

REINTEGRATION AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The private sector has played an increasingly important role in excombatant reintegration in Colombia since best practices and lessons learned emerged after the 2003-2006 AUC (right-wing paramilitary) demobilization efforts. While some private enterprise initiatives were promoted in those early years – i.e., small-scale micro enterprise initiatives led by former combatants and funded with state-sponsored seed capital – they met with limited success.

The Colombian Agency for Reintegration (ACR, now the ARN) learned from these early missteps and sought more active participation from the private sector: not just in the execution and funding of economic reintegration, but in the planning and design of policies and programming to support both sustainable revenue generation by program participants and also widespread social changes in terms of perceptions and prejudices that the former fighters faced in their community and labor environments.

Coupled with this more nuanced understanding of the role of the private sector as a critical partner in social and economic reintegration of excombatants, the Final Accord signed on November

26, 2016 includes explicit language implicating the private sector in implementing the peace accord in various instances throughout Point 3.2: *Economic, Social, and Political Reincorporation of the FARC into Civilian Life According to their Interests*. This call was further codified in the May 29, 2017 Decree (#899) that establishes the “Means and Instruments for the Collective and Individual Social and Economic Reincorporation of the FARC.”

While the language in the Accord and accompanying legal Decree points explicitly to the economic resources and technical cooperation anticipated from the private sector (Point 3.2.2.8 in the Final Accord, and Article 16 of Decree 899), the ARN has made clear in its own institutional communications that the role of the private sector in reintegration extends well beyond the fiscal contributions that it can make. This Spotlight analyzes the past and anticipated roles of the private sector in Colombia’s work with former combatants of illegal armed groups along with three experiences in the Southern Cone of Africa in order to develop global lessons learned and best practices in this domain.

THE COLOMBIAN CASE¹

It is generally understood that successful economic reintegration is a necessary minimum factor for stabilizing the reincorporation of former FARC members. Previous studies on the Private Sector in Colombia have shown that, while companies are willing to comply with legal requirements, they are slow to take independent initiative in terms of supporting economic reintegration, and tend to wait out the industry leaders for signs of successful strategies.

Businesses in the Colombian case have tended to be more supportive of collaborating on this element of peacebuilding when they have 1) some form of government support, if only operational, 2) a strong existing corporate social responsibility philosophy, 3) access to capital that can finance a project that is an appropriate fit for both the former combatants and the business, 4) and understanding of such an alliance as one that promotes the competitiveness of the business.

Researchers on the role of the private sector in Colombia have found that each industry will respond differently to reintegration policies. For example, the prominent business consortium ANDI expressed the perceived value for businesses to offer opportunities to former combatants who were exemplary in their transitional processes and who demonstrated, in the association’s opinion, the justification for facilitating their return to full legal citizen life.² Other industries look for alternative criteria (e.g., agricultural vocation) among excombatants.

The ARN posits eight dimensions for reintegrating former combatants (shown in the figure in the next column), of which “Productivity” is directly related to Private Sector collaborations, though it may easily be argued that employment also contributes to the Family, Personal, Security, Citizenship, Housing, and Education dimensions.

Key lessons learned from its more than 10 years of experience collaborating with the Private Sector include the following:³

ARN’S EIGHT DIMENSIONS FOR REINTEGRATION & LESSONS LEARNED



- » Support from the Private Sector can take the form of job offers, technical training, physical capital, participation in the supply chain for excombatant-produced goods, and support in business administration.
- » Tax incentives for companies may result in short-term gains, but tend to not deliver sustainable productive opportunities for former combatants.
- » Targeting high-impact businesses within their industries can result in effective use of social and political capital to influence opinions, interests, and perceptions of consumers and other industry operators.
- » Private Sector collaboration on reintegration falls within the corporate social responsibility framework.
- » Businesses and their institutional partners will best support reintegration efforts when they include tailored approaches for different world views and ideologies, and allow for diverse identities, in part to combat stigmatization of this population.

¹ Foundation Ideas for Peace (2009). “Reinserción Económica y Sector Privado en Colombia” (Spanish)

² Angelika Rettberg (2012) *Peacebuilding in Colombia* (Spanish)

³ María Camila Gracia interview with Miguel Suárez, ACR Coordinator of Strategic Alliances (2017) “Why is the consolidation of the reintegration process not just the responsibility of the state?” (Spanish)

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE SOUTHERN CONE OF AFRICA

● **NAMIBIA'S** Reintegration challenges emerged after a protracted conflict intending to secure Independence for Namibia from South Africa. The People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) fighters began their reintegration in 1989. Shared contextual challenges with the Colombian case included 1) tendency for excombatants to be positioned in the public imaginary as a potential social problem, 2) variability in structures of local authority in the territories, and 3) strong class-based divides.

