



Transitional Demobilization and Reintegration Program

102561

Empowerment of Socio-economic Associations

A Regional Initiative in LRA Affected Areas

JUNE 2013

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2013 The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank 1818 H Street, NW
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With Implementing Partners:

Caritas
Gulu University
JUPEDEC
Triodos Facet
ZOA

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1. Context and Background

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has inflicted enormous suffering on millions of civilians in several countries of the Great Lakes and Central African regions since it began operating in the 1990s in Northern Uganda. In the 1990s and early 2000s, successive Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF) operations in northern Uganda largely drove the LRA into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), what is now Republic of South Sudan, and Central African Republic (CAR).

In March 2008, after months of intensive efforts by regional and international stakeholders to bring the conflict to an end, representatives of the Government of Uganda and the LRA finalized the Final Peace Agreement. LRA leader Joseph Kony, however, refused to sign the agreement and in December 2008 Uganda and DRC launched joint military operations (Operation Lightning Thunder) against the armed group. While these operations dislodged the LRA from several parts of DRC, they resulted in severe humanitarian consequences with many civilians displaced.

Following the conclusion of military operations in March 2009, the LRA has fragmented into several highly-mobile groups operating across a wide area ranging from Aba in Haut Uele district to Ango in Bas Uele district in the DRC, from Birao in Vakaga prefecture to Obo in Haut Mbomou prefecture in CAR, and into Western Equatoria and occasionally Western Bahr el Ghazal states in South Sudan. To counter the LRA, the national security forces of DRC, CAR and South Sudan have continued to conduct military operations against the LRA in the affected areas of their respective countries. In particular, the UPDF, with the agreement of the relevant governments and with logistical support from the United States, has conducted joint military operations in CAR, DRC and South Sudan.

The military operations have significantly reduced the strength and operational capacity of the LRA over the past three years. Despite the relative success of the joint military operations, the group continues to pose a serious security threat to civilians due to the limited capacity of the national security forces in the affected countries. The LRA's indiscriminate attacks on civilians constitute serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws and have caused a serious humanitarian crisis in the affected countries.

Uganda

While relative peace has returned to Northern Uganda and increased investment has allowed economic activity to resume and former internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return home, Northern Uganda remains the poorest with some of the lowest, albeit improving, human development indicators in the country with issues of reconciliation and social cohesion remaining.¹

¹ National Household Survey shows a decrease in the proportion of people living in poverty in the North from 61 percent in 2005/06 to 46 percent in 2009/10, alongside a decrease in the gap between North and national poverty levels of 7.2 percentage points.

Northern Uganda is at a point of transformation from recovery to longer-term development.² The reintegration of ex-combatants has been an important aspect of this process, contributing to peace and stability in terms of addressing the more immediate post-conflict security concerns.³ The process of reintegration, however, is long-term and while the process of demobilization and reinsertion may have concluded, long-term economic reintegration challenges still exist and must be considered in longer-term development programming.

The World Bank's support to the Amnesty Commission (AC) through the Uganda Demobilization and Reintegration Project (UgDRP) has led to the right conditions for successful reintegration of ex-combatants and their communities of return.⁴ Reintegration has reached a development stage, based primarily on economic development and ensuring the social inclusion of marginal groups in Ugandan society through income generating activities, livelihood, urban poverty and community driven development specifically targeting vulnerable sub-groups including ex-combatants.

Research has highlighted female ex-combatants as a group at-risk of social exclusion within the community because their social networks are highly limited and they are far less socially active than any other key group.⁵ Female ex-combatants also display higher levels of unhappiness, marginalization and powerlessness to make decisions affecting everyday life than other groups.⁶ From an economic perspective, research shows that ex-combatants have less access to micro-credit than community members.⁷ Such barriers have been linked to challenges of re-establishing economic linkages disrupted by the conflict rather than discrimination based on their insurgent history. While female ex-combatants face specific challenges to reintegration, research shows that both female ex-combatants and their female community member peers consistently score lower than their male counterparts on a range of indicators including education, literacy, health, social networks and access to marriage and family.⁸ In comparing the situation of female ex-combatants to their peer female community members, however, they tend to fare differently across key development areas such that each group has a set of strengths generally unique to their group.⁹

Without mitigation measures, the disparity observed between female ex-combatants and their community member peers (across different indicators) may compromise successful reconciliation and sustainable reintegration by exacerbating inequalities. Further, from a security perspective, tensions may arise when female ex-combatants are elevated above the level of their community peers in some key development areas. This has previously been linked to resentment

² Reporter Reintegration and Community Dynamics Study, World Bank/TDRP, 2011; Final Independent External Evaluation of the UgDRP 2008 – 2011, World Bank, 2011.

³ Reporter Reintegration and Community Dynamics Study, World Bank/TDRP, 2011.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Preliminary Assessment: Consolidation of Peace through Strengthening Women's Economic Associations in Northern Uganda, ILPI, 2012.

⁶ Reporter Reintegration and Community Dynamics Study, World Bank/TDRP, 2011.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Preliminary Assessment: Consolidation of Peace through Strengthening Women's Economic Associations in Northern Uganda, ILPI, 2012.

among other groups who may perceive targeted support to ex-combatants as an unjustified reward to perpetrators of conflict.¹⁰ While research has shown that this is not currently the case¹¹, it is crucial that such issues are addressed during the transition period from reintegration to longer-term development while at the same time harnessing the potential of women as key actors in the economic recovery of the region. In the northern Ugandan context, therefore, research finds a further need to target women, both ex-combatants and their community peers, as beneficiaries.

Central African Republic (CAR)

The LRA presence in CAR has weakened the social and economic organization of the region causing thousands to be displaced. Since early 2008, LRA presence in the Haut-Mbomou and Mbomou prefectures caused the displacement of nearly 25,000 people. The region saw the first wave of internal displacement between February and March 2008 after a series of attacks by the LRA on villages between Bambouti and Obo in Haut-Mbomou. In the wake of a series of LRA attacks following Operation Lightning Thunder, CAR saw an influx of refugees from DRC to Mboki and Obo and a wave of internal displacement between June and August 2009, followed by an influx of refugees from DRC to Zémio between September and October. Heightened LRA activity between April and June 2010 within CAR forced more displacements on the road between Bangassou, Rafaï and Mboki.

Most people in rural CAR have lost their means of production and moved to urban and suburban areas due to insecurity. The presence of the LRA in Haut-Mbomou has affected the main market route to DRC and Sudan, isolating and shrinking market opportunities.¹² Residents of Haut-Mbomou are also struggling to maintain food security due to scarcity and rising food costs. Research also finds a lack of financial services and micro credit facilities due to which individuals and groups are unable to expand their activities beyond micro level projects.¹³ Additionally, conflict affected people in CAR possess few financial, natural, physical and social capital assets to deploy in order to maintain their economic wellbeing.¹⁴ The loss of physical capital and assets either as a direct result of LRA actions—including stolen cattle and physical assets—or as an indirect result by poachers or by people occupying land illegally pose a further binding constraint for those trying to rebuild their economic activities.

