

## **TRAINING AND JOB PERSPECTIVES OF THE INDIVIDUALLY REINCORPORATED EX-FIGHTERS' WOMEN COMPANIONS**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **Purpose of the study**

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is supporting the development of a job training project for the women companions of the individually reincorporated ex-fighters to be implemented by the High Council for Social and Economic Reintegration of Individuals and Armed Groups (herewith referred to as “the High Council for Reintegration”). The participants in this project are the Mayor’s Office in Bogota and SENA.

With the objective of laying a better foundation for this project, JICA commissioned “Caminos Alternos” to develop a qualitative study on the psychosocial characterization of women companions of demobilized exfighters living in Bogota. Having this characterization as a support, the main needs and possibilities of technical training for these women are exposed.

#### **Sources of information**

To collect the information required for this purpose, “Caminos Alternos” carried out the following activities:

- 1) An initial meeting with psychologists and social workers belonging to the Centers of Reference and Opportunities, CRO (ascribed to the High Council for Reintegration), the OIM and the Embassy of The Netherlands, as well as representatives of each of the entities that support the training project.
- 2) An exploratory opinion workshop, “Training and future job perspectives”<sup>1</sup>, with the women companions of the individually demobilized and reincorporated ex-fighters.
- 3) A final meeting with those attending the initial meeting, the reincorporated and women companions participating in the workshop, and also representatives of SENA, Fundacion Corona, Jardín Botánico and Juan Bosco Obrero, institutions that will offer training to the companions of the demobilized.

## **PSYCHOSOCIAL CHARACTERIZATION OF THE WOMEN COMPANIONS OF THE DEMOBILIZED**

### **Profile of the women companions of the reincorporated<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> See attached formats (for individuals and groups) used with participants during the workshop.

Age: *	25% between 16 and 20 years old 55% between 20 and 30 years old 20% over 30 years old
Marital Status: **	77% live in common law marriage 33% are married
Education: *	2% have no education 35% have basic primary education 60% have basic high school or intermediate education 5% have higher education
Number of children: *	60% have one child 30% have 2 or 3 children 10% have more than 3 children
Living with their children **	88% live with all their children 12% live with some of their children
Children's ages: ***	45% are between 0 and 4 years old 45% are between 5 and 16 years old 10% are over 16 years old <sup>3</sup>
Extended Family: **	50% do not live with members of their extended family 38% live with their father or mother 12% live with brothers or sisters
Present Occupation: ***	90% stay home 10% work or study
Place of origin: **	63% were born or have lived in Bogota all their lives 37% were born in other places

### Family context<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> \*An asterisk indicates that data was taken from reports and investigations done prior to this study, as the small number of companions participating in the workshop does not permit any generalizations. It is important to add that other sources do not supply any specific data on the individually reincorporated ex-fighters. Only information collected in the workshop provides this information.

\*\*Two asterisks show that the data was taken from the workshop with the companions of the individually reincorporated as there was no information on the subject in the studies that were consulted.

\*\*\* Three asterisks indicate that the data reflects what both other studies and the workshop state since the information coincides.

The couples of the reincorporated attending the workshop have lasted for an average of 6 years. In the majority of them (75%), men are older than their companions. These relations represent personal gains for the women in terms of affection and economic support from their partners. Although the women companions complain about the bad temper of their husbands and a few of them about verbal abuse, none of them admit to have suffered physical abuse from their partner. Nevertheless, the professionals attending the second meeting point out that family violence is frequent, but this information is hidden in order to keep the humanitarian support offered by the Reintegration Program, while women companions insist that they have been properly treated by their husbands and that abuse to other women happens only in isolated cases.

The family nucleus (husband and children) occupies a very special place in the life of these women, who stated that harmony and affection predominate in their homes.

### **Ties with the city and the region of origin**

All the women companions of the individually reincorporated participating in the workshop were brought up in the same city or region where they were born. The majority also met their companions there.

If it is true that some of the women born in the province would like to stay in Bogota, it is also a fact that the rest of them would like to go back to their place of origin. Although this wish does not imply their feeling unsettled or unhappy about life in the city –which is appreciated by them-, they simply feel very nostalgic about their land of origin. In spite of their desire to return, the women companions cannot do it at this moment for security reasons that put them and their husbands at risk.

### **Relations with the community**

The majority of the women feels at ease in their neighborhood and have a good relation with the community – better than their husbands' - and at the same time they are accepted by their neighbors, although, as was stated in the second meeting, the quality of this acceptance fluctuates according to the locality these families live in.

Some couples participate in communitarian activities – such as recreational events and celebrations -, and a small group does not, either because they live in farms or because they don't know about them given the constant change of address characteristic of this population. Nevertheless, the social integration often occurs anonymously, since the individually demobilized try to hide their situation to avoid being stigmatized and for security reasons.

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<sup>3</sup> From now on all the information supplied comes from the workshop carried out with the companions of the demobilized and/or the meeting with the professionals ascribed to the High Council for Reintegration, the Ministry of Defense, the Mayors Office of Bogota, OIM and JICA.

## **ASPIRATIONS OF THE COMPANIONS IN TRAINING AND WORK**

### **Do they want to train and work?**

All the participants in the workshop (companions and reincorporated), as well as the great majority of professionals who were at the meetings, manifested that the companions of the demobilized did want to receive training that would allow them to work in the near future.

In this sense, the women were aware that in order to get qualified jobs, it is necessary to receive technical training, although a great percentage of them have not yet had the opportunity to take advantage of this benefit.

### **In what do they want to train and work?**

There is a consensus with regard to the fact that the three areas of greatest interest in training for the companions of the reincorporated are: 1) Computer systems, 2) Beauticians and 3) dressmaking and confections. There are five more areas with moderate interest: nursing, teaching, baking, cooking and cattle breeding.

Despite their great motivation and that they have previous working experience, the majority of the companions of the reincorporated are not presently working nor have any gainful employment. Nevertheless, they are eager to contribute to economic support of their families (as their only source of income is from the Reintegration Program), and to offer a better future for their children. Some also want to participate so as to obtain their personal fulfillment.

The fields they want to work in are diverse, but the ones preferred are: Computer systems, beauticians, dressmaking, confections and nursing. It is important to note that most women want to train in what they are going to work later on.

Some women, especially those 30 years old or older, prefer to work at home, while the younger ones are interested in working both outside and within their homes, and the great majority (by preference and for security) prefers working in the Capital of the country.

### **Favorable conditions and difficulties for training and work**

The women feel that as well as the great hopes they have for training and working they have the total support of their companions and their family, they have some knowledge and skills related to the field of work and have the required time to do these jobs.

In contrast to the previously mentioned, the women confessed to having a few impediments to study and work, amongst them is fear of not obtaining the expected academic results, the difficulty in finding someone to care for their

small children and the lack of money for the registration fee and transport, for which a training program for the companions of the individually demobilized should be proposed beforehand with solutions to these problems.

## **POSSIBILITIES OF WORK AND TRAINING FOR THE COMPANIONS**

During the final meeting the conditions and possibilities regarding the entities that could offer training and eventually work for the companions of the demobilized (SENA, Bogota's Mayors Office, Jardin Botanico and Juan Bosco Obrero) were sought, as JICA wants the project to be cemented in real training and work possibilities.

The following shows a synthesis of what was stated by the representatives of these organizations and the complementary comments made by the other participants in the meeting.

### **Conditions for the training**

Before initiating the training process it is necessary to design a file in which information on each beneficiary is recorded indicating technical formation and/or work experience, occupational expectations and psychosocial characteristics so that the training will be adequate to the conditions and necessities of these women.

### **Options of technical training**

The entities suggested different possibilities for job-oriented training for the companions.

The SENA could offer women with high school education a titled training as long as there are sufficient people interested in the same subject. On the other hand, the companions that have a lower level of schooling could get training in accordance with the enterprises, or occupational training that includes instruction on how to set up productive projects, outline a life plan and job-oriented formation.

The Jardin Botanico has implemented the training in gardening within the program of urban tree planting and, furthermore, has training in urban agriculture that is especially oriented to guarantee families food supply, and in the future, this could serve to augment their income.

Juan Bosco Obrero offers training in automobile mechanics, computer systems, basic drawing, dressmaking, residential electricity, bakery and food conservation, among others; besides, the training in business areas and citizenship. Shortly it will open a cooking school where free training is given to members of vulnerable groups.

The Fundación Corona can offer the wives training in the creation of associated businesses. Presently there is an agreement between the Mayors Office, the

SENA and five corporate organizations, among them Fundación Corona, to train the vulnerable population in this subject.

### **Conditions and possibilities of work**

Three sectors were identified that could offer work to the companions of the demobilized: 1) Private business that could be a source of work for those women who would like to work outside their home; 2) starting or creating their own business, individual or associated, for those who wish to remain in their homes and 3) the public sector for the beneficiaries who still are not very sure of themselves and require the protection of the State.

Entering the labor market in the different sectors of work can be done in various ways, according to what the participants at the meeting expressed.

In the first place, it would be necessary that the entities associated with the training project, create a support network that supplies employment to the women, formed by business people who are sensitive to the subject and, furthermore, who can take steps with other firms in the public or private sector for contracting with companions that have received the technical training.

Another working alternative proposed is related to the starting up or creation of small businesses, individual or associated, of productive units that, in accordance with the real necessities of the firms, participate in the field of outsourcing. In this case, it is a priority to create support networks with the firm owners so that the sales of the products are guaranteed.

Lastly, keeping in mind that the project will be developed in Bogotá, it is important to work jointly with the Mayors Office and other local entities so as to generate productive opportunities of entry into the official sector.

**CAMINOS ALTERNOS**

**TRAINING AND JOB PERSPECTIVES FOR THE WOMEN COMPANIONS OF  
REINCORPORATED INDIVIDUALS**

**FINAL REPORT**

**Submitted by**

**CAMINOS ALTERNOS CORPORATION**

**Presented to the**

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## **TRAINING AND JOB PERSPECTIVES FOR THE WOMEN COMPANIONS OF INDIVIDUALLY REINCORPORATED EX-FIGHTERS**

### **PRESENTATION**

The High Council for Reintegration, ascribed to the Presidency of the Republic, supports the demobilized ex-fighters from the Colombian armed conflict in their process of reincorporating into civilian life. To this effect, among other benefits, it offers job-oriented training aimed at giving them the technical knowledge that will allow them to carry out the job they choose. On the other hand, up till now, this benefit does not extend to their women companions, since they do not have the training, and therefore, cannot contribute to the family income and have to depend wholly on the monthly payment given by the Reintegration Program. For this reason, the High Council for Reintegration requested the cooperation of JICA to jointly develop a job-oriented training project for companions of the individually reincorporated ex-fighters living in Bogotá.

Until now there has been no investigation published on the psychosocial conditions of the companions of the reintegrated or on their educational and job circumstances, a subject that must be well known and mastered so as to lay the foundations for a project of this nature. For this reason, JICA hired Caminos Alternos Corporation to carry out the first study in the country that has a psychological characterization of these women (including general information, family context, ties with the city and their place of origin and their relationship with the receptive community), and on their training perspectives and future job opportunities.

Once the study was completed, we found that the great majority of the women companions had little job training and almost none were presently working. Nevertheless, these women are very interested in obtaining technical training, especially in areas such as dressmaking, beauticians and computer systems. Although at the beginning, their companions showed some resistance, in general terms they seem to support their companions in this effort. Furthermore, the difficulties that these women have to study (care of the children, money for the registration and transport, family background, etc.) could be solved with this project.

All the above indicates that the training project for the women companions of the demobilized led by the High Council for Reintegration with support from JICA, makes sense and is useful for this sector of the population, and therefore, it will undoubtedly become a valuable support for the demobilized and their families in the process of reincorporation to civilian society.

ROSITA JARAMILLO  
Director Caminos Alternos

### **1. INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS**



## **Purpose of the study**

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is supporting the development of a job training project for the women companions of the individually reincorporated ex-fighters to be implemented by the High Council for Social and Economic Reintegration of Individuals and Armed Groups (herewith referred to as “The High Council for Reintegration”). The participants in this project are the Mayors Office in Bogota and SENA.

With the objective of laying a better foundation for this project, JICA commissioned “Caminos Alternos” to develop a qualitative study on the psychosocial characterization of women companions of demobilized ex-fighters living in Bogota. Having this characterization as a support, the main needs and possibilities of technical training for these women are exposed.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY**

### **Activities**

Based on the reference terms supplied by the hiring entity in order to obtain the information required to achieve the purpose of the study, Caminos Alternos developed the following activities:

- An initial meeting with psychologists and social workers belonging to the Centers of Reference and Opportunities, CRO (ascribed to the High Council for Reintegration), the OIM and the Embassy of The Netherlands, as well as representatives of each of the entities that support the training project.
- An exploratory opinion workshop, “Training and future job perspectives”<sup>1</sup>, with the women companions of the individually demobilized and reincorporated ex-fighters with the participation of 14 people registered in the Reintegration Program summoned by the project cooperating entities .
- A final meeting to present all the information processed up to date and to obtain feedback from those attending the meeting, as well as representatives of SENA, Fundacion Corona, Jardin Botanico and Juan Bosco Obrero, institutions that would offer training to the companions of the demobilized.

