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The Socio-Economic Conditions of Former APLA and MK Soldiers in Post-Apartheid South Africa

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the socio-economic conditions of former Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) and uMKhonto we Sizwe (MK) soldiers in South Africa. In the previous chapters it was argued that the demobilisation of former APLA and MK soldiers took place without adequate planning, and as a consequence there was no proper planning for the reintegration of soldiers into civilian society. It was thus inevitable that reintegration programmes would be wholly inadequate to meet the needs of former APLA and MK soldiers.

This chapter is based largely on a survey of a national sample of 395 former APLA and MK soldiers interviewed between July 2001 and July 2002.⁴³ At the beginning of the survey the aim was to focus exclusively on former APLA and MK soldiers who had been demobilised. However, in the process of the study, twenty respondents who reported that they had been discharged or dismissed from the SANDF, four who reported that their short-term contracts had expired, seventeen who reported that they had resigned from the SANDF, and 56 who reported that they had neither integrated

⁴³ As stated in the methodology, these interviews were conducted as part of the Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR) study on the quality of life and socio-economic needs of former APLA and MK soldiers, in which the author participated and conducted interviews.

nor demobilised were also interviewed. These numbers are insignificant because over 70 per cent of the respondents reported that they had been demobilised and had received a demobilisation gratuity (see Table 7.3).

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section examines the personal characteristics of respondents, and includes respondents' gender, age, marital status, number of children and military affiliation. The section ends with an analysis of the respondents' socio-economic needs and expectations as well as their opinions on targeted reintegration programmes for ex-combatants. The second section analyses the economic reintegration of former APLA and MK soldiers and is divided into five sub-sections – demobilisation gratuities and Special Pension, formal sector employment, informal sector employment, informal sector initiatives and the participation of former MK soldiers in formal businesses. This is followed by a discussion of the social reintegration of former APLA and MK soldiers, and includes house ownership, health and psychological problems, education and training, reintegration into the family, reintegration into local communities and relationships between former combatants. The last section focuses on the political reintegration of former APLA and MK soldiers.

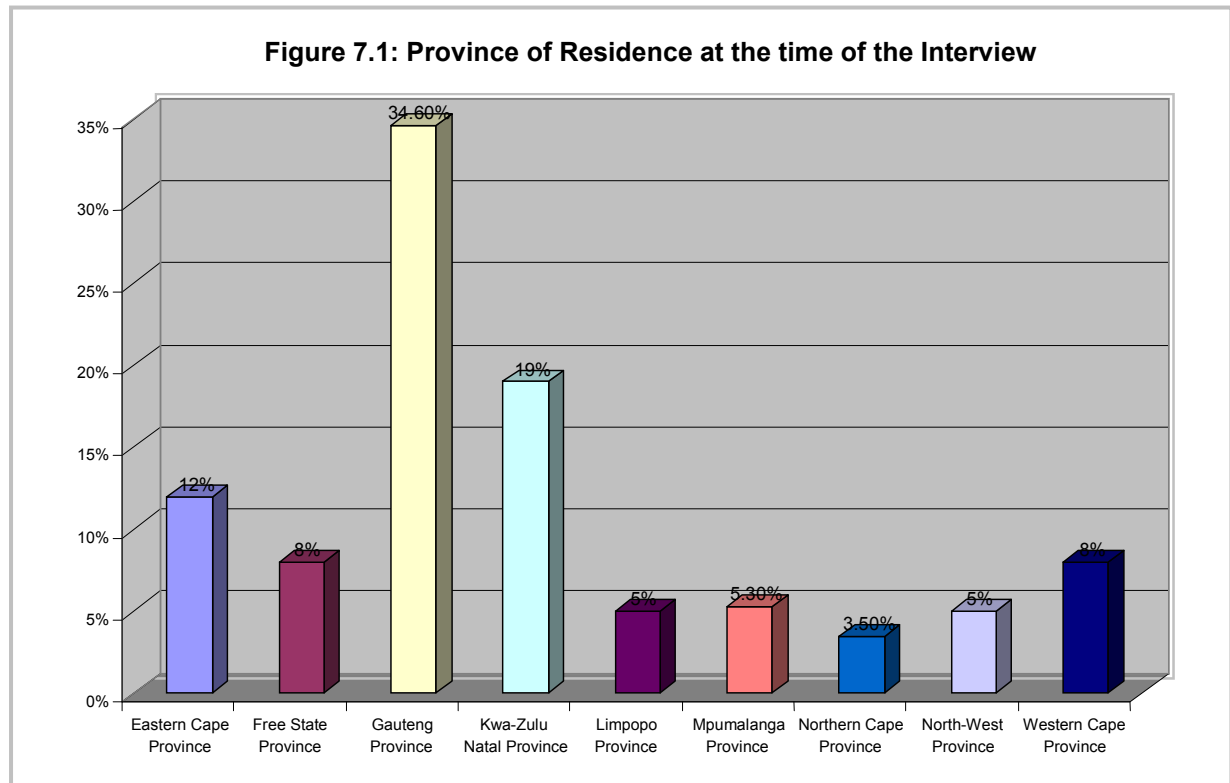
The main argument of this chapter is that respondents had not achieved economic reintegration in the sense of achieving a productive livelihood. Furthermore, while some respondents had achieved some degree of social reintegration, others continued to see themselves as a distinct group different from other members of the society.

7.2 A Profile of a Sample of Former APLA and MK Combatants

7.2.1 The Geographic Distribution of Respondents

The absence of a reliable sampling frame made it impossible to determine a representative sample of former APLA and MK soldiers in terms of geographic distribution. Former APLA and MK combatants were interviewed in all nine provinces. A significant number of respondents (34.6 per cent) were interviewed in Gauteng Province, followed by KwaZulu-Natal Province (19 per cent), Eastern Cape Province (12 per cent), Free State Province (8 per cent), Western Cape Province (8

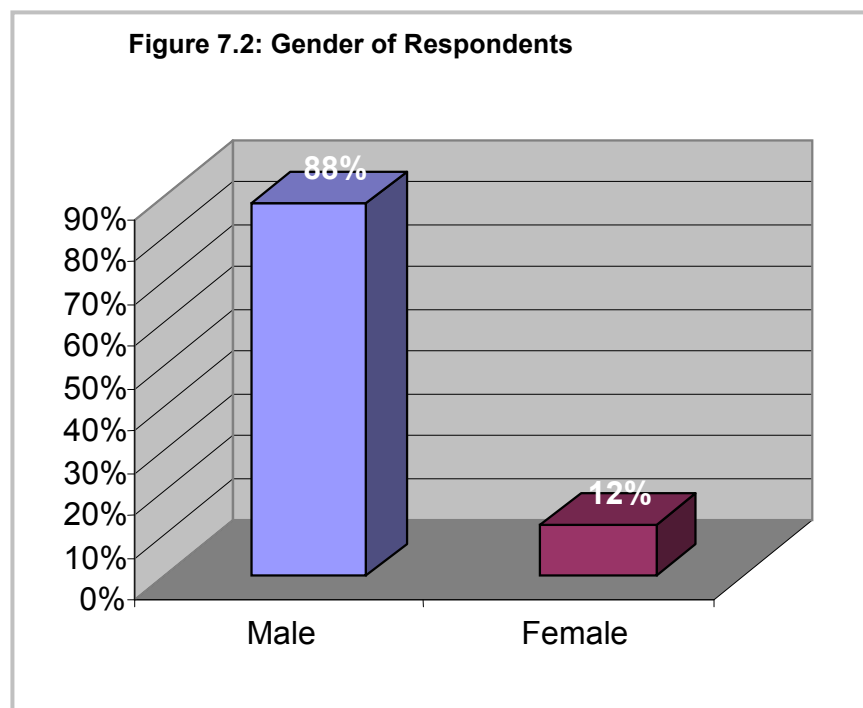
per cent), Mpumalanga Province (5.3 per cent), Limpopo Province (5 per cent), North West Province (5 per cent) and Northern Cape Province (3.5 per cent) (see Figure 7.1). While there was no question to determine whether respondents lived in the same province before joining either APLA or MK, interviews revealed that former APLA and MK combatants tended to migrate within provinces instead of across provinces.



Partly as a function of snowball sampling, and partly as a result of the geographic distribution of APLA and MK cadres, there were areas with a high concentration of former soldiers whereas in other provinces it was difficult to find respondents, especially in areas such as the Northern Cape. Mphahlele (2002) states that towards the end of the liberation struggle “there were areas without any PAC structures and others with large concentrations of APLA cadres” (Mphahlele, 2002: 137). This also applied to the ANC and MK, because while it was relatively easy to get access to former MK soldiers in different areas of Gauteng Province, in other provinces such as the North West, it was difficult to locate a single area with a concentration of former MK soldiers.

7.2.2 Respondents' Gender

Women were trained alongside men during the South African liberation struggle. Initially there were very few women combatants, but as the liberation struggle became more protracted, increasing numbers of women joined MK and APLA. According to Cock (1991), by the time the armed struggle was suspended, women made up 20 per cent of MK membership. In the case of APLA, approximately 200 women served as combatants.⁴⁴ In the survey of 395 former APLA and MK soldiers women made up only 12 per cent of the sample while an overwhelming majority (88 per cent) consisted of males (see Figure 7.2).



There were various reasons why women joined APLA and MK. However, what was common among all the former female combatants was that none of them reported that they had been coerced into joining. The factors that influenced women to join APLA and MK were similar to those that influenced men. These will be discussed in subsection 7.2.4. However, as Mtintso's (1993) study of gender relations in MK indicates, female combatants' experience of life in military camps differed from that

⁴⁴ This information was provided by a senior APLA Veterans Association official at its headquarters in Johannesburg, 14 August 2002.

of their male counterparts. This was so despite the fact that MK presented itself as a progressive organisation catering for the needs of women as well as equality between the sexes.

7.2.3 Respondents' Age, Marital Status and Number of Children

The majority (51 per cent) of respondents were 35 years and younger. More interesting was the fact that a significant number of the respondents (109 or 27.5 per cent) were in the 25–30 years age cohort. In Gauteng Province, some former MK soldiers were against the idea of classifying people in the 25–30 years age cohort as former members of MK. They argued that people in that category were former SDU members.

In terms of marital status, the majority (51.8 per cent) of the respondents were single (never married), 36.9 per cent were married, 5 per cent were widowed, 4.5 per cent were divorced, 1 per cent had separated from their spouses, and 0.5 per cent did not specify their marital status. Some former APLA and MK members got married to women from their host countries while in exile. Such marriages were often sources of conflicts within families in a post-conflict South Africa. (This is explored in sub-section 7.4.5).

Table 7.1: Number of Children

NUMBER OF CHILDREN	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
One Child	89	22.3%
Two Children	106	27%
Three Children	77	19.2%
Four Children	34	8.5%
Five Children	15	3.7%
Six Children	8	2%
Seven Children	1	0.2%
Eight Children	3	0.7%
Nine Children	1	0.2%
No Children	7	1.7%
Not Specified	58	14.5%
TOTAL	395	100%

A significant number of respondents (26.8 per cent) in the sample had at least two children, while 22.5 per cent had one child and 19.4 per cent had three children (see Table 7.1). Some of the children were born out of wedlock and this posed serious problems for women, especially if they happened to be unemployed. Some female respondents reported that they had been accused of giving birth to fatherless children and hence faced difficulties with other family members. This is not unique to ex-combatants; it is common practice in most African societies to ostracise women who give birth to a child out of wedlock, while no one ever comments about the marital status of the child's father.

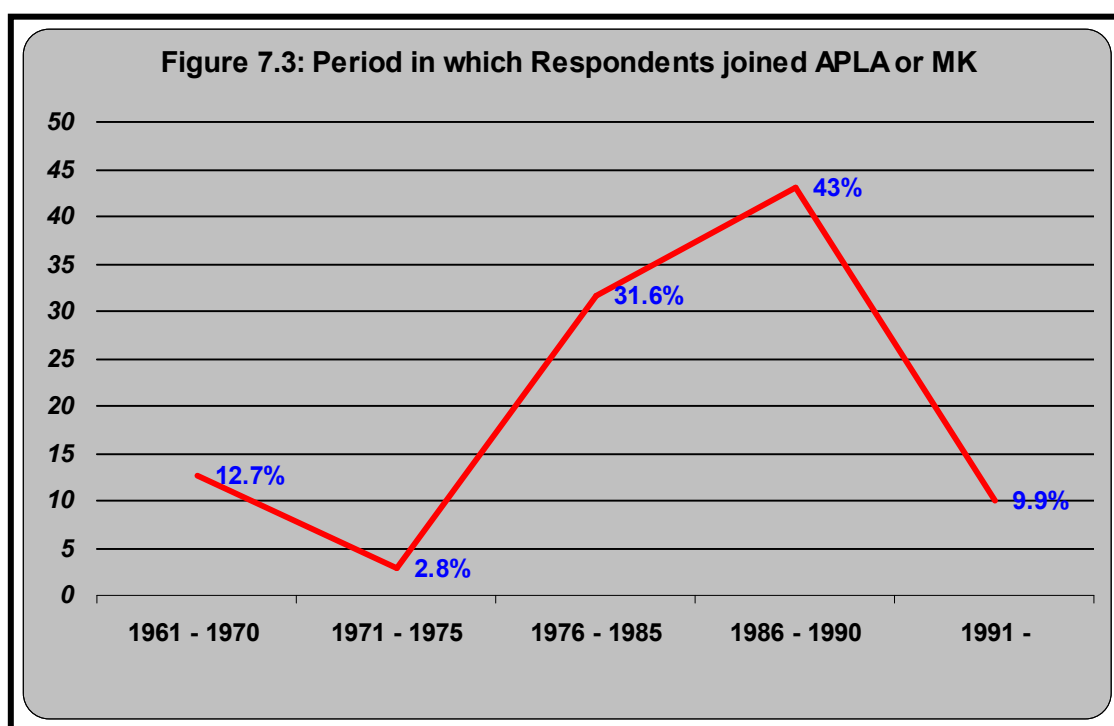
7.2.4 Respondents' Military Affiliation

In using snowball sampling, it was easier to find former MK combatants than former APLA combatants. This was because, unlike former APLA combatants, former MK soldiers had established informal networks outside their veterans' association through which information was disseminated on a regular basis. Thus, 325 respondents (82 per cent) were former MK soldiers while only 17.4 per cent (69 respondents) were former APLA soldiers. Notable was a respondent who reported that he defected from APLA to MK in 1994 after being frustrated by APLA. The majority (52 per cent) of respondents reported that they had joined either APLA or MK before their twentieth birthdays. It is worth noting that the number included 70 respondents who reported that they had joined APLA and MK before they turned sixteen. This implied that they spent most of their formative years in the military.

