

MCR 02



**Challenges in Reintegrating
Ex-Combatants into Mainstream
Social Life**

Lessons from Cambodia

Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution

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Abstract

In every war affected community any where in the world, ex combatants¹ are a serious threat to any form of change from conflict to peace resulting in reversing into the conflict in many cases or creating new conflicts in others. Mostly it is armed young men with no or extremely less economic bases to support themselves and their dependents armed with nothing but military training. Reintegration is a very long and sensitive procedure without a clear ending or conclusion. Planned detailed programs in suitable economic atmospheres will not guarantee that quality of life of targeted ex-combatants will certainly equal living conditions of the lowest layers of the civilian population². This effort is to provide my view as a member of a rural community development mission based in Cambodia and lessons learned by other related programs during my presence in Cambodia in the process of demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in Cambodia. I will be sharing the lessons extracted from our experience and from research and documents done on it. This will also provide a list of key readings as well as other useful resources on the subject. Good practices that should be implemented in similar environments and bad lessons that should be avoided are explained. Only an ex combatants would know that it is indeed a hard road home...³

“Nothing is worth doing, than what the world says is impossible”⁴

¹ The term ex combatant is used in this essay to refer to ex soldiers of state forces and other armed groups

² UNDP Mine Action, Annual Report (1998), p. 37.

³ Pearson Center Report on Reintegration of Ex combatants (1997), p. 40.

⁴ Anonymous