### **Methodology**

To obtain the information required by JICA and the organizations cooperating with this project, an exploratory qualitative opinion poll was taken in which special emphasis was given to the opinions and testimonies of the participants (women companions, demobilized persons and professionals), with the purpose of carefully examining those subjects related to the companions of reintegrated men that are more interesting and relevant for the entities involved in the project.

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<sup>1</sup> See attached formats (for individuals and groups) used with participants during the workshop.

According to this, the investigation process began with a verbal and written recount of their own experiences given by the women companions and the reincorporated people, and of the reality experienced by other women companions of the demobilized. This information was supported by documented observers (professionals that work with this population).

It is well known that the qualitative approach works with small samples that makes it possible to obtain personalized information and, therefore, deeply understand the history and circumstances relevant to the population studied here. On the contrary, with the quantitative approach, although the number of people is larger, the data obtained on the participants is more general.

This methodology gives us the possibility of collecting a large amount of information from the original sources (women companions, reincorporated men and professionals), and as far as the subject permitted, the lengthy document was also consulted in order to understand, through the process of contrast and validation, the complexity of the reality that the spouses experience.

According to the above mentioned, during the study process the objective was to prevent the author's story to substitute or diminish the reality lived by these women, as well as to make sure that their analysis and interpretation would be true to the information given by the participants.

### **Sources of information**

- In order to elaborate the "Profile of the women companions of the reincorporated" (and the very brief "Profile of the reincorporated"), included in the chapter on "Psychosocial characterization of the women companions of the demobilized", the following was taken into account:

- The information obtained in the workshop from the participating women companions and the data supplied by the reincorporated themselves about their companions.

- The subjects discussed in the second meeting attended by the professionals ascribed to CRO, the representatives of the entities involved in the project, and the training entities.

- When it was deemed necessary, and given the characteristics of the sample, the data supplied by prior investigations and reports<sup>2</sup> in reference to the women

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<sup>2</sup> The research and reports are:

Research Team Fundación Universitaria Luis Amigo *Ciudadanos excombatientes: un desafío de reconciliación e inclusión para Bogotá*, Bogotá, 2006.

Corporación Escuela Galán, *Balance de atención a las compañeras beneficiarias atendidos en este centro de referencia fase I*, Bogotá, 2006

Ministerio de Interior y Justicia, *Darle la mano a un reincorporado es ser protagonista de la paz. Una mirada institucional*, Bogotá, 2006.

companions of the reincorporated in general was included, as to date no other study dealing specifically with the couples and families of the individually demobilized has been published. Also, since the information of the different sources that were consulted is not always identical, in the cases where any discrepancy was found, the data was averaged, and this was the data that was taken into account to elaborate the profile.

- On the other hand, to collect the information related to “Family context”, “Ties with the city and the region” and the “Relations with community”, also included in the chapter “Psychosocial characterization of the women companions of individuals demobilized”, and taking into account that no other studies on this subject had been undertaken, the information came almost exclusively from:
  - Information obtained from the workshop.
  - The data given in the two meetings.
- To collect the data presented in the chapter “Training and job expectation of the women companions of the demobilized” the following sources were used:
  - The exploratory opinion workshop carried out with the women companions and the individually reincorporated ex-fighters.
  - The two meetings carried out with experts on demobilized population.
  - The other reports that deal with this subject.
- Finally, to develop the chapter on “Job and Training possibilities of the women companions of the reincorporated”, although some data from the first meetings was collected, the following was taken into account:
  - The items discussed in the second meeting with representatives of the cooperating and training entities, professionals ascribed to CRO and beneficiaries of the Reintegration Program.

## **II. PSYCHOSOCIAL CHARACTERIZATION OF THE WOMEN COMPANIONS OF THE DEMOBILISED**

### **PROFILE OF THE WOMEN COMPANIONS OF THE REINCORPORATED**

According to investigations and reports produced prior to this study, the age range of the women companions of the reincorporated are the following: 25% are women between 16 and 20 years old, 55% are between 20 and 30 years old and the other 20% are over 30. This information does not coincide with the data obtained in the workshop, since 43% them are between 19 and 23 years of age and 57% of them are over 28.

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Ministerio del Interior y de Justicia, Fichas de visita domiciliarias y de acompañamiento individual, elaborados por el CRO AMAR.

*Taking into account the peculiarity of the sample used for this workshop in what refers to the age of the companions and in order to establish the age range of the women to be trained, we consider it better to rely on the information given by other studies that were consulted, since these show consistency among themselves.*

*On accepting this suggestion, we would have to assume that 80% of the women are under 30 years old, and that probably some of their children are still small (as will be seen further on); therefore, it will be necessary to guarantee they will be taken care of when the women begin their training.<sup>3</sup>*

The data obtained in the workshop showed that the majority (77%) of these women live in common law marriage and only a few (33%) have legalized their union. The other studies did not provide more data to confirm this information.

According to the data obtained in the workshop and other studies – which are all very similar – the reincorporated couples usually have children and only very few are childless (16%). The majority (60%) of these women have only one child and another significant number (30%) have two or three children. Finally, a minority (10%) is formed by the women companions having more than three children. According to the information supplied in the workshop, a large number of the women companions (88%) presently live with all their children. There is no information from other sources to confirm this data.

According to the studies that were consulted, the ages of the women's children are: 0 to 4 years old and 45% are 5 to 16 years old. The other 10% corresponds to the children over 16. The data supplied by the workshop confirms this tendency, although there are more women with children over 16 years of age (23%), since the proportion of women over 30 was higher than expected.

Besides living with their children and husbands, some of these women live with other members of their extended families. The workshop showed that 38% of the women companions of the individually reincorporated share their homes with their father or mother and 12% with a brother or sister. In general terms, the women that do not live with their parents would like to have them at home in order to improve their safety conditions, and at the same time obtain some support from them.

According to other investigations and to the information obtained in the workshop, since the data from both sources tends to coincide, the educational level of these women is distributed in the following way: 3% have a college level (technical, technological and/or professional), 60% have high school studies

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<sup>3</sup> The observation and recommendations of the authors of the report complementing the data obtaining in the study are transcribed in italics to facilitate their identification.

<sup>4</sup>(corresponding to grades 6 to 11), 35% have done primary school (corresponding to grades 1 to 5) and 2% have never gone to school.

*This information regarding the educational level of the women companions shows that at least 63% of the women have an acceptable level in reading-writing skills, basic mathematical operations and general culture that will permit them to take advantage of their training and most likely, will also have a positive influence on the way they carry out their jobs.*

*On the other hand, another fact that must be taken into account is that 37% of the women barely have an elementary education – perhaps due to their rural origin. Therefore, with these women it is necessary to use pedagogical strategies based on “doing”, since most likely they are functionally illiterate.*

*Based on this, these women could be hired for jobs that do not require reading-writing abilities such as hairdressing, cooking, bakery assistant, etc., and the training areas could be related to jobs of this nature. We propose this because it would seem unfair that women who have not had the opportunity of a formal education should also miss the possibility of being trained for a job.*

*With the objective that trainers will get acquainted with these and other characteristics of the women that require a special pedagogical treatment it would be convenient to create a “Preliminary Module” (which we will discuss further on), for the people responsible for the technical training.*

The workshop data and the previous studies coincide in that presently these women (90%) are dedicated to housekeeping jobs and only minorities (10%) are actually working or receiving training.

According to the information gathered in the workshop, 50% of the women companions were born in Bogota, 13 % of them have lived in the capital most of their life and the other 37% came to Bogota with their companions, after they joined the Reintegration Program. No other studies were found to compare this information. Furthermore, in the second meeting it was mentioned that the percentage of women from other regions is larger than the one previously stated, since the peculiarity of the sample used for the workshop does not permit any generalizations regarding the place of origin of the women companions of the demobilized living in Bogota.

*Taking this into account, and according to our own experience as a corporation working with the reincorporated population, for the effects of*

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<sup>4</sup> Out of 60% of the women companions who studied high school, 25% graduated and 35% quit.

*this study we will assume that the amount of women who are originally from other regions is larger than the amount of those that were born and/or have lived most of their life in Bogota. This consideration, as we will see later on, has an influence on the direction the job training project might take, with respect to the subjects and training modalities to be offered.*

## **PROFILE OF THE REINCORPORATED**

According to the investigations that were consulted, the reincorporated are within two large age ranges: 68% are between 20 and 30 years old and 32% are over 30. In this case – as in the case of the women companions- the data differs from the information obtained in the workshop, since 50% of the reincorporated that attended were under 30 and the other 50% were over this age.

Other studies say that 45% of the demobilized men have basic primary studies and 49% have studied basic high school. The minority that is left (1%) is divided between those who have never had any education and those who have a higher educational level. This information tends to coincide with the one obtained in the workshop, although among those that attended the event there is a larger percentage of men with a higher educational level (7%).

According to the reports that were consulted, the majority (80%) of the reincorporated do not work. This coincides with the information gathered in the workshop, where it was evident that 62% of the individually demobilized study and this activity takes most of their time, 23% work and 15% do not have an occupation.

In the data supplied by the Ministry of the Interior, 10% of the individually reincorporated come from Cundinamarca and 90% from other regions, mostly from Antioquia, Caqueta, Santander, Tolima, Meta, Cesar and Boyaca.

## **FAMILY CONTEXT**

### **Data on the couple**

According to the information obtained in the individual records that were filled in by those who attended the workshop, until now the couple relationships of the participants have lasted for an average of 6 years. On discriminating this information, we observed that in the cases of women over thirty, the unions have lasted for an average of 8.5 years and of almost 4 years (3.75) in the cases of women under 23. These numbers indicate that there is a tendency towards stability in such unions. On the other hand, when the women companions and the demobilized that participated were consulted about the length of the relationships of other reincorporated, half of them answered that these last more

than 5 years and the other half said that they last for an average of 3 years. This information reflects a higher degree of instability in these unions. Finally, in the first meetings with psychologists and social workers, these professionals stated that these couples tend to be unstable, and the majority of them have only recently become a couple.

*Although there are different points of view regarding the duration of the unions of the demobilized, we consider that even if these relationships were short, this would not affect the main purpose of the training project, because if a separation occurs, the woman companion usually keeps the custody of the children and the family nucleus of the demobilized still benefits from the training she receives.*

Still using the data obtained in the workshop, in the majority (75%) of the couples, the men are older than the women and in only 25% of the cases the women companions are older than the reincorporated. Nevertheless, in the first meeting, it was stated that the women of the demobilized are usually older than their husbands.

### **Predominating atmosphere in the homes**

In what refers to the positive aspects of couple relationships, the women that participated in the workshop admitted the advantages of being the companions of the individually demobilized ex-fighters. Some refer to the economic support and others to the affection they receive from their companion. Likewise, all of them referred to one or various qualities of their companions which usually strengthen the relationship, and the majority talks fondly about them..

It is interesting to comment that in a survey of an individual and anonymous nature that was carried out among the women companions (taking into account that anonymity propitiates true answers), none of the participants declared to have been a victim of physical abuse from their partners. On the other hand, both the women companions and the reincorporated stated that, despite the difficulties that may arise, in general terms their homes have a harmonious and affectionate atmosphere.

According to this, in the last meeting, some of the participants stated that family violence does exist among the reincorporated population, although the women do not report it, partly because it works both ways and partly because they are afraid of losing the humanitarian aid given by the Reintegration Program. On hearing these opinions, the women companions that attended the meeting stated that these difficulties exist in some of the homes of the reincorporated, but there are also other homes where harmony predominates and their members have the necessary resources to solve these misunderstandings,

*It seems very likely that the husbands that mistreat their wives will create in them insecurity and fear that will prevent them from expressing their desire to be trained or that having started this process, they might be exposed to aggressive outbursts from their mates. Therefore, this type of relation may disturb their constant attendance to the training program.*

*Based on this, since there are some discrepancies with respect to the treatment that the reincorporated give to their women, we recommend the exploration of this aspect by means of an individual interview or an anonymous survey carried out by the CRO with the women companions of the demobilized. If this investigation should show an important level of mistreatment, it would make it necessary for the High Council to promote a psychosocial program with the couples that minimizes this difficulty, in order to improve their lives and relations and make the training of women more feasible.*

On the other hand, we would like to emphasize the great importance the family nucleus has for these women, who during the workshop expressed that motherhood has been the most enriching experience in their lives and that being with their children makes them feel very happy.

Finally, the women companions also accepted some of the negative characteristics of their partners that affect both the family dynamics and the relationship. The most common complaint refers to the men's bad temper, although two women expressed their disapproval about their companion shouting at them or being verbally abusive. These negative aspects of the couple dynamics can be related to what was stated in the first meeting, regarding the tendency of demobilized men of being chauvinists, possessive and jealous, and in some cases of mistreating their women.

### **Family of origin**

The women that participated in the workshop have positive memories of their childhood, in many cases related to their family of origin. All of them talk about their mother (two of them have no father) or about both their parents with affection and appreciation.

On the other hand, the majority of the women companions appreciate the education received from their parents regarding moral and civic values, although three of the women said they would not like to repeat with their children the mistreatment they received from their parents. Consequently, we observed an ambivalence regarding their upbringing.