The LRA-related security situation and its effect on the local economy and the social fabric in CAR justify the need for an intervention to prevent further social and economic exclusion of vulnerable groups. In the CAR context, research finds a need for the empowerment of vulnerable groups through sustainable development, support to community members affected by the

¹⁰ <http://www.unddr.org/iddrs/04/30.php>

¹¹ Reporter Reintegration and Community Dynamics Study, World Bank/TDRP, 2011.

¹² International Law and Policy Institute, Pre-assessment Report: Monitoring and Evaluation of Empowering Socio-economic Associations and Cooperatives in LRA affected Orientale Province, Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic, 2012.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

conflict and vulnerable groups, and further development of economic and social networks through socio-economic support to associations and cooperatives.¹⁵

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Despite the lack of stability and infrastructure, the Orientale Province's economy has grown at an average rate of 6.7 percent annually between 2006 and 2010.¹⁶ While the economy has been growing many of those impacted by the LRA's atrocities are struggling with agricultural output and income decreasing in recent years.¹⁷ LRA attacks have resulted in thousands being displaced with serious humanitarian conditions. IDPs around the main town of Dungu are living in makeshift settlements and their access to land is a major challenge.¹⁸ The most vulnerable IDPs heavily rely on humanitarian assistance due to lack of food security as a result of challenges accessing land. Displacement by the LRA has heightened land tensions, especially in the town center, where already struggling local communities have to bear the burden of additional people and increased economic competition for fewer and less productive resources.¹⁹

Research finds that markets have shrunk in the Province since the conflict began. Owing to the lack of infrastructure and geographic isolation, the economy is increasingly isolated and the traditional sectors of agriculture, mining and timber have lagged.²⁰ Additionally, the limited market opportunities as a result of the LRA presence constrain entrepreneurs in the area as well as prevent businesses from tapping into new markets as few potential customers have the surplus income to buy goods.²¹

In Eastern Congo, the binding constraints to economic activities are the pockets of insecurity, particularly for youth and women.²² Since a significant amount of the people in Dungu is IDPs, many of whom are recent arrivals, there is a constant demand for cleared and cultivated new land.²³ The IDPs' economic reintegration is hampered by a lack of local knowledge and networks, which are essential coping mechanisms in the absence of more formal structures of support resulting in missed job opportunities, especially given the kind of occasional, day-to-day labor market that most people earn their cash from.²⁴ Overall, research finds that in the Dungu area, people's incomes are vulnerable to shocks, in particular of those who are displaced.²⁵ Integration

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 31.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ulloa, Alfie, Felipe Katz, Nicole Kekeh. Democratic Republic of the Congo: A Study of Binding Constraints 2009, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA USA, pp. 7-35.

²¹ Preasse International Law and Policy Institute, Pre Assessment Report: Monitoring & Evaluation of Empowering Socio - Economic Associations and Cooperatives in LRA affected Orientale Province, Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic, 2012.

²² Global Witness. Artisanal Mining Communities in Eastern DRC: Seven Baseline Studies in the Kivus. A Summary by Global Witness, 2012, p. 1.

²³ ²³ Preasse International Law and Policy Institute, Pre Assessment Report: Monitoring & Evaluation of Empowering Socio - Economic Associations and Cooperatives in LRA affected Orientale Province, Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic, 2012.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

of IDPs into the local economy is limited, causing a divide in access to income-generating opportunities between those who have lived in Dungu for a long time and those who have recently arrived lacking land, jobs and networks.

2. Purpose of the Paper

The main purpose of this paper is to outline the context and rationale for interventions in LRA affected areas, to briefly describe the pilot with its regional dimension, and to present lessons learned as well as recommendations for strengthening design and implementation of support to socio-economic associations in LRA affected areas.

3. Project Rationale and Expected Outcomes

Rationale: In this regional context, international leaders and organizations including the African Development Bank (AfDB), African Union (AU), European Union, United States and the World Bank have called for enhanced efforts across LRA affected areas. In March 2012, U.S. and E.U. representatives met at the World Bank headquarters in Washington, DC to discuss appropriate and necessary interventions in LRA affected areas. In May 2012, the AU requested that the World Bank provide assistance for efforts to stabilize and rehabilitate LRA affected areas. Following this request, the World Bank's Transitional Demobilization and Reintegration Program (TDRP) developed the Cross-border Stabilization and Recovery Program (CBSR) with the following project components: support to AU's regional initiatives against the LRA, technical assistance to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in eastern DRC and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA), support to LRA related sensitization and radio messaging, establishment of reception centers in CAR and DRC for LRA returnees, and finally, a pilot project to strengthen associations and cooperatives in LRA-affected areas targeting vulnerable conflict-affected populations. In June 2012, the proposed effort was endorsed.

The pilot program is, therefore, a component of a larger intervention and covers LRA affected areas in DRC (Province Orientale), CAR (Haut Mbomou Province), and Uganda (Pader, Gulu and Kitgum districts). This regional program is piloting a participatory community model to empower social and economic associations in LRA-affected areas through the following activities: (i) delivery of 'mobile' training sessions including provision of (in-kind) start-up capital, (ii) follow-up advisory services and technical support, and (iii) psychosocial support.

Expected outcomes of the pilot program include: (i) increased access to improved livelihood opportunities of economic association members; (ii) increased income of association members supported; (iii) enhanced social participation of association members; and (iv) improved social cohesion in targeted LRA affected areas.

Theoretical Basis for Social and Economic Outcomes of Associations: A cooperative, a group-based and member-owned business, can be formed for economic and social development in any

sector. The International Cooperative Alliance defines a cooperative as an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.²⁶ A cooperative is not technically the same as an association. While some cooperatives may also call themselves associations, for an organization to be a true cooperative it must be a member-owned business that returns surplus revenues to its members.²⁷

Cooperatives by definition are dedicated to conducting business in a way that is now being recommended as the most effective route to transformational development.²⁸ Cooperatives put people in charge of their own destinies and help them bring services to their communities, increase decision making, trust and accountability through democratic participation, provide a profitable connection to the private sector, build and protect assets at the community level, limit the role of government, and work together to resolve problems in post-conflict situations.²⁹

Economically, cooperatives effectively reduce market barriers by allowing entrepreneurs to generate economies of scale that reduce transaction costs and/or increase incomes through volume sales.³⁰ Cooperatives increase efficiencies along the value chain through greater access to information and networks as well as improve the quality and value-added of products by allowing members to learn new skills and leverage technologies among and between themselves, increase access to capital through joint-pooling of resources into cooperative financial arrangements, and gain substantial bargaining power through collective action.³¹

Socially, cooperatives are local institutions rooted in grassroots society that make an important contribution to building social capital and increasing trust as well as restoring it when societies have been torn apart by conflict or by ethnic, political or religious divides.³² Cooperatives sometimes also provide social services to remotely located, low income segments of society that may not be otherwise served including providing critical health services and educating millions at risk of developing HIV/AIDS.

This pilot project, therefore, seeks to address remaining reintegration challenges within a broader, longer-term development framework by supporting conflict-affected community members including young adults and the most vulnerable community members to become better economically and socially networked through support to socio-economic associations and cooperatives.

