

Proposals for further research action in East Congo

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

A critical point in the peace process in Congo is the DDR process. More research is needed on this specific issue in order to investigate the modalities and the process of social reintegration of ex-combatants within local communities. Although we do not aim to provide a general evaluation of the DDR program, the research could provide relevant information and ideas for social reconstruction activities in the Eastern DRC, as well as useful information for donors and practitioners involved in the DDR program.

On DDR, the specific objectives of future research are the following:

- Analysis of the relationship between the socio-economic exclusion of young people and their recourse to violent forms of assertion.
- Analysis of the modification of the local concept of childhood in relation to the phenomenon of child soldiers (in particular we will try to evaluate how the active involvement of children in the war has transformed the local concept of childhood and modified the modes and the timeframe of the passage to adulthood¹).
- Analysis of the local perception of ex-combatants (who are often stigmatised and marginalized but nonetheless constitute an important social group that engages in relationships with other community members).
- Analysis of the local forms of reintegration of ex-combatants (e. g. the research will try to investigate the eventual role of traditional healers and purification rites for the social reintegration of child-soldiers).
- Analysis of the difficulties encountered by ex-combatants once back in their communities (e.g. hostility from the family or the community, aggressiveness, drug abuse, refusal of civil authorities, etc.).
- Analysis of the local perceptions of the DDR program
- Analysis of the social and economic impact of the DDR program (does it create inequality between ex-combatants and young people who have never enrolled?)

¹ An informative case study on this subject is P. Reynolds, "Children of Tribulation: The Need to Heal and the Means to Heal War Trauma", *Africa*, 1990, 60, 1, pp. 1-38

The role of churches in healing trauma

Another argument we would like to deepen is the role of churches in healing trauma. According to our preliminary research, local churches (catholic, evangelic as well as independent churches) seem to be the favourite choice for people in need of psychological relief. The points we would like to focus on are the followings:

- Analysis of the complexity of local churches “landscape”
- Analysis of the role of local churches, new prophets, traditional healers and leaders in psychological rehabilitation
- Why do people prefer churches? Which kind of relief are they looking for?
- Could local churches be effective actors in peace- building programs?

The impact of violence on women

A last point we would like to examine thoroughly is the impact of violence on women, focusing on the social stigmatisation of raped women. The assumption is that the stigmatisation of raped women is among the most serious obstacles to their psychological rehabilitation and the analysis of this aspect could furnish us some relevant information to cope with and contrast this social behaviour. The following points should guide our analysis:

- Analysis of the local perception of raped women and the reasons of their stigmatisation.
- Individuation of some communication strategies which could diminish the risk of the stigmatisation of raped women.