In this sense, there was a consensus among the attendants (women companions and reincorporated) regarding the interest that the women companions of the individually demobilized have – including the women that participated in the



workshop, as well as the rest of the women, - about bringing their parents to live with them, with the objective of guaranteeing the protection they lack in their regions and also as a way of thanking them for the efforts they made in helping them out in life.

## **TIES WITH THE CITY AND THE REGION**

Although, as we previously established half of the women that participated in the workshop were born in Bogota and the other half come from villages and rural areas far from the capital, in this study we prefer to give validity to what we stated in the second meeting about the large majority of women coming from other regions. On the other hand, all the women companions that attended the workshop were brought up in their city or region of origin. Also, the majority of them met their companion there.

Regardless of their place of origin, the women companions find something positive in Bogota, which does not necessarily imply that all of them prefer to live in this city, because although half of the women from villages want to stay in the capital, the others prefer to return to their regions of origin in order to be with their original families. This coincides with what was suggested in the first meeting, where it was stated that some women companions establish very good relations with the community that receives them, which contributes to their settling in the city, while others do not succeed in adapting to urban life and, are consequently eager to go back to their region of origin.

According to this, the rural participants that wish to return, think that for the meantime, it is not convenient to go back to their place of origin, due to the risks regarding their family's safety, Therefore, although for the majority of the women companions, going back to their homeland does not imply a direct risk since they are not ex-fighters, this would mean they would have to separate from their mates, since the individually demobilized are deserters of an armed group and cannot return. Also, the majority of the participants appreciates their relationship and wants to keep it. In general terms, this information coincides with what was stated by the professionals in the first meeting.

*It is important to remember that the expectations regarding the role assigned to women are different in rural and urban environments. And taking into account that there is an important percentage of women companions that come from the country, and that these have training and preferences related to rural jobs, we consider it fair not to impose on them the expectations that are a priority in the city, where usually they are prepared to carry out activities that are characteristic of the urban woman.*

*Taking this into account, we could think of developing training areas akin to the interests of these women, that can be taught in Bogota and that will*

*have a practical purpose of training these women to work in the city or nearby towns (for example, Mosquera, Chia, Cota, etc.) We refer to jobs such as urban agriculture, gardening, dairy products, ecological guidance, environmental promotion, etc. With respect to this, the Mayor's Office has the determination to develop in association with the Botanical Garden a project to give garden training to 30 demobilized and their women companions with the aim of detecting if this activity has work demands in the Capital. The results of this pilot study would be useful to augment this project so that more reincorporated and women companions can be trained in this area.*

*On the other hand, knowing that the women companions will not return in a short time to their regions of origin – for the security reasons mentioned before - is important to consolidate the project of technical training, since it has a practical application in the city, thus achieving a continuity in the process that permits the follow up of the training-job process, once results are evaluated.*

## **RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY**

All those attending the workshop (women companions and reincorporated) expressed that they feel fine in their neighborhood and that they have a good relation with the community that received them, some of the women specifically mentioned their will to serve the community; they also feel accepted by their neighbors. This feeling of integration with the people in the community confirms the information obtained from other sources, that states that the majority (77%) of the demobilized feel at ease and fearless in their environment. Nevertheless, in the second meeting the representative of the Mayors Office stated that according to the experience in Bogota, the relations of the families of the demobilized with the community varies, depending on the locality they live in as it is good in certain neighborhoods and difficult in others; therefore, no generalizations can be made on the subject.

On the other hand, some of the participants in the workshop stated that the women frequently take part in communitarian activities, and that sometimes they are accompanied by their husbands, specially when they are recreational or religious, while others think that they cannot join in community events given the frequent change of neighborhood which makes their integration very difficult. Regarding this, the professionals attending the first meeting declared that women companions have a closer and better relation with neighbors and local organizations (State institutions, community organizations, etc.) because they stay in their place of residence – since they neither study nor work – and because they tend to be more sociable than their husbands.

Finally, the participants in the workshop affirmed that due to the social stigma that falls on the ex-fighters, some of them hide their demobilized condition from

their neighbors and try for this reason to keep away from community life. This coincides with the information obtained in the first meeting that also stated that the demobilized tend to hide and stay away from any community activity for fear of being rejected.

*Although there are different points of view with respect to the quality of the relations of the families of the demobilized with the community that receives them, there does seem to be an agreement in that women are the ones that establish the most fructiferous ties with their neighbors and keep a closer contact with community organizations when conditions allow it.*

*Therefore, if the women companions -once they have been trained- want to perform their job in the same place they live in, they will most likely have the approval of the people of their locality, without conflicts or rejection. They will also be able to share their job activity with neighbors – by hiring them, selling their products to them or offering their services, for example-, which will project their work to the community.*

*Based on this, we consider that creating training opportunities for women of the receptive communities who have not yet had them could help to implant the training project in the Capital's localities and give it a broader social impact.*

### **III. TRAINING AND JOB EXPECTATIONS OF THE WOMEN COMPANIONS OF THE DEMOBILIZED**

#### **DO WOMEN WANT TO BE TRAINED AND WORK?**

All the participants in the workshop (women companions and reincorporated) stated that not only the companions attending the event but also the remaining women, **do fervently want to get trained and work.**

On the other hand, the women companions showed they were conscious that in order to work in qualified jobs, it is necessary to receive technical training, although until now the majority of them have not had the opportunity of receiving this kind of training.

*It is well known that until now the Reincorporation Program and the entities offering educational services have implemented the training only for the reincorporated, without taking their wives into account.*

*Nevertheless, on confirming that the majority of the women have work experience and that almost all of them would like to work, although probably not at the moment, the need to include the couples in the training*

*process arises, broadening the coverage to the family and thus going beyond the individual approach that admits only the beneficiary.*

## **IN WHICH AREAS DO THEY WANT TO BE TRAINED?**

Based on the opinion of the women companions, the reincorporated and the professionals that attended the two meetings, there are three areas of training preferred by the women companions of the demobilized. In order of preference these areas are:

- 1) Computer systems
- 2) Beauticians
- 3) Dressmaking and confection

It is important to explain that when the women were asked what they understood by the word “systems”, since this is a general term, one of them referred to the use of a computer (in a secretarial job), another one to systems engineering and another one to web management and computer technical service.

In relation to the second area preferred by the women companions, we were able to establish the difference between “beauticians and estheticians” to define more precisely the criteria for the training in this field. Although they are very close, the training for beauticians is shorter and more focused on cosmetics, hairdressing, manicure and pedicure, whereas estheticians take care of all these as well as of body care, muscle tonicity and facial and body massaging. Therefore, those choosing the beautician option (hairdressing and the like) can work in a beauty parlor, in their homes or making home visits, since the basic implements are easy to transport, whereas the women who prefer to be trained as estheticians can work mainly in gyms and beauty parlors.

Similarly, we can establish a difference between dressmaking and confection which may be relevant for the training program to be offered. Although the first one refers to sewing and renewing clothes, which women can do at home and has no industrial scope, the second refers to small businesses where garments are produced in large amounts and marketing strategies. Therefore, in the second case, besides the sewing training, it would be important to offer the women a complementary training in business administration, in case they want to develop their own small family business.

There were five more areas that according to the participants are also interesting for these women, although in a minor degree. These are: nursing, teaching, bakery, cooking and cattle breeding.

Finally, another eight training areas were also mentioned: drawing/graphic design, agroindustrial activities, fish farming, dairy products, environmental promotion, handicrafts, veterinary, medicine and driving.

### **DO THEY NEED TO WORK?**

According to the criteria of the professionals participating in the two meetings and to the opinions of all those that attended the workshop, the majority of the women are not working at the moment besides being dedicated to housekeeping. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to add that all the women have some type of previous work experience.

Additionally, as was mentioned in the meeting, the few women companions that do have a job were born in Bogota and met their partner in the city. Nevertheless, in many occasions these women must leave their jobs to take care of their family.

It is important to add that all the women participating in the workshop have a deeply felt desire to work which does not respond to external impositions. In the first place, they are motivated by their will to offer their families economic support and a better future for their children, although the purpose of succeeding in life is also very important, as well as their personal fulfillment and the desire of being economically independent from their companions.

Finally, it is important to mention that according to the information provided by the women companions, the reincorporated themselves and the professionals in the first meeting, in the majority of the homes of the demobilized the only income comes from the Reintegration Program.

*The above mentioned validates the interest demonstrated by the cooperating entities led by the High Council for Reintegration and supported by JICA, in offering a technical training to 300 women companions of the individually demobilized ex-fighters aimed at preparing them to compete in the work market with better possibilities, as the majority wish to work and contribute to support their families given that they have no additional income at the moment.*

### **IN WHICH AREAS WOULD THEY LIKE TO WORK?**

The participants in the workshop and the meetings named a large variety of working areas in which the women companions would like to work. In order of preference they are the following:

- 1) Computar systems
- 2) Estheticians and beauticians

### 3) Dressmaking

Another areas that were repeatedly mentioned were: nursing, secretarial jobs, cooking, working with children, environmental promotion and bookbinding.

It is interesting to observe that regardless of the variety of working options mentioned by the women, the most frequent coincide with their preferred training fields (pointed out in the annex “Which area do they prefer to be trained in?”). This indicates that many of the women companions are sure about the path they wish to follow when they return to work. For this reason, they want the training to be a tool that will qualify their working abilities in the area of their choice.

While the majority of the women companions attending the workshop seem to be sure of the area in which they would like to work, one woman (that could represent a group of them) seems to be confused regarding her desire of receiving technical training and about her job expectations, because her previous experience does not agree with her future work expectations and this desire does not coincide with the training they want.

*Among the women companions that are going to be trained we will very probably find this type of cases, i.e., women who are confused about their vocational and occupational expectations could choose a training option that differs from their interests just because they do not want to miss the opportunity offered to them, since such training represents a way into the working world that most of them dream of. Under these circumstances, their academic performance could diminish or they may even quit their training or jobs very quickly since their choice would not be akin to their preferences and occupational competences.*

*To prevent this risk, which would be very expensive for the training project to be offered by the cooperating entities, we recommend that help be given to the women that require it so they can explore their preferences and working capacities. To achieve this, before giving them the technical training, a Preliminary Module could be offered to diagnose their interests and occupational abilities (through tests or individual or group interviews by experts). All this aimed at helping these women to make the adequate choice regarding the training course, and at the same time understand if their motivation is real; that would guarantee that they finish their technical training and keep their jobs.*

On the other hand, almost all the women companions said that they would be willing to back up their partners in the productive project subsidized by the Reintegration Program, and half of them affirmed that they have already planned to collaborate with their companions.

*It would be valuable if the High Council would make a more extensive investigation on this subject (using a larger sample), because if this tendency prevails, it would be very important to invite the women wanting to share the productive project with their companions to participate in the training being offered to the demobilized in this field. With this training the women could become efficient partners in the organization of a family economic project, as many of them want to help their husbands, but do not know how to do so in a technical way.*

## **WHERE WOULD THEY LIKE TO WORK?**

Of all the jobs mentioned by the women companions, less than half can be performed at home or are very closely related to the traditional feminine activities (cooking, beauticians, bookbinding, child care and computer systems). The other jobs (systems, estheticians, nursing, environmental promotion, medicine and working at an office, enterprise or shopping center) must be done outside the house. Nevertheless, in the first meeting it was stated that the majority of the women companions want the type of training that will prepare them for an activity that can be done at home, except those that would like to receive job-oriented training.

*As a conclusion, some of the women prefer to work at home for different reasons, the main ones being: the need to personally take care of their small children, the insecurity they feel about working or the fear of moving within the city due to their rural origins. Nevertheless, others would like to work outside the home, either as employees or developing their own business.*

*Consequently, we recommend that the training program should have a variety of options that include these two types of situations. A good example of an activity that can be done at home is dressmaking, which is different from a small confections family business that most likely would have to be located in a commercial area. Although the first type of activity is more private, it can attain a larger economic projection if the woman has received training in business administration..*

*Hired jobs also imply working outside the home and, therefore, it would be important to offer the women that prefer this option complementary training on, for example, writing CVs and job interviews.*

Furthermore, according to the statements of the women companions of the demobilized during the workshop, the older women (over 30) would prefer to work in their homes because they feel insecure about their working abilities, while the younger ones would be willing to work either in or out of their homes.

*Many of the women companions over 30 years of age that would rather work in their place of residence, although they no longer have small children that may tie them to their homes, as is the case of the younger ones, refuse to be hired because they feel they have a competitive disadvantage with regard to younger women. For this reason, on designing the training program, it would be worthwhile to include in the Preliminary Module elements to help these women regain self-confidence regarding their working abilities by acknowledging their own resources and possibilities. With regard to this, in the workshop “Perspectives of training and job expectations”, a very valuable experience was obtained because the women companions that participated detected their main academic and working strengths and reinforced their future expectations, overcame many of their fears and recovered self-confidence.*

*On the other hand, in the cases in which the desire to work at home persists (this is also valid for the younger women), it would be interesting to enrich their training with associative strategies that will add a broader dimension to their jobs.*

On the other hand, the majority of the women that attended the workshop will stay in Bogota, either because they like to live in the city or because it offers more opportunities to study and work, and also because they feel safer working in the capital in case they have the opportunities to do so.