Partly as a function of snowball sampling and partly as the result of the lack of co-operation from the older generation of former APLA and MK members, it was difficult to interview a large number of the first generation of freedom fighters (those who had joined in the period 1961–1970). In 2002, a 72 year old former MK soldier from Orange Farm (south of Johannesburg) refused to be interviewed and said the following: *“As you can see I am too old for interviews. I have played my part in the struggle for freedom and all that I am waiting for now is my death. Go and interview the young freedom fighters”*.⁴⁵ A key MK informant from Orange Farm revealed that

⁴⁵ Shortly after June 2004, a key MK informant from Orange Farm reported that the respondent had passed away.

most of the members of the older MK generation suspected that outsiders were out to discredit the ANC, hence their refusal to talk to strangers.



However, despite the inability to interview a large number of the first generation of APLA and MK soldiers, the sample breakdown corresponded closely with the key moments in the history of the liberation struggle in South Africa. The liberation struggle started in December 1961 and, as Figure 7.3 shows, 12.7 per cent of respondents reported that they had joined either APLA or MK in the period 1961–1970. Only 2.8 per cent of the respondents stated that they had joined in the period 1971–1975. This was because the period 1961–1975 was a period of severe repression. It was followed by a dramatic increase in the recruitment of soldiers in the period 1976–1985. The increase was largely due to the police brutality that followed the 1976 student uprising. Many student activists left the country for military training in neighbouring countries. As will be discussed in subsection 7.4.4, the arrival of a large number of students in MK camps necessitated the speedy establishment of schooling facilities (Morrow, Maaba and Pulumani, 2004). In the present sample, the largest number (43 per cent) of respondents joined either APLA or MK in the period 1986–1990. This was an increase of 36 per cent from the figure of the period 1976–

1985. In 1986, South Africa was under a State of Emergency and heightened police brutality, which pushed young people to join the liberation struggle. Thirty-nine respondents (9.9 per cent) stated that they had joined MK between 1991 and 1994. This applied to those who were trained as Self-Defence Units by returning MK soldiers and those who were deliberately trained as MK soldiers post-1991 to increase numbers of MK soldiers when the time for integration (to form the SANDF) came.

There were at least four broad reasons why men and women joined either APLA or MK. The first reason applied to the first generation of female MK combatants. These combatants joined MK between 1966 and 1970, and stated that they were recruited by the ANC Women's League to join MK. The second reason was that family members and peers had joined or were joining MK. One former APLA soldier said, *"I left the country with my father who was on his way to join the PAC in exile. My father was leaving for Swaziland to join the PAC. I accompanied him on the mission"* (Interview with a former APLA soldier, Soweto, 15.02.2002). Some of the female respondents stated that the need to follow their boyfriends was the main reason why they joined MK (there was no evidence of this among female APLA soldiers). The boyfriend influence was also reported by Mtintso (1993) in her study on gender relations in MK. One respondent in her study had the following to say: *"My boyfriend was leaving the country after 1976. I had not been involved in the student uprisings but I knew what was happening. When he said he was leaving and asked me to come with him, I agreed. I never even told them at home"* (female former MK soldier cited in Mtintso, 1993: 19). The third reason that influenced men and women to join either MK or APLA was continuous police brutality and harassment. This included harassment of family members, comrades or community members.

We were engaged in looting and burning white business establishments and company vehicles with the aim of destabilising the apartheid system. This put us on the security forces' list of wanted people. It was difficult for me to live inside the country because the security forces were looking for me. I had to go to Lesotho to join MK in order to get a gun and defend the people (Interview with a former MK soldier, Orange Farm, 07.02.2001).

A former MK soldier from the Northern Cape explained his process of joining MK in the following way:

I was in the UDF and I liked the Freedom Charter; then I decided to join the ANC. I was once shot by the police and was under the constant surveillance of the apartheid government security forces. Then the current Premier of the Northern Cape [Mane Dipico] suggested that I should leave the country. He arranged for me to leave the country (Interview with a former MK soldier, Kimberley, 22.02.2002).

Another respondent said, *“I received advice from a comrade and I was tired of apartheid. I had to stand up and fight. The police were harassing me, thus I decided to go to Botswana to join APLA”* (Interview with a former APLA soldier, Evaton, 12.02.2002).

In some cases the main trigger for a decision to join either APLA or MK was the death of a family member at the hands of the state security forces, evident in the following response: *“My brother who was a member of the ANC and MK was killed by the security forces. Thus, I decided to join MK”* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Durban, 26.02.2002). A former member of APLA also stated that the death of a family member was the main reason he had decided to undergo military training:

I joined APLA because my brother was killed in the struggle for liberation. I wanted to shoot any white skin I could come across. I was so emotionally charged after my brother's death; hence, I crossed the border into Swaziland (Interview with a former APLA soldier, SOWETO, 12.02.2002).

However, for others police brutality or being wanted by the state security forces was not directly related to the struggle for liberation. A number of respondents reported that they had joined either APLA or MK because they were running away from the police due to their involvement in criminal activities. However; the extent of this practice remains unknown. A former APLA soldier from Gauteng Province said, *“I joined APLA because I was wanted by the South African Police for armed robbery in*

a white suburb. That was my contribution to the struggle for liberation” (Interview with a former APLA soldier, SOWETO, 21.11.2001).

The fourth reason that influenced men and women to join either APLA or MK was ideological – the commitment to liberate the country from racial oppression. Respondents in this category included those who had participated in political struggles before joining APLA or MK. This also included those who were deliberately recruited by the leaders of the ANC or the PAC.

I was protecting Africans from oppression. I could have joined APLA because it was also fighting for Africans. However, MK was visible and always there (Interview with a former MK soldier, Queenstown, 02.02.2002).

Others were influenced by political activities that took place in their areas of residence:

I was a student in a PAC stronghold and I also used to attend classes conducted by PAC members who had been released from Robben Island. This explains why I joined the PAC. My decision was influenced by the discrimination practised by white people on blacks (Interview with a former APLA soldier, Cape Town, 25.10.2001).

Some of the former APLA and MK soldiers were not initially involved in the armed struggle but had engaged in various forms of political activities. Their detention for their political activities very often led to a decision to join either APLA or MK on their release from prison, evident in the following response:

I was once detained for my political activities and that was when I realised the importance of joining the military in order to defend myself against the enemy. My departure was triggered by an order from MK commanders who wanted me to go to Lesotho to upgrade my military training (Interview with a former MK soldier, Soweto, 09.10.2001).

Respondents reported that they had received military training in different countries including Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Bulgaria, Cuba, East Germany, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Israel, Lesotho, People's Republic of China, Russia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and many more. Thus, at the end of the armed conflict in South Africa, former APLA and MK combatants came back to the country with diverse military training and traditions. As discussed in Chapter 5, this was used to argue for bridging training for former APLA and MK soldiers for the purposes of standardisation in the SANDF. According to the respondents, types of military training included (either one or a combination of) anti-aircraft gun handling, guerrilla warfare, infantry battalion, instructor's course, military combat work, military engineering, military First Aid, military intelligence, rangers' course, reconnaissance, sabotage, anti-tank gun handling, setting bombs, suicide commando, surveillance and counter-surveillance, tactics, target identification, topography, VIP protection, weapons handling, working with landmines, artillery, military police course, logistics, basic military training, commander's course, communications, crush course, enemy identification, firearms handling, extracting information using torture, and many more.

Those who reported to have received training in suicide commando (all from MK and none from APLA) equated it to the skill possessed by suicide bombers in the Middle East. Explaining the behaviour of suicide commandos, a key MK informant said, *"I will take you to some of the guys who were trained as suicide commandos. Do not be afraid when we get there; you will normally find them sitting alone, with a gun on the table. The main thing that is on their mind is to commit suicide if caught"* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Orange Farm, 09.10.2001). Those who reported that they had trained as suicide commandos associated the training with Algeria. However, former MK commanders denied any knowledge of such a skill. Instead General Andrew Masondo, a former MK commissar, argued that the closest thing to what the ex-combatants were describing was that some soldiers had received specialised training to carry out high-risk missions in circumstances where chances of returning alive were almost non-existent.

In the course of the study, none of those who claimed to have received training in suicide commando were able to describe what the training entailed. The use of torture

to extract information was mentioned by respondents who stated that they were deployed in the security department of either APLA or MK. They were trained in interrogation techniques to extract information from suspected enemy agents through whichever means possible. Also notable was that a number of respondents stated that most of the former APLA and MK soldiers who were earning a living through armed robberies were trained in military combat work (MCW). The argument was that for those trained in MCW being involved in an armed robbery was much easier than fighting an enemy, because in the former situation the victim is not always expecting an attack.

7.2.5 Respondents' Socio-economic Needs and Expectations

Some of those who joined the struggle for liberation on the side of the ANC had to be inducted into the ideals of the Freedom Charter to give them a rationale for taking part in the struggle. For many, it was a foundational document, stating their aspirations and expectations for the “post-apartheid” society. The Freedom Charter, adopted at the Congress of the People in Kliptown on June 26, 1955, was based on a number of democratic principles. Those who were present at the Congress pledged that they would strive together (black and white people), sparing neither strength nor courage, until the achievement of the ideals. These were:

- The People Shall Govern!
- All National Groups Shall have Equal Rights!
- The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth!
- The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work It!
- All Shall be Equal Before the Law!
- All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights!
- There Shall be Work and Security!
- The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened!
- There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort!
- There Shall be Peace and Friendship!

The last words in the Freedom Charter were, “Let all people who love their people and their country now say, as we say here: these freedoms we will fight for, side by

side, throughout our lives, until we have won our liberty” (*Freedom Charter*, 1995, <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/charter.html>).

However, as stated in Chapter 4, MK never defeated the SADF and the transition was characterised by accommodation and appeasement of two sets of interests – those of white power and privilege and those of domestic and international capital. This was aimed at preventing a civil war or a seizure of power by the military and for South Africa to survive economically in the context of globalisation. The process inevitably involved some compromises on each side. The transition was negotiated by elites from both sides of the conflict who had needs and interests that might have differed from those of the ordinary people, including guerrilla soldiers who had fought for the ideals of the Freedom Charter. This sub-section identifies the needs and expectations of ex-combatants at the time of the disbandment of APLA and MK, how ex-combatants defined their present predicament, and who they thought should be responsible for addressing their needs.

Most respondents reported that they expected an acceptable and decent standard of living after liberation. Since former APLA and MK combatants were not a homogeneous group (even within each armed formation), needs and expectations varied. Some of the respondents were primarily concerned about their health, as evidenced in the following response: “*I wanted to relax and expected that the government would look after us and give us necessary counselling* (Interview with a former MK combatant, Soweto, 04.01.2002). Another respondent said, “*All I wanted was to relax and take care of my health*” (Interview with a former MK soldier, Soweto, 16.01.2002). The concern about health problems was raised mainly by those who reported that they suffered from various illnesses (discussed in sub-section 7.4.3). Other ex-combatants were mainly concerned about returning to normal family life.

For some female respondents the suspension of the armed struggle offered them an opportunity to return to their traditional motherhood role – to raise children. A number of respondents emphasised the need to stay closer to their children. This was captured in the words of a female respondent from Gauteng: “*My wish was to settle down and look after my children and myself. I did not want to stay away from my*

children” (Interview with a female former MK combatant, Soweto, 19.12.2001). Another female former MK soldier from Cape Town had the following to say: *“I had this child, I had a baby, it was now bigger than a baby and the two of us [my son and I] had been traumatised by the way we were tortured. I couldn’t get used to getting back into a 24 hours working day like I had in the trade union movement. I had to find my feet in a different field in a different way. I didn’t know what the f** I was gonna do...”* (Interview with Shirley Gunn, Cape Town, 25.07.2001).

Others were more concerned about the welfare of everyone in the country and not only that of ex-combatants, evident in the following response: *“I expected a good life and jobs. These [ideas] are in the Freedom Charter. We fought for these ideas”* (Interview with a former MK soldier, New Crossroads, 08.03.2002). Also referring to the Freedom Charter, another respondent had the following to say: *“I expected poverty eradication and the government to address youth problems like unemployment and lack of good education. If these things can be addressed there shall be peace and harmony, the Freedom Charter says”* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Port Elizabeth, 31.01.2002).

Some ex-combatants expected the government to provide for them economically, without them making any contribution. This attitude was common among male ex-combatants, especially from MK. According to MK informants, this was mainly because in exile the ANC had been responsible for the needs of ex-combatants to the extent that even when combatants gave birth to children, the ANC would take over the responsibility of maintaining them. However, other respondents wanted an opportunity to earn a living on their own without depending on any institution. Hence, the most common economic need identified by respondents was to find a job. In response to the question on needs and expectations, most of the respondents mentioned the need to secure a job. The word “job(s)” appeared in more than 60 per cent of responses. This referred to either a job in the military or the private sector. Some respondents were aware of the constraints of the South African labour market, and their needs were mainly to start their own businesses as civilians. However, as the section on economic reintegration will show, most of those who attempted to start their own businesses did not succeed for various reasons.

The majority (67.3 per cent) of respondents reported that their expectations of life in a free society had not been met; 25.3 per cent stated that their expectations had been met, while 2.5 per cent stated that they did not expect anything from anyone. As stated above, needs and expectations differed from one individual to another. Those who felt that their needs had been met included those who wanted to leave the military and enjoy life as civilians and those who wished to settle down and take care of their health. Among those who argued that their needs and expectations had not been met, the main complaint was their inability to secure a decent job or financial aid to start a small business. Others wished to join the newly formed SANDF. It is worth noting that 66.3 per cent of the respondents felt that the government was not doing enough to address their needs in a post-conflict environment, while 29.8 per cent felt that the government was trying its best to address their needs.

