

Civil Society is an indispensable partner for weapon collection and DDRRR within the UN Programme of Action

A draft discussion paper circulated for comment

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We look forward to receiving your comments (rpoulton@comcast.net)

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Civil society organizations (CSO) are partners of choice for collecting hidden small arms and light weapons (SALW); for creating public awareness and building confidence in the peace process; for helping security services to enforce weapon bans; and for successful implementation of every step in DDRRR: disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion, rehabilitation, and reconciliation². It is pretty difficult to achieve any of these without mobilizing CSOs, yet government officials often ignore their natural CSO allies and are frequently jealous of them as rivals. We need to change that and promote private–public partnerships for DDRRR.

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² The exact meanings vary from programme to programme. Reinsertion is equivalent to Reintegration. DDR usually stands for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. World Bank DDR projects start with the second D since the World Bank cannot handle disarmament. This is a problem. DDR is a unit, and for this reason WB should disqualify itself from running DDRRR projects. Meanings may vary, but we can all agree the important thing is not the words, but the programme content and its speedy implementation.

Should civil society have a role in disarmament?

The UN Programme of Action makes several references to civil society, but they are fleeting nods of recognition rather than a commitment to partnership between governments and civil society organizations. Section 16 of the Preamble acknowledges “the important contribution of society, including non-governmental organizations and industry in, inter alia, assisting Governments to prevent... etc”. This feels like a paragraph inserted by a well-meaning diplomat, which officials from other countries accepted wearily and probably without comprehension, because it was easier for them to leave it in than to argue it out.

The Malian and Senegalese ambassadors may have drafted the sentence. They could describe the role of civil society in weapon collection, conflict transformation, and decentralized governance. Both countries regularly include civil society representatives in their official delegations to regional small arms seminars and other international conferences. An inclusive, decentralized philosophy has brought Malian and Senegalese civil society leaders into partnership with government officials on a whole range of issues, of which disarmament is only one.

The classic example of civil society participation in disarmament is the 1996 Peace of Timbuktu, which ended the Malian rebellion launched by armed Tuaregs in June 1990 against a tired and corrupt dictatorship.³ Especially interesting after the 1992 signing of the ‘National Pact’ peace accord, was the failure of DDR. Fighting broke out again in 1993. Peace and disarmament were finally achieved through the negotiation skills of civil society,⁴ a strategy explicitly favoured and promoted by the democratically elected president of Mali at the time, Dr Alpha Oumar Konare.⁵

What then is this creature called “civil society”? We define it as “those citizens who form themselves into associations to promote an interest that does not include seeking or exercising political power.” The individual is a citizen, but the citizen does not become part of civil society unless and until he or she joins a group: village association, women’s group, credit union, farmers’ cooperative, trade union, parent–teacher association, drama, art or football club, etc. Even private sector, profit-making companies may become active in civil society by joining the Chamber of Commerce or a professional organization that promotes their interests. CSOs are “representative” though not always “elected”, and are the natural partners of government in each sector of the economy. A one-party state typically eliminates CSOs because they sometimes say “no” and threaten the dominance of the tyrant.

³ Robin E. Poulton and Ibrahim Ag Youssouf, 1998, *A Peace of Timbuktu: Democratic Governance, Development and African Peacebuilding*, Geneva, UNIDIR.

⁴ Meetings brought together all the interested parties who traded at the local market. Each meeting was chaired by the eldest man present, with government officials and military officers in the audience, forbidden to speak in the debate. After each large meeting, young men joined the local DDR process. See *ibid.*, p. 109.

⁵ Dr Konare is currently Chairman of the Commission of the African Union, in Addis Ababa.

The role of CSOs and INGOs in DDRRR

Peace agreements signed by political leaders are often inadequate. Without a major effort for reconciliation at the grass roots, the destructive causes of conflict cannot be addressed or transformed into sustainable, positive peace. Peacekeeping is only the first stage of peace building, and that is why a single “R” is not enough. The 1999 DPKO definition of DDR and “reintegration”⁶ seems out of date in the light of civil society’s modern rehabilitation role for refugees and communities, for women and child soldiers. DPKO needs civil society!