Strengthening Social Capital through Group Membership: The research in the area of social capital and group membership indicates that social capital (as measured through various proxy

²⁶ US Overseas Development Council, *Cooperatives: Pathways to Economic, Democratic and Social Development in the Global Economy*, 2011.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

indicators) positively impacts membership in groups. Measures of trust were also found to be higher among members of groups. Further, the existence of village-level groups serves to improve social capital in communities.

Hong and Sporleder in their paper, *Social Capital in Agricultural Cooperatives: Application and Measurement*, explore the role of social capital, and specifically trust within agricultural cooperatives. Research finds that social capital reduces transaction costs by altering the terms of trade, creates intangible values to eliminate or reduce the need for expensive contractual arrangements, generates decision flexibility, and can positively influence economic performance in terms of productivity and growth.³³

Hong and Sporleder define an agricultural cooperative as the set of resources, tangible or intangible, that build over time to cooperative constituents (the cooperative, its members, employees, and management) through their social relationships, facilitating the attainment of goals.³⁴ The authors note that by design, the cooperative is a network organization formed with the motivation of mutual benefit and the expectation of collective actions among members.³⁵ Agricultural cooperatives, therefore, depend on social capital. Hong and Sporleder explain why social capital is important within agricultural cooperatives:

“In the traditional cooperatives, relationship between members and the cooperatives can be characterized by information asymmetry since members usually have small amount of equity investment and are not obliged to use any or all of the cooperatives’ business. This information asymmetry may give rise to members’ opportunistic behaviors, increase the transaction cost and consequently harm the cooperatives’ business. In order for the cooperatives to overcome the information asymmetry and to be effective in the business, there must be social capital to sustain members’ reliable relationship,”³⁶

Hong and Sporleder argue that the agricultural cooperative system is designed to be a network structure where member farmers who run their farms independently for their own benefits band together voluntarily as one entity for mutual benefits, participate in cooperative business as customers and owners, and act collectively.³⁷ Owing to the nature of this structure, members make commitments to market their products and purchase raw materials through their cooperative, and without trust and reciprocity among members, these commitments are futile.³⁸

³³ http://usaskstudies.coop/socialeconomy/files/congress07/hong_sporleder.pdf

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

Svein Ole Borgen in his paper, *Identification as a Trust-Generating Mechanism in Cooperatives*, identifies several reasons why trust is critical in the operation of cooperatives. Among some of the reasons he cites are the following:³⁹

- Trust is considered a crucial means of coordination and control within organizations as well as critical to forming successful relationships between members.
- Trust is central to establishing social capital through norms of reciprocity within social networks.
- Trust and other forms of social capital are moral resources that operate in a fundamentally different manner than physical capital.
- Trust has the potential capability to mitigate agency-problems that stem from the fact that ownership and control is separated.
- The significance of trust is related to the organization design of cooperatives and its inherent principle of membership control.

Research on trust and group membership in South Africa concluded that trust in neighbors or extended family led to increased membership in financial groups and increased incomes.⁴⁰ These findings are supported by experimental and survey results from rural Cameroon where the average level of trust is higher than that found in other African countries.⁴¹ The Cameroon study found that the prevalence of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs) explained a substantial part of the difference. Responses to survey questions indicated villagers had a high degree of trust in people with whom they interacted regularly, although this degree did not apply to people in general with whom they did not have as much interaction. Further, membership in a ROSCA was associated with much higher levels of trust with ROSCA members more confident they could trust each other.⁴²

The impact of group membership on social capital was also supported in a group lending analysis of India, Kenya, Guatemala, Armenia, and the Philippines, which concluded that social capital does not just exist innately in developing countries but can be created through repetitive and cooperative group effort.⁴³ The results of their study provided evidence that among borrowing groups, contribution rates were higher among experienced borrower groups compared to groups that had been formed but not yet taken actual loans.⁴⁴

³⁹ Ole Borgen, *Identification as a Trust-Generating Mechanism in Cooperatives*. *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*, 2011, 72: 209–228.

⁴⁰ Lawrence Haddad and John A. Maluccio. "Trust, Membership in Groups, and Household Welfare: Evidence from Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa," IFPRI FCND Discussion Paper No. 135.

⁴¹ Alvin Etang, David Fielding & Stephen Knowles. "Survey Trust, Experimental Trust and ROSCA Membership in Rural Cameroon," University of Otago Economics Discussion Papers No. 0713.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Alessandra Cassar and Bruce Wydick. "Does Social Capital Matter? Evidence from a Five-Country Group Lending Experiment," February 2008.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Research indicates that high social capital—high levels of participation in community projects, family planning posts, and the presence of public spaces—helped foster ROSCA participation.⁴⁵ In particular, where community social capital resulted from participation in community activities, individual ROSCA participation was highest.⁴⁶ These findings indicated that ROSCAs benefited from the presence of social capital. Enhanced levels of trust at the village level improved functioning of ROSCAs, through mechanisms similar to that in effectiveness of group lending—auto-selection, mutual monitoring, and social sanctioning.

Review of Other Countries/DDR Programs that Support Associations: Research from across the Great Lakes Region (GLR) has shown positive results from joining or creating associations in terms of both economic and social support. Findings across DRC and the Republic of Congo (RoC) in particular, demonstrate success with regard to the improvement of governance, micro-finance, banking, incorporation capacity as well as enhanced social capital, levels of community trust and safety nets for shocks.⁴⁷ Research finds that in DRC, associations with open membership tend to have a limited impact on economic reintegration as they rarely manage to create revenues for their members. However, a series of positive social impacts, including provision of support to the most vulnerable, community inclusion, and access to land and production means have resulted from this open membership.⁴⁸ The same research finds that in RoC, associations operate under a more restricted membership scheme with no more than 10 to 15 members and play a limited social role but prove more manageable to govern and perform better economically.⁴⁹ Recommendations for future programming based on the findings of the study in DRC and RoC include: 1) limiting membership while encouraging mixed membership of community members and ex-combatants to form associations that perform well economically as well as strengthen social capital, and 2) identifying priority needs in each context of intervention in order to emphasize either economic reintegration (as was most needed in RoC), or social reintegration (as was de facto prioritized in DRC).⁵⁰

Looking at experiences from Latin America, particularly the DDR experience in Colombia, research finds that the economic reintegration of ex-combatants in Colombia focused on individual businesses had a higher success rate than collective activities with the latter being more conducive to developing strong collective capabilities contributing to social reintegration.⁵¹ Colombia's reintegration program allows ex-combatants to choose from two options of business development- individual income generative projects or associations. The experience in Colombia finds that ownership is emerging as an important factor in assuring sustainability since there is a tendency towards failure if the idea does not emanate from the beneficiaries themselves. There are currently two associative approaches being implemented in Colombia: 1) 'Plan, Harvest and

⁴⁵ Andrea Lasagni and Eleonora Lollo. "Participation in Rotating Savings and Credit Associations in Indonesia: New Empirical Evidence on Social Capital," November 2011.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Lemasle N, *From Conflict to Resilience: Ex-combatants Trade Associations in Post Conflict: Lessons Learnt from the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo*. TDRP, World Bank, 2011.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Gonzalez, Alvaro (2013). *Social and Economic Reintegration in Colombia*.