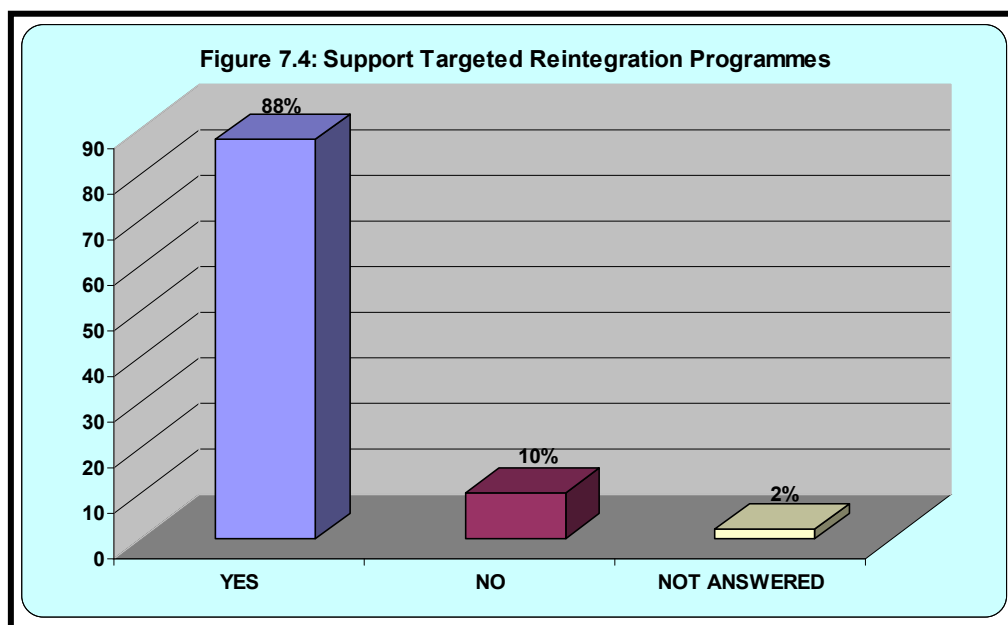
7.2.6 Support for Targeted Reintegration Programmes

In designing reintegration programmes, there is a choice between targeted and non-targeted programmes. The choice depends on a number of factors (Colletta, Kostner and Wiederhofer, 1996; Kingma and Sayers, 1995; World Bank, 1993). These are whether demobilised ex-combatants are a special needs population, whether their return to productive non-military activity is more important to the overall security of the nation than that of other groups, and whether targeted programmes are effective (World Bank, 1993).

There are eight reasons that are often used to justify some form of targeted support for the reintegration of ex-soldiers and guerrillas. The first is that demobilised soldiers and fighters require support from a humanitarian point of view (Kingma, 2000). This is because, upon demobilisation, they are out of a job and often far from their homes. Therefore, they require at least the provision of basic needs for some time as well as assistance with resettlement. The second reason is that in some cases, targeted programmes are a form of reward for the sacrifices that combatants have made for several years of their lives to liberate their country and to improve the prospects of their compatriots. Thirdly, targeted reintegration programmes are used with the expectation that ex-combatants can make a contribution to general development in their communities and the country as a whole. The assumption is that their skills and

other capabilities might bring new economic activities and employment opportunities (Kingma, 2000). The fourth reason for targeted reintegration programmes is related to peace and security. Insufficient attention to the risks involved in demobilisation and reintegration could jeopardise the peace-building process. “Without support, the ex-combatants might become frustrated and threaten the peace and development process by becoming active in criminal activities or violent political opposition” (Kingma, 2000: 21-22). Another reason for targeted reintegration programmes is that in most countries ex-combatants must adapt to a completely new way of life, and may lack many of the skills that other beneficiaries of development projects possess (World Bank, 1993). Linked to this is that very often ex-combatants also lack the social skills to obtain jobs and the resources necessary to access land and other inputs necessary to succeed in farming or in starting businesses, since they have spent most of their lives in the military. The seventh reason to justify targeted reintegration is that even when ex-combatants possess marketable skills, they often lack job-search skills (World Bank, 1993). Lastly, veterans have very high expectations in that they expect rewards from the community for their contributions and sacrifices. Sometimes ex-combatants’ expectations are complicated by the interests of various political faction groups who want to use veterans for political gains through misinforming them. The potential risk and high expectations of ex-combatants call for targeted reintegration programmes for veterans and their families (Kazoora, 1998).

In this study’s sample of former APLA and MK soldiers, an overwhelming majority (88 per cent) of respondents argued that the government had to embark on programmes targeted at ex-combatants, 10 per cent of the respondents (including self-confessed criminals) were against the idea, while 2 per cent did not respond to the question (see Figure 7.4).



Those who argued for specific government programmes targeted towards ex-combatants had a number of suggestions. A stable source of income was the priority for many ex-combatants, and a number of respondents argued for the creation of income-generating projects:

Yes, there are so many creative minds out there that can benefit the community. Such people should be used in such projects [specific projects aimed at assisting ex-combatants] (Interview with a former APLA soldier, Botshabelo, 31.12.2001).

Also commenting on the creation of projects, another respondent said:

There should be projects. Many comrades are doing nothing and are unemployed; projects can help them with jobs and money to improve their lives (Interview with a former MK soldier, Port Elizabeth, 30.01.2002).

Some ex-combatants viewed government reintegration programmes as a solution to crime; hence they strongly argued that the government must create projects. For example, one respondent argued that: “*We are not afraid of committing crime. For*

example [Collin] Chauke is a hero, he can give birth to other Chaukes (Interview with a former MK soldier, Orange Farm, 04.01.2002).⁴⁶ Others were more concerned with their own survival or the survival of their comrades. Housing was mentioned as a top priority if the government was to embark on targeted projects to assist ex-combatants.

Those who were opposed to targeted reintegration programmes offered various reasons. These ranged from the need for equality to the need for self-reliance. The most common argument was that there were many people who had never left the country but who had been injured in the struggle, and their condition was worse than the condition of some of the people who had left the country for military training. Those who adopted this position argued for equal treatment of everyone in South Africa irrespective of their military background. This was particularly evident in the following response:

Most ex-MK solders are lazy and suffer from a culture of entitlement. They always think that once a tender is out, they are automatically entitled to be awarded the project irrespective of the technicalities involved. Ex-MK soldiers must suffer with all those who were not part of MK (Interview with Jomo Mashiane, a former MK soldier, Polokwane, 01.02.2002).

However, there were a few respondents who expressed the opinion that ex-combatants had to be responsible for their needs and expectations. Their assertion was that former soldiers had to take initiative before asking for help. As one respondent put it, “*We know best what we want and how to get it* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Durban, 23.02.2002). This category of respondents included criminals who maintained that former soldiers had to use their military skills to earn a living, and others who argued for the use of a range of skills which included building houses. Another respondent argued that it was the responsibility of the veterans’ associations to develop targeted reintegration programmes:

⁴⁶ Collin Chauke was a former MK combatant who was identified as a kingpin of a syndicate that engaged in cash-in-transit vehicle robberies. He eluded police for years, escaped from custody after he was captured, and received substantial media attention until he was re-arrested, convicted and later died in prison.

Ex-combatants must come together and develop their own income-generating projects. The government could intervene if necessary, because government intervention is not compulsory. We are not special because we fought in foreign countries. MKMVA and APLMVA can design targeted reintegration programmes, not the government. The government is the government for all South Africans, not for ex-combatants alone. Targeted reintegration programmes would create some hatred between returning ex-combatants and those who stayed in the country while fighting for the same goal (Interview with a former MK soldier, SOWETO, 04.01.2002).

The reintegration programmes for former combatants should be designed as part of the reconstruction of the country instead of as targeted programmes (Kingma, 2000). One respondent argued that after 1994, the government introduced the Reconstruction and Development Programme to reconstruct the whole country; thus ex-combatants should never be treated as a special group through targeted programmes. The respondent argued that ex-combatants had to be wise and creative.

While ex-combatants often prefer targeted reintegration programmes, at the end of the war the needs of communities are many and those of the ex-combatants are only a subset of these. Targeted reintegration programmes impact on the self-conception of ex-combatants. There is some risk that if they are treated as a distinct group, separate from the rest of society, they will continue to identify themselves as such, demanding special benefits and targeted economic opportunities over the long term. Perhaps more importantly, ex-combatants who perceive themselves as belonging to a group apart from the rest of society may have trouble reintegrating socially and psychologically (International Peace Academy, 2002). The choice between targeted and non-targeted reintegration programmes is often contested, due to the variety of actors involved in the process. These may include, on the one hand, politicians whose concern is to buy national security and, on the other hand, donor agencies that are mainly concerned with broader community development issues.

A number of scholars argue that efforts should be made to strike a balance between dealing with the specific needs of ex-combatants and not creating discontent among the rest of their often poor communities (see for example, Kingma and Sayers, 1995).

Failure to do this might jeopardise true reintegration because of discontent from members of the communities into which ex-combatants are reintegrating (Kingma and Sayers, 1995). The needs of demobilised ex-combatants should be addressed as part of efforts to uplift entire communities into which ex-combatants are reintegrating (Kazoora, 1998; Kingma and Sayers, 1995; World Bank, 1993). “At the planning level, the reintegration goal is to bring the majority of veterans to a socio-economic level on a par with civilians” (Kazoora, 1998: 35). Some of the respondents argued for a similar approach of national reconstruction.

A common view among respondents in the present sample was that the state was the only institution in a favourable position to address the needs of ex-combatants. Respondents adopting this position argued that the state was the only institution with the resources and capacity to address their socio-economic needs. The argument was not simply about capacity and resources. Some respondents viewed this as a way that the government could compensate them for their role in the struggle for liberation, while others argued that the government was the only institution made up of people who understood the plight of ex-combatants. Other respondents argued that other institutions – including foreign governments, non-governmental organisations and the private sector – should aid the government to address the needs of ex-combatants. Respondents adopting this position argued that funds should be channelled through veterans’ associations, which should take the responsibility of addressing the needs of former soldiers.

7.3 Economic Reintegration

7.3.1 Different Sources of Income

This section analyses the economic conditions of former APLA and MK members. The discussion examines the demobilisation gratuity received, access to the Special Pension grant, formal sector employment and informal sector activities. The last subsection discusses the participation of former guerrilla soldiers in formal businesses.

The majority (62 per cent) of the respondents reported that they were unemployed and looking for work, 13 per cent reported that they were in full-time formal employment,

5.3 per cent reported that they were self-employed, while 8.6 per cent reported that they survived on a Special Military Pension grant as the only source of income. A small percentage (4.3 per cent) reported their status as unemployed and not looking for work. (as indicated in Table 7.2.)

Table 7.2: Source of Income

SOURCE OF INCOME	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Waged/Salaried Employment	52	13%
Self Employed	21	5.3%
Chief of Mpukane Nqamakwe	1	0.2%
Disability Grant	3	0.7%
Student	1	0.2%
Supported by Family/Relatives	1	0.2%
Special Pension Grant	34	8.6%
Disability and Special Pension Grants	6	1.5%
Old age and Special Pension Grants	15	4%
Unemployed Looking for Work	244	62%
Unemployed Not Looking for Work	17	4.3%
TOTAL	395	100%

South Africa has relatively high rates of unemployment. Statistics South Africa (2005a: xxvii) defines the unemployed as “those people within the economically active population who did not work during the seven days prior to the interview, want to work and are available to start work within two weeks of the interview, and have taken active steps to look for work or to start some form of self-employment in the four weeks prior to the interview”. According to Statistics South Africa (2005b), the overall unemployment rate in South Africa rose from 25.4 per cent in September 2000 to a peak of 31.2 per cent in March 2003, before declining to 26.5 per cent in March 2005. In 2004 the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) estimated that the unemployment rate in South Africa was 31 per cent, including workers no longer looking for employment (CIA World FactBook <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sf.html#Econ>).

7.3.2 Demobilisation Gratuities and the Special Pension Grant

As discussed in Chapter 6, former members of MK and APLA who were demobilised by the Department of Defence were entitled to a demobilisation gratuity. The amount of this gratuity was dependent on the length of time served in MK or APLA. An overwhelming majority of respondents (71.3 per cent) stated that they had received a demobilisation gratuity. Most of the respondents (144 out of a total of 282) had received demobilisation gratuities of between R12,000 and R20,000 (see Table 7.3). This was because a large number of respondents reported that they had joined either APLA or MK from 1986 onwards (see Figure 7.3 above).

A total of 93 respondents stated that they had not received a demobilisation gratuity because they had not been formally demobilised. From this total, four did not receive a demobilisation gratuity because they initially joined the SANDF on short-term contracts. Ex-combatants in this category stated that they were not aware that their employment contracts were non-permanent. Others reported that they had joined the SANDF but were later dismissed for various reasons, which included indiscipline even though, they argue, they did not understand the Military Discipline Code, which was inherited from the former SADF. The last category consisted of those who joined the SANDF but resigned because they were not happy with the conditions. They too did not qualify for a demobilisation gratuity.

Table 7.3: Demobilisation Gratuity Received

AMOUNT RECEIVED	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
R12 000 - R20 000	144	36.4%
R20 201 - R28 000	54	13.6%
R28 721 - R34 000	28	7%
R34 313 - R42 000	34	8.6%
R42 058 and above	22	6%
Discharged from the SANDF	20	5%
Joined SANDF on short-term contract	4	1%
Resigned from SANDF	17	4.3%
Waiting to be Formally Demobilised	56	14.1%
Not Disclosed	16	4%
TOTAL	395	100%

A total of 55 respondents (or 14 per cent) reported that they were receiving pensions in terms of the *Special Pension Act* (No. 69 of 1996), as discussed in the previous chapter. As Table 7.2 indicates, a Special Pension grant was either the only or a second source of income for the respondents. The reason for the low percentage of respondents who reported that they were receiving the Special Pension grant was that in terms of Subsection A of Section 1 of the Act, only those who were 35 years or older on the commencement date of the Act were entitled to apply for a special pension. Hence, more than half the sample population was not entitled to a Special Pension. However, a number of respondents stated that even though they qualified, they had not been able to secure a pension. Respondents in this category reported that this was due to the laborious application process, insufficient information, government inefficiency, and the lack of essential personal documentation, such as birth certificates, identity documents, proof of military background, permanent home address and bank details.

An overwhelming majority of respondents (88 per cent) reported that they supported the idea of providing a Special Pension for ex-combatants irrespective of their age, while only 12 per cent were against the idea. Respondents who stated that they supported the provision of a Special Pension for former APLA and MK soldiers cited various reasons for their support. These can be grouped into three broad categories. First, for some respondents the provision of a Special Pension was seen as a form of compensation for sacrifices made in the struggle to liberate South Africa. A respondent from the Western Cape stated the following:

We fought for this country both young and old but only the old receive the benefits. It seems that we were fighting for them to receive benefits (Interview with a former MK soldier, Gugulethu, 08.03.2002).

Another respondent from the Free State Province said:

Yes, everybody who participated in the activities of APLA and MK must get those pensions. We sacrificed our lives for this democracy (Interview with a former APLA soldier, Botshabelo, 03.01.2002.).