International non-governmental organizations (INGO) are only one part of civil society. They do a great job on long-term development and providing humanitarian relief, but they are sometimes guilty of suffocating civil society in small countries. The powerful CSOs of India, Bangladesh or Brazil cannot be swamped by INGOs: resources are vast, their civil society throbs with energy. In a one-party state, however, it is easy to lose sight of indigenous civil society. This is all the more common where social structures have broken down through natural catastrophe or widespread civil unrest.

Donors and local government officials become focused on INGOs, their fleets of vehicles, their ample supplies of cash and their professional competence. Sometimes the INGOs themselves lose sight of civil society. In Liberia we were dismayed to find each foreign organization creating a separate village committee, thereby stimulating competition and discord in village communities that rely on harmony and solidarity for survival. Village Development Committees (VDC) are vital for rehabilitating villages and schools, and for the reintegration and reconciliation of demobilized soldiers and former rebels. If NGOs encourage divisions in a VDC, they weaken civil society and threaten sustainable peace.⁷

A good rule of thumb for judging INGOs is to study to what extent their work actually strengthens local civil society. Local and foreign NGOs shouldn’t compete for donor funds. INGOs should import new financial and managerial resources. In the long term each society must solve its own problems, so INGOs that refuse to work with local CSOs will “do harm”. NGOs are understandably jealous of their independence, but they need to understand that feeding refugees and treating patients is not effective if it fails to recognize their identity as people who must rebuild their communities and participate in DDRRR.

Incoherence among INGOs is exacerbated by the weakness of local government, and by the reluctance of the United Nations to take a strong political leadership role. It is curious how few UN agencies or NGOs have studied the successful coordination of a massive aid programme in Ethiopia during the 1970s under the leadership of Kurt Jansen,

⁶ “Reintegration programmes are an essential concomitant of a successful demobilization effort and refer to programme of cash or in-kind compensation, training and income generation meant to increase the potential for the economic and social reintegration of ex-combatants and their families.” From the Introduction in Lessons Learned Unit of the United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations, 1999, *Disarmament, Demolilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in a Peacekeeping Environment*, DPKO, July.

⁷ See www.cadinc.com/dnh for the Do No Harm Project, which seeks to ensure that humanitarian assistance in conflict settings avoids exacerbating the problems, and helps local people to disengage from fighting without creating more problems and social divisions.

who was the UN Special Representative at that time. That was a UN, NGO, and Ethiopian success story.⁸

Liberia during 2004–2005 had non-functional ministries led by faction chiefs instead of 'government'. Officials are drafting rules to crush local associations with Monrovia's greed for US dollars. Paying a \$250 registration fee destroys a village women's group. Parliament needs better information about the sources of INGO funds so ministries don't think they are losing donor money to NGOs. Meanwhile CSOs and the UN should work to protect village committees and women's associations from bribes and taxes: for these CSOs are essential to a successful DDRRR process.

Paragraphs 20, 22 and 40 in the UN Programme of Action ignore disarmament, but they do recognise the role of CSOs in raising public awareness and building confidence, in reintegrating child soldiers, and in eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. For all of these reasons, strengthening civil society must be part of any DDRRR strategy. Strong CSOs are vital to maintain the peace we are all striving to achieve.

Weapon collection depends on the people

Eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons may be simple on a small island with few ports, but it is very difficult to patrol long borders that meander across deserts, through jungles, or across mountains. To limit arms and ammunition smuggling in such regions the local population has to be enrolled to support the rule of law, which they will only do if they are convinced that the government's strategies are more beneficial for their livelihood than those of the smugglers.

There are places like Sicily, Chechnya and the mountains of Afghanistan where government loyalty will never trump family, clan or tribal loyalties. To collect weapons and produce peaceful coexistence in such places, decentralization appears the only viable alternative to repression. Marshal Tito in Yugoslavia and Saddam Hussein in Iraq kept their countries together as police states; both places fell apart once the repression was removed. Weapon management in such places needs both an iron fist, and decentralized popular consent that SALW should be controlled.

