



# Ex-pirates in Somalia: Disengagement Processes and Reintegration Programming

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## Introduction

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) occur in conflict-ridden, weakened states in which one or more armed non-state actors that may be party to a DDR process have challenged the monopoly of power. Other actors may remain outside the formal DDR efforts and continue to undermine community security and to challenge the fledgling state and other armed competitors. The inception, escalation, longevity, and ending of armed conflicts often involves tangled regional dimensions that challenge the simplistic characterization of civil wars as being only internal. Over the last two decades, the UN as well as regional organizations, have taken a neutral third-party role in the increasingly challenging peace building operations around the world, from political missions to full-fledged peacekeeping operations. In retrospect, the multilateral actors and applied researchers have tended to view the success of these efforts as mixed. In particular, reintegration has received insufficient attention and resources and may have an inadequate evidence base. Given that the global recession currently threatens the funding of multilateral peace building interventions, a pressing concern is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of international operations. The research community is being challenged to produce solid applied reintegration research that is relevant to both policy and planning.

The research project aims to outline the key analytical and practical concerns regarding reintegration processes in Somalia, Nepal and Afghanistan. This present subsidiary country report on Somalia is divided into two main parts. The first part explores the processes, conditions and circumstances that influence decisions to join piracy groups in Somalia, as well as decisions to disengage from the groups and activities. A question of particular interest is whether the decision to join a piracy group is made by the individuals alone or influenced by others, such as family members and peers. The second part of the report looks at the Norwegian Church Aid's (NCA) "Alternative Livelihood to Piracy" (ALP) project, which is facilitating the disengagement and reintegration of pirates in Somalia. Rather than being an evaluation of the ALP project, the report studies the processes of disengagement from piracy groups and reintegration into productive non-violent livelihood as well as the role a project can play in these processes in the Somali context. These insights hold wider relevance for programming for second generation reintegration programs with their increasing attention to community security and the critical linkages between social and economic reintegration.

### *Theoretical and analytical perspectives*

A number of studies and research traditions have addressed various aspects of how individuals join and leave different types of reclusive, militant, extremist or criminal groups or scenes (for an overview, see Bjørge and Horgan 2009:5–10). However, the traditional focus of this analytical interest has been on the processes of recruitment into the groups, rather than on disengagement and reintegration into mainstream society. The last 10–15 years have seen an increased level of interest in the processes of disengagement or desistance from crime. Many of the factors and processes involved in leaving religious 'cults', terrorist organizations, racist groups and criminal youth gangs appear strikingly similar, despite the great differences in ideological content, background and aspirations. The social movement literature (e.g., della Porta 1995) is one of the bodies of research that has addressed these issues, studying a wide variety of movements. A related approach is to analyse these processes as identity changes (Ebaugh 1988). Studies of the sociology of

religion of joining and leaving new religious movements ('sects') have also made significant contributions to theoretical development on these processes, including the understanding of push and pull factors and the role of disillusionment in the process of disengagement (e.g., Wright 1987). Criminological studies on desistance from crime (e.g., Maruna 2001; Laub and Sampson 2001), particularly disengagement from criminal gangs (e.g., Decker and Lauritsen 2002; Pyrooz and Decker 2011) have also been applicable for the study of other fields. Studies on disengagement from racist and right-wing extremist groups (Bjørgero 1997:193–246) are also relevant to a wide variety of other extremist or terrorist movements and groups (Bjørgero and Horgan 2009).

A common theme in all these research traditions is the importance of social ties, both in the process of joining the group or movement as well as in the process of disengagement. Individuals typically join a group or movement because their friends or family members are involved (Sageman 2004:178) although they sometimes join despite family opposition. After disengagement, family, relatives and clan may play an important role in the individuals' reintegration (Boucek 2009:219). A community can be a lived ('socio-geographic') place with varying degrees of belonging and an imagined community whose spatial boundaries are often shifting. When individuals join and leave various types of criminal or militant groups, relations with the mainstream community vary. In some cases, joining a stigmatized community means cutting most ties to mainstream society, which is also a powerful moral community. Being accepted back into the society is difficult due to the stigma and social rejection (Bjørgero 2009:33–36, 41–42). For other types of militant groups (such as Hamas, IRA), becoming a fighter is widely acclaimed as an act of heroism to defend the community.

These processes are frequently described as criminal/extremist careers, typically with a beginning, a peak and an end. The various research traditions share the view that individual decisions to join or leave are usually the product of a mixture of factors and motivations working in tandem. Various forms of disillusionment are usually the main triggering factors (Bjørgero 2011). There is increasing evidence that the processes involved in joining and leaving criminal or militant groups are quite generic, and these patterns are relevant to piracy groups in Somalia.

Based on their work on terrorism and violent extremism, Bjørgero and Horgan developed a set of theoretical models and concepts on exit processes and disengagement from armed groups. '*Disengagement*' refers to changes in behavior and participation in social groups and activities. '*Deradicalisation*' refers to changes in values and attitudes. Theories on disengagement processes are built around *push* and *pull* factors. Push factors are negative forces and circumstances that make certain social affiliations unattractive and unpleasant. Conversely, pull factors offer attractive and rewarding alternatives to a life of crime (Bjørgero 2009:36). Bjørgero and Horgan's conceptualization of disengagement processes is used in this study to map and highlight the informant's processes of engaging with, and disengaging from, piracy groups in Somalia. In addition the concept of a multi-centric notion of community is used. This analytical concept includes a citizen-based community such as a national community, community of believers in a political cause or in a faith, and community as a particular kind of lived place, with a certain level of social cohesion. To date, only the latter reference has been recognized in the standard IDDRS guidelines and programming manuals. Viewing combatants as entering "a community" (as a close-knit place) after they have completed a DDR program or returned to civilian life on their own

disregards the fact that they are often deeply entangled throughout the DDR process in the real or imagined political, social, or religious communities that initially motivated them to join armed groups. This may present grave obstacles to them leaving the group; or, on the contrary, they may enable a return to civilian life.

## Country setting and international interventions

Somalia has undergone a protracted civil war, mass famine, and large emigration since the 1991 fall of President Siad Barre's regime. Somalia has been referred to as a failed state and experts have questioned the quality of international interventions in its violent conflicts (Lewis 2008:ix).

The first UN intervention force, UNISOM I, took place in 1991, but had a small force and a limited mandate (Bøås 2009:91). It was followed by the US-led "Operation Restore Hope" in 1992, which was drawn into the inter-clan conflicts. In 1993, two American military helicopters were shot down and images of dead US personnel, dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, were broadcast worldwide (Lewis 2008:7). As a result, the American and UNISOM II forces withdrew. United Nations agencies and NGOs relocated their headquarters to Nairobi (Kenya) for security reasons which became the base for international efforts in Somalia. In 2005, Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was established however, encountering problems, as it "*found itself confronting public hostility to its claimed status*" in Somalia (Lewis 2008:85). Al-Shabaab, a splinter group of the Islamic Court Union, was a major opponent of the TFG and controlled large parts of Mogadishu and South-Central Somalia. In 2006, Ethiopia intervened and defeated the Islamic Court Union, but the two-year-long direct engagement still did not improve the political situation (Bamfo 2010). In 2007 the African Union deployed a peacekeeping operation in Somalia; AMISOM<sup>1</sup> with an extended mandate until 2012.

In spite of the weak state structures, Somali society has a strong clan system. Both Islam and the traditional clan system underlie the informal institutions that manage social and economic activities (Lewis 2008). The various clans fight among themselves for territorial and resource control.

After the overthrow of Siad Barre, different political and administrative units started to emerge. In 1991, Somaliland declared itself an independent state with a parliamentary-style government and functioning administrative machinery. In 1998, Puntland also established separate political institutions, without seeking complete independence from larger Somalia. The regional state of Puntland is still politically unstable, with a highly centralized power structure that creates safe havens for criminal groups such as pirates in the more decentralized areas. Piracy<sup>2</sup> has been an increasingly concerning problem in Somali waters

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<sup>1</sup> The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

<sup>2</sup> According to ICC International Maritime Bureau (2011:3), "piracy is defined in Article 101 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as any of the following acts :

- (a) any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft, and directed:
  - (i) on the high seas, against another ship or aircraft, or against persons or property on board such ship or aircraft;
  - (ii) against a ship, aircraft, persons or property in a place outside the jurisdiction of any State;
- (b) any act of voluntary participation in the operation of a ship or of an aircraft with knowledge of facts making it a pirate ship or aircraft;
- (c) any act inciting or of intentionally facilitating an act described in sub-paragraph (a) or (b)."



over the last 10 years. In 2008, the number of piracy attacks off the coast of Somalia almost doubled from the previous year (Middleton 2008:3). Reported piracy attacks and attempted attacks by Somali pirates in 2011 were the highest ever registered, and almost half of the total attacks reported worldwide were committed by Somali pirates<sup>3</sup> (ICC International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Centre 2011). However, the Somali coast as a whole is far from being pirate-infested (Hansen 2009:5) as Puntland appears to be the base for most pirates in Somalia (Middleton 2008:4). Interestingly, piracy virtually vanished around Somalia for six months when the Islamic Courts Union was in power in 2006 (Hansen 2009 and Middleton 2008). Hence, the problem of piracy may be understood both as an outgrowth of the war economy and an outcome of a weak or non-existent state power and an inadequate police and coast guard.