The view that ex-combatants should be compensated was also expressed by a former MK soldier from Gauteng Province:

We are suffering; we must get first preference in any government projects since we were responsible for bringing democracy to this country (Interview with a former MK soldier, Orange Farm, 03.11.2001).

The second category consisted of those who viewed the provision of a Special Pension as a mechanism to assist former APLA and MK soldiers to survive in the context of poverty and unemployment. This was mainly due to the recognition that former guerrillas had forfeited a chance to contribute to pension funds as a result of their participation in the struggle for liberation.

Ex-combatants never had time to contribute to a pension fund. The amount that is allocated must be enough so that a portion thereof can be saved in the bank (Interview with a former MK soldier, Polokwane, 24.01.2002).

An elderly former MK soldier from Limpopo Province argued that:

Some of us spent 31 years fighting for liberation. We were not paid for 31 years and never contributed to any pension fund, thus we deserve some compensation. Those who are aged have no pension fund to fall back on and this is unfair (Interview with a former MK soldier, Polokwane, 31.01.2002).

Others argued that the government had to provide financial assistance due to its failure to retrain those who had been demobilised:

The government must give us Special Pension because we are suffering. When we were demobilised we never received any training to help us survive as civilians. It was just 'take your money and go' (Interview with a former MK soldier, Evaton North, 09.11.2001).

Lastly, some respondents argued that the provision of a Special Pension for all former APLA and MK soldiers would help reduce the potential for former soldiers to engage in criminal activities as a means to earn a living.

The reason is that some of us know nothing except military skills; therefore it is difficult to get employment. The pension will help some of us survive before we end up being engaged in criminal activities (Interview with a former MK soldier, Nelspruit, 24.04.2002).

A female former MK soldier had the following to say:

We need a Special Pension irrespective of our age so that we don't think of crime or shoplifting. For us women stealing clothes is our main crime (Interview with a former MK soldier, SOWETO, 19.12.2001).

In the Free State Province a former APLA soldier said:

Guerrillas and Africans are suffering and to avoid possible security threats, I think it is important for us to get Special Pension. Otherwise this poverty may lead to massive crime (Interview with a former APLA soldier, Botshabelo, 06.11.2001).

The view was also expressed by a former MK soldier from the Western Cape:

Cadres brought change to this country and should be rewarded for their service. Factors that should be considered should be age, lack of employment and education. This will help alleviate possible crime by cadres. Projects should be created for them to earn money, too (Interview with a former MK soldier, Cape Town, 09.10.2001).

The main reason provided by those who were opposed to a Special Pension for ex-combatants was that former APLA and MK soldiers were not more deserving than other members of their communities. The respondents' view on Special Pension did not depend on their individual economic positions. Some of those who reported that

they had been looking for work for a period exceeding six years prior to the interview rejected the idea of a Special Pension. One of the respondents seemed to recognise the need for former APLA and MK soldiers to reintegrate into society by arguing, *“We are not a special group. We were special when we returned, but now we are part of the communities we live in”* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Evaton, 08.11.2001). This made sense because by the time reintegration began some former APLA and MK soldiers had already spent two or more years within their communities as civilians. This applied to those who started returning to South Africa in 1990/1991 after the suspension of the armed struggle. They lived within their communities until 1994, when the assembly of soldiers for the purposes of integration began.

Two of the respondents emphasised equality: *“We are all South Africans; we should be treated the same”* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Orange Farm, 02.11.2001). Another respondent said, *“We are not more special than people who were left behind inside the country. Thus, I believe we should all be treated equally”* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Soweto, 11.12.2001). Some of the respondents who confessed to surviving by engaging in criminal activities rejected the idea of a Special Pension by arguing for the use of military skills to earn a living. One respondent said, *“We all have brains to think for ourselves. We must be responsible for addressing our needs”* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Evaton, 09.11.2001). Another respondent who earned a living as a criminal said, *“I have my own way of getting money. I use some military experience because our jobs are still in a white man’s hands. Crime is my friend, I work once, and I get paid once, not because it was my choice, but because I faced many difficulties when I reached home”* (Interview with a former MK combatant, Sebokeng, 08.11.2001).

7.3.3 Formal Sector Employment

As indicated in Table 7.2, only 52 (or 13 per cent of the) respondents were engaged in formal sector employment. They were in various occupations including delivery truck driver, shop assistant, ANC provincial co-ordinator, member of provincial legislature, police captain, police superintendent, advisor to the premier, (medical) nurse, administration officer, mini-bus taxi driver, office assistant, researcher, clerical assistant, secretary, operations manager, accounts inspector, ANC regional

membership officer, project facilitator, co-owner of security company, chief (traditional leader), sales representative, electricity faults inspector, director of alumni relations, chief executive officer, municipal (manual) labourer, skills training lead facilitator, assistant foreman, shop owner, company manager, plumber, traditional chemist owner, agricultural products retailer, foreman (fishing co-operative) and van assistant.

From a total of 244 respondents who reported that they were unemployed and looking for work, 124 had been looking for work for between one and five years preceding the interview, 69 respondents for a period of between six and nine years, 36 respondents for the ten years preceding the interview, while nine respondents had been looking for work for less than a year (see Table 7.4). Those in the last category included former APLA and MK soldiers who had joined the SANDF on short-term contracts, and those who were either dismissed or resigned voluntarily. Some of the unemployed respondents had been able to secure casual *ad hoc* part-time employment, which had lasted anywhere from one day to three months. Even when such jobs lasted for six months or more, ex-combatants did not want to classify them as employment because they did not bring in a steady income and did not stabilise their living conditions.

Table 7.4: Period Looking for Work

NUMBER OF YEARS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
1 - 5 years	124	31.3%
6 - 9 years	69	17.4%
10 years	36	9.1%
11 years	9	2.2%
Less than a year	6	1.5%
Not Specified	2	0.5%
Not Applicable	149	38%
TOTAL	395	100

Respondents cited various reasons to explain their inability to secure employment, with the most common being: a lack of education or skills, insufficient employment experience, a lack of personal contact with influential individuals who could facilitate access to employment, and the lack of job opportunities in the public and private

sector. There was a perception among 37.2 per cent of respondents that ex-combatants were discriminated against in the job market, while 25.5 per cent believed that there was no job discrimination. Respondents in the latter group attributed their unemployment status to the general lack of employment opportunities in South Africa and their lack of marketable skills. In Nelspruit (Mpumalanga Province), respondents stated that given the fact that their military background was known by the majority of potential employers in and around Nelspruit, this made it difficult for them to find employment. In other provinces, respondents stated that once their military background became known to employers, their employment contracts were terminated. To avoid possible discrimination from potential employers, many ex-combatants reported that they did not mention their military background when applying for employment. Some reported that they kept two curriculum vitae, one with a military background and another without. Some ex-combatants chose to engage in informal sector activities.

7.3.4 Informal Sector Initiatives

A significant number (189 or 47.8 per cent) of the respondents stated that they had attempted to start their own businesses, while 51.3 per cent stated that they had never attempted to do so. Those who had attempted to start small businesses stated that such initiatives did not last long due to the lack of financial backup and business skills. Having spent most of their lives in the military, it was difficult for them to apply for business loans because of lack of collateral. Secondly, as indicated earlier, most former combatants never had an opportunity to take responsibility for their own lives and thus issues like planning a personal budget were foreign to them. As one respondent put it, *“I have been dependent on the ANC for most of my life. It is difficult for me to stand on my own. This is the problem with many ex-combatants and the ANC should provide for its members as it is now in government”* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Rocklands Location, 12.01.2002). This, compounded by the general absence of any meaningful reorientation to civilian life, meant that even when ex-combatants started their own business, such initiatives were more likely to collapse than to succeed.

Six of the respondents who identified themselves as self-employed confessed that they were involved in criminal activities. Included in this category was a qualified auto panel-beater who earned a living as a member of a car theft syndicate. The respondent stated that he used both his military skills and auto panel-beater skills to earn a living. Other criminals were involved in various forms of crime including shoplifting, which they argued was not violent. All six of the self-confessed criminals were strongly opposed to any form of assistance (either targeted or non-targeted) for ex-combatants. They argued that if ex-combatants failed to get employment in the formal sector, they had to take some initiative and use their military skills to earn a living. During the course of the study, one of the respondents complained to his former comrade (who was accompanying the author) that some ex-combatants did not want to join his gang even though they were living in poverty.

Some of the criminal activities among ex-combatants began during the struggle for liberation. Some respondents argued that they were encouraged by their leaders to commit armed robberies to fund the armed struggle. However, Letlapa Mphahlele, a former APLA Director of Operations, observes that in the early 1990s APLA cadres were literally starving and that the PAC was not taking care of them. Instead, they encouraged APLA cadres to commit robberies to survive:

When they refused to do that, they were called cowards who were beaten by mere criminals who had not been given military training abroad. It's a sad record that during the nineties Apla suffered more casualties on 'repossession missions' than on combat with the enemy (Mphahlele, 2002: 144).⁴⁷

While some ex-combatants were employed and others were engaged in informal sector activities, in general the overall monthly income (i.e. income generated from all economic activities) remained low. An example of overall monthly income would include money earned from a small business added to money received from a disability grant. Over 164 respondents reported that they had an income of less than R3,000 per month. However, most notable was the gap between the highest earners

⁴⁷ Within APLA, armed robberies were regarded as a form of repossession since white business owners were seen as descendents of the first European settlers who had dispossessed African people of their land.

and the lowest earners. This applied between and across occupations. The highest earner, an owner of various businesses, reported that he earned R89,000 per month, while the lowest earners were a shop assistant and mini-bus taxi driver, who each earned R900 per month. Those earning R10,000 or more per month included a Chief Executive Officer, a Member of the Limpopo Provincial Legislature, an Administration Officer, and an Advisor to the Premier of Limpopo Province. Among security officers, the lowest earner reported that he earned R650 per month, followed by those who earned R1000 per month and the highest earner reported that he earned R2,400 per month.

In the informal sector, while some criminals reported that they earned as much as R10,000 per month from their criminal activities, most of the respondents stated that they earned less than R2,500 per month. This applied to one criminal, two painters (handymen), two tavern owners, one carpenter, one plumber, one traditional pharmacist, and two garment designers. Those running taverns also experienced the income gap. The lowest earner reported an income of R1,700 per month, followed by one who reported that he earned R2,000 per month, and the highest earner stated that he earned R5,000 per month.

While low incomes were also common among members of the civilian population, with 57 per cent of South Africans living in poverty, ex-combatants were worse off because most of them were starting life from scratch, having spent a significant part of their lives in the military. This meant that they were forced to use all the money they earned, and had no opportunity to invest. Linked to this was the fact that, due to their participation in the struggle for liberation over a number of years, they did not possess a credit record, which denied them access to loans and other forms of financial assistance. While some ex-combatants' ventures in the informal sector had either collapsed or offered limited income, other ex-combatants had succeeded in the formal business sector.

7.3.5 Former Guerrilla Soldiers in Business

During the course of the study, it was difficult to access some of the former APLA and MK soldiers who were successful in their formal business ventures. Some of those who were interviewed included, Parks Mamabolo, Director of Operations and 51 per cent owner of Trans Sizwe Security Company in Johannesburg (discussed in Chapter 6), and Jomo Mashiane and Thomas Matlaila, both from Polokwane.

Jomo Mashiane, aged 31 at the time of interview, stated that he had joined MK in 1988 when he was eighteen years old and had left the country running away from the state security forces. While in exile he received training in guerrilla warfare and was deployed as a political education officer. He stated that unlike some of his comrades, he never received any sophisticated military training and had never fired a shot under command. He left school after passing Grade 11 (Standard 9), and never had the opportunity to study because of his commitments as a political education officer. On his return to South Africa in the early 1990s, he completed his National Senior Certificate (Grade 12). He reported that he was in possession of thirteen Business Administration certificates, mainly from company in-house training.

At the time of the interview, Mashiane, who reported that his demobilisation gratuity had been R18,000, owned various businesses in building construction, transportation, stationery distribution and catering. Matlaila described catering as his most thriving business venture, which had earned him a contract at Mapulaneng College and another one at CS Barlow College. He employed 32 workers and had a turnover of R1.9 million per annum. Describing himself as a disillusioned member of MKMVA, Mashiane argued that the association's name was abused for individual gain by some people who applied for business tenders using the MKMVA name. He reported that he was willing to help those who were prepared to take some initiative and to contribute something to MKMVA. In December 2001, he had sponsored the MKMVA Limpopo Provincial Congress with food catering to the value of R12,000.⁴⁸

Another former MK businessman from Limpopo Province was Thomas Matlaila. According to Matlaila, the idea to start a business was born out of a discussion among

⁴⁸ He produced documents as evidence during the interview.

21 former MK soldiers who were then serving in the SANDF in Cape Town. Most of them felt that they could not fit in the army as foot-soldiers, since they had been deployed in the intelligence and propaganda departments of MK during the armed struggle. The group approached the ANC with a request to be deployed in crime intelligence and security services outside the SANDF, so as to enable them to develop their idea of forming a private security firm. According to Matlaila, the ANC never responded to the request. The group was later moved to Bloemfontein. Three former MK soldiers of the original group of 21, holding the rank of Captain, left the military to pursue business interests. Those who left the military worked in collaboration with others who remained in the SANDF to form a private security company with their own salaries, since they could not obtain funding from any source. According to Matlaila, the company affiliated to MKMVA with an understanding that the organisation would provide administrative support. However, Matlaila observed that as soon as the company was established politicians started showing interest, which made him leave the company to establish his own business ventures. While Matlaila did not go into details about his company, he stated that it was a Black Economic Empowerment company with 54 per cent black ownership, while 46 per cent was held by some white business people.

The company was engaged in catering, security and construction. In explaining his interest in the private security industry, Matlaila argued that military training provides the skills to manage a security company, because the military is about administration and the deployment of personnel. His main argument was that running a security firm does not require any specialised skills. However, Matlaila was aware of constraints involved in starting a security firm in the context of a proliferation of such firms. He argued that the problem with starting a security firm was that the market had shrunk. As he put it, *"You are dividing the cake that has always been there; thus in order to make it, you have to push hard"* (Interview with Thomas Matlaila, Polokwane, 01.02.2002). He noted that the major obstacle was in 1994 with the beginning of the proliferation of black security firms. White companies did not trust black firms and thus it was difficult to obtain contracts.