Cambodia's post-UNTAC⁹ government in the mid-1990s faced the equally difficult case of a heavily armed Khmer Rouge. Through a combination of astute political manoeuvres and decisive military interventions, Hun Sen emerged as Prime Minister and, by the public destruction of 3,800 weapons in the national stadium in 1999, he made weapon collection and destruction a national priority for reducing violence and achieving sustainable peace.

In the jungles of the Vietnamese and Thai borders lie dozens of Khmer Rouge (KR) villages that do not even figure on maps. Ruled by the Khmer Rouge since the early 1970s, most men had served in the KR army. This was warlord territory. Villages were filled with SALW, grenades, mines and explosives of all kinds. A voluntary weapon

⁸ See Kurt Jansson, Michael Harris and Angela Penrose, 1979, *The Ethiopian Famine*, Zed Books.

⁹ United Nations Transitional Administration in Cambodia (UNTAC) ran the country during 1993 and organized elections before handing over the country to a new government.

collection programme (VWCP) placed the responsibility for peace with the people themselves.¹⁰

Khmers have little concept of 'civil society', but the culture offered monks and pagodas as focal points. Local chiefs were involved at every level, starting with the provincial Governors. At pagoda mass meetings, community development projects and better security conditions were offered to these poor and isolated people, in exchange for a VWCP. Governors disciplined the troops, and the EU supplied training and minimal equipment to the local police (radios, whiteboards, bicycles, a motor bike). Local Khmer and international NGOs were mobilized to train both police and communities on law and human rights, to create community awareness and to put in place the development process: rapid rural appraisal of needs, then community participation to build schools or wells or bridges. Weapons were deposited anonymously in pagodas for collection by the police.

Public destruction of collected weapons showed the sceptical population that fighting had finished, and this brought in more weapons. The government burned its 170,000th weapon in September 2005.

Disarmament and economic investment

Disarmament is not separate from the rest of peace-building. Though we define disarmament to include the immediate destruction of collected weapons, it is a political and not a technical matter. Disarmament is part of conflict transformation, establishing the primacy of civilian government over warlordism and reducing levels of gun violence. CSOs are partners on the same level as political parties. DDRRR needs to be run as a single holistic process. Field experience shows that it is a mistake to separate disarmament from reintegration and reconciliation.

SALW and armed violence are sometimes 'perceived as disarmament issues, dominated by Foreign Ministries'.¹¹ However, if SALW control is traditionally the territory of peace agreements, or Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes targeted at former combatants, it is also fundamentally linked to human security and a range of other aspects of the welfare of civilian populations. (...) DDR programmes tackle SALW in the disarmament phase, but frequently depend for success on the delivery of development solutions in the reintegration phase.¹²

¹⁰ This was the European Union's Assistance for Curbing Small Arms and Light Weapons in Cambodia (ASAC) project, led first by Henny van der Graaf and currently by David de Beer. E-mail: eu.smallarms@online.com.kh. Website: <http://www.eu-asac.org> The present author was Weapons-for-Development Advisor to EU-ASAC, which includes weapon storage, legal drafting and public awareness in its comprehensive strategy. See the summary of progress in R.E. Poulton, Seng Son and Neil Wilford, 2004, "Micro-disarmament and Peace-building: The European Union ASAC Programme in Cambodia after Three Years of Activity", *Disarmament Forum* no. 2, Geneva, UNIDIR.

¹¹ UK Department for International Development, 2003, *Tackling Poverty by Reducing Armed Violence*, London, p. 12.

¹² From the Introduction in Adrian Wilkinson, 2005, *Linkages between SALW and Development in South Eastern Europe*, SEESAC, see www.seesac.org.

The proliferation of illegal firearms distorts economic priorities, discourages investment, and distracts government from rebuilding economic and social services. Insecurity incites people to obtain weapons, which further stokes the fires of fear. These are compelling reasons for mobilizing civil society from the very beginning to support disarmament. No one suggests that civil society can stop violence by itself, but CSOs have proved to be essential partners for governments and international community in making DDRRR successful.