## Reintegration efforts in Somalia

In 2001, UNDP's Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery (BCRP) proposed a pilot project to address small arms proliferation in Somalia. The main phase of the project began in September 2003 and ended in early 2005 (Menkhaus 2006:2). In September 2008, an independent assessment of the DDR project recommended focusing on broader causes of violence. This involved strengthening community-based mechanisms for preventing the emergence of new armed groups and tackling armed groups outside the DDR project. As a result, the UNDP promoted the Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration/Armed Violence Reduction (DDR/AVR) project. In partnership with UNICEF and ILO, the DDR/AVR project launched a "Youth at Risk" initiative in 2011 within the Somali Community Safety Framework. This is a second-generation DDR project with a main focus on Community Security and economic reintegration.

Other local and international organizations are also working with reintegration in Somalia. One of these is the Norwegian Church Aid which initiated the "Alternative Livelihood to Piracy" (ALP) project in 2010. The ALP project has three main objectives: awareness-raising to 50 percent of Puntland's population about the negative effects of piracy, providing 600 ex-pirates with vocational and life skills training, and successfully engaging ex-pirates in alternative income-generating activities (NCA 2010a). The ALP project is neither a reintegration program nor part of a wider DDR process. However, it provides alternative livelihood opportunities, which are important pillars for economic reintegration and can provide points for programmatic guidance for reintegration programs targeting ex-combatants.

## Methodology

The empirical material for this study was gathered in Kenya and Somalia in May and June 2011. This report is based on interviews with 22 individuals,<sup>4</sup> mainly ex-pirates, pirate associates and youth at risk of joining piracy. In addition, representatives from ministries in Puntland and Somaliland, as well as international and local organizations were interviewed (see the Appendix for the list of these interviewees).

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<sup>3</sup> The number of attacks reported to ICC International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Centre as of the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2011 was 421, 231 of which were committed by Somali pirates (ICC International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Centre 2011).

<sup>4</sup> When informants are quoted in the text, they are referred to by number (for example, #14).

Two of the 22 interviewees had not considered joining piracy, but still participated in the ALP project. They were therefore excluded from the data analysis for entry and exit routes. Sixteen informants had been involved in piracy. Eleven of these had been active pirates, meaning they were integrated members of piracy groups. Three of the five remaining informants involved with piracy were in the process of joining a piracy group, but changed their minds. Another two female informants had a supporting role, selling khat and tea to pirates on shore. Their husbands also were pirates. In addition, there were four informants who were former members of militia groups; two from al-Shabaab and two from clan militia groups. These interviews contribute to understanding the complex Somali context of armed groups. They also show that the processes of engagement and disengagement in relation to piracy may, in some cases, also apply to members of other armed groups in Somalia. Ten informants including the four members of al-Shabaab and clan militias were interviewed in Nairobi and were self-integrated, meaning that they had not been part of a formal reintegration program. The 12 ALP participants were interviewed in Bossaso and Garowe, in Puntland. Seven of these had vocational training, and five participated in business skills training.

It is important to note that the sample for this study is not representative for all Somali pirates, as only ex-pirates were interviewed. This means data were not collected from active pirates or people still involved piracy. All the informants can be classified as foot soldiers. Hence, the data is limited to lower-rank participants. Likewise, the data material does not include interviews with “successful” ex-pirates who may have retired from piracy with a significant amount of wealth. However, the study still provides a basis to show how and why young Somalis engage with, and disengage from, piracy groups.

## PART I: Entry and exit processes

### Motives for entering piracy

People get involved with armed groups for various reasons, including family background, life circumstances and social ties (Bjørge 2011, Nesser 2010). While none of the informants in this study was forcefully recruited, peer pressure, poverty, and a lack of alternative livelihoods may pull and push youngsters into piracy. As Bjørge and Horgan observed: *“Individuals do not necessarily join extremist groups because they hold extremist views; they sometimes acquire extremist views because they have joined such a group for other reasons”* (Bjørge and Horgan 2009:3).

Fifteen of the 16 individuals involved with piracy did so for economic reasons and/or lack of other life opportunities. Fourteen of these mentioned that the influence of friends, acquaintances or family members led them to join an armed group. Interestingly all four from al-Shabaab and clan militias also became involved for economic gain and joined through family and friends. Hence, the present data give credence to the theory that most young foot soldiers do not join because of strong identification with the group’s ideology and beliefs. Rather, they are pulled in by friends and family members for economic returns.

### Economic gain, lack of livelihood, and masculinities

Poverty and lack of other appropriate livelihood opportunities are main factors pushing individuals into piracy in the Somali regions:

It is claimed that people engage in piracy because they benefit more from it than from other alternative activities; either because there are no other alternatives (for example due to a lack of work opportunities), or because the benefits that can be achieved by piracy is so great that it draws recruits away from other relative good jobs. In other words, you are drawn into piracy because of opportunities for increased income. (Hansen 2009:7).

The field observations reflect underlying traditional gender norms and values, which often place men and women at different ends in terms of roles, responsibilities and opportunities. In everyday domestic life, men assume the role of breadwinners, warriors, protectors, status seekers and authority figures. A young man who takes on these roles gains recognition as a social adult (UNDP 2010:27). In Somalia, where protracted violence and droughts have destroyed livelihood assets such as houses, land and livestock, it is difficult for men to be breadwinners. Thus, to promote livelihoods and protect their self-dignity and masculine reputation, many men become vulnerable to the appeals of criminal and armed groups. Such groups clearly tap into young men’s gender identity and its current crises, in order to recruit them into criminal and violent activities (ibid:12).

Without opportunities to gain employment or social position, young men in marginalized communities lack a legitimate path to make the transition from boyhood to manhood. In addition to income, protection and access to women, these groups offer young men a sense of belonging and purpose and means to achieve respect and recognition among their peers or communities. (UNDP 2010:12-13).

With few exceptions, the young interviewees appeared to come from economically deprived families. They either dropped out of school or never attended. Without the benefit of formal education and employable skills, piracy presented an attractive alternative access to income. A young pirate explained: *"The market closed in our faces and we didn't get any jobs. So it was a new door for us to get an income"* (#14). Even though they knew piracy was *haram*<sup>5</sup>, meaning forbidden by Islam and unacceptable by local communities and religion, people still joined due to the lack of alternative income sources. One young man from Bossaso, who joined a piracy group at the age of 17, said he joined for the following reason: *"For the lack of job. Here in the country there is nothing to do"* (#3).

Seeing friends who become rich from piracy can push other youth to explore similar opportunities involving easy access to money and increased attention from women. A group of young fishermen explained why they shifted to piracy from fishing: *"After seeing some of the youth [pirates] that we knew riding expensive cars and throwing money here and there,"* they shifted from fishing to piracy (#14). Another informant added: *"When life became more expensive, and we saw the others at our age scatter money here and there, being able to get whatever they want, then we decided to be like them and become rich"* (#16).

These needs for income and employment do not merely affect those joining piracy but also those attracted to other types of militant groups in Somalia. An informant who joined a clan militia immediately after the collapse of President Siad Barres's regime, claimed: *"At that time, there was nothing you could do except joining the fight or stay at home like the women. There was no job or work to do, and no schools to go"* (#8). He felt that being a member of a clan militia group was the best and only option for meeting his material needs. Another young man, who was recruited into al-Shabaab at the age of 17 with the promise of earning money, also noted: *"They just told us they will provide us with a job and money. First they promised to pay us \$200 first month. They gave us \$50 and they told us they will give us the salary they promised next month and took us to Kismayo City"* (#1).

While a large majority of the youngsters join piracy in order to meet basic welfare needs, others see such groups as the surest conduits for quick and supplementary income. An informant left his family and traditional nomadic lifestyle to work in a restaurant in a coastal town. Through the job, he got in contact with the pirates: *"They told me a lot about the hijacking, the money they received and then I joined them. I left the job as a waiter, and started cooking for them and giving them food"* (#6).

Having a job and regular income is therefore not a guarantee against the appeals of piracy groups. Members of more ideological-based groups may also be attracted by the promise of enormous economic benefits. A 21-year-old man and former member of al-Shabaab explained his decision: *"I had a good job at that time. I was working in a company. I earned \$200 per month and worked there for four years"* (#7). However, al-Shabaab had a more tempting offer: *"They told me I would earn \$1,000 per month. And get a Toyota Pickup. I also had free airtime; they got me a phone, free fuel and the vehicle. They paid me nicely"*

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<sup>5</sup> *Haram* means 'forbidden' in Arabic, referring to anything that is forbidden by Islamic law. It represents the moral opposite of *halal*, an Arabic word for lawful or allowed. *Haram* also applies to ill-gotten wealth obtained through sinful acts, including money earned through cheating, stealing, corruption, murder, or any means that involves harm to another human being (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haram>).