Matlaila argued that he was not interested in government tenders because the Tender Board had been accused of being biased in favour of MK. He further complained that

state departments were staffed by people who did not understand the process of tendering and those who did not know what they were doing. Thus, he argued, “*you have to fight them like you were fighting the apartheid system*” (Interview with Thomas Matlaila, Polokwane, 01.02.2002). He complained about the value of some of the contracts, such as R2.8 million, which he argued was too little. He further argued that delays due to bad government administration meant that some companies operated for months without being paid. According to Matlaila, if a company goes for seven months without payment and has no overdraft facility, it would probably collapse. However, a key informant from the MKMVA Limpopo provincial office complained about the extravagant lifestyles of some former MK soldiers even when their companies were still new.

Most of our guys do not know how to run a business. Very often they make arrangements with governments departments or private companies to pay them on the 25th of the month so that by the end of the month they have money to pay their employees. However, some of the guys do not mind taking the first ever payment to buy a motor vehicle worth half-a-million rands and thus fail to pay their employees at the end of the month. The usual story is that the client hasn't paid and usually if people are deployed as security guards, they leave their posts to enquire at the offices of the client. This means that employees spent more time (sometimes three days in a week) enquiring about their salaries instead of working, which often leads to the cancellation of their companies' contracts, and this explains how most of the new and smaller companies collapse (Interview with Dumi Matabane, former MK soldier, Polokwane, 22.01.2002).

Contrary to this observation, Matlaila argued that most companies owned by ex-combatants had collapsed. In his analysis, whatever ex-combatants wanted to achieve had to satisfy America and Britain in order for them to survive. Matlaila stated that there were about 20 to 30 companies owned by former MK soldiers in and around Polokwane, but argued that only ten of the companies were growing.

It is worth noting that some former MK soldiers in Limpopo Province had established a support group for former guerrillas who wanted to start their own businesses. The

group met regularly to help each other with business ideas and skills, including how to write a business plan or apply for finance. However, by the time of the interview the group was inactive and a former member, Ngwale Mamabolo, produced minutes of some of the meetings that had taken place as the only evidence of the history of the support group. Mamabolo reported that some of the companies that were slowly developing had benefited from the support group.

There were other well-established companies owned by former MK soldiers which had benefited from the Black Economic Empowerment deals of the post-1994 period. For example, in May 2001 the *Financial Mail* reported that companies owned by former MK soldiers secured R4 billion in arms subcontracts linked to South Africa's R50 billion rearmament programme. The leader of the companies, which the *Financial Mail* nicknamed "MK Inc", was African Defence Systems (ADS), a subsidiary of the French multinational Thomson-CSF which won the most valuable subcontract in the arms deal. ADS won one of the 33 arms subcontracts it tendered for. The contract was worth R2,6 billion (one of the largest local subcontracts) for integrating the various systems aboard the submarines and corvettes bought as part of the arms deal (*Financial Mail*, 04.05.2001). There were other companies owned by former MK soldiers in other sectors of the economy.

The MKMVA national chairperson, Deacon Mathe, and treasurer general Dumisane Khoza formed MKMVA Investment Holdings and its investment arm, Mabutho Investment Company. They claimed that MKMVA Investment Holdings represented 46,000 MKMVA members and Mabutho 60,000 MKMVA members and their dependants (*Business Report*, 14.08.2005). Both Mathe and Khoza became directors of MKMVA Investment Holdings (*Business Report*, 07.08.2005). MKMVA Holdings took a 25 per cent shareholding in CommuniTel, which was part of the consortium for the second network operator (SNO) aimed at being a fixed-line competitor to Telkom. CommuniTel had been allocated a 12.5 per cent stake in the SNO (*Business Report* 07.08.2005). MKMVA Holdings also acquired 5 per cent of shares in the Mediro Clidet 517 black economic empowerment consortium (*Business Report*, 08.08.2005; 14.08.2005). Another investment of MKMVA Holdings was a 1 per cent stake in Cell C, South Africa's third mobile phone operator (*Business Report*, 10.08.2005). However, while MKMVA Holdings and Mabutho Investment companies claimed that

they represented MKMVA members, the uMKhonto we Sizwe Military Veterans (MKMV) Trust reported that it had not received any money from the two companies. This was despite the fact that “...in December 2002 Mvelaphanda Holdings had paid R10 million to Mabutho as a capital distribution in terms of the Northam Platinum empowerment transaction that Mvelaphanda had structured and financed... Mabutho and Mvelaphanda representatives had agreed that the residual shares and interests that Mabutho held in Mvelaphanda would be transferred to the MKMVA Trust, a shareholder of Mabutho” (*Business Report*, 28.08.2005).

Former MK soldiers were also involved in tenders for the R40 million contract to issue new driver's licence cards and the Home Affairs national identity documents. They were also involved in tenders for the taxi recapitalisation project⁴⁹ and electricity payment systems. Some were involved in casino licences, new tourism ventures and state housing contracts (*Financial Mail*, 04.05.2001). Among companies that existed at the time of the completion of this study was Mvelaphanda Holdings (Pty) Ltd, owned by a former MK soldier. Established by Tokyo Sexwale in 1998, it had six subsidiaries: Mvelaphanda Resources Ltd; Mvelaphanda Energy (Pty) Ltd; Mvelaphanda Strategic Investments (Pty) Ltd; Mvelaphanda Private Equity (Pty) Ltd; Mvelaphanda Property Investments (Pty) Ltd; and Mvelaphanda Financial Services (Pty) Ltd. Mvelaphanda began with a capital base of R1,000 and now had gross assets exceeding R2.5 billion. It had capital resources for investment and had raised a third-party private equity investment fund with committed capital of R500 million to invest in service-based and industrial-based businesses (http://www.gibb.co.za/profile/main_mvla_profile.htm).

While companies owned by some former MK soldiers made billions of rands, they benefited very few former MK soldiers. The consequence of the existence of affluence in the midst of poverty and shanty towns had made it difficult for other former guerrillas to achieve proper social reintegration. The lack of economic reintegration has led to rejection by some family members, and for others it had meant failure to reintegrate into communities.

⁴⁹ This was the third-biggest procurement after the arms deal and the Home Affairs national ID systems project.

7.4 Social Reintegration

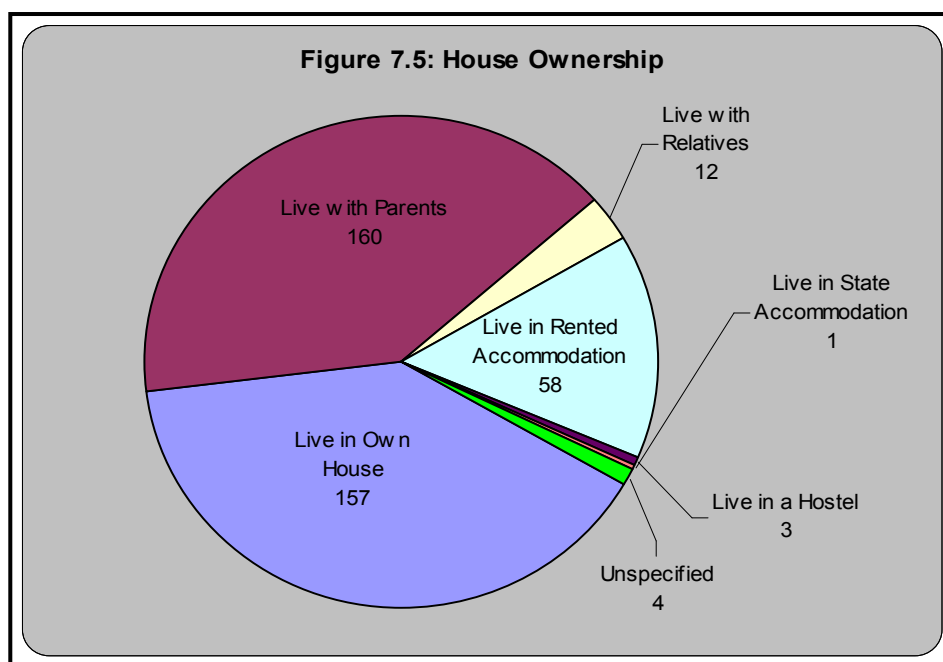
7.4.1 The Concept of Social Reintegration

Social reintegration is the process through which the ex-combatant and his/her family (in cases where both the ex-combatants and family members were displaced) begin to feel part of and are accepted by, the community (Kingma, 1998). This section focuses on several aspects of social reintegration to determine the extent of ex-combatants' reintegration into civilian life. These are house ownership, health and psychological problems including HIV/AIDS, education and training, reintegration into the family, reintegration into local communities and relationship with former comrades.

7.4.2 House Ownership

A significant number (157 or 39.7 per cent) of respondents reported that they lived in their own houses (as indicated in Figure 7.5 below). Some of them did not necessarily refer to formal housing structures. Some of the so-called houses were shacks made out of used corrugated iron, and any other material that people could lay their hands on, including material from broken road signs and billboards. Thus, stating that they lived in their own houses distorted the house ownership statistics. Thus, "own house" should read "a place to call my own" and not necessarily a formal housing structure. It is worth noting that due to the larger size of their demobilisation gratuities, the older generation of former APLA and MK soldiers were more likely to own proper houses than those who had joined in the late 1970s and 1980s.

A slightly higher number (160 or 40.5 per cent) of the respondents reported to live in a house owned by parents, 58 (or 14.6 per cent) stated that they lived in rented accommodation, while 12 reported that they lived in a house owned by relatives. Most notable was the fact that more respondents reported that they had access to electricity (91.1 per cent) than those that stated that they had access to clean and running water (89.3 per cent). Only 10 per cent reported that they had to walk out of their yards to access clean water. Nearly three-quarters (70.6 per cent) of respondents reported owning a television set.



These results need to be placed in the South African context. One of the promises made by the ANC during the 1994 elections was the provision of housing to the majority of South Africans. In his State of the Nation Address in February 2004, President Thabo Mbeki stated that after a decade of democracy about 1,9 million housing subsidies had been provided and 1,6 million houses built for the poor of South Africa. However, in 2005 Ahmedi Varda from the Housing Department stated that during the first ten years of democracy the government had provided 1,5 million new houses. He further reported that the main problem faced by the government in housing delivery was that there was 30 per cent more demand for housing than initially anticipated. This was because of two factors. First, there was increased urbanisation and, according to Varda, 20 per cent of urban dwellers were first-generation urban dwellers. Second, a million households had been evicted from white-owned farms in the last ten years, thus increasing the demand for housing (Ahmedi Varda, Director-General in the Department of Housing, speaking on *Judge for Yourself*, e-tv, 04.09.2005).⁵⁰ More than 70 per cent of households had been electrified, nine million additional people had access to clean water, and 63 per cent

⁵⁰ This is a current affairs programme broadcast every Sunday on e-tv by Judge Dennis Davis. It involves a panel discussion on a topical issue. This particular episode focused on the state's housing delivery.

of households had access to sanitation (State of the Nation Address of the President of South Africa, 06.02.2004).

7.4.3 Health and Psychological Problems

A majority (68.1 per cent) of respondents reported that they did not suffer from any health problem, while 30.8 per cent reported that they suffered from various health problems. One percent of the respondents did not specify their health status. From those who reported that they suffered from health problems, nine reported that they suffered from dizziness, ten from heart disease, six from high blood pressure, eight from hypertension, seven from headaches, while two complained about their amputated legs. Three respondents suffered from arthritis, 25 from asthma, while others reported that they suffered from a combination of diseases. Some of the respondents were not prepared to disclose the nature of their health problems. A majority, 106 of the respondents who reported that they suffered from health problems, reported that they had consulted a medical practitioner for help. Only 26 respondents reported that they had never consulted a medical practitioner, largely due to lack of finance. From a total of 106 respondents who consulted a medical practitioner, 84 reported that the consultation helped while 25 reported that it did not.

Apart from problems of physical health, some respondents reported that they suffered from psychological problems.

During their participation in armed conflict, soldiers run the risk of exposure to trauma. This refers to a nervous shock, which results from exposure to a life-threatening incident. The shock is characterised by feelings of fear, helplessness or horror. Since fear overwhelms most people during a trauma, survivors often have particular symptoms that begin soon after the traumatic experience. These symptoms create a problem that is called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Peterson, Prout and Schwartz (1991) identify a number of primary symptoms of PTSD. First is re-experiencing of the trauma, which is evidenced by at least one of the following – recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, recurrent distressing dreams of the event, sudden acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring

(includes a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative [flashbacks] episodes, which sometimes occur upon waking or when intoxicated).

Second were persistent symptoms of increased arousal (not present before the trauma) as indicated by difficulty falling or staying asleep, irritability or outbursts of anger, difficulty concentrating, hyper-vigilance and exaggerated startle response (Peterson, Prout and Schwartz, 1991). Third, some engaged in persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma or numbing of general responsiveness (not present before the trauma), as indicated by at least three of the following: deliberate efforts to avoid thought or feelings associated with the trauma, deliberate efforts to avoid activities or situations that aroused recollections of the trauma, inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma (psychogenic amnesia), markedly diminished interest in one or more significant activities, feeling of detachment or estrangement from others, restricted range of affect (e.g. unable to have loving feelings) and sense of a foreshortened future (Peterson, Prout and Schwartz, 1991).

Some of the respondents were aware of the fact that exposure to armed conflict often leads to psychological problems. However, respondents did not use the concept PTSD. Among Gauteng MK ex-combatants, the condition was called “hard-nervous”. A male respondent from Soweto who confessed suffering from psychological problems described his condition in the following words:

If you are detached from a family for a long time, when you return it becomes very difficult to live with members of your family. If you were exposed to incidences of violence the problem becomes worse. This is because you can take a soldier out of the bush but you cannot take the bush out of the soldier. Most [former] MK soldiers suffer from the Angolan Syndrome. The Boers call it 'Bosis'. This is the tendency to always want to kill even though you cannot identify a clear enemy. Sometimes you feel like killing the whole family. Personally I hate the sound of a diesel engine. It reminds me of the sound of the SADF military vehicles. On one occasion I broke a grill door with my bare hands; on another I broke a table from merely hearing the sound of a diesel engine. Sometimes I wake up from a dream of a war situation. Thus when you wake me up, you must make sure not to touch me or stand nearby or else I will

mistake you for an attacker and thus harm you. I have realised that it is not conducive for ex-combatants to gather in one place. You end up hitting a comrade with a beer bottle for no reason. The bad thing is that no one would report such an incident to the police (Interview with Kho Maluke, a former MK soldier, Soweto, 09.10.2001).⁵¹

People who have been through traumas generally want to avoid reminders of the experience. Avoidance symptoms include actively avoiding trauma-related thoughts and memories, avoiding conversations and staying away from places, activities, or people that might remind you of trauma, avoiding situations that might make you have a strong emotional reaction, feeling odd physical sensations, and feeling physically numb. The present study reveals that alcohol abuse is the most common avoidance technique used by former soldiers.