*Taking this into account, it is advisable that the job training offered to the women companions of the individually demobilized focus on jobs that have a demand and can be performed in the city, without this necessarily implying typically urban jobs because many women prefer activities of a rural nature that also have room in a cosmopolitan city such as the Capital.*

## **SUPPORT THEY COUNT ON FOR TRAINING AND WORK**

With regard to favorable job conditions, some of the women companions said they had experience and knowledge about the field they preferred to work in and affirmed they had the time availability to carry out payed jobs. Besides, many of them expressed that they had a real desire to study and work, and some also said that when they thought about their future and their job expectations, they saw themselves as professionals in ten years time. Finally, the majority of the women considered that they could count on the support of the government to fulfill their training dream.

Almost all the women participating in the workshop said that their husbands would want them to be trained, and at the same time, none of them affirmed specifically that their companions or children would prevent them from doing so. Half of the participants (women companions and reincorporated) affirmed that the women companions of the demobilized count on the help of their families, and



that in their homes there is an atmosphere that propitiates their training. It is interesting to add that at the end of the event the reincorporated declared that they will definitely support their couples in case they want to study and/or work in a paid job.

When the previous information was compared with the opinion of the professionals that attended the first meeting, we detected a difficulty that should be solved before offering the technical training. The psychologists and social workers affirmed that when a woman starts training, usually this generates problems between the couple, either because the man thinks that she is assuming a masculine role or because he does not like his companion to carry out activities outside the house, and, therefore, the women prefer to leave the training in order to avoid confrontations with their husbands.

*It would be important to identify the husbands that are most ambivalent with respect to the women's training and job options so they can participate with their companions in the Preliminary Module, which could also be aimed at making the husbands more sensitive regarding the importance of their companions' training and job opportunities. At the same time it should promote a more autonomous attitude in these women to avoid conflicts that may result in their quitting their training or jobs.*

*Most likely, this Preliminary Module will be attended by a lot of the men, regardless of their genre prejudices, as they are interested in their women's contribution to the family income, based at present exclusively on the aid provided by the Reintegration Program, which they sometimes consider little.*

## **DIFFICULTIES FOR TRAINING AND WORK**

Without detriment to their desire for training, half of the assistants at the workshop said they were frightened of the academic world and this fear seems to stem from the lack of confidence in their capacity to study.

*It is interesting to note that the fear the companions have toward the training (considered as a difficulty), is not mentioned by any one of them when they refer to the job, maybe because most of them have faced the labor market since childhood and a great number have already had formal jobs, while their education incursions have been more limited. This reinforces the idea of offering a Preliminary Module as an introduction to the training that will help the women trust their capacities to study and work by recognizing their abilities and resources.*

On the other hand, nearly half of the participants have small children and would not like to be away from them, although one of the women mentioned that she had someone to take care of the children. In reference to this, in the initial

meeting this obstacle to participate in training was mentioned by many women who have no one to care for their children, as the city has not established a family or social support network.

*According to the information in this study, 45% of the companions have children 4 years old and younger and at the same time, 50% are far away from their extended family -that could be a valuable support for the upbringing- therefore, many women need to guarantee the care of their children when they start studying and later onworking.*

*In the meantime, they would have to coordinate with their friends the best and more reliable option for the care of their children while they study or work .Among these options would be the implementation of kindergartens of community mothers or fathers, made up by companions or demobilized persons that live in the same community, for which the ICBF (Colombian Institute for Family Welfare) or the DABS would be in a position to offer specialized advise. (We include in this option the reincorporated people that, as they are already assigned to the Reintegration Program, do not have the work obligations of other parents and frequently have more free time than ordinary parents. In this manner, community kindergartens of parents could be opened, which would be an innovative and valuable experience, and would require special training by the ICBF and DABS. Furthermore, steps could be taken for placing the children in State day nurseries, or request training entities to offer a complementary service to the small children.*

*For the mothers that have children younger than two years old, special schedules should be offered for training that do not interfere with the care of the children – for example, avoiding long work periods or that the classes be given at night-, so that there is little absenteeism or possible desertion, due to the special care that the youngsters need.*

In another sense, not only the participants in both meetings but also several of the companions referred to the economic difficulty for the training consisting of not having money for registration fees and transportation. This difficulty is accentuated for the women who live on small farms in villages far from the City - as they have to travel long distances to come and study and transportation costs are also very high for them. In the second meeting the problem was mentioned that some of the beneficiaries who were enrolled in the SENA had had to stop going to the courses because of lack of money for urban transportation.

*This impediment will not exist when the project presently being studied with the backing of JICA offers training, and if the studies are presented as a benefit linked to the Reintegration Program that does not generate registration costs for the companions.*

*It would also be of importance to offer the transportation money, and when possible, create training programs close to the area where most of the reincorporated live (Ciudad Bolivar, Suba, Soacha, Usme, Tunjuelito and Bosa), although the frequent change of address of this population must also be considered.*

According to what was mentioned in the workshop and in the initial meeting, there is another obstacle for the many companions that come from the province, that is, the difficulty they have of moving and finding their way around in the city, a fact that also hinders their intention and desire for training.

*We suggest that these women be invited to the "City Module" offered by the Mayors Office, where help is given to the assistants so that they become familiar with the Capital and be able to take advantage of their stay in it. With this orientation the companions from the provinces can become confident in their travels to the training places and familiarized with the city, which would facilitate their participation in the formative project.*

The fact was also mentioned in the two meetings that on various occasions, the women who receive technical training in developing independent businesses cannot apply what has been learned for lack of the basic infrastructure to get the economic project going.

*Therefore, once the women finish their studies, it would be important to include in the job-oriented training program the acquisition of the basic infrastructure to start their own business or develop the chosen activity independently -for example, through the offer of a subsidy or soft credits- as, otherwise, the women will receive good technical formation that will not be able to be put to practical use, which would greatly affect the objective of this project.*

On the other hand, the participating professionals in the second meeting stated that many times the rural origin of the companions made it difficult to apply certain work regulations and competences such as the development of tests and selection interviews or, once employed, the rigorous time schedules, reasons for which they have been at a disadvantage in the selection process they have participated in and few are the ones who have maintained their employment.

*It is important to keep these difficulties in mind for the labor training that is offered to those companions that want to be employed and have chosen an occupation; there should be a module related to competences when looking for employment (for example, how to make a resume or how to appear at an interview) and how to keep the job (keeping a time schedule or following the institutional norms).*

*Lastly, it should be said that in spite of the previously mentioned difficulties, there were no strong indications found that the women had insurmountable impediments for training or jobs, such as the definite opposition of the partner, the personal refusal to study, delicate health or security (personal or of her family) problems, for example. Therefore, in general terms, the previously noted difficulties could be overcome thanks to the commitment of the women and with the support of cooperating entities, as long as the solution has been foreseen in the design of the project.*

#### **IV. POSSIBILITIES OF WORK AND TRAINING FOR THE COMPANIONS OF THE REINCORPORATED**

During the final meeting the idea was that the representatives of the entities that could offer training and, eventually, work to the companions of the demobilized – SENA, Mayors Office of Bogota, Jardin Botanico (Botanical Gardens), Corona Foundation and Juan Bosco Obrero – pointed out the conditions and possibilities that exist regarding this, as JICA wants the project to be cemented in real possibilities of training and work.

The following is the synthesis of what was expressed by the representatives of these organizations and comments made by the other participants at the meeting.

#### **CONDITIONS FOR TRAINING**

The entities that cooperate with the project led by JIC consider it necessary that before beginning a training process for the companions of the individually demobilized, they have precise information on each beneficiary, where they specify their previous training or labor experience, their preferences and occupational expectations (linked with the area of work, the idea of working within or outside the home, etc) and their psychological profile (related, for example, with the support of the extended family, the children's ages, the cooperation from the husband, etc.), so as to design the training in accordance with the educational history, the labor expectations and the family conditions of these women. This information could be gathered in a psychological file designed by the CRO to be applied to the companions during the periods when the placement of the demobilized entering the Program takes place.

In this regard, it was also suggested that an initial module be created for the companions, - similar to the "Module Zero" that is given to the reincorporated once they enter the Reincorporation Program -, where all their data is assembled so that the companions have access to the labor training offered by the training entities, with a portfolio of evidence that includes information on their education and work history, their work expectations and projects of life. It was suggested that this module should be a requisite for the women that are going to get work training, as well as for the reincorporated. It was also mentioned that the Office

of the High Council for Reintegration should be the entity responsible for implanting and offering the initial module to the companions, in order that its contents and methodology is shared in the regions and capitals where there is a demobilized population so as to unify and standardize the process prior to the training and work of the companions.

With the same idea in mind, the officials of the High Council who were present at the meeting suggested that before a “Module Zero”, it would be convenient to design an “Integrated Module” that would include aspects related to the psychosocial sphere, the family, the educational, like the one the High Council is proposing to offer the demobilized in the future. Until now, Decree 128 imposed certain limitations by excluding the companions from the benefits that were granted to the reincorporated, but presently the necessary measures are being taken so as to incorporate the family nucleus into the process and work with it in the Integral Module.

## **TRAINING OPTIONS**

In this second meeting, different training possibilities were suggested in accordance with the experience that each of the entities had with the reincorporated and other vulnerable populations.

SENA could offer two types of courses for the companions of the reincorporated. It is possible to offer a titled training (for example, nursing technician) for women with high school education, as long as there are sufficient persons wanting to train in this area. To those companions who have a lower level of schooling, training would be given in accordance with the needs of the companies – depending on the specific needs of the organizations that offer the jobs – or, occupational training that includes, as well as the technical training, instructions in the design and initiation of a productive project, and definition of a living and working plan.

*As is well known, this entity offers job training in a great number of areas, having developed the most extensive portfolio in the country, which opens large possibilities to the training project for these companions of the demobilized. As has been mentioned, this population has some non-conventional needs and preferences that are important to satisfy so that the occupational training has the desired impact.*

The Jardín Botánico (Botanical Gardens) has two possibilities of training for the companions of the reincorporated and their families. On the one hand, it has implemented the training of gardening within the program of urban tree planting and, on the other hand, has training in urban agriculture that is especially directed to guarantee food supply and which can later start generating additional income for the family. Presently, in collaboration with the Mayors Office, a pilot project is taking place on training in gardening for the demobilized and their

companions so as to explore the labor options in this field in the city which is related with the expertise of the participants.

*These options offered by the Jardín Botánico can be very useful to the companions that are of rural origin, as it allows them to get occupational training in labors related to their knowledge and abilities which could contribute to a feeling of belonging, although they live in the city.*

Juan Bosco Obrero has the capacity to train a group of reincorporated persons and their companions in areas of automobile mechanics, computer systems, basic drawing, dress making, residential electricity, bakery and food preserving, amongst others. The program offered furthermore includes, other than the technical training, formation in business management and citizenship. In the near future, thanks to the contribution by the Japanese Embassy in association with SENA, a school gastronomy will be open to give free training to members of vulnerable citizen groups.

*As can be seen, among the training subjects offered by Juan Bosco Obrero, there are several that are preferred by the companions, a fact that makes JICA's intended training project more viable.*

Lastly, Corona Foundation can offer the companions training in the creation of associated businesses. Presently there is an agreement between the Mayors Office, SENA and five business organizations, amongst them Fundación Corona, to train vulnerable population groups in this subject.

## **CONDITIONS AND POSSIBILITIES OF WORK**

Given the labor conditions in the country, it is necessary that the occupational training projects include guidelines to ensure the productive placement of the women to be trained, otherwise this great training effort could be lost.

Keeping in mind some aspects of the psychosocial profiles of the companions recorded by Caminos Alternos, the JICA representative acknowledges three sectors that could give work to the companions of the demobilized, which are: 1) Private enterprises that could be a source of jobs for those younger women that would like to go to work outside the home; 2) the initiation or creation of their own business, individual or associated, for the older companions that want to continue within the home, and 3) the public sector for the companions that do not yet feel very secure and require protection from the State. The labor placement in the different occupational sectors can be done in different ways, as participants pointed out at the meeting.

According to the participants in the meeting, job opportunities can be provided in different occupational sectors and through different ways.

In the first place, the entities associated with the training project can create a support network to offer jobs to the women, made up by the businesses that are aware of the subject and can, furthermore, take steps with other firms of the public and private sectors for the hiring of companions that have received technical training.

In this regard, representatives of the CRO suggested that for the reincorporated and their companions there is a labor demand in the fields of surveillance and security and the clothing industry, reason for which it would be interesting to train them in these areas.

Another labor alternative proposed is related to the initiation and creation of small individual or associated businesses that, according to the needs of enterprises, work via outsourcing. In this case, it is also a priority to create a support network with business owners so as to guarantee the sale of the units produced.

Lastly, keeping in mind that the project will be developed in Bogota, it is important to work in coordination with the Mayors Office and with other local entities so as to generate opportunities for jobs within the official sector.

In this sense, the experiences that Fundacion Corona has had with vulnerable groups of population include not only the training but also the job placement. Among these experiences, some outstanding projects are: Maintenance of public spaces in collaboration with the IDR; washing and maintenance of aerial and subterranean tanks in collaboration with SENA and Acueducto of Bogota; the School of Arts and Crafts in Rafael Uribe Uribe and the different productive units that participate in outsourcing services.