Dream Again’ in rural areas with a focus on IDPs, demobilized ex-combatants, and vulnerable populations, 2) ‘Mini Markets – Franchising’ in urban areas with a focus on demobilized ex-combatants demonstrating entrepreneurial skills and a desire to learn.

The ‘Plan, Harvest and Dream Again’ project includes components on food security, advisory support, legalization of associations for commercialization of produce, and training. This project experienced challenges with regard to the motivation of beneficiaries remaining committed in light of seasonal variability. Lessons to promote long-term sustainability prospects include a minimum implementation period of two years, follow-up, and crop diversification. Despite a lower success rate than anticipated with regard to commercial objectives, social benefits emerged as positive collateral with numerous groups remaining functional albeit for dealing with social aspects of community life.⁵²

The franchise model experience is emerging as a promising practice by providing an off-the-shelf solution for new entrepreneurs with the opportunity for a continual adaptation of the franchise model based on successes and failures. This pilot program includes a rigorous screening process, three-month long training, apprenticeship, technical support, audits and counseling, strategic management support through a partnership with the private sector. Beneficiaries are motivated by the double benefit of employment and eventual ownership. While this innovative approach demonstrates high potential for replication, high costs and relatively slow implementation remain drawbacks.

Further, the economic reintegration approach in Colombia finds that it is very important to tailor interventions based on rural and urban locations. In terms of associations, research finds that the social benefits accrued due to the formation of associations acted as positive collateral with associations not only performing economic functions but also addressing larger social issues in the communities.⁵³

The Republic of South Sudan’s DDR Commission has integrated a cooperative approach into the design of their new DDR program based on the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) and TDRP’s experiences in DRC, RoC, Rwanda and Burundi. Cooperatives will be focused on agricultural activities and will mix ex-combatants with community members (30% - 70% respectively). Groups are encouraged to implement a shared value-added activity and diversification is promoted. The intervention focuses on life skills, finance and general management. Groups receive technical support for the initial set-up and inputs such as seeds, fertilizer and tools. Emphasis is placed on forging linkages between new business and traditional markets and a social safety net is introduced through a savings mechanism. Challenges to the success of cooperatives such as the nascent phase of the microfinance sector, low access to land, food insecurity and low literacy levels have been identified and integrated to the extent possible through mitigation mechanisms in program design.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

4. Benefits of a Regional Initiative

Regional Scope with Tailor Made Country Interventions: TDRP, as a regional initiative, assists countries in their transition from activities supporting the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants to broader recovery, development and stabilization. More than 20 years of instability caused by the LRA conflict in northern Uganda has taken a tremendous toll on the population and economy. While peace has returned to the area, the North still lags behind the rest of the country in terms of key human development indicators. The LRA, however, remains an active armed group whose activities continue to be felt throughout the region across northern Uganda, DRC, CAR, and Republic of South Sudan.

TDRP is working to promote stability and address the challenges of groups affected by the conflict through a model to strengthen socio-economic associations within the LRA-affected region. TDRP's implementation partners include JUPEDDEC in CAR, CARITAS in DRC, and Gulu University and ZOA as local partners of Triodos Facet in Uganda. The interventions are tailored for each specific context. For example, psychosocial support is only provided in CAR and DRC and the focus is on support to women's economic associations in Northern Uganda, whereas in CAR and DRC the focus is on youth and IDPs respectively.

The pilot's specific objectives are (i) to promote sustainable livelihoods amongst conflict-affected community members by strengthening social and economic associations, and (ii) to strengthen social cohesion by providing psychosocial support to people in need.

TDRP's peace-building activities have a particular focus on research, learning and innovation. To this end, this regional pilot initiative in the LRA-affected area is expected to contribute to operational knowledge on good practices to promote associations in post-conflict situations as both a social and economic reintegration tool for possible replication.⁵⁴ The regional pilot projects provide an opportunity for practitioners from the region to come together and share their experiences on their respective implementations in each country as well as facilitate cross-learning from other projects and regions. Through a significant research component, the proposed initiative will serve to build on this emerging body of knowledge on the assumptions of such community-driven programs, related gender dynamics as well as the effectiveness of specific models to support female and youth micro-entrepreneurs.⁵⁵

5. Pilot Project Initiative-Components and Lessons Learned

The next section of the paper highlights the various components of the pilot project in DRC, CAR, and Uganda and the lessons learned. The paper will highlight the differences that exist in implementation in each country where such differences exist. All the implementing partners participated in the 'Practitioners Workshop on Empowering Socio-economic Associations in Conflict-Affected Areas' organized by TDRP in February 2013 in Kampala, Uganda ("workshop").

⁵⁴ Summary of Proceedings: Practitioners' Workshop on Empowering Socioeconomic Associations in Conflict-affected Areas. Kampala, Uganda, World Bank/TDRP, 2013.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

The lessons learned in this paper were collectively derived at the workshop by representatives of the implementing partners.

5.1 Identification of Associations and Cooperatives

In Uganda, Triodos Facet developed eligibility criteria for identifying women's economic associations (WEAs) for inclusion in the pilot by considering factors such as demographic of membership, membership size, vulnerability level of members, and motivation of the group towards building capacity and remaining sustainable following intervention.

Triodos Facet also developed a matrix for identifying groups of varying levels of development. They created a matrix for level of maturity of associations by balancing the following factors: extent of joint economic activities, access to finance / maturity of Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA), levels of past economic support, member skills, year WEA started (as indication only). The idea was to select a majority of WEAs identified as basic (40-60%) with the rest divided between new and advanced WEAs. Triodos intends to present differences in the achievements of the intervention based on differing levels of maturity at the start of the intervention and aims to upgrade each of these types of groups requiring different training needs to the next level.

Triodos Facet has outlined the following eligibility criteria for the selection of associations/cooperatives:

- The majority of the groups must include different kinds of vulnerable women (female ex-combatants with multiple failed marriages/partnerships, female ex-combatants who came back with children born while in captivity and/or found that their parents had passed away, women with unsupportive husbands, women with disabilities, women with no basic literacy/numeracy and elderly women)⁵⁶
- Special groups (e.g. HIV+, child mothers, nodding disease) are included in the target population
- Mixed groups have a maximum of 25% men, preferably 10-15%
- Management must include women: preferably the majority is women, including the group leader
- 30 members maximum (15-20 members preferred)
- Own initiative groups are at least 20% of total target population versus groups started by external parties
- Assess motivation of groups:
 - Reaction to the capacity building as starting point of the project with no grants provided
 - Purpose of the group: is the objective of the group centered around receiving support or is it based on own agency
 - How will the groups continue after the support?

⁵⁶ Vulnerable groups identified through a pre-assessment and a rapid assessment report.

Since the primary target group in the Ugandan context is women, Triodos expected to work mostly with women-only groups. Triodos, however, found many mixed associations with a majority of women who ask men to join and fill management functions because of their skills. Due to this finding, they ultimately considered it neither feasible to exclude mixed groups nor to expect that mixed groups have management entirely made up of women. In Uganda, 100 WEAs were selected (32 in Gulu, 36 in Kitgum, and 32 in Pader) for the pilot.