Sometimes when I am not taking beer, I have dreams of the time when the TNT blew me up. I normally jump up forgetting that I lost one leg in the incident. Those wars in Angola come to my dreams. Sometimes I scream thinking that war is taking place inside my house. This is why I opened a [liquor] tavern so that I can have people talking to keep my mind occupied. I always remember how I used to hate beer, but now I am a Professor of beer [drinking] and this was not out of choice, but was forced upon me by the situation (Interview with a female former MK soldier, Orange Farm, 19.12.2001).

Another respondent who confessed to alcohol abuse said:

The wars I was involved in, both in Angola and Mozambique, always come back to haunt me. Sometimes the sound of guns and bombs ring in my mind. When I am alone in the house I keep on thinking about these wars. When this happens I feel like screaming and normally drink brandy to calm myself down. When I think about how we have been used in other countries by our own leaders, I become depressed. These people who used us today have forgotten us. They are eating on a silver plate while we have to scavenge from the

⁵¹ According to a key MK informant from Orange Farm, in August 2005, the respondent committed suicide by shooting himself.

garbage heap (Interview with a female former MK soldier, Orange Farm, 19.12.2001).

The majority (56.2 per cent) of the respondents reported that they had never been exposed to traumatic incidents, while 42.5 per cent (or 168 respondents) reported that they had been exposed to traumatic incidents during their time in the military. Most of these respondents referred to military engagements and/or attacks by enemies. However, despite the fact that only 168 respondents reported that they had been exposed to traumatic incidents during their time in the military, an overwhelming majority (215 respondents) reported that they suffered from psychological problems. The most common psychological problem was depression. A total of 95 respondents reported that they suffered from depression, 55 reported that they suffered from flashbacks while 42 reported that they suffered from bad dreams. The psychological problems mentioned occurred as a single condition or in combination. The most common combination was bad dreams and flashbacks, which was reported by 14 respondents. This was followed by bad dreams and depression, and depression and mood swings (eight respondents each). Among the few former APLA soldiers who reported that they suffered from psychological problems, they attributed their condition to their time in Israel. Former APLA soldiers who reported that they were trained in Israel complained about how their leaders used them to fight other people's war. They reported that they had fought on the side of Israel in the armed conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Respondents from MK who reported bad dreams and flashbacks attributed the conditions to their traumatic experiences in Angola, especially the encounters with UNITA soldiers. This applied to 18 out of a total of 40 respondents who were prepared to give a detailed account of their psychological conditions. The traumatic experience of war against UNITA soldiers was captured in the following response:

When I remember the day I was shot, this brings back bad memories. I was in the river and we were surrounded by South African Defence Force and UNITA soldiers. There were gunshots all over and at the end we lost 50 comrades. My comrades thought that I was dead and when they put dead bodies in the coffins, they also put me in one of the coffins. This was the worst experience I

have ever had in my life and even today, when I see a coffin, it is like I am involved in that incident again. This has created serious psychological problems for me to an extent that I cannot watch movies with themes of war or military activities. If I do watch such movies, the events in the movies take me back to my involvement in the fight against the SADF and UNITA soldiers. I feel like I am back at the time. I generally find myself feeling and acting as if I was back at the time (Interview with a former MK soldier, SOWETO, 22.01.2002).

Another respondent who survived the war against UNITA said:

When I think of that day in October 1987, I remember that it felt like the day of death. We were ambushed by UNITA rebels and I was shot several times and my legs were like mince meat. I have flashbacks of this incident on a daily basis; sometimes I even think that I am not normal. When I see a military vehicle, it reminds me of the incident and now I rely too much on alcohol to avoid thinking and dreaming about the event. However, it does not help. When I dream about the event I even forget that my legs have been amputated. I feel so much pain that sometimes I think of killing myself. I once tried to hang myself but was discovered and ever since comrades keep a close watch on me day and night. The most stressful thing in my life is that I lost my girl, the mother of my child, because of the influence from my family. She told me that she cannot live with 'nyawana' (a one-legged person).⁵² I don't know where she is now (Interview with a former MK soldier, SOWETO, 16.01.2002).

Another survivor of the battles against UNITA, who also suffered from cerebral malaria, had the following to say:

I was engaged in a war against UNITA in Angola. Due to this, I often hear voices screaming like in a war situation. Watching movies like War Bus II and Universal Soldier brings me some flashbacks of the war. When watching these movies I always feel like it is real-life drama taking place. I normally leave the house to go outside to check if it is not true to make sure that I am not under

⁵² The word may also be used to refer to someone with a deformed leg.

attack. While watching these movies I normally start arguing with the actors in the movie. My problem is that I sometimes feel that they are involved in a real war situation but they are failing to do the right thing [based on the military training we received]. Maybe this is because most war films are characterized by inappropriate thinking. Seeing a gun or group of soldiers often reminds me of a war situation and I become jumpy and easily startled because I feel vulnerable (Interview with a former MK soldier, Soweto, 16.10.2001).

A week after this interview an MK informant revealed that he had visited the respondent in the company of another former MK soldier on a Saturday, and that the respondent had chased them away, accusing them of dressing up in combat wear. This was despite the fact that neither of the two former MK soldiers were dressed in anything that resembled military uniform. In late 2004 the same MK informant reported that the respondent had committed suicide by shooting himself.

While female soldiers were exposed to the same traumatic incidents as their male counterparts, the rape of female soldiers by their male counterparts was very often an additional source of stress. A male-dominated social environment such as the military provides men with an opportunity to engage in rape and makes women unwilling to report it. As Brownmiller (1975) argues, rape is not an act of sex, but of male power, control and domination. Rape is used by males to control women; once a woman has been raped this instils fear in those who have not been raped. The problem is that very often women find themselves in an oppressive social context, which is biased in favour of men. In a context of a male-dominated guerrilla army based in a foreign country, the social pressure not to report rape was very high, as the victim always feared that she would be accused of asking for it. Thus, military camp life made women more vulnerable because first, they were in a foreign environment, secondly, men far outnumbered them, and lastly, all power and control were held by men subjecting women to subordination.

While MK presented itself as a liberation army that liberated women, sexual harassment took place within its ranks. Respondents in both Mtintso's (1993) study and this study reported some form of sexual abuse, which in some instances they

argued was actually rape. However, under the prevailing circumstances at the time it was difficult for women to prove it. Respondents reported that sexual harassment was mainly perpetrated by male instructors and commanders⁵³ on young female recruits who were undergoing military training. Commenting on the abuse, one female respondent argued that one day, former commanders would pay for their sins:

When I was in Angola, I was a sex slave abused by commanders. Memories of the abuse keeps on recurring. I believe that one day they [ANC leaders] will regret it. They will be in need of us while we will be turning our guns on them (Interview with a female former MK soldier, Soweto, 18.12.2001).

The abuse of female MK soldiers was reported as early as 1984, through the findings of the Stuart Commission. The Commission, which was set up by the ANC to investigate the “mutiny” that took place within MK ranks in Angola, reported that there was a widespread complaint that people in administration in Angolan camps used their positions to seduce female combatants. Furthermore, it was reported that the practice affected married women and lovers, and that boyfriends were harassed and sometimes transferred to other camps. A number of respondents reported that they had experienced sexual harassment (Stuart Commission, 1984). One respondent who reported that she was sexually abused in Angola had the following to say:

When I remember my first three years in exile, I feel like crying because I had sexual intercourse with more than twenty MK commanders. I also saw this happening to other young female comrades who joined MK in the 1970s and 1980s. The female comrades were used as sex slaves, but if a young male comrade was found having an affair with a female comrade, he was punished, in some cases killed. The killing would be justified by arguing that the comrade was an enemy agent. All these affect me now because every time I see those young girls who work in offices, they bring back bad memories. I always think that they found their jobs by exposing themselves to sexual abuse by those in authority (Interview with a female former MK soldier, Soweto, 04.01.2002).

⁵³ Some of these former commanders occupied senior positions in government at the end of the armed struggle.

Another female respondent also complained about sexual abuse at the hands of MK commanders in Angola:

Sometimes I have flashbacks of how comrades killed the father of my child in Angola. He was suspected of being a rapist, and I was dissatisfied with the comrades because they killed him in front of me. They then took my child to Tanzania where he died of malaria. I always think about this and cry because after that I was forced to have sexual intercourse with the men I did not love. When I think about my dead boyfriend I always become depressed. After returning to South Africa, the father of my two children also cheated me. He told me that he was not married. I discovered that he was married to a woman in KwaZulu-Natal, then he disappeared (Interview with a female former MK soldier, Soweto, 15.01.2002).

The Stuart Commission (1984) further reported that a trainee had attempted to commit suicide because his girlfriend had been taken from him. Furthermore, women lovers of administration staff were given special treatment, and they tended to reject the authority of their immediate commanders. It was reported that there was a widespread belief that women were sex objects and that they did not develop politically and militarily (Stuart Commission Report, 1984).

However, despite the existence of reports (including in Mtintso's 1993 study) that male commanders and instructors abused their power, a female former MK Medical Officer denied that any act of sexual abuse or harassment by commanders took place in MK camps. Her argument was that some women consented to relationships with commanders and instructors in return for luxury items (in the context of camp life) such as sweets and fruits (which commanders and instructors were able to bring back from town) and lenient treatment by commanders and instructors. The former MK Medical Officer also stated that in some cases female combatants took advantage of the fact that there were few women in camps and thus became promiscuous. She further stated that one woman would have relationships with five men at a time, and male combatants would never fight among themselves over such women. The former Medical Officer also noted that due to their promiscuity such women were referred to

as *amakomonisi*, a derogatory pet name meaning “communists”, implying that they were generous in offering sexual services. “*Any man who was new in the camps would be directed to amakomonisi, who were the easiest targets*” (Interview with Vera, a former MK Medical Officer, Johannesburg, 15.10.2003).

Some of the respondents who reported suffering from psychological problems stated that this was a result of their role in the enactment of violence against suspected enemy agents and dissidents. The high incidence of infiltration of liberation movements by state agents, especially in the 1980s, made the liberation movements hyper-alert. Security mechanisms in both APLA and MK camps were tightened and in the process a number of people suspected of being enemy agents were detained and subjected to torture, including murder. This violence sometimes left the perpetrators with deep psychological scars, which continued to haunt them after the end of the armed struggle. The perpetrators of violence became victims of their actions. One of the respondents confessed to his actions in Quattro, ANC’s detention camp in Angola:

When in Angola I was based at the Quattro camp where we tortured apartheid spies. We also used to kill them and it was not a nice way of killing them; it was the most brutal way of killing a person. Pictures of the events pop into my mind. The events at Quattro camp affect me a lot. Sometimes I dream about what happened and when these dreams come, I scream. I am too afraid to go to the doctor because I can’t even explain why I am like this. That is why I have to drink beers if I want to fall asleep. Even today comrades do not trust me in their discussions (Interview with a former MK soldier, Soweto, 11.12.2001).

Another former member of the ANC’s security department, *Imbokodo*, complained about hearing screams, and reported that he lived with a constant fear that his former victims would come back to kill him:

I was deployed as a member of Imbokodo and I have killed many enemy agents and those who were suspected of being sent to the camps by the apartheid government. I always hear screams of the people that I killed because we were not having mercy on such people. What distresses me the

most is the thought that those who survived the torture may come and kill me
(Interview with a former MK soldier, Soweto, 15.01.2002).

The psychological problems among Quattro guards were also reported by other sources who observed that “Quattro guards quite often became mentally disturbed as a consequence of the atrocities they had witnessed and that they themselves had perpetrated on prisoners” (Twala and Benard, 1994: 89). These problems were not unique to MK; a former APLA soldier who was deployed in the security department had the following to say about his work in exile:

When in exile I was deployed in the security division where we used to kill innocent comrades who were suspected of being enemy agents. After we had killed about 80 comrades we discovered that the enemy set us up and we fell into the trap [of killing innocent people]. Sometimes I hear voices of innocent children screaming, I can also hear the sounds of gunshot similar to the one I heard when we killed the innocent comrades. The main thing that distresses me is when families try to enquire about the whereabouts of their children. All these give me bad dreams and frustrate my life. I try to avoid thinking about it but I can't, especially when it starts flashing in my mind (Interview with a former APLA soldier, Soweto, 20.02.2002).

The human rights abuses in MK camps, especially Quattro Camp (also known as “Camp 32” and the “Morris Seabelo Rehabilitation Centre”), have been well documented (Marais, 1992; Motsuenyane Commission, 1993; Skweyiya Commission Report, 1992; Stuart Commission Report, 1984; Trehela, 1990; Twala and Benard, 1994). Methods of torture included “gasmask”. A pawpaw shell, from which the pulp had been removed, was pushed into the face of the detainee until he could no longer breathe (Skweyiya Commission Report, 1992). The Skweyiya Commission (1992) also reported other brutal methods of punishment including “slaughter”.

A detainee was thrown into a narrow pit approximately four metres deep. Two metres above the base of the pit there was a trench which was the only exit from the pit. A prisoner would then be ordered to jump and try to get out of the pit through the trench, while at the same time the warders would throw heaps of soil on the prisoner

struggling to get out. One witness related how a prisoner was thrown into a pit with the pawpaw skin over his face, while stones were thrown at him by the guards. The same witness told a particularly gruesome tale concerning a prisoner who had to wear the 'gasmask' while his forehead was repeatedly bashed against the trunk of a tree. The victim was apparently previously burnt with boiling water on his head. The wound had never properly healed. A sympathetic medical officer provided a razor blade to shave this prisoner's hair so that the wound could be exposed to fresh air and heal. However, we were told that the wound would not heal because some guards would, from time to time, as a form of punishment, bash this prisoner's head against a tree trunk with the deliberate intent of irritating the wound (Skweyiya Commission Report, 1992, <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/misc/skweyiya.html>).

The case of the cadre whose head was burned with boiling water was also reported by Twala and Benard (1994). "We did our best to comfort him and over a tortuous half an hour he painfully told us that his captors had brought him to Quattro, questioned him, beat him and poured boiling water on his head continuously until he had lost consciousness..." (Twala and Benard, 1994: 96).