*and it was a good life” (#7). He became a contract killer for al-Shabaab, specializing in the murder of government officials.*

## Recruitment into piracy

Traditionally, Somalis have a strong clan and family system which shapes their actions and resource rights (Bøås 2009:91). Economic activities are usually family-run. Some activities are monopolized by certain families (Interview with UNICEF May 2011) and social networks and relationships play an influential role in youth’s livelihoods and life chances.

Piracy groups are mostly clan-based. Many groups consist of a leader, family members and a network of friends: *“In general, groups seem to be recruited from individuals with previous family or village ties”* (Hansen 2009:34). An informant specifically noted: *“The pirates were some people that I knew very well, and we were in contact from time to time. So I knew what they were doing and what they benefit from it. So I decided to join them in the end. I was 13 years old”* (#16).

Peers and schoolmates of members of pirate groups are ripe for recruitment: *“I left school in eighth grade and joined some of my friends from school who became pirates to get rich”* (#11). Local restaurants and coffee shops, where idle young men drink tea/coffee, chew khat, and converse, are also fertile grounds for recruitment: *“The people know each other because we study in the same schools and live in the same areas. So I had an idea about them, and we met them in places like the coffee shops where everyone goes”* (#12).

Family members may also recruit into armed groups. An interviewee who worked as a fisherman with his uncle noted:

I finished school and started working with my uncle. He was a fisherman, so I was helping him with fishing and whatever he needed help with. In the beginning, my uncle was working alone, but then they became a group. My uncle was driving the boat, and they were about 10 people in the group. One day they had problem with a ship cutting off their nets. From then on, the group started organizing themselves [to become pirates]. (#5)

Despite his uncle being the group leader, it took some years for the young man to join. This was due to his mother’s strong objections. He recounted those objections: *“Well you can die. There is a risk. She had heard stories of people in Mombasa. It is a difficult job. I could lose myself even”* (#5). However, his uncle and friends eventually convinced him to join their group: *“I heard stories about them, about what they received, money. I heard many stories. Most of my friends were in the groups. I saw my friends receiving money”* (#5).

This is a good example of how family members both encourage and discourage youth to join violent armed groups. In this particular case, the uncle’s influence and the prospect of sudden richness were pulling factors into the armed group, while the mother served as a barrier to group membership. Thus, an individual may make the decision to join a group, but peers and friends are strong influential factors.

This supports Sageman’s research on membership in jihadist movements, which shows that recruitment is not necessarily a top-down process of brainwashing by group leaders. It is rather the *“formation of a network of friendship that solidified and preceded formal*

*induction into terrorist organization*" (Sageman 2004:107-108). While studying a group of men who joined al-Qaeda, Sageman found *"Instead of a top-down process of the terrorist organization trying to recruit new members, it was a bottom-up process of young people volunteering to join the organization"* (ibid:110). Similarly, Somali piracy group leaders seem to have a limited role in the recruitment of new members. Some of the pirates established new groups, and used ties of friendship and kinship to recruit members.

An important observation is that 13 of the 16 informants involved with piracy noted economic motives, combined with influence of friends and relatives, as reasons for getting involved in piracy. Therefore, economic gain and social ties are strong factors that pull or attract Somalis into piracy activities. Lack of alternative income sources and the persuasion of relatives or friends may therefore make potential membership in piracy groups hard to resist.

## Ideology and political interests

Ideology was not a strong motivating factor for joining piracy groups among our informants. However, five interviewees noted that they joined on political grounds and self-defense. They claimed to have gotten involved in piracy in response to illegal fishing in order to protect their interests and rights. One informant said: *"We were a big group going together to fish. So when that happened [getting their nets cut off] to us many times, we had a meeting and decided to defend ourselves against them. So we brought our guns, went into our boats and defended ourselves. That's how it started"* (#2).

Not every fisherman is a boat owner. Such fishermen usually join the boats of friends or relatives for a share of the surplus catch. Thus, fishing is organized around networks of friends and relatives, which can easily turn into piracy groups.

Piracy is mostly prevalent in the decentralized villages in Puntland, where the state has little or no presence. There is hardly any functioning police force in these areas, and Puntland's Coast Guard has demonstrated little effectiveness in fighting piracy at the Puntland coast. Many fishermen themselves assume the role of Coast Guards to protect their livelihoods. A former pirate explained the transformation from a fishing group to a piracy group as an act of heroism:

While we were getting our daily life from the sea, some foreign ships attacked us, took our nets, fish and terrorized us. They opened hose water on us to push us to leave and they kept accusing us of being pirates. When that happened we decided to go back and defend our income, our sea, because no state was there any more that could defend our sea and the rights of the fishermen. So we agreed with each other to battle these people and defended ourselves, our income and our coast. We collected guns, no one cared about the risks that we could meet at the sea. We put our souls in front of us. No one cared or was afraid of death or being taken to another country to be put in prison. (#20)

Initially, fishermen might have seen fighting illegal fishing as a legitimate motivation to start or join a pirate group. However, many fishing groups transformed into piracy groups purely for economic returns, as most of the hijacked ships were cargo ships rather than illegal fishing vessels. One of the theories of the origins of piracy presented in Hansen's report suggests that: *"Piracy started out as a defensive measure taken due to illegal foreign fishing, which over time has turned into professional piracy"* (Hansen 2009:9) Hansen further note

that piracy is a highly profitable venture, which attracts people looking for substantial and easy money (Hansen 2009:10). Notwithstanding, many pirates still justified their activities as a stand against illegal foreign vessels and for the protection of their fishing rights.

## Barriers to engagement

While there are general risk (push) factors towards certain delinquent behaviors or militant groups, some people still do not join (Horgan 2005:48). Many Somali young men are unemployed and vulnerable, but they still refrain from joining piracy or other armed groups. As earlier stated, relatives and friends are important sources of recruitment into armed groups. However, the same networks of friendship and family can also provide strong barriers to joining armed groups. More than half of the informants indicated that their family and local community members expressed objections to involvement in armed group activities. Parents were particularly vocal in trying to prevent their children from joining armed groups.

A 19-year-old male informant, who had planned to join a pirate group, noted that his father quickly put an end to the plans. He claimed: *"No, I didn't contact any of these piracy groups. I had planned to join them when I heard and got an idea about what they were getting from hijacking. So I tell my father about my plan and he refused me to join"* (#12). His father had raised him in the Islamic faith, which does not approve of piracy. However, the father was still worried that his son would be lured into a pirate group. He moved his son away from the coastal area and enrolled him in the ALP project's vocational training. The young man explained:

My father was worried about me and decided to enroll me into this vocational training that he had heard about from his friend, the mayor. So his friend finished the whole registration and the things needed from me. Then my father came to me and told me about this training and that he had registered me and sent me to Garowe to take me far away from the sea environment. This is how I got involved with the training. (#12).

In this particular case, the father was the main barrier to the son's membership in a piracy group and his connections with the mayor enabled him to enroll his son in the ALP project. The ALP project provided skills training and a potential alternative income source, as well as a basis for relocation. The combination of these three barrier factors proved stronger than the motivation for joining a pirate group.

Another 15-year-old male informant decided to join a pirate group due to a difficult family background, including the early death of his mother and an abusive step-mother. His father was a fisherman. The young man was uneducated and unemployed, and twice tried to join piracy groups. However, his father physically prevented him from joining a piracy group and even removed him from a boat. The young man said: *"I got involved with them twice and both of the times my father brought me back home"* (#15). His father arranged for him to join the ALP project. Today, he is studying language and computer science.

A 29-year-old male interviewee, with three wives and eight kids, also considered joining piracy. He was originally a pastoralist, but, due to changing environmental conditions and drought, he moved his family to a more central area in order to find work. It turned out unsuccessful, leading him to consider joining a pirate group: *"I planned to join piracy. I didn't meet them, I just had an idea of joining them. But before doing that, I heard about the [ALP]*

*training and I joined it” (#18). The skills-training gave him a potential livelihood alternative, preventing him from going into piracy. His family also influenced the final decision: “My wives did not allow me to join piracy. They refused the money coming from something that was not acceptable in Islam” (#18).*

The notion of *haram* and ill-gotten money was used by families of many of the informants to prevent their male family members from getting involved in piracy. Religious norms are strong factors in dissuading people from involvement with pirate groups. The religious leaders in the ALP project built on these norms when recruiting participants to the project. As one interviewee explained:

I was planning to go to the sea and hijack these ships, but before I did that some of the elders and religious leaders came to us and made us aware about what we were about to do and what our religion says about it. That the profit we get from it is considered *haram*. We became more aware, and were promised a program to learn new skills for an occupation and a new life far away from piracy. We took to us what the religion advised us and went to register for the training through the mayor (#14).

The religious leaders clearly made an impact against piracy. By supporting local Muslim leaders in their efforts to discourage ties with pirate groups and offering alternatives in job training, NCA has successfully managed to build on religious norms within the Somali society to fight piracy locally.

## Engagement as pirates

In order to design effective reintegration programs, it is important to understand the dynamics of the specific criminal or armed group. The nature of the group, especially structure, activities, status, roles, and bonds among members, influences the disengagement process.