In CAR, the implementing partner JUPEDDEC used several eligibility criteria for the identification of associations including:

- Membership size
- Number of members including young adults, groups affected by conflict, child soldiers, and women heads of households
- Number of IDPs who are members
- The level of LRA abuses faced by members
- Access to and the provision of facilities and training programs
- Advocacy on behalf of their members for a more conducive environment for business
- Level of Social and Economic Cohesion
- Conflict Management Capabilities
- Innovative approaches used
- Access to improved production technology for business
- Access to financial and technical support from banks and other institutions
- Level of psychosocial support to members in need
- Development and dissemination of improved production and better quality management systems between members

Prior to identification, JUPEDDEC performed a preliminary assessment of existing associations in the southern areas affected by the LRA. In Upper Mbomoul, JUPEDDEC identified 61 associations in the five sub-prefectures of Obo (12), Zemio (18), Djemah (4), Mboki (16) and Rafai (11). 51% of the selected associations are not legal entities. In total there are 1,525 members in the selected associations (44% females, 56% males) and 9,150 direct beneficiaries. 54% of the selected associations are agricultural.

CARITAS, implementing partner in DRC, developed the identification form of associations as a project management tool. The form was intended to help collect all the needed information regarding the association (its location, its members, its activities, its assets) and to assess the baseline position of each association. The use of the identification fact sheet also allowed CARITAS to collect information to facilitate the classification of associations in relation to their activities and the kind of support (start-up capital and technical support) given to each association.

The registration of associations was performed based on the following criteria:

- Existing or emerging associations in Dungu territory
- Members: women and men (youth) without gender discrimination, stigmatization, social distinction, provenance, handicap and religion
- Association whose vision is the cooperative spirit
- Association whose members were affected by the trauma caused by the LRA atrocities and other vulnerable people
- Association with a specific economic activity, which does not use illegal practices

CARITAS conducted 14 awareness sessions in the community to explain to the community leaders and community members the project rationale, expected objectives and to seek their cooperation. CARITAS identified and registered 50 associations with 1,017 members (32% men, 30% women, 21% youth, and 17% vulnerable populations (disabled, widows and girl-mothers). Of the 50 associations identified, 38 are old and 12 new with 30 associations belonging to the agriculture, fishery and livestock sectors and 20 associations engaged in small scale business.

Lessons Learned:

Interventions Supporting Existing Groups vs. the Creation of New Groups: Representatives of implementing partners agreed that the ideal scenario in terms of ownership and sustainability is to work with existing groups where a structure and social dynamic is already established and group cohesion, purpose and objectives are embedded and owned by members. Anecdotal experiences indicate that groups formed from within a community are more likely to remain in place following the completion of an externally funded operation. Further, building upon existing group structures contributes to the efficiency of an intervention in terms of design, set-up and implementation. Activities can also rapidly commence and groups are likely to be productive sooner.

Challenges experienced with the creation of new groups include communities' growing familiarity with traditional interventions that provide grants to those forming themselves into 'community interest groups'. This in turn tends to encourage formation of ad hoc groups with the sole purpose of accessing immediate cash. Despite such limitations, implementing partners acknowledged that working with existing groups is not always conducive to reaching the most vulnerable and may even serve to exacerbate their exclusion. In such cases, creating new groups may be the only viable option. Experience has shown that informal groups often exist based upon social issues and present a potential basis from which to provide additional support and formalize the group for economic objectives.

Effective Approaches for Integrating Non-members into Groups: When working with existing groups, it is important to consider the possibility of resistance to new members. Interventions are often established specifically to support those that may have been deliberately excluded from existing community structures and therefore, existing group members may be skeptical as

to their added value. The challenge experienced frequently is that of reconciling the inclusion of the most vulnerable alongside ensuring productive, sustainable associations.

Lessons have shown that it is important to ensure that: (i) new members possess a certain level of competencies and are able to contribute productively to the group or (ii) that groups comprise a balance of competencies to allow learning and capacity building between group members themselves. Ensuring an adequate mix of group members with regard to levels of vulnerability and conflict-affectedness are also important with regard to (i) social cohesion objectives and (ii) practical considerations with particular regard to displaced populations who are by definition in a location temporarily. It is critical that the displaced population do not comprise the majority of a newly formed group to ensure sustainability prospects for the host community. Further promising practices include: (i) adhering to existing criteria for group membership to avoid possible tensions by perceived benefits to a specific group, (ii) establishing a specified 'open period' in which new members can join the group to mitigate against perceived ulterior motives for membership, and (iii) sensitization strategies can be effective in terms of facilitating access to non-members by both raising awareness as to the potential advantages of both joining a group and benefits to the group itself.

Dilemma with Addressing both Vulnerability and Potential for Productivity in the Context of Eligibility Criteria: The question of responding to the dual objective of addressing vulnerability as well as establishing strong, productive associations has emerged as a consistent dilemma. Implementing partners agree that vulnerability and competency levels must be combined to ensure success relative to the overall aim of socioeconomic reintegration. It is important that interventions consider the strength and productivity of groups relative to the context of the target group. Interventions with the primary objective of establishing a model group with the highest earning potential would have very different eligibility criteria based on competencies. When working with existing groups there is a need to base selection on a basic level of commitment or promising results to build upon capacity effectively. When creating new groups, implementing partners agree on the importance of criteria to identify common problems or interests among beneficiaries and areas of comparative advantage between members. In-depth needs assessments should be conducted to inform the development of criteria accordingly.

Inspiring Interest for Participation in Interventions when Grant Assistance is not offered: Implementing partners find that often communities are dependent upon external development assistance and continuing to provide grant assistance and related benefits such as transport fees and per diems perpetuate dependency. Mobilizing beneficiary participation in initiatives where monetary assistance is not foreseen is a related challenge. This has been compounded by the largely transitional context in which the pilot program operates where humanitarian support is often implemented in parallel. Garnering interest from communities where food and cash hand-outs are common is challenging.

Despite such difficulties, in-kind incentives for participation (such as technical assistance, training, start-up capital) are preferable in terms of ensuring local ownership and sustainability. This approach provides some measure of protection against the diversion of funds.

Implementing partners note that significant community sensitization on the long-term benefits of capacity-building focused support was required to secure interest.

Optimal Group Composition: Mixed groups in terms of sex and age are generally preferable. This is, however, dependent on the nature of the project and context of implementation. For example, building on the particular success of women's entrepreneurship activities in Northern Uganda, combined with their identified high levels of vulnerability or when groups come together for a specific activity that is traditionally male/female dominated such as tailoring or carpentry. Ensuring a balanced age mix was preferable as it allows groups to capitalize on various age range comparative advantages.

A minimum age of 18 years should apply to groups in line with the national legislative framework of countries of intervention. However, there are several challenges to implementing this in practice. There is frequently little difference in the reintegration experiences of a 16 or 17 year old compared to an 18 year old, particularly in conflict-affected contexts with numerous child-headed households. While the legislation exists in such contexts, adequate mechanisms for their appropriate implementation are frequently absent. Experiences to address this have included advocating to the local community leadership to allow inclusion.