Due to the brutal nature of the activities described above, both victims and perpetrators required counselling and treatment. Without proper professional treatment the problems might begin to cause problems in the survivor's family and in the community. A former MK soldier from Limpopo Province stated that all forms of aircraft reminded him of war planes, and thus he always felt like shooting them down. His condition is worth quoting at length:

I was a commander during the Spolilo operation. We were bombarded from 11h00 until 19h00 non-stop and the enemy [SADF Air Force] was using ten warplanes. The bombing went on non-stop and I normally have some flashbacks of the event. When we were detained in prison we spent lot of time thinking about how to correct our mistakes. This paid off because we once brought down a military plane in Viana. Hence, every time I see an aeroplane I immediately look at the possibilities of how to shoot it down. It does not matter whether it is a civilian or military plane, including helicopters; all I see are the many possibilities of shooting it down with ease. This is because all

aircrafts remind me of the Spolilo bombing. I think that shooting down a plane is a nice art.

After my return from exile the South Air Force held some acrobatic exercises over Seshego [a township outside Polokwane] one evening. I was so terrified that the next morning I approached the commander of the Far North Command in Polokwane and warned him to stop the exercises. I warned him that most of us think that a war is beginning and thus could not rule out the possibility of shooting down the warplanes. The commander apologised and this never took place again (Interview with Ike Maphoto, former MK commander, Polokwane, 31.01.2002).

While the respondent cited above spoke about the idea of shooting any aircraft that flew above his head, other respondents suffering from psychological problems reported that they became violent when reminded about the traumatic event.

One day while moving along the border between South Africa and Zimbabwe three of my comrades were killed by the enemy. The bad thing is that every time I dream of the incident I scream and my scream shocks everybody including neighbours. Sometimes when I dream about the incident, I become violent. In such cases I am not aware of my violent behaviour and later when people tell me about my behaviour, it is hard for me to believe. The source of my stress is that now I have enemies in my community. I am worried about my children because they complain that their friends insult them about their mad father (Interview with a former MK soldier, Soweto, 22.01.2002).

A self-employed technician reported that sometimes, when there was no one bringing radios and television sets for repairs, he thought of taking his gun and resorting to some form of crime to feed his children. More serious was the fact that at other times he thought of killing whoever was responsible for ex-combatants' suffering because, as he argued, there were people who kept on making promises without delivering on them (Interview with a former MK soldier, Soweto, 11.11.2001).

Despite the severity of these problems, an overwhelming majority (71.8 per cent of respondents) reported that they had not received any form of counselling during the process of demobilisation.

7.4.3.1 HIV/AIDS among Demobilised Soldiers

The association of HIV/AIDS with APLA and MK soldiers was a favourite piece of apartheid misinformation in the late 1980s (London, 1999). In the post-apartheid period, Shell (2001) popularised the argument that soldiers brought HIV/AIDS to South Africa through his Trojan Horse theory. According to Shell (2001), many soldiers, whether former SADF or liberation forces (APLA and MK), returned to South Africa infected with HIV and thus served as HIV vectors in their respective communities:

Once SA veterans returned to their home country and were incorporated into the new South African National Defence Force, they were distributed all over the country and thereby became an almost perfectly randomly distributed set of sites for the incipient pandemic between 1992 and 1994. Recruits who had been called up on national service simply returned to their homes without any exit testing (Shell, 2001: 11).

Soldiers are particularly susceptible to HIV/AIDS infection since they are highly mobile and belong to a sexually active age group. In peace time STD infection rates among armed forces are generally two to five times higher than in civilian populations, while in time of conflict the difference can be 50 times higher or more (Sarin, 2003; UNAIDS, 1998).

The assembly phase during demobilisation presents a unique opportunity to introduce a number of activities pertinent to HIV/AIDS prevention. “In terms of tackling the spread of HIV, cantonment could provide an environment conducive to counselling, testing, education and prevention... In addition cantonment may provide the space to assess the scale of HIV infection among state and non-state forces” (Mendelson-Forman and Carballo, 2001: 83-84). Mendelson-Forman and Carballo (2001) state that it is possible that some of the stigma attached to being a former fighter may be reduced by providing ex-combatants with HIV-prevention skills and presenting them as people with a capacity to serve the community, especially as peer counselors or

health aides. However, all these depend on careful and thorough planning for the process of demobilisation, something that was absent during the demobilisation of former APLA and MK soldiers.

In South Africa, when discussions were being held on the integration of the defence force, it was agreed by the ANC that there would be no testing of incoming personnel. The ANC was “absolutely opposed” to the compulsory testing of exiles. HIV/AIDS became “a sensitive political issue and it was agreed that there would be no testing, a tragic and conceivably catastrophic watershed event for the history of AIDS in South Africa” (Shell, 2001: 10). The absence of a strategy to deal with HIV/AIDS during demobilisation in South Africa was largely because assembly was meant for integration to form the SANDF and not demobilisation. According to informants within the SANDF, HIV/AIDS testing was done on all integrating soldiers while those who were demobilised were not subjected to any tests.

Since HIV/AIDS was a very sensitive political issue, it was deliberately left out during the construction of the questionnaire for the survey of former APLA and MK soldiers in the Centre for Conflict Resolution (2003) study. However, the author and the other researchers were allowed to probe the issue if they managed to establish good rapport with the respondents. Due to its sensitivity, it was impossible to gather adequate information on the extent of HIV/AIDS awareness among former APLA and MK soldiers or the extent of the infection. Respondents refused to discuss issues around HIV/AIDS, calling it part of the apartheid government’s propaganda. In Nelspruit, where respondents reported that a number of former APLA and MK soldiers were seriously sick, respondents dismissed any suggestion that they might have been HIV-positive but attributed the sickness to possible food poisoning at Wallmannstahl.

Only one respondent was prepared to openly discuss the HIV/AIDS pandemic. He was the key MK informant from Gauteng Province. His interest in HIV/AIDS was evident in the fact that he established the now defunct Orange Farm Anti-AIDS Club and ran a number of successful campaigns which received media attention. Unlike some of his former comrades, he readily admitted that many former guerrillas, including some in senior government positions, were HIV-positive. He attributed HIV

infection to a number of factors. First, he argued that those MK soldiers who were based in Zambia intermingled with the local people and in some cases had casual sex with local women or men. He was himself married to a Zambian woman who passed away some years after arriving in South Africa. Second was the promiscuity among former guerrilla soldiers, something that he continuously condemned. Third was the sexual abuse of female cadres by senior MK commanders and instructors. During the course of the study he identified a number of HIV/AIDS widows and orphans within MK ranks. However, the extent of HIV infection among former APLA and MK soldiers remains unknown and dealing with it poses challenges. It would be wrong to conclude that they brought HIV/AIDS to South Africa.

7.4.4 Education and Training

An overwhelming majority, 247 respondents (62.5 per cent), did not have a National Senior Certificate (Grade 12); 26 were in possession of both a National Senior Certificate and a post-school Diploma, two were in possession of a Bachelors degree, while eight were in possession of a postgraduate degree (Table 7.5). Three of the respondents stated that they did not have any formal education. The low percentage of former combatants with a National Senior Certificate was attributable to the fact that the majority had their schooling disrupted. From a total of 296 respondents who left the country for military training, 208 stated that they did not get a chance to continue with their studies while in exile.

Table 7.5: Level of Education at the time of Interview

LEVEL	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Grade 1 – Grade 7	28	7%
Grade 8 – Grade 11	216	55%
Grade 12	112	28.3%
Grade 12 and Diploma	26	6.5%
Bachelors Degree	2	0.5%
Postgraduate Degree	8	2.0%
None	3	0.7%
TOTAL	395	100%

The young people who fled Soweto in the aftermath of the events of 1976 often arrived in MK camps strongly influenced by the Black Consciousness philosophy.

“They were angry and militant, and it was difficult to persuade some of them that they could serve the cause [as] effectively by continuing their studies as by joining MK” (Morrow, Maaba and Pulumani, 2004: 38).

During the struggle for liberation guerrilla soldiers were given an opportunity to complete their schooling or further their education through institutions of higher learning. The ANC developed some educational facilities in Tanzania, partly to cater for the educational needs of the youth who ran away from South Africa after the 1976 student uprising and partly to develop a blueprint for an educational system for a free South Africa (Morrow, Maaba and Pulumani, 2004). The first group of students arrived in Mazimbu, Tanzania, in 1977, and in 1978 teaching began at the newly developed Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO).⁵⁴ The school was originally developed as a secondary school; however, due to the arrival of primary school children aged between 7 and 16, a primary school was founded in 1980 (Morrow, Maaba and Pulumani, 2004). To cater for the needs of infants, a nursery was developed. The Charlotte Maxeke Children’s Centre was completed in 1984, and provided for the care and education of children to the age of six, when they could join the primary school. In 1982, the Dakawa Development Centre was founded. This served as a reception area for new arrivals, where the academic level and the security status of young people were checked. Thereafter they received basic education in subjects such as Mathematics and English, political instruction and an induction into the history of South Africa and the ANC. Eventually they moved to SOMAFCO. Support structures at SOMAFO included a farm and the Vuyisile Mini furniture factory, founded in 1980 (Morrow, Maaba and Pulumani, 2004).

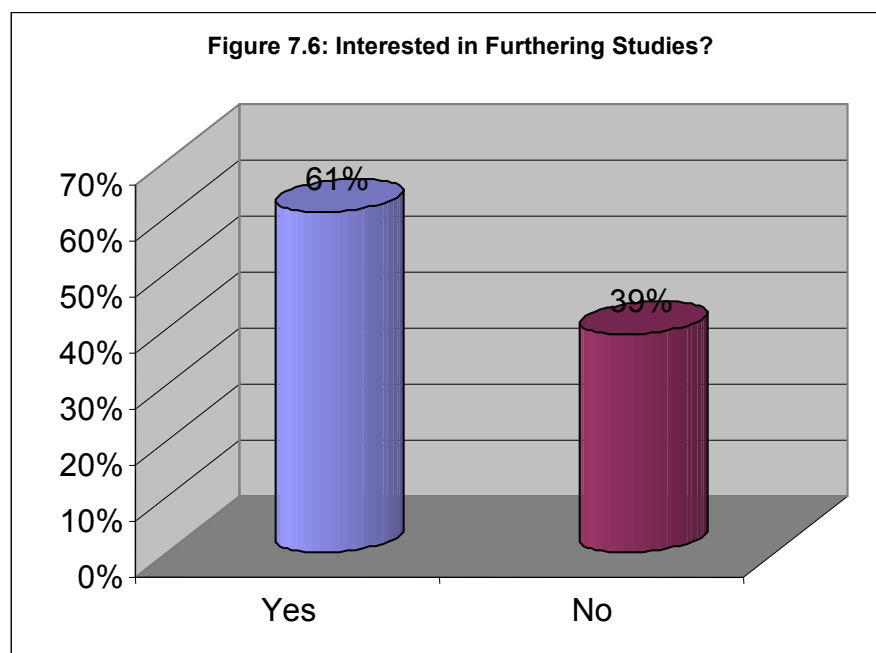
It is worth noting that even members of the exiled Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC) in Botswana, which had led the student uprising in South Africa on June 16, 1976, were not interested in furthering their education while in exile. Mphahlele (2002) states that while opportunities existed for education, some of them attended school for the allowances, free meals and accommodation. He further mentions that there was a learning institute designated exclusively for the refugees

⁵⁴ The school was named after Solomon Mahlangu, an MK cadre executed by the apartheid government on April 6, 1979. It is reported that on the day of his execution he went to the gallows singing and said, “Tell my people that I love them and that they must continue the struggle. My blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom”.

where they could enrol for a class at any time of the year. However, most South African refugees used it to while away time and meet friends, while others were critical of the education programmes:

Those who didn't study asserted that the education programmes were sponsored by the American CIA to drain the liberation movement of its lifeblood, the youth. Some turned down offers to study in Botswana, Nigeria or overseas. Others had returned from those places venomously castigating the 'imperialist' for emasculating our legitimate struggle by dispersing the warriors throughout the world's colleges (Mphahlele, 2002: 58).

The reluctance by some members of APLA and MK combatants to further their studies meant that when the liberation struggle was suspended most of them had to face a tough labour market without any skills. Thus, any post-conflict government should would have to attend to the educational needs of these former combatants. This could only have been done if a survey was conducted before APLA and MK were formally disbanded. The majority (61 per cent) of the respondents reported that they were interested in furthering their studies (Figure 7.6). The number included those who had gone through the Service Corps training programme.



The low levels of education and the general lack of vocational skills, compounded by the lack of employment experience, made it difficult for former APLA and MK soldiers to achieve economic reintegration. Without the necessary educational qualifications and/or work experience, the possibility of finding a job in the formal labour market became limited, while the lack of entrepreneurial skills, compounded by the lack of financial backup, impacted on their ability to start self-employment projects.

7.4.5 Reintegration into the Family

Due to the oppressive nature of the state security forces, many people were forced to leave the country to join liberation forces in the neighbouring countries or to seek political asylum outside the country. An overwhelming majority (74.4 per cent) of respondents stated that they had left the country for military training in foreign countries; 24 per cent had not left the country. One respondent was born of a Zambian father and a South African mother in Zambia, joined the Zambian Air Force in 1975, and in 1978 joined MK. Some of the respondents reported that they had spent most of their military years in exile. Returning to South Africa posed challenges to returnees, as some of them had run away from home without the consent of their parents.

Table 7.6: Family Reception on Return from Exile

RECEPTION	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Hero's Welcome	255	64.5%
Indifferent	17	4.3%
No Family to Welcome Me	11	3%
Rejected Me	2	0.5%
Shocked to See Me	29	7.3%
Other	2	0.5%
Not Applicable	76	19.2%
Not Specified	3	0.7%
TOTAL	395	100%

The majority (255) of the respondents stated that on their return their families gave them a hero's welcome (Table 7.6). A further 29 respondents reported that their families were shocked to see them, while 17 reported that their families were

indifferent about their return. As one respondent from Polokwane put it, *“My mother acted as if I just went behind the house and came back”*. Two respondents reported that on their arrival from exile their families rejected them. While the majority of respondents were received as heroes, in few cases family relations changed for the worse. An overwhelming majority (75.9 per cent) of respondents reported that at the time of the interview relations with family members were good and that family members were very supportive during the period of transition to civilian life. Meanwhile, 13.4 per cent of the respondents reported that relations between themselves and their family members were conflictual. After an initial hero’s welcome, the number of those rejected by their families increased. A total of 17 respondents (or 4.3 per cent) reported that their families had rejected them.