Bjørgero and Horgan argue against the conventional saying: “Once a terrorist, always a terrorist.” This is also the case with many other forms of criminal involvement and most of the informants in the sample were only involved with piracy groups for a relatively short time:

An increasing body of gang research shows that gang memberships turns out to be a temporal experience for most youths involved in such groups. According to Thornberry, Huizinga and Loeber, the large majority of gang members quit after a brief stay in the group; less than half stayed for more than a year. (Bjørgero and Horgan 2009:7-8)

Of the 11 informants who were active members of a pirate group, only two had been active for more than a year. The majority had just been in the group for a couple of months or joined for one or two hijackings. A young boy who joined a piracy group at the age of 13, but soon decided to quit, said:

I joined them two times but we failed on the two missions. We went to a village and started going on our hijacking mission with two boats. We stayed in the sea for two nights, and we couldn’t find anything so we returned back to land. Then we went back to the sea, and this time we stayed three nights. Then I decided to quit, give up. (#16).



Hence, the notion of “once a pirate, always a pirate” does not apply to those in the sample. Most engaged in hijacking a couple of times and then left the group.<sup>6</sup> As Bjørgo and Horgan point out: *“In reality, [...], most individuals involved in terrorism eventually disengage from it one way or another. Similarly few terrorist movements last more than a few months, in rare cases years, before coming to an end”* (Bjørgo and Horgan 2009:7). This also seems to be the case for many Somali pirate groups. The more amateur groups dissolve after a short time, as they do not have sufficient experience, skills and equipment for effective raids. Some get lost at sea, or end up in prison.

The organization of Somali pirate groups has changed over the years. The 2008 piracy boom led to fragmentation of groups into smaller and more varied entities (Hansen 2009:34). Many of these small groups were not well-organized and consisted of less-experienced fishermen who just wanted to earn extra money. In the view of an informant: *“There were no specific roles inside the group. We didn’t have any leader. We just did everything together”* (#20).

Pirate groups are normally a loose constellation that consists of a leader and about 12 to 35 people (Hansen 2009:34, 36). An informant who was elected leader of a group of fishermen that turned into piracy, explained: *“We divided ourselves into two groups. One group was on the sea while the other was waiting outside the water giving us directions”* (#2). Other informants confirmed that this was standard operating procedure. The sea-based team undertook the hijacking, while the land-based team took custody of the hijacked ship and provided other support services. Some individuals shifted between the teams: *“I was in the boat with my gun and also climbing onto the other ship. Afterwards, I was also attending to the crew on the boat that was hijacked”* (#4). Despite many pirate groups being loosely organized, they seem to have a clear hierarchical arrangement:

Most of the time, I was in the boat. My uncle and I were functioning as guards to look out for what may come from outside while the others were inside the ship. For one week, we kept it at the sea and then we brought it close to Eyl. Then it spent 21 days in Eyl. My responsibilities in Eyl were to bring what the group needed from town and cook. I was the youngest, so I just got these kinds of jobs. (#5).

The money earned also varies according to rank and status in the group:

When the ship got to Eyl, the boss contacted the place where the ship was coming from, and they got a ransom of \$300,000. I received \$10,000. I was young and low rank so the bosses took most of it. My uncle was the second commander in the group and the driver for the boat. He received \$40,000 for this job. He had been doing this for a long time. (#5)

Informants classified as foot soldiers typically got around \$10,000–\$20,000. However, piracy groups work on the “no prey, no pay” system (Hansen 2009:36). In other words, in the event of failed raids, they do not get paid. The young informant who joined his uncle’s group remarked: *“We had only one successful hijacking. So I only got paid once”* (#5).

In terms of financing piracy, some of the amateur groups mobilized initial resources:

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<sup>6</sup> We interviewed ex-pirates who mainly had been involved with the less organized pirate groups. Some of the more advanced groups probably last longer, and their members are likely to be involved for a longer time. Still, those groups are likely to have a considerable turnover of personnel.

We didn't have any money, but you know, most Somalis have weapons, so we collected from here and there. Sometimes we got some money from other people by begging them to give us some money. But of course we don't tell them the truth that we needed this money to buy guns (#20).

The more established groups have their own financiers, as interviewee #3 explained: "There were four financiers who provided us with everything, including weapons. And they were the ones getting the largest share of the money" (#3). Being an investor can be quite beneficial if the raids are successful. According to another informant: "There are people whose business is to provide the pirates with what they need. So when we succeeded on our mission, then we pay them twice of what they invested. In this way, they also benefit" (#13). Support seems to be given on credit and repaid after successful raids. Profits are often invested into new raids: "The pirates tend to be self-financing and the money from hijackings is reinvested in new attacks" (Hansen 2009:37). This also means that if raids are unsuccessful, the financiers risk losing their investment. Local businesses providing goods on credit are also not guaranteed payment.

### Managing family relations and community pressure

Many families and local communities are against piracy as they believe it violates Islamic teachings and values. Thus, for many informants, their family relations changed when they went into piracy. Some tried to keep their activities secret in order not to offend the sensibilities of relatives. Informant #4 explained this strategy:

My family did not have any idea about what I was doing. I hid the money because they would start asking me where I got it from. And at the same time, they would refuse to receive any money from me as they consider it *haram*. (#4) .

To make it easier to hide earnings, some pirates moved into rented houses with fellow pirates. Thus, involvement in piracy also leads to a change in community and social relationships. An informant noted: "*I joined my friends planning to become a pirate and hijack ships to get money. So we decided to rent a house. I left home and moved in with them*" (#13). He told the family that he was going to look for a job. Some people become totally isolated from their families while in the piracy group: "*The family didn't have any idea where to look for us. Even those who knew what we were doing, didn't know where to find us or where to search for us*" (#20).

Many of Puntland's coastal communities are strongly against piracy. Pirates spend lavishly, which causes inflation and creates problems for already financially distressed people in local communities. In addition, they engage in other unacceptable social activities, such as drug abuse and bringing in prostitutes: "*The communities consider the pirates themselves and their bodies as haram. So they avoid those they know are in that group*" (#20).

Thus, in spite of the riches the successful pirates can show off, there is a considerable stigma attached to their social identity as pirates in the local community.

### Exit and disengagement

The process of leaving criminal groups depends on several factors, such as duration in the group, group character, group role, status and experiences, and ties to other group

members and people outside the group: *“The reason of disengagement can be numerous, conflicting, competing and exceptionally complex even within a single case”* (Horgan 2009:27). Other researchers point to the importance of disillusionment (Bjørge 2011) and life-threatening episodes (Decker and Lauritsen 2002) as turning points.

All of the ex-pirates interviewed disengaged voluntarily. However, quite a number of Somali pirates are imprisoned in and outside of Somalia and some die at sea during piracy operations. This section will look at why and how the individuals in the sample leave piracy and the most prevalent pull and push factors.

### Individual and covert exit

As shown earlier, many joined pirate groups in Somalia due to peer pressure. Despite this, all 11 informants actively engaged in piracy decided to leave on their own, based on an individual decision: *“I left alone. But I met others [who had quit] here in Nairobi. Not from the same group, but different groups.”* (#5) Most informants joined piracy with friends or family members but left alone. They also choose to leave covertly in order to avoid confrontation: *“I put the gun somewhere, and I didn’t tell them I was leaving. I told them I would be back the next day”* (#5). A majority of these were foot soldiers who were not entrusted with the most valuable information. There was less of a risk for being hunted down and sanctioned by the group. Furthermore, the person would not be so hard to replace. Only two of the active pirates mentioned fear of reprisals from the group they belonged to. For members of al-Shabaab there is a greater risk related to disengaging. One of the former members of al-Shabaab explained:

Going out of the group is too difficult. If you tell them you want to contact your family, they refuse. They kept telling us that we are in jihad, so we must forget about everything else. When I came back, I told them I needed to go back to my parents, that I couldn’t stay there. They refused and sent me back to the group. They were killing the people who insisted on leaving. (#1)

### Disillusionment and economic failure

Disillusionment is a common cause for leaving extremist groups (Bjørge 2011, Wright 1987). This was one of the motives for disengagement for several of the informants. The young man who started working as a cook for the pirates did not benefit much from his career change: *“They did not pay me. They were expecting to get profit from hijacking. But since they had no successful raids I did not get anything. Not even a dollar”* (#6). As explained earlier, the pirates work on a “no prey no pay” system. Consequently, many believe they will make a lot of money, but receive nothing.