## **V. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Briefly, the following is some of the information compiled in the study which we think relevant to the purposes of JICA and the cooperating entities:

- The companions of the individually reincorporated are, in their majority (80%), young people between the ages of 16 and 30.
- 45% of these women have children 4 years old and younger, who require the necessary guarantee of trustworthy care of their children while they participate in the job training.
- 77% of the companions live in common law marriage with the reincorporated, a common practice in our country. For this reason the informality of this union cannot be associated, in our case, to how solid or fragile the couples' relationship is.
- Approximately half of the companions live with a member of their extended family: 38% live with one or both parents and another important percentage (12%) live with a sibling.

- The majority of the companions of the demobilized that live in Bogota come from regions other than the Capital of the country. Although some of them would like to return to their place of origin, for security reasons they cannot do so, as their life or that of their companion would be at risk.
- The women and their spouses value the training and work opportunities offered in Bogota, and thus have plans for remaining in the Capital for some time. Furthermore, many of the companions have made positive relations with people of the community through their participation in some community activities.
- Thanks to the support of the Reintegration Program, the majority of the reincorporated are presently validating their formal education (primary or high school) and/or taking courses in technical training. On the contrary, around 90% of the companions are dedicated exclusively to the home and the majority has not had opportunities in labor training.
- Although the companions of the individuals reincorporated have had scarce opportunities in training, they have the basic schooling required for participation in said training, as 25% have graduated from high school, 35% have incomplete high school studies and 35% have primary school studies.
- The favorite areas for training and work of the companions of the reincorporated are: computer systems, qualified beauticians and dressmaking and design. Although to a lesser degree, they are also interested in nursing, teaching, baking, cooking and cattle farming.
- Some women prefer working at home independently or recurring to the creation of small associated businesses, while others prefer to be employed in public or private sector entities.
- The companions showed a strong desire to study and work, and to do so they have the backing of the family, although they also feel that they would have to solve matters such as the care of their younger children and earning enough money for enrollment fees and transportation.

## **MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

Throughout the report we have made detailed recommendations which we consider important for the success of a labor training project for companions of the demobilized. The following is a synthesis of those which we consider relevant for this purpose.

### **Preliminary Module**

In order that the labor training offered to the companions bear its best fruits, we consider it important to incorporate into the project a Preliminary Module to prepare the women so they can benefit from the training with confidence and taking the maximum advantage of it.



The following are the subjects which we consider fundamental to be included in the Primary Module (keeping in mind the information obtained during this study), which have been shown in great detail throughout this report.

- Acknowledge the interests, educational and occupational abilities of the companions (and women of the community who participate in the training).
- Reinforce their confidence in their capacities to study.
- Recuperate self-confidence concerning their work competitiveness.

The Preliminary Module could also include elements focused on the spouses so as to sensitize them on the importance of having the women trained and working in order to avoid future confrontations that may create obstacles during the implementation of the project.

Finally, it would be important to create another component for the trainees of the companions where they become aware of the main characteristics and needs of this population and, furthermore, they be given some tools for interacting with the women and for making their teaching efforts more efficient.

### **Care of the Children**

As many of the companions are women with small children, we consider it necessary to offer facilities for the care of the children. Some of the options are:

- The creation of nurseries for community mothers or fathers, with advise from ICBF or DABS.
- Measures aimed at placing the children in nurseries of the Capital District located in the areas where the women reside.

### **Participation of the Community**

It would be very important to involve the receiving community in this project, so as to fortify the links of the reincorporated and their families with their neighbors. Among others, we propose the following alternatives:

- Allow the women of the locality to participate not only in the specific components of the Preliminary Module, but also in the technical training that is given to the companions of the demobilized.
- Promote that the companions, by way of their productive projects, offer employment to the members of the community, sell them their products or offer their services.

### **Formation in abilities for the fulfillment of their work**

Keeping in mind that the training has as its goal the labor insertion of the companions, three aspects should be taken into account: Private sector, public sector and personal undertaking. Therefore, it is important that in accordance with the type of job chosen by the women (employment or personal undertaking), the technical training should include some of the following elements:

- Development of abilities for job search (e.g.: making a resume and presentation at job interviews).
- Strengthening their capacities for keeping a job (e.g.. Keeping the time schedule, following institutional norms).
- Forming associative strategies and business management.
- Help in the acquisition of the basic infrastructure to start their own business or develop the independent activity chosen (e.g. Small credits and donations).
- Follow up to the training so as to verify that the women have adapted in the fields of work for which they have been trained.

### **Work Placement of the Companions**

To make sure that the project is sustainable and that no false expectations are created in the companions, it is important to commit the entities of the public sector and the enterprises of the private sector, so as to offer real opportunities of employment and commercialization of the products made by the women.

**ANA LUCIA JARAMILLO**

**MARY BOHÓRQUEZ**

**ROSITA JARAMILLO**

### **Glossary of Entities and Organizations**

High Council for Social and Economic Reintegration of Individuals and Armed Groups: Government entities assigned to the Presidency of the Republic, responsible for the Reincorporation Program, both social and economic, of the armed persons or groups.

DABS: Departamento Administrativo de Bienestar Social del Distrito (Administrative Department of Social Welfare of the District). Entity that formulates policies in the Capital District (Bogota) for the social integration of the persons, families and communities, especially those that are at the highest poverty and vulnerability levels, and execute the actions necessary to promote prevention and protection of this population.

Fundacion Corona: This is a private, non-profit foundation that supports and finances incentives that contribute to fortify the institutional capacity of the Country in four strategic social sectors: education, health, business development and local and community development. This entity also participates in the training of the companions of the demobilized.

IDRD: Instituto Distrital de Recreacion y Deporte (Bogota's Institute for Recreation and Sports). This is an entity of the Capital District that promotes recreation, sport, and the good use of the parks for all the inhabitants of Bogota, especially the neediest groups.

JICA: Japan International Cooperation Agency, entity that supports the creation of the Labor Training Project for the companions of the demobilized.

Ministry of the Defense: Government entity in charge of national defense, to which demobilized persons of age ascribe after they depose their arms. They remain here for a short period of time and then are placed under the High Commissioner's Office for Reintegration.

SENA: Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (National Learning Service). This is an organization ascribed to the Ministry of Social Protection that offers free integral technical training through intermediate careers and basic courses in labor training. SENA is one of the entities that support the project of labor training of the companions of the reincorporated.

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**REINTEGRATING EX-COMBATANTS  
INTO CIVILIAN LIFE**

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE SUCCESS AND RISK  
FACTORS IN THE REINTEGRATION PROCESS  
AND POLICIES IN COLOMBIA**

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**Title:**            **Reintegrating Ex-combatants into Civilian Life**  
*An Analysis of the Success and Risk Factors in the Reintegration Process  
and Policies in Colombia*

**Author:**        **Marieke Denissen, Utrecht University**

**Date:**            **24 May 2007**

**Report Commissioned by the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Bogotá**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study analyzes the success and risk factors in the reintegration into civilian life of ex-combatants in Colombia and the reintegration policies of the High Council for the Social and Economic Reintegration of Disarmed People and Groups (ACR). Its purpose is to provide the Netherlands government, and in particular its embassy in Bogotá, with an evaluation of the possibilities to continue to support the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process in Colombia.

The DDR process with the United Auto Defense Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC) began in 2003 and since then more than 30,000 combatants have disarmed and demobilized. Along with the DDR process with the AUC, in recent years more than 10,000 combatants have deserted from the armed groups. The reintegration into civilian life of ex-combatants is often believed to be the major challenge in the overall process. It is therefore important to look at the factors that influence its success. The five factors distinguished in this study are 1) livelihood security, 2) the characteristics, needs, and capacities of the demobilized as a starting point, 3) the decentralization of the implementation of the reintegration policies, 4) the involvement of the community, and 5) the prevention of rearming and new recruitments.

### Livelihood security

One of the main problems in the reintegration process so far is that a large part of the demobilized has no livelihood security. Many depend on the monthly financial support of the government, some have temporary jobs, and according to the October 2006 figures of the ACR, less than a third work in the so-called productive projects. To bring about the economic independence of the demobilized and their families, the private sector must be encouraged to contract ex-combatants, the skills development of the demobilized should be linked to the needs of the local labor market, productive projects must be economically sustainable and should match the development policies of the region, and the demobilized have to be encouraged to start businesses together to increase their investment capital and to decrease their economic vulnerability.

### The characteristics, needs, and capacities of the demobilized as a starting point

'Psychosocial assistance' is a model that allows starting from the individual's characteristics, needs, and capacities. It is based on a relation of trust between the professional and the demobilized, and is about orientation, accompanying, therapy, and designing a life project with the demobilized. In this way, it is possible to make a more complete estimate of the elements necessary for reintegration into civilian life. Taking the characteristics, needs, and capacities of the demobilized as a starting point also implies the formulation of policies for specific groups, such as the middle commanders and child and women ex-combatants.

### Decentralization of the implementation of the reintegration policies

Reintegration at the local level is important because this is where the ex-combatants will have to find employment and live peacefully with their neighbors. The decentralization of the implementation of the reintegration policies does not imply the delegation of the process to the local authorities and institutions. It is a task that the national and local governments need to carry out jointly. The local authorities need to be responsible for the coordination of the process. So far, however, decentralization has been mainly about the installation of 29 service centers, the *Altas Consejerías Regionales* (ACRs), in the country, because in many cases the local authorities and institutions lack the capacity or the will to become involved in the reintegration process.

### Involvement of the community

In a DDR process, the focus must not only be on the demobilized combatants, but also on the communities that have suffered from violence and/or have received the demobilized. Excluding the communities from the services and benefits offered to the demobilized nourishes the idea that forming part of an armed group is rewarding. Furthermore, it is important to promote processes of reparation and reconciliation. So far, however, hardly any of such initiatives have taken place. In general, the communities are not informed about the reintegration process and the implications for their communities. Together with the local media, the demobilized themselves can play a role in informing and sensitizing the communities by telling their stories.

### Prevention of rearming and new recruitments

Due to the fact that guerrilla groups have not demobilized and new armed groups are emerging, entering an armed group is still an option mostly for young people. Therefore, the government needs to design a number of policies to prevent rearming and to dismantle the regional 'factories of war'. Access to education and the labor market must be improved and more leisure activities need to be created because this will reduce the attractiveness of belonging to an armed group. The ex-combatants need to be stimulated to tell their stories in the communities in order to show that the armed struggle also implies hardship and is not the right way. Female ex-combatants and the wives of ex-combatants need to start participating much more visibly as guarantors of the success of the reintegration of ex-combatants.

Since September 2006, the reintegration process has been coordinated and executed by the ACR. The ACR started to formulate new reintegration policies because the former interventions had not generated the desired results. The ACR distinguishes two areas of reintegration: social and economic. The social and economic reintegration process is an individual process; it starts with the individual profiles of the demobilized (that is, from their characteristics, needs, and capacities) and ends when the goals set between the ACR and the individual have been accomplished. Contrary to the earlier interventions, the demobilized has to live up to a number of agreements if he or she wants to continue to have access to the services. Recently, ACRs have been opened in 29 municipalities from which a professional team will attend the demobilized all over the country. Furthermore, the ACR is designing its policies to involve the communities in the reintegration process and to ensure that they also benefit from them.

The implementation of the reintegration policies has just started. Therefore, it remains to be seen how the implementation will proceed. Nevertheless, several observations can be made about the reintegration policies. The ACR has made significant progress in designing reintegration policies and has shown the political will to bring to reintegration process to a good end. However, policies in some areas, like communities, have not been well designed yet. Using individual profiles as a starting point is more likely to bring about successful

reintegration than the collective approach of earlier interventions. However, this is a costly method: it implies the hiring of many more professionals over the long period of time the reintegration process can take. Most of the psychologists have not received sufficient training on how to apply the psychosocial model of assistance and how to work with the population of demobilized combatants. Apart from exceptions like Medellín and Bogotá, to date, the decentralization of the reintegration policies is carried out only through the ACRs. As yet, there are no special policies for middle commanders, child and women ex-combatants, as well as no special policies to prevent new recruitments by the armed groups that have not demobilized or have emerged after the demobilization of the AUC.

# 1 INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT, OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS<sup>1</sup>

The aim of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process with the United Auto Defense Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC) that began in 2003, is to eliminate this paramilitary group as an armed actor in Colombian society. The initiative is important for numerous reasons, but at the same time is politically and socially sensitive and entails high risks. Because the phases of disarmament and demobilization have been concluded, at this moment especially the reintegration into civilian life of more than 30,000 ex-combatants is of crucial importance for the long-term success of the peace process. The Colombian government and part of the international community recognize this challenge.

Building on earlier DDR experiences with deserters of armed groups (the so-called individually demobilized), the Colombian government created the High Council for the Social and Economic Reintegration of Disarmed People and Groups (ACR) in September 2006.<sup>2</sup> Financial, political, and technical support from the international community is very important in order to bring the reintegration process to a good conclusion. In this context, it is essential to gain insight into the factors that influence the success of the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life, not only for the long-term prospects for peace and social reconstruction, but also for the constructive involvement of the donors who are willing to invest in the DDR process.