Civil society can also be turned into an early warning system where violence threatens. SALW are not just tools of violence, but a cause of violence. Analysis of the situation in Kosovo shows that, while the danger of conflict existed for several years, war broke out only with easy access to weapons after 549,775 weapons were looted from Albania's state armouries, together with 12 million rounds of ammunition. People in the mountain villages knew what was happening. "Then there were guns, first only some, which is usual, but then a lot of weapons being talked about. I didn't see them, but I heard about them. We knew all this, but still nobody was watching or listening to us in Kosovo."¹³

Demobilization and community involvement

When combatants give up their firearms and enter a camp, the cantonment process needs to be short and swift. Ex-fighters should stay no longer than three weeks in demobilization camps, having medical examinations, physical education and team sports, seeing peace-oriented videos, and beginning civilian life with courses on democracy, governance and the rule of law. From there, men and women need to move into retraining. It doesn't matter whether they are going to become soldiers or policemen, carpenters or accountants, they need to move swiftly into the next part of their lives. The sack of Freetown on 6 January 1999 was predictable (and predicted) because demobilized fighters in World Bank camps near Lungi Airport, a few miles from the capital city, were bored, poorly fed, and getting angry.

Much the same happened in Mali in 1992, when army and rebel fighters found themselves sharing the same camp. They still had their weapons, and after a dispute shooting restarted. The second DDR exercise in late 1995 was successful because Malians learned the lessons.¹⁴

CSOs are needed as partners to bring the ex-fighters into the camps, and to get them out again quickly. Just as UNHCR has NGO partners running refugee camps and establishing child protection programmes, so the DDR camps need CSOs to organize food, sport and civic education programmes for all, and vocational training for those who are moving to civilian life.

Child protection programmes are important in every peace process. Militarized camps often exclude girls who carry ammunition and become soldiers' wives, but who fail the "strip down this rifle" test. Many rebel wives are still children who need the benefits of DDRRR. Unless they are demobilized with care, these girls will raise a future

¹³ Ibid., pp. 38-40.

¹⁴ R.E. Poulton and I. ag Youssouf, op. cit., pp. 115-130.

generation of child soldiers. Officials often ignore the special needs of young people. In Burundi, to take just one example, children have been used both as fighters and as 'shields' in front of the 'warriors'. To make them more effective as shields, their eardrums were pierced to reduce the kids' sensitivity to gunfire.¹⁵ Such children obviously need special attention to rebuild their lives as useful, peaceful citizens and happy, loving parents. This can only happen if civil society is fully involved: community associations to receive the children, and specialized trainers who will help deaf children learn to read and write.

It is worth emphasizing the important role of CSOs as partners in peace building, at this time when the African Union is developing its Post Conflict Strategy within the context of the Economic, Cultural and Social Councils (ECOSOCCs) programme of the AU—more particularly through the emerging Peace and Security Clusters of each national ECOSOCC. Acronyms are the language of diplomats and bureaucrats. The structures and committees leave very little space for civil society organizations as partners, let alone for the demobilized child soldiers. For them, a successful and sympathetic DDRRR programme means the difference between a happy life or failure, between integrating civilian life as a useful citizen, or returning to the violent life of an angry rebel.

Reintegration and civilian life

Lessons learned from DDR programmes in Central America¹⁶ show that civil society was crucial for weapon collection and reintegration in Nicaragua and El Salvador in the early 1990s. Nicaraguan church organizations took the lead, while in El Salvador the Movimiento Patriótico Contra la Delincuencia (MPCD) ran a Goods for Guns campaign exchanging firearms for pharmaceutical coupons and consumer products. Weapons were handed to the police, and destroyed by the Ministry of Defence.

It seems that CSOs were less implicated in the reintegration stage, and this may be why it was less successful. Agricultural training went well, but high interest bank loans and land tenure problems led many Salvadorians to feel politically alienated. In Nicaragua, the Sandinista government was seen as biased by the Contras. Many on both sides left the rural settlement areas for the cities, or joined gangs and rearmed from hidden caches. In Haiti the US—led disarmament effort in 1994–1995 was largely unsuccessful because CSOs were not involved and because weapons were purchased for cash. Haiti proves that unless the international community builds peace structures and funds the three "R"s of DDRRR, money spent on disarmament is wasted.¹⁷

Governments involved in a conflict cannot be neutral, and may be a part of the problem. Not all CSOs are unbiased, of course, but they may be more trusted by local people than government officials, and CSOs are rarely involved in fighting. Civil society

¹⁵ Coalition burundaise contre l'utilisation des enfants soldat, tel: +257 220 613, mobile: +257 601 921, email: adrientuyaga@hotmail.com.