Two of the informants were not able to make productive use of the money they earned from piracy. A young ex-pirate who joined when he was 17 told about his lifestyle as a pirate: *“I was busy making friends and spending money on chewing khat and having fun”* (#3). He did buy a car: *“I bought a second-hand [car] for that [piracy] money but I had an accident with it, and it got destroyed”* (#3). In the end, the young pirate realized that even though he got money, it did not take him very far: *“The money finished by spending it here and there, so I decided not to go back to piracy”* (#3). Another ex-pirate only participated in one raid. Even though it was successful, he still decided not go back: *“You see, another*

*group caught me and stole the money. They were masked and robbed me on my way to the town with the money. After that, I decided not to go back” (#4).*

Not all who left pirate groups felt disillusioned. An ex-pirate participated in three raids over three years; two that were successful and one that failed. During that time, he earned \$70,000. He was not disillusioned with piracy. However, his wife was not happy with his profession: *“I married her at the end of my time working with the pirates. But she wasn’t happy with what I was doing and she asked me to quit. I stopped because of her and the injury I had on my arm from a car accident” (#2).*

Drop-outs from gangs and extremist groups frequently mention group/cause loyalty as a barrier to leaving (Bjørge 1997:222). An interesting finding is that hardly any of the informants identified group/cause loyalty as a barrier to disengagement. That was not even the case with the two informants who were ex-members of the Islamist al-Shabaab militia. This further supports the argument that most people do not necessarily join radical movements due to radical beliefs (Bjørge and Horgan 2009:3). Since many enter groups through friends, family, and acquaintances, it is natural to assume that they have loyalty to the group, even if they do not feel loyalty to the cause. However, in the sample, only one ex-pirate cited loyalty to the group as a barrier for leaving. He had started a piracy group with his friends, but left before they managed to do their first raid. He knew that his friends would be disappointed with him, and he felt he was betraying them. However, his family had a bigger influence over him and was able to remove him from the group.

## Hardship and risk

Being a pirate is not as luxurious as many expect. It demands a lot of effort and hard work, especially for the lower rang foot soldiers. Six out of the 11 actively engaged in a piracy group emphasized the risk and hardship connected with the job:

You can’t imagine the kind of life that we were living on that time. It’s hard life, the person realizes how bad it was when he gets out of it. You have to be awake the whole night and the whole day waiting for ships. Some time we get lost at sea, losing the direction. Sometimes you run from your colleagues as you don’t trust them when they are far away and you don’t know who they are. So there is no life there. (#20).

Such negative experiences push pirates towards disengagement: *“It is bad from the beginning this hard work that we are doing. This affects their decision to go back and quit piracy, especially for the ones who did not get anything from it” (#20).* The hard work and seeing friends get injured, die or imprisoned are major push factors in exiting piracy and other groups: *“My plan was to work along with them. But some of the people in the group got injured, and I left because of that. With one of the ships, two people got injured and died” (#22).*

## The role of family, relatives, and friends in facilitating disengagement

Seven of 16 informants stated that they disengaged due to family or community objection: *“The community wasn’t happy. That’s why I left. And my mum. They were saying that what we were doing was haram and not good” (#5).* The community’s discontent (particularly his mother’s dissatisfaction with his work), combined with experiencing people getting injured and dying during hijacking, produced a strong combination of push factors. He also earned

some money from a successful raid that made it possible for him to leave. This represented a pull factor: *"I got the money, and I then left the group. I used the money I had earned to leave the group. I first went to Mogadishu, then Kenya and Nairobi"* (#5).

Not all low-level soldiers have enough money to leave. Close family and relatives may help create exit routes. Six out of 11 who were actively engaged in piracy got help from family. Fathers can play a crucial role when it comes to getting their sons out of pirate groups.

In one raid, one guy died. Then my father got to know about me being in the group, as the whole community was invited to the funeral. So my father met the leader of the group and almost started a fight with him. But the leader of the group said that he had never forced me to join and that my father could take me back. (#6).

His father thought it was a risky business and told him to change his lifestyle. In order to prevent the son from re-engaging with the group or other armed groups he made arrangements for the son to be relocated: *"My father sold some camels so that I would get some transport to come to Nairobi. I was very happy. Cause it was not a nice life. Even the religion does not allow it"* (#6).

Another father took action when he heard about his son joining the pirates: *"He searched for me and took me back home. He became very angry with me, of course. Mum also when I got back to the house. And she was one of the main reasons why I decided to go back home"* (#13). The mother was his main motive for disengaging. However, the father got him enrolled into the Alternative Livelihood to Piracy (ALP) training.

Families also help ex-fighters to sustain themselves when they have no other means of income. The majority of the informants living in Nairobi did not have a stable job and were supported by family. Many lived with friends who took care of them. Social networks, family, relatives, and friends are therefore crucial in creating exit routes for young pirates and providing for them afterwards. None of the informants cited severed family ties or fear of stigmatization from the community as barriers to disengagement. Many stated that they felt disregard from the community while in the group. However, nobody expressed experiencing considerable concerns of stigmatization after leaving.

An important variable is the duration of membership and level of integration into the piracy group. The more secrets with which the person has been trusted, the harder and more risky it is to disengage from the group (Bjørge 2009:47). Also, the longer the person has stayed with the group, the harder it is to leave, especially if cutting outside ties had been a consequence of joining: *"The shorter time they have stayed in the gang, the more easily they adapted to an ordinary, non-delinquent lifestyle"* (Bjørge and Horgan 2009:8).

As most of the active members of piracy in the sample (as well as the informants from al-Shabaab and clan militia groups) had stayed in the group less than a year, few faced severe problems afterwards. They were welcomed back and received support from the family. This confirms research from other extremist groups, where families frequently play a crucial role in the disengagement process (Bjørge 2009:47; 2009:8; Boucek 2009:219).

## Religion and ALP project

Religious leaders play a central role in the Alternative Livelihood to Piracy (ALP) project: *“Our religious leaders made us aware about piracy activities and how it doesn’t belong to our religion”* (#16). Religious leaders also managed to reach the pirates while they were working.

We didn’t meet them [the religious leaders], but we listened to their sermons on the radio. They talked about piracy, what our religion says about it, and how we are considered by the other Muslims. We were hearing these sermons while we were working at sea or on shore. This affected on our decision to go back and quit piracy. Especially for the ones who didn’t get anything from it. So I quit and came back to town, and joined the [ALP] training a month later. (#20).

Religious sermons, in combination with an offer of alternative livelihood training, can be the final factor pushing people to disengage. However, as much as the religious aspect appeals to people, the lack of jobs is a difficult challenge:

It [piracy] is not something good, according to religion. The religion does not accept attacking somebody and robbing them. And it is not something that even the community like. They are not happy about it. But most of the people are jobless, which means you try to survive. In Eyl, most of the people in the community were not happy. The sheiks were not happy with piracy. The clan leaders and elders were not happy with it. It is not a sustainable life to rob someone. All the leaders were against it. However, they can only give advice, as there are no other job opportunities. The sheiks preach in the communities but the leaders of the sea people [pirates] did not respond well to this. They tell the young boys that you can get a lot of money, that they can change their life. (#6)

Thus, the ALP project can be seen as a well-targeted strategy trying to offer alternative livelihood training. Eight of the informants identified the lack of other means of livelihood as a barrier to disengagement. However, due to its small size, the project is only able to touch the tip of the iceberg, as youth unemployment is a widespread problem across all of Somalia.

## Re-engagement

Those who drop out of a criminal or extremist career do not necessarily stop their involvement forever. Recidivism into criminal involvement (Maruna 2001:69–71) or re-engagement into violent extremism (Horgan 2009:29) is often an option, sometimes forced by lack of viable alternatives or rejection from the social surroundings. None of the informants in the sample claimed that they wanted to re-engage with piracy. Due to the covert character of leaving the group there were no transition period, and all quit with immediate effect. This also meant completely cutting ties with the group and having no, or very limited, contact with other group members. Relocation facilitated disengagement, but it also prevented reengagement. An ex-pirate was grateful to his father for relocating him to another community: *“If I stay in one of the towns in Puntland maybe I would join another group”* (#6).

The major risks of people going back to armed groups are still related to the basic reasons why they joined in the first place. When an ex-pirate in Nairobi was asked if he was thinking

of going back to Somalia his answer was clear: *“No, never. There are no jobs there. So I might join the wrong people and groups”* (#4).

In hindsight, after staying out of a piracy group for some time, attitudes toward piracy groups changed. An ex-pirate radically changed his view: *“It is bad. To attack innocent people, that is not nice in a humanitarian way. Otherwise it is risky. And if you get the money, it is not halal. Not the work in the lawful way that Allah accepts. God will punish you”* (#6). Religious and moral regrets were clear among other ex-pirates as well: *“I am disappointed because my whole work was haram”* (#3). One of the informants clearly stated that he was now distancing himself from violence: *“No, I wouldn’t have joined an armed group even if it would have given me sustainable livelihood. Because I don’t like violence”* (#4).

Changes in life situations also hinder re-engagement (Bjørøgo 2009:40). Some moved on to new phases of their lives, where there was little space for membership in criminal or armed groups. A 24-year-old student, who had been living in Nairobi for the last four years, expressed that he does not wish to go back to piracy:

No, my mind is busy with how to be an educator. I want to become a professor. I became a father and a husband, and there are responsibilities on my shoulders. Also I don’t want to give my kids ill-gotten money. (#3).

Based on his study of extremist groups, Bjørøgo describes this tendency to “age out” of extremism or crime as normal process and a typical pull factor. *“At some point, activists in militant nationalistic or racist youth groups feel that they are getting too old for what they are doing. They no longer have the same need for excitement; they have less energy and want to calm things down”* (Bjørøgo 2009:39). An ex-pirate expressed relief that he could change his lifestyle and move on: *“Am sorry for what I did before because I now know that what we were doing was not right. I felt that I could not live a normal life but now am happy that am leading a straight life and I can look forward for a better and brighter future”* (#11).

Not all changed their views on the activities in which their group was engaged. One informant had no regrets and justified his involvement in piracy.