The fact that peace agreements have been signed with only one armed actor, without the guerrilla groups National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, ELN) and Colombian Armed Revolutionary Forces (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*,

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<sup>1</sup> This study has been made possible by the IS Academy, a cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs / DEK and Utrecht University / Department of Cultural Anthropology. The author of this report would like to take the opportunity to thank the IS Academy for funding this study. The author also wishes to thank Dr. Kees Koonings and Drs. Ralph Rozema for their useful comments on earlier versions of the report. Furthermore, the author is thankful to the MAPP/OEA for organizing several interesting visits to different regions in Colombia.

<sup>2</sup> Previously, the Program for the Reincorporation into Civilian Life (PRVC) was responsible for the reintegration process. See Chapter 3 for more details.

FARC at the negotiation table, makes the DDR process in Colombia more challenging compared to countries where such agreements were signed with all armed actors. One of the major challenges is, for instance, the continued recruiting of mostly young people by the armed groups that have not yet demobilized. However, compared to other countries, Colombia has several advantages in terms of bringing the reintegration of ex-combatants to a good end. Colombia is ranked a medium human development country (on the Human Development Index, HDI) with relatively strong national state institutions. In addition, the number of reintegrating ex-combatants is relatively low compared to countries like Sierra Leone and Ethiopia (respectively, 72,500 and 509,200).

The legal framework for the collective demobilisations is the Justice and Peace Law (Law 975), passed in 2005 and amended by the Constitutional Court of Colombia in 2006. The law was designed to reconstruct the truth about the war crimes of the paramilitaries by offering a maximum punishment of eight years in prison. The law establishes that the victims have the right to reparation of the harm suffered, namely through restitution, compensation, and rehabilitation. Hence, the law prevents full amnesty for the war crimes committed and establishes a juridical framework for repairing the victims of the conflict. The passing of this law increased the legitimacy of the DDR process because the equilibrium between victims - victimizers and reintegration – reconciliation, formerly considered off balance, was restored to some extent.<sup>3</sup>

Even though part of the international community (among others, the Netherlands, Japanese, Swedish, Canadian and Italian governments, the European Commission, USAID, and UNICEF) supports the DDR process with the AUC, the Colombian process has received very little support compared to countries like Angola, Afghanistan, and Mozambique. Whereas the external financial support in these countries was respectively \$5,498, \$2,900

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<sup>3</sup> The law also ordered the creation of the National Commission of Reparation and Reconciliation (CNNR), which is made up of representatives of the National government, civil society and organizations of victims. The functions of the commission are, among others, to make recommendations on collective reparation policies to the government, to guarantee the participation of the victims in the juridical processes, and to coordinate the activity of the regional commissions for the restitution of goods.

and \$5,030 per capita, in Colombia it was only \$263.<sup>4</sup> The motives for the reticence of the international community to invest in the DDR process in Colombia are the fact that it is a partial peace process, the extremely bad reputation of the AUC due to the many massacres and its involvement in the drug trade, and that Colombia has resources of its own.

The Netherlands involvement in the peace process in Colombia consists of supporting, among others, the Mission to Support the Peace Process of the Organization of American States (MAPP/OEA); the creation of three Centers of Orientation and Opportunities (Netherlands CROs), two in Bogotá and one in Medellín, to assist individually demobilized young people in their reintegration into civilian life; and the institutional strengthening of the National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation (CNNR). The Netherlands support has increased the legitimacy of the process and the recognition among other international donors that political, financial, and technical support is needed. Additionally, the model of psychosocial assistance (see 2.3.1 for additional details), as put into practice by the Netherlands CROs, has been widely recognized as a useful model for the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life and, in effect, is being applied largely in the same manner by the ACR at present.

To date, the Netherlands support to the reintegration process has focused on the individually demobilized combatants. The objective of this study is to provide the Netherlands government, and in particular its embassy in Bogotá, with an evaluation of success and risk factors in the reintegration process of ex-combatants into civilian life and the possibilities of supporting not only the process of individually demobilized combatants, but also of those who have demobilized as a group, the AUC. The Terms of Reference requested answers to the following three questions:

- What are the success factors in the reintegration of demobilized combatants into civilian life?

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<sup>4</sup> Powerpoint Presentation "Diagnóstico Programa para la Reincorporación a la Vida Civil", ACR, October 2006.



- What are the risks and limitations in the reintegration process of demobilized combatants?
- What are the reintegration policies of the ACR and what may be expected from the process of their implementation?

Subquestions that result from the above questions are:

- What can be done to bring about the economic reintegration of ex-combatants in a country where about half the population is poor and 12% unemployed?
- To what extent do child and women ex-combatants and middle commanders need special treatment and benefits?
- What can be done to decentralize the implementation of the reintegration policies to the local authorities?
- What can be done to involve the communities in the reintegration process and to promote processes of reconciliation between former combatants and the communities?
- What can be done to prevent ex-combatants from taking up arms again, entering criminal organizations, and using their old networks for organized crime?

The main sources of information for this report have been conversations and interviews with representatives of ACR, MAPP/OEA, CNNR, IOM, UNOCHA, Programa Paz y Reconciliación in Medellín and Centro Mundial de Investigación y Capacitación para la Solución de Conflictos, academics, journalists, members of non-governmental organizations (Redepaz, Indepaz, Instituto Popular de Capacitación, Cooperación Región, Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris), think tanks like Fundación Ideas para la Paz, Centro de Recursos para el Análisis del Conflicto, International Crisis Group and Fundación Seguridad y Democracia, and about 15 demobilized combatants.<sup>5</sup> In addition, visits to

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<sup>5</sup> The research and the writing of this report took place at the time (February – May 2007) when the course of the reintegration process was subject to heavy public debates. This was primarily due to a lack of clarity about the plans of the ACR which was still in the process of designing the reintegration policies. This led to rumors within civil society, among others, about what was going to happen and also to much criticism about the long time the design of the reintegration policies was taking. Second, it was also during this period (and the previous months) that the reach of the *parapolitica* (the paramilitary penetration in politics), and the

Medellín, Montería, Valledupar, Santa Marta, Apartadó and Riosucio, the last five organized by the MAPP/OEA, gave more insight into the reintegration process at the local level. Furthermore, the author of this report attended several workshops for ex-combatants and seminars.

The report starts in Chapter 2 with an analysis of the success and risk factors in the reintegration process. Following that, Chapter 3 examines the policies of the ACR and their implementation in the Colombian regions. Chapter 4 offers a number of recommendations to the Netherlands government, particularly to its embassy in Bogotá, regarding possible ways of continuing to support the DDR process in Colombia in general, and the reintegration process in particular.

Finally, it needs to be emphasized that the arguments and views in this report are solely those of the author of the report and do not necessarily represent those of the Netherlands government or the Netherlands embassy in Bogotá.

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rearming of paramilitary groups and the emergence of new groups in the regions became widely known. Due to the conjuncture of the moment of research, part of the research data and analysis are perhaps only valid for a relatively short lapse of time.

## 2 SUCCESS AND RISK FACTORS IN THE REINTEGRATION PROCESS OF EX-COMBATANTS

The reintegration into civilian life of ex-combatants is often believed to be the major challenge of the DDR process. Therefore, it is important to look at the success and risk factors in the reintegration process. This chapter consists of two parts. Firstly, some general observations about the reintegration process will be made in Section 2.1. Secondly, in the Sections 2.2 to 2.6, the necessary ingredients for a successful reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life will be defined. Before elaborating on the observations and ingredients of successful reintegration, it needs to be emphasized that reintegration requires a set of coherent policies instead of the culmination of a number of reintegration projects.

### 2.1 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

#### 2.1.1 Definition of 'successful reintegration'

Clarification about the meaning of 'successful reintegration' is needed prior to the study of its ingredients. Successful reintegration is about transforming formerly armed actors into citizens and giving them the opportunity to participate in civilian life with the rights and obligations implied in the exercise of citizenship.

The ACR distinguishes the following three levels of reintegration: psychological, civil, and professional. On the psychological level, the person needs to be autonomous, with a concrete life project, ethical values and a social (and legal) network. On the civil level, the person needs to participate in public life, make use of public services, and know his or her rights and obligations as a citizen. On the professional level, the person needs to know his or her weaknesses and capacities and to show the will to participate in the labor market with a clear and sustainable economic project.

In theory, the definitions of successful reintegration make sense. However, in practice and due to the nature of Colombian reality, part of the ex-combatants will be reintegrated into poverty and exclusion. Moreover, the definitions have their limitations; there are too many

regional differences to define a clear set of factors that will have a positive outcome everywhere.

### **2.1.2 How to convince the combatants to take part in the DDR process**

When studying successful reintegration, it is essential to have a clear idea of what to offer the ex-combatants to convince them of the advantages of civil life. From an economic viewpoint, it will be hard to offer them the same economic level they had when they were combatants. Additionally, the advantages of the 'culture of war', with its status and easy access to weapons and women, are difficult to equal.<sup>6</sup> In interviews, several ex-combatants expressed their fears that their former enemies in war could come to kill them. So, even though economic and social benefits are important in the reintegration process, the public force also needs to guarantee security to the demobilized.

### **2.1.3 Individually and collectively demobilized combatants**

In studying of the ingredients of successful reintegration in Colombia, it is useful to take a look at the similar and dissimilar characteristics of individually and collectively demobilized combatants. The individually demobilized have decided themselves to leave the armed group; they are deserters. In general, this implies a strong will to be reintegrated into civilian life, a consideration that was confirmed in the conversations of this author with several of them. They no longer belong to or have contact with the armed structures and, therefore, the likelihood of rearming is small. Another distinctive feature is that a large part of the individually demobilized chooses to stay in the big cities, mainly due to safety reasons.

In contrast, the collectively demobilized combatants demobilize because they received the order to do so from their chiefs. The advantages of belonging to an armed group (a salary and status, for instance) are less easily compensated by a reintegration package offered by the state. In these cases, it is essential to pay much more attention to bringing about a change of mentality from war to civilian life. Besides, the collectively demobilized more

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<sup>6</sup> However, mostly for lower-rank paramilitary soldiers, the economic and 'culture of war' advantages do not compensate the hardship and insecurity of war; they are happy to be able to return to their families and live a peaceful life.

often maintain ties with the former armed structures (now, supposedly, unarmed structures). Additionally, reintegration into a society where the conflict continues is complex because the armed groups are on the look-out for new recruits (see 2.6). Furthermore, in contrast to the individually demobilized, the collectively demobilized generally return to the regions where they came from or formed part of the armed group.

Although for the understanding of the developments within the reintegration process it is important to consider the similarities and differences between the two groups, the position held in this report is that the same reintegration model is applicable to both the individually and collectively demobilized when sufficient attention is paid to the individual and to individual decisions in the case of the collectively demobilized. The fact that the ACR has abolished the different programs for individually and collectively demobilized combatants (see 3.2 for more details) demonstrates that the ACR is of the same opinion.

## **2.2 LIVELIHOOD SECURITY**

So far, one of the major problems in the reintegration process is that a large part of the demobilized has no livelihood security. According to ACR October 2006 figures, 69,2% had no economic productive project<sup>7</sup>, for instance (no numbers are available for demobilized with a stable job). In addition, many of the existing productive projects have proved to be economically unsustainable. Almost all the demobilized interviewed for this report depended on the monthly financial support (between 187 and 314 euros for the individually demobilized and 125 euros for the collectively demobilized). When the financial support ends after 24 months (for the individually demobilized) or 18 (for the collectively demobilized), they will encounter great difficulties in supporting their families.<sup>8</sup> Part of them has temporary jobs as driving bike taxis, selling mobile minutes, or

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<sup>7</sup> The PRVC wanted to bring about economic reintegration of ex-combatants through 'productive projects', cacao and yuca, for instance, with the aim of providing a job to large numbers of demobilized. This method, however, failed to bring about their economic reintegration, as is evidenced by the small number of demobilized actually working in productive projects. The reasons are, among others, that the projects were not sustainable, the demobilized were too inexperienced, and there was not sufficient technical support or control.

<sup>8</sup> With the new reintegration policies of the ACR, the amount and duration of the financial support will also depend on the situation of each demobilized. Thus, the situation sketched here will no longer exist. In addition, in Medellín the demobilized receive four years of financial support.

serving in restaurants, for instance, but in most cases they prefer not to tell about their life as former combatants.<sup>9</sup>

In this context, one of the major challenges of the reintegration process is to bring about the economic independence of the demobilized and their families. A number of strategies need to be implemented to achieve this.

First of all, the willingness and trust of the private sector to contract ex-combatants need to be increased. Companies can be motivated by being offered a subsidy for each demobilized they contract. Furthermore, the ACR should monitor the developments of the demobilized in the companies so that the companies feel they are not left alone in case of difficulties.

Second, the skills development of the demobilized must be linked to the needs of the labor market in the regions. So far, ex-combatants have received technical training (in computers, for instance) that is not in accordance with the labor demands of the region to which they return.