¹⁶ Lessons Learned Unit of the UN DPKO, op. cit., pp. 36-55.

¹⁷ Civil society organizations are not even mentioned in the study by Marcos Mendiburu and Sarah Meek, 1996, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Haiti*, Geneva, UNIDIR. This is one of a series produced by UNIDIR's Disarmament and Conflict Resolution project, which is a valuable source of information and analysis for anyone studying SALW and disarmament.

and government complete each other. Comments that “NGOs do what the government fails to do”, reveal a flawed perception of governance. The omniscient, all-powerful centralized government is out of date, and ill-equipped to handle the decentralized and flexible aspects of DDRRR.

The role of government is to secure the nation’s security and infrastructure. Teaching car mechanics is not a government’s job. Ex-combatants who opt for service in the army, police, customs or coastguard services will join the government payroll. Everyone else should be trained by groups in the private (for profit) or social (non-profit = CSO) sectors of the economy to obtain the skills needed for their new, civilian careers.

Mobilizing CSOs is especially critical for reintegration because they can prepare the communities in which the ex-fighters are going to live. In Central America the church has a major role to play. Many Africans and Asians reintegrate ex-fighters through ancestral purification ceremonies that purge young people of the atrocities they have committed, often against their own families. It is necessary “to kill the goat” (the origin of the word “scapegoat”) as a sacrifice, and that is not a government task. On every continent, reintegration implies that civil society leaders must take back their children. For NGOs, working successfully with communities on reintegration demands humility, and the use of action–research methodologies.

Social reintegration means participation—not just in economic activities but also in community activities. The two are inseparable. Without formal, and in many cases even ritual re-admittance to the community, demobilized combatants have access neither to land nor to the mutual support systems of the family and community as a whole.¹⁸

Rehabilitation and building bridges for children

Rehabilitation refers to the social and physical structures of a war-torn society, and also to its people and institutions. Violence and brutality leave deep psycho-social scars, especially if rape becomes a weapon of subjugation and ethnic humiliation. Western medical approaches to individual trauma have limited relevance in cultures where community solidarity provides better forms of treatment. Sudanese women in Darfur camps have created “child friendly spaces”. Constructed by the women from wood and grass or mud brick, they are centres where neither men nor weapons are allowed. Here children feel safe while their mothers talk. They comfort each other, design strategies to reduce their risk of rape, and create projects to restart their lives. Such refugee rehabilitation models are suitable for women and child soldiers in DDRRR camps. They have been developed by NGOs like the Christian Children’s Fund (CCF) and InterSOS¹⁹ and they illustrate how INGOs can work to reconstruct civil society in a way that no government could.

These unfortunate people need to move forward as quickly as possible from the camps to their next stage in life. For women and child soldiers, this means education—

¹⁸ *When Combatants become Civilians – GTZ programmes for demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants*, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, 1997.

¹⁹ CCF, the American branch of Child Fund International is a pioneer in this area together with UNICEF. InterSOS is an Italian NGO working in Chad and Darfur, and is a partner there of UNICEF, UNHCR and CCF.

not necessarily formal schooling on the colonial model (which is often extraordinarily cost-ineffective) but bridges to literacy and numeracy, a diploma and a vocational target so that the victims of war can earn a living and some self-respect. Afghan women have been reinventing education since the fall of the Taliban. Many Afghan and African children have lost a limb, or a hand, yet they must find a way to survive and this requires a commitment found more easily in civil society than in government.

To facilitate the reintegration of former child soldiers, schools should be rehabilitated as quickly as possible in the areas affected by the conflict, and teachers trained and recruited. Awareness campaigns should also be undertaken to avoid the stigmatisation of children who have been soldiers, and to support their integration—with care and compassion—into their home or host communities.²⁰

Rebuilding physical infrastructures like bridges and schools brings hope, providing a tangible proof that peace has arrived and the population can hope for better days. It is also the best way to get the economy moving again. As soon as roads and bridges are repaired (and provided that a reasonable level of security is assured) trade will restart, weekly markets will function.