Optimal Size of Groups: A group's primary objective is instrumental in informing the optimal number of members required to achieve objectives. Implementing partners have observed a range of different sized groups operating effectively to achieve economic and/or social objectives. In the context of the current pilot program, however, groups should not exceed 20 individuals for effective training and capacity building and particularly to allow for the use of participatory training techniques.

Purpose of Existing Groups, Social versus Economic and Implications for Programming: The purpose of organically formed groups is not always clear in terms of social versus economic objectives as groups often evolve with a dual purpose. Groups established for economic purposes often promote social cohesion, while groups coming together for social reasons present the potential for building capacity towards livelihood goals. Results can be achieved towards both objectives from either starting point, using adapted methodologies for each: (i) In the case of working with economic-focused groups to achieve social objectives, traditional training to strengthen business skills, financial management and administration should be complemented by life skills, group trust and confidence building techniques. Such evolution, however, is usually an organic process that does not require significant intervention. (ii) In the case of groups formed around social issues, it is less likely to be existing relevant productive capacity among groups' members requiring intensive sensitization and capacity development activities.

Leadership Dynamics and Group Conflicts: Group conflicts can often emerge as a result of lack of clarity over the leadership structure, member roles, responsibilities and collective benefits. It is, therefore, critical to establish basic group rules and regulations early on. Regular communication mechanisms must be established to promote conflict prevention and mitigation across group

members. Group leadership selection should be established based upon existing community processes for election or nomination and should ensure mechanisms are in place to rotate leadership positions across willing members. When establishing new groups, sensitization activities on leadership selection and responsibilities should be implemented.

5.2 Training Approaches and Follow-up/Advisory Services

TDRP expects all implementing partners to build the institutional and technical capacity of the selected associations through training sessions customized to each individual socio-economic association and cooperative's (SEAC's) needs. In all three countries a pre-assessment was carried out to assess market gaps and demand, skills audit and aspirations. All implementing partners have developed a training curriculum customized to each SEAC including the following modules:

- Basic literacy and numeracy skills
- Basic technical and production skills
- Business skills
- Understanding of and access to finance and existing support services
- Administrative, management and leadership skills

The design and delivery of the training modules adhere to the following principles:

- 'Mobile' sessions are held within the communities themselves at a time dictated by beneficiaries.
- Training of trainers, training SEAC staff and local civil society organizations trained receive continual refresher courses and ongoing mentoring throughout the duration of the intervention.
- Cross-cutting elements throughout training modules are envisaged to include (1) trust-building activities to promote co-operation, sharing of responsibilities and division of labor, and (2) activities for the continued promotion of social reintegration and cohesion through the integration of cultural activities, such as music dance and drama.
- Training will be conducted over a period of 2 – 11 months depending on the module and the specific needs of each SEAC. They are conducted regularly during the defined period, so as to serve simultaneously as a meeting place with associated benefits for social reintegration and cohesion. SEACs shall be served by continuous tailored follow-up and advisory services in-between formal training sessions.
- Community awareness and sensitization activities have been conducted in parallel to training delivery to promote understanding on the objectives, rationale for targeting and common benefits of the project with a focus on ensuring the engagement and support of men, particularly beneficiary household members.

Advisory services are provided in-between formal training sessions to support the application of skills acquired through 'on-the-job' support and mentoring. Such services are customized to the needs of each SEAC by the implementing partner, and include systematic follow-up visits according to a schedule developed in partnership with the SEAC. Advisory services are delivered by a 'mobile team' of trainers. Mobile teams also serve to facilitate positive experiences, lessons

and good practices between SEACs as well as to forge relationships between them as appropriate.

The training in Uganda is expected to last 14.5 days with 29 sessions spread throughout the implementation period for each WEA and 6 days of follow-up with 12 sessions for each WEA receiving follow-up. Triodos plans to provide a comprehensive approach (training plus follow-up) to half the sub-counties and a traditional approach (only training) to the other half the sub-counties to empirically test the difference follow-up makes. Follow-up advisory services provided by Triodos include on the job coaching, help exercise application of material, addressing challenges that come up, and assessing progress made on capacity building plans.

In contrast in DRC, CARITAS will provide 20 associations with professional training (3 months), 30 associations with training in agriculture, livestock and fishery (3 months) and all 50 associations will receive training on the creation and management of associations (first two months), in-kind support (last two months), and basic literacy and numeracy as needed (7 months). Also in contrast to Uganda, follow-up services in DRC are mainly intended to provide technical assistance and psychosocial support (further discussed in the psychosocial section). In DRC, trainers and supervisors conduct visits, during which they advise associations in relation to their activities and gather information useful to assess the evolution of the activities of associations and the changes made. They also follow-up with local training courses to ensure they are being held in good conditions and that the beneficiaries are benefitting from these activities.

While the technical and organizational capacity building components in CAR are similar to DRC and Uganda, JUPEDEC has a strong focus on agricultural training because over 50% of its beneficiary associations are in the agricultural sector and low food security prevails in the Haut Mbomou region. The intervention in CAR, therefore, includes a vegetable production component for agricultural associations. JUPEDEC has identified vegetable production as a very high revenue generating endeavor for associations in the region as well as a crucial component to address food security issues in the region.

Lessons Learned:

Optimal Number of Training and Follow-up Sessions: Implementing partners believe that the overall method of providing initial basic training combined with follow-up services, once members have applied the knowledge gained, is a promising approach. Follow-up services should be structured around short, medium and long-term actions dictated by group members' evolving needs.

The specific number of training and follow-up sessions should be determined by the type of livelihood activity and capacity needs assessment. The schedule should be carefully tailored around group members' existing commitments and cognizant of seasons and timing of household obligations. Implementing partners, in general, agree that training activities should last for no more than 3-4 hours in one day in order to be productive.

Training Techniques: Implementing partners agree that the optimal training venue is within the community itself in a location chosen by group members as it promotes efficiency and facilitates ‘action-learning’ by practicing techniques on existing activities. Implementing partners also note the success of the effectiveness of interactive training and ‘learning by doing’ in technical training modules as well as business and administration modules. Ascertaining the literacy and numeracy capacity of groups and integrating basic training into modules accordingly has also proven to be an important aspect of training approaches. Another promising strategy is that of facilitating exchange visits between associations to promote learning from one another.

Importance of Providing a Customized Approach: It is important to provide training activities tailored to each specific group. Standard modules can be developed and adapted based on in-depth capacity and aspirations assessment and placed in the context of market demand as well as the social and cultural dynamic for each group. Special attention should be given to ensuring that group members can relate to all examples.

Optimal Mix of Technical versus Organizational and Life Skills Training: In post-conflict contexts with social cohesion as a parallel objective, effective capacity building for groups must include a mix of technical, life skills and organizational development. The time invested for each component will vary according to the type of activity around which the association is based, existing capacity needs and overall context of the community. When establishing new groups, training is more likely to focus on organizational and life skills at early stages, with increasing emphasis on technical skills as the group evolves. Providing support to existing groups is likely to focus more on the development of technical skills and enhancing existing organizational capacity.