No, I have no regrets and nothing was bad. As I worked closely with my uncle, and he was a bit up in the system, I had no problems. Yes, it was the right thing to do. It was our duty. It was our duty, and we had to do it. The boats came and destroyed our nets. (#5)

However, he also clearly stated he did not want to go back: *“I don’t want to go back [to Somalia]. He [the uncle] might tell me that I have to come back and join them again. I don’t want that, it is a difficult job”* (#5).

## PART II: Disengagement and reintegration programming

The second part of this research report will take a closer look at disengagement and reintegration programming related to exit processes from piracy groups. It will look at the Norwegian Church Aid's "Alternative Livelihood to Piracy" (ALP) project and focus on the project's components of disengagement and reintegration. As mentioned earlier, despite the project not being a DDR intervention, its livelihood and social reintegration approach to exiting a criminal armed group holds wider significance for reintegration programming.

### The Alternative Livelihood to Piracy project

The Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is one of the few organizations that have continued working and being present in some of the most conflict-affected areas in the Somali regions. In 2009, NCA commissioned a survey to assess counter-piracy initiatives in Puntland. It found widespread effects of piracy and youth vulnerability to conscription (NCA 2010a:5). The study also revealed widespread antipathy towards piracy, based on the religious belief that any gain from piracy is *haram*. Religious leaders had already spearheaded an initiative against piracy, using Koranic teachings (ibid). In 2010, the NCA launched a three-year project aimed at reducing piracy in the coastal areas of Puntland. This project was undertaken in close partnership with the State Government of Puntland, in particular the Ministry of Justice, Religious Affairs and Rehabilitation (MoJRAR).

The three main objectives of the Alternative Livelihood to Piracy (ALP) project are: awareness-raising about the negative effects of piracy to at least 50% of the population in Puntland, providing 600 ex-pirates with vocational life-skill training, and have these successfully engage in alternative means of livelihood (NCAa 2010:1). The main target groups are youth between the ages of 15 and 25 who have been actively involved in piracy activities, particularly as foot soldiers. In addition, the project targets community members in Eyl, Bandarbeyla, Bargaal, Bossaso town and Garowe. The program was later opened up for women making a living of piracy and/or wives whose husband were killed or in jail due to piracy activities (NCA 2011:12).

Before starting training, participants are selected for one of three courses (electricity, carpentry or masonry), depending on their knowledge. The courses last three months and are a mix of theory and practice. Two hundred participants get just business-skills training for five days and receive a seed grant of \$300 in order to start their own businesses.

Religious leaders have continued to play a central role through awareness-raising, engaging in anti-piracy rallies and campaigns, integrating anti-piracy messages in the Friday prayers in Mosques and radio broadcasts, and by encouraging disengagement and recruitment into the ALP project.

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norwegian Ship owners' Association and the Norwegian Shipping Insurance Company (DNK) are the main donors.

### Program coherency in promoting disengagement and reintegration

"DDR is effective-or not effective- not so much due to organization and character of a given DDR program, but due to a host of macro- and micro-factors in specific country contexts" (Stankovic, Torjesen and Bleie 2010:7).



Understanding the broader social, political and economic conditions that shape the development in specific post-war situations is therefore crucial (ibid 2010:7). Colletta and Muggah (2009) developed a typology of macro- and micro-determinants that shapes the condition of insecurity in post-war states. The macro determinants are the character of the armed conflict, nature of peace processes and governance capacity. The micro determinants<sup>7</sup> are community-level absorptive capacities, character of armed groups and communities and mix of incentives such as monetary benefits, employment and basic services etc (Colletta and Muggah 2009:432).

In parts of Somalia there are still armed conflicts and clashes. In addition to creating large security challenges it has caused extensive damage to the economic, political and social structures, making the conditions for the DDR processes particularly challenging.

The ALP mainly focuses on livelihood opportunities and employment. Due to the size of the project and the limited target groups, the project cannot and do not intend to target the larger macro-factors. The project instead stresses micro- and meso-determinants, such as the labor market, monetary benefits, and employment opportunities locally. This study will mainly focus on economic reintegration in these areas. However, it is important to stress that a more comprehensive approach, including sociopolitical integration need to be included in larger reintegration efforts.

## Skills training

“Economic reintegration is at the heart of the wider reintegration process, and remains central to the successful reintegration of ex-combatants.” (IDDR:40).

Alternative and non-violent means of income are crucial for reintegration processes. Skills training is one component of economical reintegration that, when matched with the real requirements of the labor market, may enhance employability (IDDR:45).

The 12 informants from the ALP project valued the project as a positive opportunity: “It was a good training that you benefit from. Learning new skills, which helps you get opportunities for work, get income and also become an active person in the community” (#14). However, they also wanted the training to last longer: “It was very good, but the training was too short” (#13). A short training period means that participants do not get to learn and acquire necessary professional skills. This makes it difficult for them to compete in the labour market.

Religious leaders in Puntland suggested that the ALP vocational training should be extended to at least a year for the electricity courses and six to eight months for the others. A review of the project in February 2011 showed that vocational training should be extended, and be in line with the Puntland’s Ministry of Education’s vocational-skills curriculum. The Ministry of Education’s vocational-skills training lasts from six to nine months, depending on the course (NCA 2011:13).

However, in order to prolong the training, the project will either need further financial support or to reduce the number of beneficiaries. Business-skills training does not require the same amount of time, however five days of training may be too short. Some of the

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<sup>7</sup> Could also be defined as meso-determinants, as it concerns the community level.

business-skills participants also expressed that they would want an advanced course in order to expand their established small-scale businesses.

## Employment opportunities

A general lack of employment opportunities, parallel war economies, and shattered economies with dismantled markets characterizes war and post-war contexts (IDDR:40). Employment creation, income generation, and reintegration are particularly challenging. Experience has shown that a main constraint to reintegration is the economic context, with labor market absorption and access to productive assets in particular (IDDR:40–41). Graduates of reintegration programs are far from certain to find employment and a stable income.

A participant of the ALP's vocational skills training faced difficulty searching for a job after graduating. He tried to get a job, but without results. He estimated that four people from his carpentry training group of 15 were employed: *"The market is somehow in a sleeping state. There are few carpenter workshops, which effects on the number of employees who also are few"* (#13). Five out of the seven interviewees who had gone through vocational-skills training had some type of work. However, none of them had any permanent job or sufficient source of income. A graduate from masonry training managed to find a job, but employment was sporadic and did not provide a stable income:

There are not many job opportunities. I am now working building a house. I have a family to feed so I am working. Now the job that I have got, it's for one month. But sometimes it happens that I don't get any contracts for jobs and then I have to work the days that I get, even if it is only one. (#18).

"Skills training does not by itself create employment." (IDDR:45). It is important that vocational training target actual needs in the labor market. "Vocational training should not be offered in occupations and trades that are already saturated or that are likely to become saturated in the future. This will only create disillusionment and aggravate the economic and security situation" (IDDR:43). The private and public sectors must therefore be included in designing skills training and conducting market surveys.

According to a NCA's annual report from 2010, 50 of 100 trainees had either started their own businesses, or were employed in electric or construction companies during the first year of implementation of the ALP project (NCA 2010b). Again, half of the 100 trainees went through business-skills training and received seed grant money. Thirty-two of these own shops or are part of a cooperative (ibid). Only 18 of the 50 receiving vocational training were employed at that time. Hence it was easier for participants doing business-skills training to get an income relatively soon after graduation than for those doing vocational-skills training. As a result of a 2001 ALP project review, NCA now suggests expanding vocational courses to include professions required by the market such as welding, auto repair, tailoring, and information technology.

## Links to the market

Employment creation relies on existing businesses and the private sector (IDDR:31). This applies to Somalia in particular, where the state is weak but the clan system is still strong and functional.

Building a close partnership with the private sector is indispensable to creating opportunities to absorb ex-combatants in the labor market. Private sector actors should be consulted from the initial program design stage so that reintegration assistance can target actual needs in the labor market (IDDR:32).

Establishing close ties to the private sector through apprenticeship, internships and employment-subsidy programs are crucial employment-creation initiatives. An example of this is the Garowe Vocational Training Centre (GVTC), which is the local NGO providing vocational-skills training for the ALP project. The GVTC has made an apprenticeship agreement with Nugaal Electrical Company (NEC), the local power company in Garowe. The graduates from the electricity training have a better chance of getting into the labor market through the apprentice agreement. This has also benefitted participants from other training programs. A graduate from the carpentry training also got employment doing construction for the NEC: *"I work with the NEC company. I am not NEC staff, I am working with them on external contracts, and I am also working for myself. The length of the contract depends on the construction designed"* (#14).

The trainers in the vocational centers are also important links to the job market. One of the participants in the ALP project works in external projects with the teacher of the electricity training from which he graduated: *"I have practiced my skills as I got a part time job with the electrical engineer who was my teacher. He calls me to accompany him when he doing electrical installation"* (#11). In addition, the trainers and also religious leaders are used as guarantees for the employees, which can be a crucial factor for employment in Somalia. However, there is a need for formal links and agreements with local companies: *"Yes they [GVTC] were helping me trying to find a job. But I haven't got one yet"* (#13).