The third part of rehabilitation is rebuilding the nation state, a concept alien to many cultures. The nation state was invented by the American and French revolutions, and around the 1820s in Latin America. It was imposed on the Middle East and Africa during the 20th century. The “failed state syndrome” bred “terrorism” in Afghanistan, as well as many of the wars that created DDRRR. Rehabilitating the institutions of failed nation states is a vital but neglected offshoot of DDRRR.

The importance of civil society for reconstruction and rehabilitation has been ignored. UNIDIR research shows clearly that peace and disarmament cannot be achieved without the active participation of civil society organizations. Civil society (including inter-faith councils, press associations and the media) leads political and cultural development in much of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Civil society is one of the five pillars in the modern West African state, alongside the executive, the legislature, security forces and the judiciary. Civil society makes the other pillars strong. Without the pressure of human rights organizations and strong local governance groups, abuse of power will not be curbed, judges will be weak, police and soldiers will be venal, there will be no public debate and no rule of law. Without CSOs to mobilize a nation’s communities, DDR cannot succeed.

Reconciliation—a pebble thrown into a pool

DDR without reconciliation cannot breed peace. As the Balkans remind us daily, only people who believe in peace will give up their weapons. In Afghanistan, DDR teams were ambushed by soldiers refusing to disarm because they didn’t believe in the fragile peace.²¹ Liberian rebel generals speak openly of hiding their weapons because they

²⁰ *Still under the gun: More child soldiers recruited*, Amnesty International Public Appeal for Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), AI Index: Afr 62/009/2004, June 2004.

²¹ UNDP’s Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme was forced to change its disarmament plans in Chhor province after an Afghan National Army convoy going to disarm 41 Division with American advisors and two ANBP employees was attacked north of Chaghcharan on Thursday 29 July 2004.

believe the October 2005 elections will launch a new wave of warfare. The South Africans created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the unique purpose of purging the State's guilt of apartheid. When exported to other places and cultures, the TRC mechanism has proved inappropriate. To each culture its own process of reconciliation.

Peace agreements are not enough. What all processes have in common is the need to bring people together—not just politicians. Only by combining politicians and CSOs can we mobilize the “social capital”²² that brings reconciliation and sustainable peace. Africa has invented the national conference²³ as a mechanism where the state meets the nation: this is the forum where government and civil society leaders reconcile opponents and find solutions for the causes of violence.

The little known Guinea Fowl War of 1993–1995 in northern Ghana provides a case study of civil society reconciliation. On 31 January 1994 a Konkomba and a Nanumba disagreed over the market price of a guinea fowl. An altercation degenerated rapidly into interethnic violence. The bird was a spark, igniting a tinderbox of economic deprivation and competition for increasingly scarce resources between sedentary, acephalous societies and other groups with chiefs.²⁴ Migration and co-existence are easy in times of plenty. Pressures from increasing populations and declining wealth calls us to invent new forms of reconciliation for the globalized economy.

In the Guinea Fowl War, leaders were identified in each community who were open to dialogue. They travelled from their communities to a neutral place (the city of Kumasi) where a week of listening clarified points of agreement and areas of discord. The secret of consensus building is mutual respect. When everyone knows they are being heard, they are themselves more inclined to listen. This is how social capital is rebuilt. Only civil society structures can make it happen because they do not seek to exercise direct political power.

The 41 Division had been officially disbanded in June. The attackers were 41 Division soldiers who refused to be disarmed.

²² “Social Capital is almost the opposite of the financial capital that has come to dominate the culture of the West. Social capital is the sum of the human, cultural and spiritual values and patterns of personal interaction in a society.” R.E. Poulton and I. ag Youssouf, op. cit., p. 15.

²³ Disarmament has been a key element of recent national conferences in Tanzania, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Mozambique, and in the 1990s in Mali, Niger, and Benin. See the Keynote address by Victoria Gamba in *The UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons—Building Capacity and Partnerships for Implementation*, International Policy Dialogue 28–29 April 2003, INWENT Development Policy Forum and Federal German Ministry of Economic Cooperation, www.inwent.org.