Links to Existing Programming and Services: Consideration of existing initiatives in target communities when designing interventions will ensure a complementary service building upon the comparative advantage of the service provider. Further, activities should be strongly linked to existing state structures and other longer-term development efforts to promote the sustainability of activities. A particularly promising strategy is to establish an agreement with an existing training institution to help issue a certificate following the completion of training that can be relevant to both the individual and the group beyond the completion of pilot program activities.

5.3 Psychosocial Support

Psychosocial impairment prevents survivors from productive participation in peace-building and reintegration activities. Post-conflict rehabilitation interventions seek to include dysfunctional community members through psycho-diagnostic identification and case-appropriate psychological treatment. Research indicates that it is possible to train local lay personnel to become trauma counselors and successfully reduce symptoms of trauma-related mental health disorders to enable trauma survivors to become functioning members of their community.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Pfeiffer, Annett, The Importance of Psychosocial Support in Conflict-Affected Areas. Kampala, Uganda, 2013.

Research also finds that any psychosocial assistance needs to consider mental health disorders such as depression besides more serious cases of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for a holistic approach.⁵⁸ Trauma-related guilt, shame and stigmatization can be obstacles in the process of build-up of a society and reintegration into society. A vicious circle of conflict-related psychological problems often translates into civil society in the form of higher rates of gender-based violence, alcohol and drug abuse, aggression and domestic violence towards partner and children. These problems related to psychosocial assistance in post-conflict areas can be addressed through knowledge and skills training of counselors, community sensitizations and the establishment of an adequate psychosocial referral system for mental health rehabilitation.⁵⁹

TDRP, therefore, believes psychosocial support to be an integral component of the pilot project with implications for the achievement of the social and economic objectives of the project. The psychosocial support component is unique to CAR and DRC. TDRP decided to exclude this component from northern Uganda due to its advanced reintegration stage as well as other donor presence in the field of psychosocial support. TDRP, therefore, intends to avoid duplicating efforts of psychosocial support in northern Uganda. In CAR and DRC, the implementing partners have taken two very different approaches to psychosocial support based on the needs identified in each country's areas of intervention. In CAR, support is based on a manual for psychosocial support in schools while in DRC, community leaders are being trained to counsel community members in need of psychosocial support.

Psychosocial training to Implementing Partners: During the practitioners' workshop the implementing partners expressed the need for additional psychosocial training to enable them to provide enhanced and more adequate support to associations and other members in need. TDRP (through LOGiCA funding) has granted this additional support.

Approach in DRC: Training of Community Leaders on Psychosocial Support: The psychosocial component in DRC was kicked off by a training facilitated by the diocesan office of medical works of the Diocese of Dungu – Doruma for 50 community leaders such as teachers, nurses, and heads of communities. The training module included three components: basic concepts (definition of traumatism, types of trauma, victim concept, traumatic events, reaction toward traumatic event), counseling and psychosocial approach (concept of counseling, psychosocial approach, sports activities based approach), and guidelines (victim attack toward perpetrator, working materials, action to be taken towards victims, individual follow-up form and reference).

CARITAS developed a psychosocial approach that will be implemented in four stages:

1. Identification of Trauma Case: Psychologists in collaboration with community leaders and members of associations will identify trauma cases requiring psychosocial support to victims of LRA attacks.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

2. Care of Victims/Traumatized: Victims of trauma are referred to a competent health center to receive necessary care. Council of psychologists, trainers and supervisors provide education to the community and family members of victims of trauma on psychosocial support allowing families to take care of victims/traumatized people. CARITAS will provide partner hospitals (for referrals) with kits for victims affected by trauma caused by the LRA.
3. Visits of Accompaniment: Visits by trainers and psychologists resulted in the identification of 43 cases of trauma out of 1,017 registered beneficiaries in 50 associations. CARITAS has adopted an individual approach of supporting identified members of associations with trauma by setting up listening-points in each community. The listening-point is a good place for consultation (often in a hut so as to provide an isolated location to accommodate patients). Consultations of associations' members take place following appointments that were taken during the first sessions to raise awareness about violence.
4. Collective or Group Approach: In the worst cases, CARITAS intends to set up a vigilance committee consisting of two or three people to watch over the group or association, especially victims of trauma. The psychologist will form the committee of vigilance along with members of the targeted association. This committee will play the role of psychologists to ensure the reintegration of psychologically unbalanced persons in the group or association.

CARITAS has developed three working tools: 1) initial consultation fact sheet (containing the patient's identity, circumstances of the incident, the narrative of fact, traumatic reactions expressed by the patient), 2) monitoring/ listening sheet (listening no., category, listening date, listening location, identical traumatic reactions as of the first interview or previous listening, persistence, main difficulties of individual toward solutions proposed by the victims, next rendezvous), and 3) referencing fact sheet (used when it is necessary to place a patient in a family or community home or in a health center).

Approach in CAR: Psychosocial Support through the Local Education System: In CAR, victims as well as the level and degree of trauma have been identified in the cities of Obo Zémio, Mboki, Rafai and Djemah. A training manual based on psychosocial support has been developed, and the technical capacity of field staff responsible for monitoring psychosocial victims has been strengthened.

In total 1,465 psychosocial direct victims have been identified in the project area (Obo Zémio, Mboki, and Djemah Rafai) with adults representing 56% of the identified victims. Apart from the direct victims of the LRA, it is estimated that more than 7,300 displaced people in areas of Southeast have fled LRA abuses. Over 60% of these IDPs are young people aged between 5-17 years. Many trauma cases were recorded among youth and their evaluation is underway.

Since most youth are enrolled in school, stakeholders from education services, local authorities and the project team felt it was necessary to include a psychosocial support component in middle school. JUPEDDEC, therefore, developed a teachers' guide for basic training on psychosocial support in schools as an instrument that aims to provide a quick and effective response to the psychosocial needs of youth. The guide includes four modules: Module 1: Detection of trauma and referral system, Module 2: Recreational, Module 3: Hygiene School, Module 4: Education for Peace and Tolerance. At the training's conclusion, teachers will possess the capacity to provide students with psycho social support and highlight the impact of trauma on youth and their education, detect cases of trauma and other health disorders among students, adequately refer victims to a specialized center, facilitate recreational activities for children, teach life skills in hygiene, and instill the values of peace and tolerance in children.

5.4 Building Social Capital through the Pilot Initiative

Experiences in DRC and RoC demonstrate the importance of social capital in the creation and functioning of associations. Research undertaken in DRC and RoC suggest that both wartime and peacetime trust and leadership constitute central pillars of ex-combatant trade associations and that it is possible to take advantage of existing social capital.⁶⁰ In particular, research finds that while trust and cooperation cannot be forced, training organized over several months and provided as part of interventions emerges as an interesting trust-building tool, in particular between ex-combatants and community members. A comparison between DRC and RoC as well as experiences from Colombia, however, demonstrates that a level of trade-off exists between social and economic performance in working with associations and that one may take priority over the other.