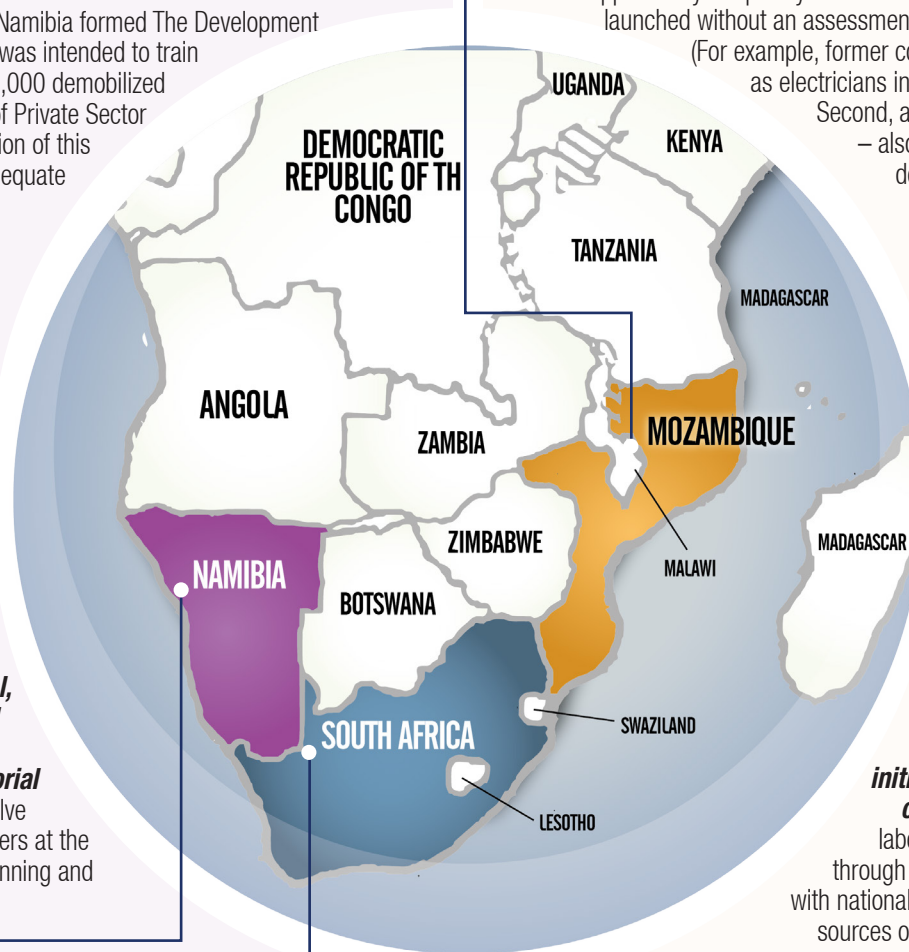
The Government of Namibia formed The Development Brigade in 1991, which was intended to train and find work for the 25,000 demobilized fighters. However, lack of Private Sector involvement in the creation of this initiative resulted in inadequate basic skill development and a lack of alignment between the needs of the Namibian industries and the capabilities of excombatants. The program did not accommodate adjustments for local contexts.

The primary lesson learned highlights the need to consider the role of the Private Sector *within the constellation of social, security, and political forces in which it operates at the territorial level*. For example, involve local Private Sector leaders at the territorial level in the planning and development phases.

● Seventeen years of civil war ended in 1992 in **MOZAMBIQUE** after the signing of the General Peace Agreement (GPA). However, the lack of clarity on how effective reintegration was to be achieved led to long-term challenges in the process.

Several shortcomings in the economic reintegration initiatives undermined their efficacy. First, the initial program raised expectations far beyond what it was capable of delivering as 1) a program supported by temporary international funds and 2) an initiative launched without an assessment of the local labor markets. (For example, former combatants received training as electricians in villages without electricity.) Second, a follow-up training program – also supported by international donors – resulted in hiring of excombatants as long as the funding endured, but immediate layoffs when the programs ended.

The inability of former combatants to acquire vocational skill sets of value to local labor market resulted in high levels of recidivism among mid- and high-ranking demobilized to organized criminal activity. From this and other experiences, policy and program designers have learned *to link economic reintegration initiatives to existing supply chains* to ensure relevance, labor linking, and sustainability through creating interdependencies with national – instead of international – sources of work and financial capital.



● The conflict in **SOUTH AFRICA** was a 30-year low-intensity civil war, with the transition beginning formally in 1993 through the multi-party Transitional Executive Council. One element of this was the Employer Initiative Retrenchment (EIR), which offered educational and vocational training to former combatants. However, opportunities presented through the EIR were both inadequate and dramatically underutilized – just over 5% of the demobilized combatants solicited vocational training through the program.

While this reintegration effort did collaborate with the Private Sector, it placed former combatants without training or educational leveling processes directly in companies, which resulted in several complications: 1) they were deployed alongside full-time workers who earned a regular salary (instead of the meager daily allowance earned by the excombatants); 2) these full-time workers tended to mock the excombatants for their low skill levels; and 3) the participants were verbally abused by their work supervisors.

Those who did receive vocational training apart learned professional skills that had no relevance in the communities in which they were planning to resettle. From this earlier experience in reintegration, policy designers have learned to develop both educational and psychosocial support programs in order to ensure that excombatants *are independently competitive in local labor markets with relevant technical capacities for territories in which they plan to reside*.

1. Namibia: Jareme Mullin (2013) *Namibia: Jobs for Some*

2. Mozambique: Jareme Mullin (2004) "Were the right lessons learned from Mozambique?"

3. South Africa: Lephophotho Mashike (2004) *Excombatants in post-conflict South Africa*