Third, the productive projects need to be economically sustainable over time and also match the development policies of the region. Here, the technical support of the *Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje* (SENA), for instance, the coordination between the local institutions, and the close monitoring of the productive projects are important. Moreover, most productive projects are in the countryside. Whereas a large part of the demobilized wants to stay in the cities, for safety reasons, among others, more efforts need to be made in the designing of productive projects in urban areas.

Fourth, in the case of ex-combatants who want to start their own business, it is wise to encourage them to join hands and start businesses together. By working together, like in a cooperative, they have a larger capital to invest and are less vulnerable economically. However, one of the risks here is that in this manner the ex-combatants stay within their

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<sup>9</sup> In some regions, however, the former paramilitary soldiers are received as heroes because they have driven away the guerrilla.

former trusted circle instead of mingling with other members of the community as well. Additionally, their business may be stigmatized more easily as belonging to former combatants.

## **2.3 THE CHARACTERISTICS, NEEDS, AND CAPACITIES OF THE DEMOBILIZED AS A STARTING POINT**

### **2.3.1 Psychosocial assistance**

It is important to pay attention to the individual, that is, to his or her characteristics, needs, and capacities for the reintegration process to be successful. 'Psychosocial assistance' is a model of assistance that starts with the individual. Psychosocial assistance is a broad approach that offers help and services based on a relation of trust between the professional and the demobilized. It is among other things about orientation, accompanying, therapy and designing a life project, and has a transversal character that cuts across all the services offered to the demobilized. An important aspect of psychosocial assistance are the visits to the homes of the demobilized; this is when the professional can truly assess the progress of the reintegration process. The Netherlands CROs, for instance, have applied the model of psychosocial assistance in this manner.

When starting from the individual's characteristics, needs, and capacities, every reintegration process has its own features. In this way, it is possible to make a more complete estimate of the elements necessary for reintegration into civilian life. Some ex-combatants explained in interviews, for instance, that even though they thought the workshops they had attended were useful, they also felt they were too many and too massive. In addition, demobilized with specific problems (such as drug addiction, behavioral problems, or relational problems with their husband or wife) can receive special attention.

Furthermore, for reintegration to be successful a change of mentality is necessary; the demobilized need to realize that they encounter the same difficulties as millions of other Colombians in economically supporting themselves and that the benefits and services have

a temporary character. After all, the ultimate goal is to encourage the ex-combatants to become independent self-supporting citizens. However, without the right incentives, the DDR process may create an environment in which the demobilized are only stimulated to hold out their hands. Therefore, clarity regarding the end of the reintegration process of each individual ex-combatant is imperative. Extending the reintegration process with new benefits and services, just as it happened after the demobilization of several guerrilla groups in the early 1990s, and also nowadays, to a certain extent, with the ex-combatants of the AUC (see the next chapter for more details), may be counterproductive because it does not encourage the ex-combatants to become self-supporting. Hence, it must be clear until what moment someone is 'demobilized' and from what moment, a 'citizen'. The psychosocial model of assistance must be directed at bringing about such a change of mentality.

However, approaching the demobilized through psychosocial assistance as an individual does not mean that the only focus should be on him or her. On the contrary; a reintegration process that does not include the victims and communities of return is too limited and creates feelings of resentment among these groups (see 2.5).

### 2.3.2 Middle commanders

The middle commanders are the administrative levels of an armed group. They are the ones who maintain the discipline and morale of the troop and ensure the finances of the group. If they decide to start a peace process, the organization will follow.<sup>10</sup> Taking into account their importance for the viability of the armed group, many voices around the world emphasize the need for special treatment for the middle commanders in the DDR process. For the middle commanders to be offered the same status and beneficiaries as their troops could be humiliating. They have been leaders and will not easily give up this position. The middle commanders are the most likely ones to start rearming again (they have the knowledge to do so) and become the future leaders of armed groups if the peace process does not live up to their expectations. Therefore, it is important to consider the middle

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<sup>10</sup> See the definition of middle commanders in *Siguiendo el Conflicto* 26, August 2005, Fundación Ideas para la Paz.



commanders as a special group with different needs, and to design policies through which their qualities (of leadership, for instance) can be of use in civilian life. At the same time, however, they have larger responsibilities concerning war crimes and need to account for them. The middle commanders that have submitted to the Justice and Peace Law will first have to wait for the legal proceedings to end and possibly serve a sentence before they can carry out specific tasks that contribute to reintegration and reconciliation.

Although scholarly literature points out the importance of special programs for middle commanders, little is known about what such programs should contain. Therefore, before designing specific policies for middle commanders, much more research on their needs and capacities must be conducted. Despite the minimal availability of academic studies, several observations can be made.

Middle commanders can play a fundamental role in sensitizing and convincing ex-combatants to take part and continue in the reintegration process. In a context like this, they maintain their role as leaders, which for them is probably more satisfying. However, leadership in legality requires different characteristics and capacities from those of leadership in war. Therefore, the former leaders in war need to receive training (in the SENA, Centro Mundial de Investigación y Capacitación para la Solución de Conflictos or in a university, for instance) on how to adapt their qualities of leadership to a context where legal norms and values are the rule.

The middle commanders can operate as spokespersons for the demobilized and can communicate their ideas and suggestions to the ACR, for instance. They can also function as 'social communicators' by informing the ex-combatants about new plans of the ACR. This is important because many ex-combatants are not well informed on what is going to happen in the near future. Likewise, many of them do not seem to understand the implications of having submitted (or not) to the Justice and Peace Law. By organizing workshops to bring the middle commanders up to date on all these issues, many of the present insecurities and frustrations they experience could disappear.

### 2.3.3 Child and women ex-combatants

Scholarly literature emphasizes the importance of taking into account the specific needs of child and women ex-combatants. Nevertheless, they should not be considered homogeneous groups. In these cases, individual psychosocial assistance is also important. At present, however, in Colombia not much is known about their specific needs; on this topic too, much more academic research is needed. Here only a few observations are made.

The reintegration into civilian life of child combatants is about resuming the interrupted process of learning and socialization in many aspects: education, rules and norms, showing affection, and so on. Considering their background, child combatants must receive special assistance to cope with the difficulties of civilian life. They need to be reunited with their families and offered education, and the immediate need for work should be delayed.<sup>11</sup> In addition, they must be offered recreational activities in order to learn how to be child.

For women ex-combatants to have the same opportunities as their male associates, it is important to include a gender perspective in the reintegration process. Women may have different education, work and health needs which must be addressed. In addition, and due to the social perception of the place of women, they run the risk of becoming more stigmatized than men upon returning to their communities. Assisting women to become experts in areas not traditionally associated with women's peace-building can help them improve their social and political position.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, special economic productive projects, such as establishing a beauty salon or a restaurant, need to be designed for female ex-combatants in Colombia.

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<sup>11</sup> Creative Associates International, Inc. (2001) Planning Educational Response Strategies for the Reintegration of Demobilized Child Soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo. <http://www.beps.net/publications/DEMobilized%20CHILD%20SOLDIERS.PDF>

<sup>12</sup> Farr, V. (2003) The importance of a gender perspective to successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. Disarmament forum. <http://womenwarpeace.org/issues/ddr/vanessa%20UNIDIR%20article.pdf>

## 2.4 DECENTRALIZATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REINTEGRATION POLICIES

Reintegration at the local level is important because this is where the ex-combatants will have to find employment and live peacefully with their neighbors. However, one of the main challenges of the reintegration process and policies is to decentralize their implementation into the hands of the local authorities and institutions. This does not imply the delegation of the reintegration process to the local authorities and institutions; it is a task that the national and local governments need to carry out jointly. The local authorities should be responsible for the coordination of the process, in cooperation with the local service of the ACR (the *Altas Consejerías Regionales*, see 3.2), the local civil society, the health care system, and the private sector, among others. But in Colombia, where local authorities and institutions are generally believed to be weak and poor, local reintegration of ex-combatants faces a number of limitations.

Medellín and Bogotá are considered relative success stories in terms of reintegrating ex-combatants.<sup>13</sup> The majority is studying or working, and examples of the demobilized ending up in criminality are few. These achievements are mainly due to the local municipalities that undertook the responsibility of initiating their own reintegration policies, partly because they realized that the reintegration policies of the National government would not bring the cities the desired results. That Medellín and Bogotá were able to design their own policies has to do, for the most part, with the fact that they are relatively prosperous and institutionally strong municipalities.

Other municipalities in the country, however, show a different panorama. In the first place, the negotiations and DDR process so far have been mainly an affair of the national institutions. As one member of the CNNR explained, a week before the collective demobilization of the paramilitary group of the region, the High Commissioner of Peace sent an official communication to inform the mayor of the municipality where it was going to take place. The logistics were placed in the hands of the national authorities. The mayor

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<sup>13</sup> The difference between the two cities is that in Medellín, groups demobilized collectively; and in Bogotá, the program mainly attends individually demobilized. This difference makes it impossible to compare all aspects of the program.

and the governor of the region were present and made their speeches during the ceremony, but this was the only contribution they were able to make: the local authorities were never involved in the planning and implementation of the process. Consequently, after the demobilization, the local authorities did not know what to do with the large number of demobilized people, and the will to become involved was minimal because they felt they were being excluded from the process.

Second, the reintegration process at the local level cuts across weak institutional structures, lack of resources and knowledge, and poor or absent community services. The local authorities will not receive resources from the ACR to invest in the reintegration process, but are left on their own. In the regions, there is also a lack of professionals to assist the demobilized in their reintegration. Additionally, in a number of communities there is no adult education. The SENA offers courses for adults, but only with a minimum number of participants often not feasible to reach. Consequently, for the local reintegration process to be successful, the strengthening of local institutions by means of a more direct support from the National government, the ACR, and the international community is indispensable.

Even though the reintegration process will come across difficulties at the local level, this is not a sufficient reason for centralizing and implementing the process solely from Bogotá. As one official of the ACR said "it would be paternalistic to say that they [the local authorities] can not do it. They have to learn, even though this is a long and slow process. The reintegration process must become a problem common to all of us, not only to the National government and the demobilized".

## **2.5 INVOLVEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY**

In the first phase of the DDR process, the focus is on the demobilized. In a next phase however, this focus should be broadened to encompass the communities that have suffered from violence and/or have received the demobilized. Among the general population, the benefits and services the demobilized receive generate feelings of exclusion and the idea that forming part of an armed group pays, a familiar problem in other DDR processes. Not taking the communities and victims into account may lead to rejection to the reintegration

of the demobilized in their communities. Furthermore, it is essential to pay attention to justice, reparation, and reconciliation. The rebuilding of social capital in the communities may fail without processes of justice, reparation, and reconciliation. Up to now, however, relations between ex-combatants and the receiving community, including the direct victims of the conflict, have been tense. In interviews, the demobilized expressed that they felt excluded from the community where they lived. Aside from some recreational activities, hardly any initiatives to promote reconciliation have taken place.

The communities first need to be informed about the peace and reintegration process if they are to become involved. The people in the regions are not familiar with the developments in the overall process and the implications for their communities. They see demobilized combatants arriving in their villages and simultaneously hear about new armed groups operating in the area. Yet, they do not know about the government plans concerning reintegration, for instance. The local media can play an important role in informing and consequently sensitizing the communities on the importance of living peacefully together to improve the quality of life. The demobilized themselves should also be encouraged to tell their stories in the communities, in order to gain more acceptance among the population, as well as to undertake tasks like street and river cleaning, that are beneficial to communities. In some cases, such reparatory activities have taken place, but until now they are the exception rather than the rule. Furthermore, the police and military need to protect the communities from guerrilla groups that might attempt to occupy the territories that were previously controlled by the paramilitaries. Still, although the public force has regained part of the territory, its presence in the rural areas is too little.

Second, the communities should benefit from the peace process in general, and also from the reintegration process in particular. Up to now, only the demobilized have received financial support, education, access to health care, and psychosocial workshops. These benefits, at least to some extent and, in some cases, with a symbolic character, should also be made available to the communities. One of such initiatives is the leadership course of the MAPP/OEA in Apartadó. Fifteen ex-combatants and fifteen people of the community

will jointly follow courses in conflict resolution and the qualities required for exercising leadership, for instance.

## 2.6 PREVENTION OF REARMING AND NEW RECRUITMENTS

In recent times, ex-combatants have increasingly received offers to join armed groups. This increase can be explained by the strengthening in number and force of armed groups in several regions.<sup>14</sup> A number of reasons contribute to the phenomenon of rearming<sup>15</sup> in Colombia.

First of all, due to criticism on the course of the process from civil society, political parties, and international community, the government had to take measures that ran counter to the agreements with the AUC and put the relations with them under pressure. The criticism made reference, for instance, to the large amount of freedom the paramilitary chiefs enjoyed while being submitted to the Justice and Peace Law. This, plus the amendment to the Justice and Peace Law by the Constitutional Court which states that privileged sites for serving prison terms would no longer be allowed, led in 2006 to their imprisonment. One interviewee explained that the middle commanders observe how the agreements are not being lived up to by the government. They feel the DDR process will not bring the desired results and decide to take up arms again.