As all three countries of the regional pilot are bringing together beneficiaries including community members and ex-combatants for training sessions on technical and capacity building as well as psychosocial support in DRC and CAR, TDRP's hope is that social cohesion and capital will increase organically not only between members of the target associations but also between beneficiaries and their communities at large.

CARITAS in DRC has developed an applied leisure based-approach as a component to promote and facilitate coexistence and cohesion in the communities between the young and older members. Popular games that involve people once stigmatized for example, displaced people with handicaps, people living with HIV / AIDS, girl-mothers, promote cohesion in the community through the involvement of stigmatized and vulnerable populations. Psychologists and trainers visited 50 associations during which the choices of leisure activities to be undertaken in their community were noted.

Examples of CARITAS' approach to building social capital in DRC include the following: a) Collective games where children play games such as football, handball, skits and rope together. These games help educate, motivate, exercise the muscles and brain, relax and restore psychological balance among youth. b) Song and dance which promotes entertainment and

⁶⁰ Lemasle, N, From Conflict to Resilience: Ex-combatants Trade Associations in Post Conflict: Lessons Learnt from the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. World Bank/TDRP, 2013.

relaxation with everyone singing songs in local languages or French, dancing, and taking strength from life. c) Sharing stories with lessons to learn for life, education proverbs, as well as riddles are learned for mental exercise. d) Showing educational movies including discussion to increase the participation of children and their interest. e) Group discussions for exchanges between small or large group are organized by the trainers. These discussions concern various aspects of life. During these sessions, trainers encourage people to express themselves freely, to share experiences, and identify opportunities.

6. Intensive Monitoring and Evaluation for possible Scaling-up

The intervention also expects to contribute to the limited evidence on the effect of strengthened economic associations on social connectedness and psychosocial wellbeing in post-conflict contexts. TDRP has partnered with an external specialist entity to conduct monitoring and evaluation activities throughout project implementation using rigorous quantitative and qualitative techniques.

The special entity will conduct an evaluation to determine the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of the intervention model for possible scale-up as well as to contribute to the body of knowledge on the effectiveness of associations in terms of (i) promotion of reintegration and social cohesion, including linkages between strengthened economic associations, psychosocial well-being and social connectedness; (ii) the effect of strengthened economic associations on micro-economies; and (iii) the sustainability of livelihood activities. The research also aims to ascertain the relative benefits of (1) custom-made 'mobile training services' and (2) the provision of follow-up advisory services on the overall outcomes of the project. Lessons from the three pilot sites are expected to feed into the development of a good practice model for future scale-up interventions in the LRA-affected region.

7. Challenges

The escalation of the security situation in CAR has had significant impact on logistics. For example, travel is now permitted only by air, which has increased projects costs. Additionally, security related logistical challenges have delayed the delivery of start-up kits. The security situation following the recent coup d'état has resulted in a slow-down and stop of all Bank-financed projects in CAR. As a consequence, the Mid-term Review and the planned psychosocial training of the implementing partner were put on hold.

In the DRC, challenges include an influx of displaced people, limited educational level of beneficiaries, limited capacity of training institutions, limited access to arable land, and high levels of poverty. Challenges in northern Uganda include the distant and remote locations of existing associations as well as ensuring that the most vulnerable are reached while also selecting beneficiaries most likely to succeed. In northern Uganda, Triodos found a lack of culture of expressing needs, which has made it very difficult to accurately assess needs. Additionally, each selected association has demonstrated very different needs, which pose a challenge for applying a standard model. All implementing partners also face the challenge of

ensuring sustainability of beneficiary cooperatives and associations in a short period of time. While the implementation period, one year, of the pilot is too short to address sustainability challenges, TDRP believes that the results of the pilot, particularly data collected for monitoring and evaluation purposes will support the design of future interventions that can address the sustainability challenge of cooperatives and associations.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

TDRP's implementing partners noted at a workshop held in Kampala that the identification of common themes in terms of challenges, lessons and recommendations when implementing similar interventions in post-conflict contexts has equipped them with ideas to improve their respective interventions. Implementing partners, however, emphasized that many of the common themes identified are dependent upon the specific social, economic and cultural factors of any one community or group and must be considered accordingly.

Pilot program implementing partners will review recommendations and consider how these apply in their respective projects going forward. The pilot program endeavors to bring practitioners together at key stages of the intervention as part of a continuous effort to reflect on implementation successes and failures and related lessons. Consequently, lessons learned and recommendations identified during the workshop and future workshops will contribute to a 'work in progress' to be finalized at the end of the pilot program. Below are the recommendations that have been compiled by implementing partners of the regional initiative so far:

Group Identification

- In terms of prospects for sustainability, working with existing groups should be given preference. This, however, must be carefully balanced with the specific needs of each community as well as nature of vulnerability and exclusion among non-members.
- If new groups are formed, the following should be taken into consideration:
 - The needs of members must be carefully assessed and contextualized in terms of market demand
 - Members should have a common (economic or social) interest
 - Adequate time and resources must be available to establish groups to enhance their sustainability prospects. A minimum of eight months is considered to be optimal.
 - Community members must be adequately sensitized on benefits of group creation to the broader community
- Successful integration of non-members must be based upon a double-sensitization strategy targeting both members and non-members. A specific 'open season' should be officially established to allow non-members access to existing groups for a specified period.

Group Establishment

- The optimal size of groups should be determined based upon the objective of the group, type of activity, and overall context. For training and capacity building-focused activities, a maximum of 20 members seems to be optimal for learning purposes.
- Groups should ideally be mixed with regard to age, sex, competencies and vulnerability to promote social cohesion and harness comparative advantages. However, this must be carefully considered in view of the specific context in each locality, particularly in post-conflict contexts where specific biographic profiles may be more susceptible to the effects of the conflict.
- It is important to ensure equilibrium in order to promote social reintegration when working with specific special groups such as IDPs, formerly abducted or ex-combatants as well as for practical considerations in the case of IDPs who are temporarily located in the project site.

Training Approaches

- It is important to adopt a holistic approach including modules on (i) technical skills, (ii) business skills and organizational capacity, and (iii) life skills and psychosocial support. The importance ascribed to each will depend on the stage, nature of income generating activities, capacity and aspirations of each group. The allocation of time between these areas should be adapted accordingly.
- Standard training modules should be developed and tailored to the needs of each individual group based upon in-depth needs and market assessments. Curricula adaptation should include local names and examples and be conducted in the local language.
- The training environment is important and should be selected by group members. Conducting training within the community allows for an effective balance of other livelihood and household priorities, time-efficiency, and facilitates interactive as well as ‘on the job’ training approaches.
- A mix of training sessions and follow-up advisory sessions are important to allow group members to apply what they have learned and seek further guidance accordingly. The nature and intensity of follow-up services should be guided on an on-demand basis with flexible resources assigned appropriately. Exchange visits between groups have proven successful and must be incorporated where possible.
- Strong linkages should be established to existing longer-term development programs as well as state structures to promote sustainability. Partnerships with established training institutions should be explored with regard to the award of certification and diplomas.

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