²⁴ The Nanumba, Dogomba, Gonja and Mamprusi people have paramount chiefs, most of whom are Muslim (although many of their people follow ancestral monotheism in preference to the imported variety). The Konkomba, Nchumuru and Nawuri are acephalous—instead of a ‘head’ they use a non-centralized political system. The story of the dispute and the reconciliation is told in summary by Emmy Toonen, 1999, in Monique Mekenkamp, Paul van Tongeren, Hans van de Veen (eds), *Searching for Peace in Africa*, European Platform for Conflict Prevention; and in detail in Hizkias Assefa, *Peace and Conflict in Africa: Reflections from an African Peacebuilder*, www.brandeis.edu/ethics/resources/publications/Assefa2.pdf. Assefa led the civil society reconciliation process on behalf of the Nairobi Peace Initiative, founded in 1984 with support from the World Council of Churches.

Members of the first Kumasi group went home with ideas. They found others who would listen and who were invited to the next, enlarged round of dialogue. The fifth Kumasi meeting—almost a year after the process began—produced a draft peace agreement. This was signed in March 1996, with the acephalous Konkomba being allowed to have a Paramount Chief.

The pebble thrown into a pool creates ripples all over the pond—this illustration of chaos theory could be the start of a new reconciliation theory, a painstaking and very African process of consensus building that could be exported worldwide. It would take the 'palaver hut' system of community mediation and extend it to a region. That is how the Peace of Timbuktu was negotiated in Mali in 1995, while the Guinea Fowl negotiations were proceeding. In both cases local CSOs created peace through reconciliation, but it could not have happened without the national leadership creating political space, overruling army reluctance and opposition from some governors. In both cases international civil society agencies were catalysts (and provided tiny funding to lubricate the machinery of peace). Partnership between governments and CSOs creates a negotiating space, and this may be the future pattern for peace building and DDRRR.

Women in DDRRR and civil society

Civil society brings another considerable asset to the peace table: CSOs provide a space where women can work for reconciliation and disarmament. The public sector and the private commercial sector of the economy are dominated by men. The social economy, on the other hand, provides opportunities for women. Marketing, health and education cooperatives often benefit women more than men. Women take leadership roles in savings and loan associations that—unlike banks—offer services of proximity in rural and urban areas close to where mothers work.

This is important. Wives, mothers and grandmothers can wield enormous influence over the young men (and occasionally the young women) who have the weapons we are trying to remove from society. After civil war, we don't have to collect and destroy all the weapons: we seek their removal from daily life. Assault rifles buried in the paddy fields or stored in a remote mountain cave can be retrieved if war re-ignites—but in the meantime they are no longer destabilizing the peace, nor raising levels of domestic violence and crime.

If we mobilize women for disarmament, they can create a climate of peace and persuade their men to hand in or bury their firearms. Bringing women into a leadership role for disarmament is something civil society does well—witness the achievements of Viva Rio, a non-governmental organization founded in 1991 to fight violence in Brazil's state of Rio de Janeiro. In addition to public awareness campaigns using popular music and art to change attitudes (including the spectacular 'Mural of Pain') and persuade the government to pass new laws to ban civilian use of firearms, it is their practical disarmament success that made Viva Rio famous. On 24 June 2001 the CSO destroyed 100,000 weapons, the largest single destruction in the world.²⁵ One year later in July,

²⁵ Viva Rio, <http://www.vivario.org.br>, works in partnership with government and police authorities. Their database on the 750,000 firearms registered and/or seized in the state of Rio de

they organized the destruction of 10,000 weapons confiscated by the police, in support of International Gun Destruction Day which the United Nations created largely under pressure from international civil society.²⁶ That is the type of story that justifies the role of civil society as a partner for disarmament.

Janeiro shows how partnership between civil society and government can be beneficial for society. See www.desarme.org for details of these weapons.

²⁶ IANSA, the International Action Network on Small Arms is an international coalition of CSOs working to promote a treaty regulating and limiting the trade in small arms and light weapons. See www.iansa.org.