Second, despite the demobilization of the AUC, the paramilitarism phenomenon has not disappeared; in some areas, former paramilitaries, now plain-clothed and unarmed, continue to exercise their economic and political power. Some groups have not demobilized, and in other regions, the power vacuum created by the demobilization of the

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<sup>14</sup> The MAPP/OEA has verified the existence of rearming in the following regions: Guajira, Cesar, Atlántico, Norte de Santander, Bolívar, Córdoba, Tolima, Casanare, Caquetá and Nariño (8<sup>th</sup> Report, 14 February 2007)

<sup>15</sup> In the debate on rearming, three groups can be distinguished. First of all, the so-called 'dissidents of the negotiation' like Vicente Castaño who are held responsible for rearming new (paramilitary) groups. Secondly, individuals, foremost the demobilized middle commanders of the AUC, who are said to have taken over part of the power and coercion structures of the AUC. Third, rearming is about 'emerging groups' (*bundas emergentes*), new armed groups fighting over parts of Colombian territory, and the drug trade networks. Especially the ex-combatants who have not submitted to the Justice and Peace Law form a risk group for rearming. The calculations on the number of rearming ex-combatants range from 1300 (the Police), to 3000 / 4000 (MAPP/OEA), to 5000 (former paramilitary chief Salvatore Mancuso), to 9000 (some non-governmental organizations).

AUC has not been filled by the public force. Instead, other armed groups took the opportunity to fill this gap. In line with the above, and although the drug trade is not the main cause of rearming, it does guarantee the (new) groups the ability to finance their armed activities.

Hence, entering an armed group is still an option mostly for the young people in the regions. For a successful reintegration of ex-combatants, the government needs to design a number of policies to prevent rearming and to dismantle these regional 'factories of war'.

First of all, a clear focus on the prevention of new recruitments is indispensable. Young people especially are sensitive to the benefits war can bring when they are socially and economically excluded. Improving access to education and the labor market will reduce the attractiveness of belonging to an armed group.

Second, young people in the regions often do not have sufficient leisure activities. Becoming part of an armed group might be more attractive to young people when they are bored. The creation of sports facilities and libraries, for instance, can help reduce the attractiveness of war.

Third, the demobilized themselves can play an essential role in preventing new recruitments; they need to be stimulated to tell their stories in the communities in order to show that the armed struggle also means hardship and is not the right way.

Fourth, female ex-combatants and the wives of ex-combatants have not visibly and actively taken part in the reintegration process as yet. However, several interviewees emphasized the importance of their participation as guarantors of the success of the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life. They can convince their husbands that staying at home, where they are needed, is preferable to fighting in the mountains.

### **3 REINTEGRATION POLICIES: THE HIGH COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION OF DISARMED PEOPLE AND GROUPS (ACR)**

In many peace accords, only few clear agreements on the reintegration of ex-combatants are inserted. Most of times, reintegration policies are designed gradually, a fact that entails the risk of overlooking necessary aspects and postponing their effective implementation. In Colombia this was not different: reintegration policies were drawn little by little. This chapter will take a lengthier look at these reintegration policies. Firstly, in Section 3.1, the reintegration process up to the creation of ACR in September 2006 will be described briefly. Secondly, the main elements of the reintegration policy of the ACR will be explained in Section 3.2. Finally, in Section 3.3, some observations about the reintegration policy of the ACR will be made.

#### **3.1 THE REINTEGRATION PROCESS BEFORE THE CREATION OF THE ACR**

Until September 2006, the DDR process was organized and executed by the several state entities, among others, the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Justice (through the Program for the Reincorporation into Civilian Life, PRVC), and the Ministry of Defense. From September 2006 onwards, the process has been coordinated and executed by the High Council for the Social and Economic Reintegration of Disarmed People and Groups (ACR), an entity created within the Administrative Department of the Presidency. This change has been important; it acknowledges on the part of the government the need for a different reintegration approach with better coordination among institutions and more international support.

What has happened in terms of reintegration of ex-combatants since the first demobilizations in 2003? In general terms, the PRVC has not been able to offer an integral package of services to a majority of the ex-combatants. The services consisted of financial support, healthcare, psychosocial assistance, education and generation of income



(employment and productive projects). An evaluation of the PRVC by the ACR in October 2006 showed that 31% of the collectively demobilized received no financial support, 55% had no access to subsidized health care, 66% received no psychosocial assistance, 55.7% was not studying, and 59.8% was not working or participating in a productive project.<sup>16</sup> The reasons that explain why the services of the PRVC have not reached a large part of the demobilized have to do, among others, with the character of the design and implementation of the reintegration policies; prior to this, there was no plan, no clear idea of how to design and implement reintegration policies, and this led to a lot of improvisation and 'learning by doing'.

Before the creation of the ACR, the demobilized were offered benefits in the abovementioned areas during a period of 18 months (for the collectively demobilized) or 24 months (for the individually demobilized). The reintegration process was mostly a collective process; most benefits were the same for everybody. However, when the terms proved insufficient to consolidate the reintegration process, new terms were established.

### **3.2 THE REINTEGRATION POLICIES OF THE ACR**

First of all, according to Decree 3043 (2006) the functions of the ACR are to design, execute, and evaluate state policies directed at the social and economic reintegration of persons or armed groups who demobilize individually or collectively, in coordination with the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Justice, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace. Furthermore, the task of the ACR is to receive and administer the resources and funds for the financing of the ACR and the plans and projects for social and economic reintegration. According to the Decree, reintegration is understood as the sum of the processes associated with reinsertion, reincorporation, and social and economic stabilization of (individually and collectively) demobilized minors and adults.

Second, the ACR distinguishes two areas of reintegration: social and economic. Social reintegration covers psychosocial assistance, education, health, and financial support. Each

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<sup>16</sup> PowerPoint Presentation "Diagnóstico Programa para la Reincorporación a la Vida Civil", ACR October 2006.

psychologist helps 120 demobilized people in their life project; in education, each professional guides 500 demobilized people; and in health care each professional assists 10,000 demobilized people. Economic reintegration involves temporary (mostly public) jobs during the first period, which are followed by the design of business plans, productive projects, and the generation of employment opportunities. To stimulate the responsibility of the demobilized, the idea is to give them a low-interest loan instead of a gift (as has been the case so far). The demobilized are no longer expected to become businessmen, as was the objective of the former reintegration program. It turned out that most of them do not have the skills to become businessmen, so now the focus is on talking to the private sector about their societal responsibility and convincing the businessmen to create jobs for the demobilized. The main goal is to ensure economic sustainability.

Third, the social and economic reintegration process is an individual process; it takes the individual profiles of the demobilized as a starting point. Their characteristics, needs, and capacities determine the process (the 'life project'), and the process ends when the goals set between the ACR and the individual have been accomplished. Thus, different processes and benefits for the individually and the collectively demobilized no longer exist. The 'contract' between the individual and the ACR implies a number of rights, and also obligations; the demobilized does not have access to the services if he or she does not live up to the contract.

Fourth, the ACR is opening service centers, *Altas Consejerías Regionales* (ACRs), in 29 municipalities in the country in order to decentralize the reintegration process.<sup>17</sup> The psychologists in the ACRs are responsible for planning a life project with the demobilized and following their developments closely. In addition, there will be a professional team responsible for education, health care, and income generation. Beginning with the view that each region has its own characteristics, the centers need to adapt their services to the needs and characteristics of the region.

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<sup>17</sup> The objective is to have the ACRs functioning before 22 May 2007.

Fifth, the ACR is designing its policies to involve the communities in the reintegration process and to ensure that they also benefit from it. The objective is to create a culture of legality, to reinstate social capital, to fortify spaces of interchange between the different social actors, and to restore trust between the members of the community and the state. To achieve this, the ACR has devised two strategies: citizen projects and symbolic activities.

### **3.3 OBSERVATIONS ON THE REINTEGRATION POLICIES OF THE ACR**

Some observations on the reintegration policies of the ACR are worth mentioning. First of all, the ACR has made significant progress in designing reintegration policies and has shown the political will to bring the reintegration process to a good end. However, since the phase of policy design was concluded only recently, it remains to be seen in the forthcoming period if and to what extent and how the policies are implemented. In addition, policies in some areas, like communities, have not yet been designed well. It remains unclear what the ACR means by the term 'community' (the receiving community, the victims, the local authorities, the families of the demobilized, or all these groups) and what kind of activities it has in view to restore the balance between benefits for victims and victimizers and to stimulate processes of reconciliation. In this area ACR and CNNR could join hands, but so far the cooperation has been limited.

Second, using individual profiles as a starting point is more likely to bring about the successful reintegration of the demobilized than the former group approach. Nevertheless, the individual approach is costly; it implies the hiring of many more professionals and the reintegration processes can take much longer than the former two years. In addition, most of the psychologists have not received sufficient training on how to apply the psychosocial model of assistance and how to work with the population of demobilized combatants.

Third, even though the objective of the ACR is that the demobilized develop into independent self-supporting citizens, the opposite may turn out to be true. The fact that the reintegration process can take a long time may lead to the dependence of the demobilized upon the state. In interviews, the demobilized expressed their expectation that the

government take care of them, as promised. Until now, there have not been sufficient incentives for the demobilized to start to make a living on their own, for instance.

Fourth, as was also discussed in the previous chapter, the decentralization of the reintegration process implies the involvement of the local authorities. Even though the ACR recognizes that participation of the local authorities in the implementation of the reintegration politics is central to its success, the question of whether the local institutional structures are capable and willing to carry out this task must be raised. So far, decentralization is about the installation of 29 ACRs with a smaller or larger team of professionals (depending on the number of demobilized). Apart from some exceptions like Medellín and Bogotá, in a majority of cases the municipalities, aside from distributing a few drinks during some kind of event, do not actively participate in the process of reintegration. In addition, there is a lack of trained professionals in the regions. The idea of the ACR is to bring professionals to these regions, and this too is a very costly solution.

Fifth, there are no special plans and strategies designed for the middle commanders (as yet). Not taking them into account as a separate group with different needs and capacities increases the likelihood of rearming. However, to learn more about their specific needs and capacities, additional academic studies must be done.

Sixth, it remains rather unclear which state entity is responsible for preventing new recruitments. The ACR recognizes that this issue touches upon or falls within its field of activity, but the plans and strategies are still vague; for instance, they remain at the level of encouraging local and regional authorities to include development programs that allow the social and economic reintegration of the demobilized into their policies. However, this is not a task of the ACR alone. The local authorities, the Ministry of Defense, the Police and the *Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar*, for instance, all need to cooperate to prevent new recruitments.

## 4 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Considering the progress the ACR has made in designing its reintegration policies and its political will to bring the overall process to a good conclusion, the Netherlands government, through its embassy in Bogotá, should aim towards supporting the ACR financially. In doing so, the Netherlands government, through its embassy in Bogotá, would extend the focus of its funding policy from supporting programs for the individually demobilized to supporting programs for the individually and the collectively demobilized.
2. In the case of financial support to the ACR, it is recommendable to support three specific areas: psychosocial assistance, economic reintegration, and communities.
  - Because the model of psychosocial assistance as applied by the Netherlands CROs has proven to be useful, the continuation of support to this model makes sense: it is proof of coherent funding policies in the area of DDR by the Netherlands government through its embassy in Bogotá.
  - After the ACR evaluation of the results that the former reintegration program (PRVC) had brought about, it became clear that more weight must be given to the economic reintegration of the ex-combatants. This learned lesson justifies the specific funding of policies that stimulate the economic reintegration of ex-combatants.
  - The area of communities has so far received disproportionately little attention. Specific funding of policies aimed at involving the communities is fundamental because reconciliation between victims and perpetrators and the prevention of new recruitments are key ingredients for the long-term success of the DDR process.

3. In the case of financial support to the ACR, the ACR must be encouraged to formulate a clear prevention policy on new recruitments of young people by armed groups (in cooperation with other state entities like the Ministry of Defense, the *Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar*, the Police and the local authorities). Projects that are worth considering to fund are those that:
- Provide alternatives, such as education and leisure activities.
  - ✓ ▪ Include women (female ex-combatants and wives of ex-combatants) who take a leading role.
  - Stimulate ex-combatants to tell their stories to the communities.
4. As a supplement to financial support, it is recommendable to offer technical training to psychologists who will work in the ACRs on how to apply the psychosocial model of assistance and how to deal with the population of demobilized combatants. Up to now, only part of the psychologists in Bogotá has received training in psychosocial assistance by the Centro Mundial de Investigación y Capacitación para la Solución de Conflictos. Such training must also be given to the psychologists working in the other regions of Colombia.
- ✓ 5. There is still a huge lack of knowledge in this policy area, most notably about the specific needs of middle commanders, women (ex-combatants and wives of ex-combatants), and communities. This impedes a clear and complete formulation of specific policies for these groups; thus it is recommendable to support (academic) studies on this topic. Such studies can be conducted by the ACR or by independent research groups or consultants.
6. The Netherlands government, through the Netherlands embassy in Bogotá, should aim towards strengthening the local institutions in their reintegration programs. In this respect, it is recommendable to support not only the national entity for reintegration (ACR) or the two largest cities in the country (Bogotá and Medellín), but also smaller cities and municipalities. Programs that include a specific focus on

the relation between reintegration and reconciliation, the surroundings of the demobilized (family and community), and the prevention of new recruitments should be especially taken into account.