### Self-established small-scale businesses

Based on the interviews and NCA's 2010 project review, business-skills training accompanied with a seed grant proved efficient in quickly getting a stable income. The five people interviewed who had done business-skills training and received the seed grant had all started their small businesses.

A former service provider to piracy groups joined the business-skills training while her husband was in jail for piracy. After the training, she opened up a small shop, selling dry goods, soft drinks, soap and some clothing. She was able to provide for herself and her children. *"I benefited from this training. It helped me to get a new start, a different job and an income. And business skills also"* (#19). An ex-pirate, who was married with two kids, was also positive to the business-skills training: *"We got trained in how to make and open a small business, how to make use of cash book to know what we sell and the other expenses"* (#16). He applied in practice what he had learned, and started his own small shop: *"I bought small stuff, what my budget allowed me to buy. Like cigarettes, soft drinks, and mineral water. I increase the price on the things to get a profit. And today I earn so much from it so that I can feed my family and kids"* (#16).

This supports the UN's IDDR statement that training should respond to the requirement of the informal sector, which is where most micro-enterprises emerge (IDDR:43). In the present economic and political context of Somalia, small-scale shops and self-employment may be the easiest way to get an income rapidly.

## Social ties

As shown in the first part of this report, family, relatives, and friends facilitate and hinder both engagement with and disengagement from piracy. This also seems to be the case when seeking employment. Chances of getting jobs may depend on clan structures, as the clan provides important entry points to the job market for its members. The ALP project has through the business skills training and seed grant managed to embark on these processes. Participants who did business-skills training received \$300 in seed grant money, which is insufficient capital for opening a small-scale business.

However, the \$300 seed grant stimulated further support from relatives or loans from larger businesses. With crucial support from family and relatives, ALP graduates were able to get enough start-up capital to open their private shops.

Four of the five interviewed from the business training received support from relatives: *“I got support from my father, who gave me \$200. So I opened a shop with \$500, not \$300”* (#20). A woman opened a shop in her house, also with the assistance of her family: *“I opened this shop with the support from my relatives who added me some money”* (#17). Her relatives had some larger stores, so she got goods on credit from them. It cost \$1,000 to open the shop, and she still owes \$500 to her relatives. She is paying it off, little by little, as she gets a surplus.

Graduates of vocational training skills also receive support from family and friends: *“Sometimes I am called upon by my friends and neighbours when they want electricity installation. In this way, am able to get some money to pay for my computer classes, English classes and other things without depending on my parents.”* (#15).

Building on existing social networks and natural processes of “aging out” of extremism and delinquency and into more pro-social commitments such as marriage and parenthood, may prove successful. The important roles of the family in disengagement and reintegration processes have also been seen in Saudi Arabia and Norway (Boucek 2009; Bjørge 2009).

In Norway, the “Exit Project,” established in 1997, supported parents with children in racist or violent groups: *“The parenting network groups proved to be a highly effective method for concerned parents in order to get their teenagers out of extremist groups”* (Bjørge, van Donselaar and Grunenbergs 2009:136). Parents meet within network groups, share information, and get a better understanding of what was happening in the groups of which their children were a part. Knowledgeable outsiders, such as police officers, researchers, or ex-members, were also brought in to provide information and advice: *“The network group could thereby strengthen the parent’s monitoring, control and ability to provide care for their children”* (ibid:137).

The Saudi Arabian “Counseling Program” is another example of a rehabilitation program making use of social networks and familial obligations. The program aims to re-educate and rehabilitate terrorist sympathizers. It incorporates many traditional Saudi methods of conflict resolution and management (Boucek 2009:212–213). The program makes use of several important Saudi cultural mores, including social responsibility, notions of honor, and the recognition of traditional and extended family hierarchies.

For instance, when detainees are released for family events such as weddings or funerals, three family members must come forward to guarantee their return; should the detainee not return, then those three family members would have to take his place. At the time of writing no prisoner has ever used this opportunity to escape. (Boucek 2009:217).

The Exit Project in Norway and Counseling Program in Saudi Arabia are two examples of how to successfully build on social networks and ties in a specific cultural context. In the Somali culture, where clan and family structures are strongly grounded, social networks and ties may be formally integrated into any efforts of disengagement and reintegration of ex-combatants. Parents serve as barriers when their children try to engage with Somali armed groups and also create exit routes for disengagement. Including close family and relatives in the formal reintegration efforts could therefore prove highly beneficial.

### Selection processes

In conflict-affected areas, experiencing war economies where there are few job opportunities, many people, including those outside the target groups, naturally show strong interest in DDR programs and projects. In Colombia for example, one challenge for the governmental DDR program designed for the right wing paramilitary came in the form of 'ghost soldiers.' These were people not belonging to any armed group who entered the demobilization program (Rasmussen and Porch 2008).

The two informants removed from the sample of ALP graduates had not considered joining a piracy group nor were in the target group defined by Norwegian Church Aid (NCA). One of them was studying at university level when he enrolled in the project. He heard about the NCA training and joined the business-skills training through a contact: *"I heard about the training from the radio. I knew the teacher of the training and he helped me with the registration. I joined the training to make myself a business, and now I have a cafeteria"* (#21). He is now aiming at finishing his education and getting a job: *"I want to finish my education, get a degree and work with an international organization"* (#21). This is an example of an individual who is clearly outside the target group, but was included into the project through contacts.

Some of the participants in the ALP project had already disengaged from piracy groups and spent quite some time outside the group before enrolling into the project. They were already engaged in other pro-social activities and expressed no plans of re-joining any piracy groups. One man was part of a piracy group for four months in 2007. However, he did not enroll into the ALP project until 2011: *"In between that time, I was helping my father with fishing"* (#13). As he had already disengaged and had been away from piracy for four years, the project was not the pulling factor to disengagement.

Based on our small sample we are not able to quantify if such cases are exceptions or if many outside the target groups are included in the trainings. However, if many such cases occur, it would be beneficial to introduce a stronger selection mechanism. A solution could be to implement stricter selection processes, including fewer participants but providing longer training sessions.

## Bridging reintegration initiatives and wider recovery and development efforts

A well-designed DDR program should not only enhance basic security but also support wider recovery and development efforts (IDDR:33). Even though the ALP project is not a part of wider DDR processes, it is a good example of how an international actor has understood and embarked on important local processes to address one of the elements of insecurity in the region. Through the ALP project, NCA built on grassroots initiatives by religious leaders to push people out of piracy groups. The religious leaders and elders traditionally enjoy a high status in Somali society and have the credibility to address the piracy issue.

The notions of *haram* vs. *halal* are strongly grounded within communities, and the religious leaders successfully use this moral aspect to encourage individuals and communities to say no to piracy. Even though the religious leaders managed to reach out to the local population morally, they were not able to offer pirates any other profitable alternative when disengaging.

The NCA organized trainings in alternative livelihoods, which religious leaders used as incentives for disengagement. Religion was a push factor, and alternative livelihood training a pull factor. Combined these two factors provide strong motives and incentives for disengagement from piracy. Hence, the ALP project is an example of success in building on local processes and efforts, and combining these with components of standard reintegration programming.

### Moral communities take action

An interesting recent development is that local communities have started to mobilize against piracy. The NCA and others now claim that Eyl, which has been one of the most pirate infested harbors on the east coast of Puntland, is now free from pirates. This is apparently the result of the local community taking counter-action. An ex-pirate from Eyl said: *“There are no pirates in Eyl because the people chased them away. The community put pressure on them to either quit or disband them from the community.”* (#11) This was confirmed by NCA employees in Garowe. In NCA’s annual report for 2010, one of the program’s results was coastal communities withdrawing support for pirates.

The coastal communities, especially Eyl and Bargaal, do not buy or sell goods to the pirates, rent their houses nor allow their daughters to be married to the pirates. This has forced the pirates to go southwards to Garacad and Hobyo in search of communal support. (NCA 2010b, section 2.4.1)

A 2011 Project Review Report found that pirates also are moving out of Garacad and Jarriiban in Puntland, to villages such as Haragdheer and Hobyo in South Central Somalia. This is a result of efforts on various levels:

The out-migration is said to be as a result of a combination of efforts, including intense government pressure, efforts by the international community and grassroots advocacy by non-state actors, particularly NCA through the religious leaders. These efforts have generated social rejection of pirates by community. (NCA 2011:8).

## Investments in local economy

Investments in local economy and improving infrastructure are crucial parts of recovery and development in many conflict and post-war areas. The Minister of Security in Puntland strongly argues for investment in the local economy: *“What should be done is developing and supporting the small industry and local production. There should be invested in airport and seaport to strengthen the local economy”* (Interview with the Ministry of Security in Puntland, May 2011). Such investments are closely linked to reintegration, creating a stronger employment base and livelihood opportunities for all. The minister argues that there should be a stronger link between reintegration, livelihood projects, and broader investment in the local economy:

There should be investment in three sectors; fishery, livestock and agriculture. This can create sustainable solutions. Investing in small industries. The money that has been used in the projects (reintegration projects) could have been invested in that sector. Some do training within fishery, however the people do not have boats and nets. So it should be a package combining these things. That would make much more impact. (Interview with the Ministry of Security in Puntland, May 2011).

