

from military activities into development.

The plea therefore would be for a more holistic approach to the issues of peace-building, development, and conversion processes. Such an approach could lend itself to the construction of broad constituencies, normally disparate, yet potentially capable of being united by the single issue of peace. In this way, we can connect the issue of peace in both the South and the North to the question of disarmament, again both North and South.

Support for Ex-Combatant Reintegration

Among the action possibilities we would stress is the promotion of national and international budgetary allocations to encourage the demobilization and effective reintegration programs for ex-combatants. Outright calls for the abolition of armed forces altogether are incomplete at best, and irresponsible at worst, if they do not deal with the human and security implications of demobilization.

Ex-combatants face enormous obstacles to achieve re-integration. This is especially the case in countries with seriously deteriorated economies and implementing structural adjustment policies. There are also generalized feelings of frustration and despair sparking occasional violent reactions to what the ex-soldiers considered lack of governmental compliance with demobilization accords and the crippling absence of employment opportunities on account of the generalized economic crisis.

Still ex-combatants acting through their associations can play an active role in promoting urban and rural social stability by being allowed to have a voice and participation in reintegration and reconciliation programs. With steady accompaniment by NGO peace-builders, countries such as Nicaragua and El Salvador have witnessed a steady reduction in the levels of hostility and distrust between ex-combatants from each side, as avenues for mutuality and constructive interaction could develop and enable ex-combatants not only to reconcile but to make peace-building contributions to their community.