Most informants involved in piracy had a background from the fishing industry while others were nomads. These are traditionally the two main sectors of livelihood for Puntlanders (Puntland State of Somalia 2007:18). Based on limited formal labor-market opportunities in the region, it could prove efficient to support reintegration back into traditional ways of livelihood, building on already obtained skills rather than introducing them to sectors where the unemployment rate might be high and the demand is low. In contexts such as Somalia: *“Each individual will have some type of skills that he or she is capable of, and the DDR reintegration program should be designed to capitalize on this in the best way possible”* (IDDR:44).

## Conclusion and main findings

The first part of this study explored the social and economic entities, processes, conditions, and circumstances influencing decisions to join piracy in Somalia, as well as decisions to disengage; this is discussed in terms of engagement/disengagement and push and pull factors. However, the findings cannot be generalized to piracy as a whole, as the sample is small, consisting of foot “soldiers” in these criminal groups and those individuals who decided to disengage. The findings are still relevant, since they offer insights for developing or improving interventions.

In interviews with 16 individuals involved with piracy groups, 15 stated that economic conditions and motivations were a main factor in their decisions to join. The lack of employment and livelihood served as a push factor, whereas the prospect of economic profit was a pull factor. Ideology or political motivations played a minor role in attracting them to join pirate groups. However, five ex-pirates stated that they did so in response to illegal fishing by foreign vessels.

Disappointment at the lack of expected profit influenced some decisions to end piracy involvement, serving to push them out of the group. Another push factor was the hardship and risk involved, mentioned by more than half of those actively involved in piracy.

Based on the notion of multi-centric communities, this report has unraveled how these criminalized individuals are members of a set of partly overlapping social units and networks of various outreach, all of which are custodians of religious moral codes that form incentives for not engaging and for exiting. More than half of the ex-pirates mentioned strong morally condemning statements by local Muslim leaders, family or other members in the local community that piracy was *haram* (forbidden) as a factor in their decision to stop involvement. This provided a strong push factor out of piracy. The message of the religious leaders was often reinforced by family and community objections to their involvement in piracy, motivated both moral arguments and fear about the dangers involved in piracy activities.

Of particular interest was whether decisions to engage and disengage from piracy were made alone or under the influence of others. For 14 out of 16 involved with piracy, family members or peers had encouraged, facilitated, or pressured them to join. Most joined the group with others, but they left the group alone and covertly. However, other family members also played important roles in trying to prevent them from joining, as well as facilitating their disengagement. The dangers involved, as well as the *haram* (forbidden) nature of piracy, motivated the family to try to keep or get them out of pirate groups. In several cases, fathers used their social connections to get their sons enrolled in the Alternative Livelihood to Piracy (ALP) project or send them away from the piracy group.

The second part of the study looked into the Norwegian Church Aid’s (NCA) ALP project in Somalia. The project facilitates disengagement and reintegration and offers vocational and business-skills training and a seed grant to help ex-pirates start a new life. Generally the participants held positive views on the project and its usefulness. For some, the ALP project played a vital role as a pull factor in their disengagement process by providing an attractive alternative to continued involvement with piracy.



A very successful part of the ALP project was the close cooperation with local religious leaders, who drew upon Koranic teachings to dissuade youths from piracy. These religious leaders also recommended such youths to enroll in the ALP project. The ALP project thus seems to have provided a powerful mix of reinforcing push factors out of piracy with forces pulling youths into a more rewarding alternative.

## Recommendations for programming

- Build stronger and more links to the local market and businesses. Expand arrangements for internships and apprenticeships with local businesses.
- Conduct in-depth market surveys mapping the local job opportunities and possibilities for developing new businesses.
- Expand the project period beyond three years in order to provide sustainability, long-term planning, and capacity building.
- Extend the duration of the training period and expand to other sectors on the basis of findings from the market survey. Introduce follow-up training and advanced courses (e.g., six months after graduation).
- Increase the number of participants in the project (depending on resources).
- Refine selection criteria and processes for gaining admittance to the project. Establish objective criteria in order to counteract selection biases due to gate-keepers with vested interests, or social ties to applicants or their families. Project employees should interview the final list of candidates before they are accepted, addressing their background, their skill level, their needs and their potential for benefitting from the project. Screen out applicants who have not been involved in piracy-related activities, and those who are already well on their way to reintegration independent of the project.
- Consider to introduce a social contract between the ALP project and the individual participants, specifying certain terms with which the participant has to comply in order to be accepted into the project, and breaches which may result in expulsion. This may include not fighting, committing crimes, or chewing khat during the project period.
- Improve the M&E framework to better monitor participants. Assess individual outcomes after one year.
- Offer capacity building for local implementing partners in order to increase the quality of the trainings.
- Support families in preventing their children from joining piracy groups, and/or in persuading their children to quit piracy. Provide information on their important roles and on possible routes of disengagement and reintegration. Invite parents to contact religious leaders who take a clear stand against piracy. Inform about the possibilities the ALP project can offer individuals who disengage from piracy.
- Continue programs on education, water, sanitary, emergency aid, livelihood, women's empowerment, and peace projects. These initiatives contribute to prevention of young and economically challenged people joining piracy. They also contribute to successful disengagement and reintegration.
- Use ex-pirates to help spread awareness and knowledge about the hardship, risk, and disillusionment involved in armed group membership.
- Maintain and expand capacity building and cooperation with religious leaders who take a clear stand against piracy. Develop similar partnerships with elders and community leaders. Expand to other piracy-affected areas.

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# Appendix 1

## List of interviewed organizations and individuals

Ministry of Justice and Religious Affairs (MoJAR), Puntland

Ministry of Security, Puntland

Ministry of Labour, Youth and Sports, Puntland

Ministry of Justice, Somaliland

Ministry of Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Refugees, Somaliland

The Religious Leaders Organization (under the MoJAR in Puntland)

Secretariat for Puntland Religious Leaders (under the MoJAR in Puntland)

UNICEF, Puntland

Garowe Vocational Training Centre (GVTC), Puntland

Somalia Relief and Development Organization (SORDO), Puntland

Somali Women with Vision (SWV), Puntland

Bossaso District Safety Committee (DSC), Puntland

Somali Youth Organizations, Puntland

Regional Marine Conservation Organization (RMCO), Puntland

Puntland Institute for Development Administration and Management (PIDAM), Puntland

Two representatives from the elders in Bosasso, Puntland

Kenya Pastoral Development Agency (NOKEPDA)







## The International Research Group on Reintegration

Efforts to ensure social, political and economic reintegration of former combatants are persistently neglected in peacebuilding interventions. This is so, even as reintegration of former fighters is a central prerequisite for durable peace to take hold and for post-war economic reconstruction to be kick-started.

The Centre for Peace Studies' (CPS) International Research Group on Reintegration (IRGR) is currently in cooperation with other applied academic institutions and international agencies, including the United Nations Interagency Working Group on DDR (IAWG-DDR), undertaking interdisciplinary and comparative studies of reintegration. Current initiatives build on a four years in-depth project with the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) on the contexts of DDR. Ongoing applied research will enable the group to assess strengths and weaknesses in current DDR policy formulation and programming and contribute to a bolstering of reintegration efforts in key conflict zones.

The research initiative will solidify the standing of the Centre for Peace Studies at the University of Tromsø and associated partners as an international hub for expertise on reintegration. Complementary to the ongoing IAWG-CPS collaboration, which also has a focus on customization of DDR knowledge products, CPS is in collaboration with UNIDIR (Geneva) and Livework (a leading innovator of service design), developing prototypes which may enable CPS gradually to take on global service functions on reintegration.

Disarmament and demobilization, the shorter and technical sides of DDR, usually receive considerable focus and

resources. Reintegration, however, is understudied and critically underfinanced. The work of the IRGR may help rectify this by maintaining a deliberate focus on reintegration and substantiate why long-term funding will enhance cost-effectiveness of peacebuilding. An underlying premise of current initiatives is that if reintegration, in all its facets, is systematically studied, we can generate new important evidence-based knowledge that will help future reintegration programming. Too little is known about the mechanisms that facilitate and play into reintegration processes. These need to be recorded, distilled and analyzed in order for researchers and practitioners to see common patterns and processes, which in turn can shed new light on why and how reintegration processes unfold in the way they do. Reintegration is an issue gaining importance in inter-agency efforts - helping to develop UN-wide tools and approaches will therefore provide important support to the Integrated Missions concept.

The IRGR comprises both faculty staff and affiliated leading scholars on DDR and global security. Furthermore, CPS currently supports young researchers to develop expert knowledge on DDR and Reintegration in particular. CPS's own PhD and MA students in Peace and Conflict Transformation are affiliated with the expert group and receive guidance from a group who combine academic excellence with dedicated work as practitioners. Several of the groups' members are current or former UN staff, including from agencies such as DPKO, UNDP, UNIFEM and UNESCAP. The DDR team will offer advice on design, implementation and evaluation of DDR, as well as on institutional capacity building and on mainstreaming gender-aware reintegration concerns into large-scale reconstruction and recovery efforts.