Respondents provided five reasons for the emergence of tensions within families in a post-conflict South Africa. The first reason related to ex-combatants’ failure to contribute to the income of the family. In some cases initial high expectations from family members soon disappeared and relations improved, evident in the following response: *“My family is very supportive. However at the beginning they had expectations that I would bring home money at the end of the struggle. I had to explain to them that the struggle was not about money but about democracy* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Durban, 27.02.2002). Another respondent also commented about the family’s initial high economic expectations and how the expectations disappeared, thus helping to improve relations with family members: *“Members of my family are very supportive. However, initially they were expecting a lot. They thought I was going to get a high government position or a lot of money. They were disappointed but I explained the situation to them* (Interview with a former MK combatant, Port Elizabeth, 29.01.2002).

However, other ex-combatants were not fortunate and family relations became strained forever, up to and including total rejection, evident in the following response: *“My family expected me to provide materially. Since their expectations were not met, their attitude towards me has changed and our relationship has become conflictual”* (Interview with a former MK combatant, Lethabong, 04.06.2002). Another respondent said:

I was forced to leave my home to find a place to call my own. This was because when I had money my family was always accommodative and happy for me. However, when I did not have money I had to sleep outside the house. They locked me outside and would always hide away from me. I had to sleep on an empty stomach on many occasions (Interview with a former MK soldier, Soweto, 07.11.2001).

The importance of economic reintegration was evident in the fact that ex-combatants who had not achieved economic reintegration reported that they were regarded as an economic burden by receiving families. Some of the respondents complained that they were accused of being too lazy to work. The most striking case was that of a former combatant from Soweto who was forced to rent a room in his own home.

If I miss one month without paying my rent my family threatens me with eviction, and the threat is often accompanied by the question, 'Where is your ANC?' This explains why sometimes I think of killing myself, but I always feel sorry for my six-month old boy (Interview with a former MK soldier, Soweto, 11.12.2001).

The circumstances of the respondents cannot be understood out of their context. In most African townships people have erected backyard rooms (in some cases shacks), which they lease to people without accommodation. The monthly rental is far below the lowest rental rates of flats and other forms of accommodation in big cities. The money obtained from leasing rooms is the only source of income for some home owners, while for others it is a supplement to salaries earned in formal or informal sector work. In this context, a member of a family who has been out of the country for about ten years while rooms were rented out to outsiders, sometimes has no place in the family unless he is able to supplement the family's income or support the family. However, as the case cited above indicates, such a move leads to conflict if the child is unable to pay his/her rent.

The notion of being a burden was more pronounced among ex-combatants who had children. This applied to both male and female ex-combatants.

My family was at first supportive but later started insulting me for bearing 'fatherless children'. They started hiding food from my children and I, until a friend of mine found me a part-time job and I started earning a Special Pension grant. I decided to look for my own accommodation, which explains why I am renting this room (Interview with a former MK soldier, Soweto, 15.01.2002).

The second reason to explain tension in families relates to ideological and religious factors. A respondent from Mpumalanga stated that he was born in a Christian family and the main source of tension was the family's lack of understanding of the difference between Socialism and Capitalism. Meanwhile, another former MK soldier from a royal family in the North West Province stated that his family had rejected him because of his affiliation to the ANC and MK, and thus he was all by himself. As a member of the royal family he was expected to follow certain traditions and behave in a particular manner, which included refraining from engagement in party politics. The respondent reported that his family viewed his decision to join ANC/MK as an act of rebellion against the family.

Xenophobia was the third reason for tension between former APLA and MK soldiers and members of their families. This mainly resulted from the presence of daughters-in-law from other African countries. The years spent in exile meant that some male ex-combatants did not wait for liberation to start normal family life. Some of them married female citizens of host countries such as Tanzania and Zambia. In some cases, children were born out of those unions. While some of the ex-combatants left their wives in the wives' home countries for various reasons, others chose to bring their foreign wives to South Africa. As was the case in Uganda (see Kazoora, 1998), the presence of a daughter-in-law from a foreign culture often drew a negative reception. The foreign-born wives became victims of xenophobia once they reached South Africa, evident in the following comment: *"Members of my family hate my Tanzanian-born wife. There was always conflict in the family as I was told to take her back to Tanzania. Thus, I was forced to move from home and search for a room to rent* (Interview with a former APLA combatant, Sebokeng, 19.02.2002). Another respondent who was forced to leave his home had the following to say:

I had problems with members of my family and relatives because I brought home a Zambian-born woman as my wife. When I arrived my family had already arranged a woman for me to marry. Family members used to ask me, 'Don't you know there are women in South Africa looking for marriage?' This forced me to leave home in Soweto to settle in Orange Farm (Interview with a former MK soldier, Orange Farm, 01.11.2001).

Xenophobia was not simply a rejection of foreigners by South Africans who felt that their access to employment and housing was threatened. The media was instrumental in fuelling xenophobia at the time. The image that was portrayed in the media was that of illegal immigrants flooding South Africa's borders. Unlike some South Africans, who were hostile to African foreigners, most respondents who had spent time in exile were critical of xenophobic attitudes towards African immigrants:

I hate xenophobia against African people. The same people who terrorise Africans from other parts of the continent go out to support Chinese and Indian businesses. Most of the Chinese and Indian traders are illegal foreigners, whose illegality often goes unnoticed (Interview with a former MK soldier, Polokwane, 01.02.2002).

The fourth reason for the tensions within families related to the stigma attached to freedom fighters from APLA and MK. The language used by the apartheid regime and its repressive machinery had been internalised by a minority of the people in receiving families and communities. Despite the process of democratisation epitomised by three democratic elections, the stigma attached to being a freedom fighter persisted ten years into democracy, and words such as “terrorists” and “killers” were still well ingrained in the minds of some South Africans. The stigma was closely associated with the perception that freedom fighters were criminals. Such negative stereotypes were also the main source of conflict and tension between ex-combatants and receiving families.

Members of my family think that I am criminal because I am a former APLA soldier. Now relations between us are tense; I live by myself away from them,

and I feel I am better off by myself (Interview with a former APLA soldier, Botshabelo, 07.11. 2001).

Another respondent who came from a racially-mixed family said the following:

I am born of a Coloured mother and a white father. The latter disapproved of my political activities. On my mother's side they were very happy. Thus, I never had a close relationship with my father's family. They regarded me as a terrorist (Interview with a former MK combatant, Woodstock, 18.12.2001).

The last reason for intra-family tension was unique to families in KwaZulu-Natal Province, and it relates to political affiliation. The power struggle between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) left a number of families divided.

When I returned from exile I discovered that the whole family is affiliated to the IFP. How they recruited them I don't know. Before I came back my family was misled that I died in Angola in 1986. Under such circumstances I just packed my things and left home (Interview with a former MK combatant, Durban, 28.02.2002).

Another respondent from KwaZulu-Natal had the following comment to make about family tensions:

My family is divided between the ANC and IFP. It is hard; our discussions about politics always ended in conflict. Hence, I decided to stay away from them. However, we do meet and talk (Interview with a former MK soldier, Durban, 27.02.2002).

The above discussion shows the lack of social reintegration at a family level for some ex-combatants. The study shows that while some ex-combatants were rejected by their families, they often found their communities, or at least fellow ex-combatants, to be accommodating. Hence, one ex-combatant remarked that fellow ex-MK combatants “*are the only family I have*”. In other cases, ex-combatants were accepted by their families but regarded as useless by members of the community. In extreme

cases, some ex-combatants reported that they found both the family and the community to be less accommodating than fellow ex-combatants.

7.4.6 Reintegration into Local Communities

An overwhelming majority (87 per cent) of respondents reported that their identity as ex-combatants was known by members of their communities, while only 12 per cent reported that their identity was unknown. A significant number of those who reported that their identity was known stated that community members were indifferent to their identity. A total of 147 (37.2 per cent) respondents reported that members of their communities treated them as heroes due to their role in the liberation struggle, while 42 (11 per cent) respondents stated that members of the community laughed at them. (See Table 7.7.)

Table 7.7: Treatment received from Community Members

NATURE OF TREATMENT	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Helpful	1	0.2%
Treat Me as a Hero	147	37.2%
Laugh at me	42	11%
Indifferent	140	35.4%
Reject Me	8	2%
Sympathetic towards me	1	0.2%
Fear me	1	0.2%
Other	3	0.7%
Not Specified	4	1%
Not Applicable	48	12.1%
TOTAL	395	100%

The majority (81.2 per cent) of the respondents reported that the treatment they received from community members had remained constant since rejoining the community. Most ex-combatants stated that they were receiving the same treatment that they had received when they rejoined their communities. Some respondents in Gauteng Province reported that the treatment that former APLA and MK soldiers received from community members depended on their attitude towards those community members and their general conduct. Apparently, some male ex-combatants boasted about their struggle credentials and demanded respect from

community members. As one ex-combatant noted, “If you treat community members with respect they will also treat you with respect”.

In the discussion of reintegration at the family level, it was argued that the lack of economic reintegration for ex-combatants was one of the factors leading to conflict and tension between ex-combatants and their families. The lack of economic reintegration was also an important factor in explaining why ex-combatants found it difficult to reintegrate into civilian communities. This was best captured in the words of an ex-MK soldier from the Eastern Cape: *“Some people have respect [for us]; others are indifferent because what matters to [people] is when you are employed and doing something with your life”* (Interview with a former MK combatant, Port Elizabeth, 29.01.2002). As discussed in the previous sub-section, the fact that some ex-combatants were welcomed as heroes raised certain expectations among members of the receiving communities. Respondents stated that once these expectations were not realised, members of the community started laughing at them and questioned the benefit of spending many years in exile if that did not bring with it economic benefits to the ex-combatants.

If you are an MK member people expect you to receive first preference [in job allocation] and if this does not happen, you become a laughing stock. My low standard of living due to unemployment has made people change their attitude [towards me]. Initially I was a hero, but because of my low standard of living people began to think that exile was slavery land and they also think that I was enslaved (Interview with a former MK soldier, Lethabong, 04.06.2002).

Another respondent had the following to say:

They laugh at me because most of us (ex-MK soldiers) are unemployed after spending years fighting against apartheid. Initially we were treated as heroes, but now members of the community laugh at us and say uMKhonto we Sizwe soldiers are useless, they don't want to work (Interview with a former MK soldier, Orange Farm, 03.11.2001).

The absence of meaningful economic reintegration in a context where fellow comrades drive fancy cars is another source of stress:

They say that I am from exile but I don't drive a car, I am suffering. I always sit in my room and when I come into contact with members of my community, we only greet each other. When I turn my back they start gossiping: 'look at him, he spent twenty years in exile, but now he lives in a small house' (Interview with a former MK soldier, Soweto, 11.12.2001).

The lack of economic reintegration also fuelled the belief that ex-combatants were involved in criminal activities. The main source of this perception was the fact that the majority of ex-combatants were unemployed – a problem which was not of their own making. One respondent who reported facing problems of social reintegration at the community level had the following to say:

They think and say that we are thugs. This has to do with the language of the apartheid government, that we are rebels and terrorists. It is even worse because we have been unemployed for many years. They regard us as thugs with no future (Interview with a former MK soldier, Botshabelo, 02.01.2002).

However, in some cases ex-combatants experienced social rejection because of their confessed involvement in criminal activities. A former MK soldier earning a living as a criminal stated that members of his community knew that he was a former member of MK but rejected him because of his criminal activities. This was despite the fact that in his criminal activities he targeted white people, whom he described as rich. *"They think that I am a monster because I am doing my own job that they don't understand. It is not the same as when we returned, because now I try to live my own way, by taking from the rich and giving to the poor"* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Sebokeng, 08.11.2001).

In Limpopo Province respondents reported that another source of tension between ex-combatants and members of their communities was the perception that ex-combatants got preference in government jobs. *"Initially we were treated as heroes. However,*

these days, due to stiff competition over jobs, ex-combatants are perceived to pose a threat” (Interview with a former MK soldier, Polokwane, 22.02.2002).

As discussed in the previous subsection, the tension between the ANC and the IFP, the two main political parties in KwaZulu-Natal, had left deep divisions between people. Some of the ex-MK combatants faced rejection in their communities, first because they were affiliated to the ANC while residing in IFP-dominated areas, and second because people did not see any tangible benefits from their affiliation to the ruling party. One respondent had the following to say: *“Members of the community talk too much. They say that we are thugs and the ANC is a party of thugs* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Durban, 26.02.2002). Another respondent from KwaZulu-Natal also reported negative social relations with community members. *“It is very difficult. No one likes the ANC. They laugh at us and ask what the ANC is doing for us. They see nothing good in us* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Durban, 26.02.2002).

In other parts of the country, where the ANC is the dominant political party, respondents stated that people felt that the ANC had abandoned ex-combatants. However, instead of sympathising with them, community members laughed at them.

Members of my community laugh at me and tell me that I am wasting too much time hanging on to the ANC. They argue that most of my peers have now progressed from where I left them when I went for military training. They tell me that the ANC will never give me or anybody jobs and freedom (Interview with a former MK soldier, Polokwane, 25.01.2002).

The fact that some former soldiers left school to join the liberation struggle was used by some community members to mock those who returned to poverty and unemployment. While some respondents stated that social relations within their families and the larger community were not always positive, they argued that they could still rely on each other for support. The comradeship between ex-combatants was forged in the context of a hostile social and political climate; most combatants were able to transcend ethnic, cultural and religious boundaries to join arms in the

struggle for liberation. It thus becomes interesting to investigate whether the comradeship can be sustained in a post-liberation society.

7.4.7 Relationships with Former Comrades

An overwhelming majority (380 or 96.2 per cent) of respondents reported that they still regarded former APLA/MK cadres as their comrades, while (209 or 52.9 per cent) reported that they met their comrades on a daily basis. About 51 (12.9 per cent) respondents met their comrades on a weekly basis, 19 (4.8 per cent) met on a monthly basis while a significant number (101 or 25.5 per cent) met their comrades on special occasions such as funerals, political rallies and weddings. At a basic level, “meeting” meant seeing each other on a daily basis to share a cigarette or some food. However, some respondents spoke about weekly and monthly meetings in which comrades discussed developments regarding their conditions.

The majority (69.3 per cent) of respondents reported that as comrades they helped each other, including some respondents who stated that they were more comfortable requesting help from comrades than from anyone else (family members included). Help ranged from sharing a cigarette to sharing food, to financial assistance, to helping a comrade with funeral costs of a family member. As one respondent put it, *“It is a matter of sharing beer and cigarettes because at least I am earning an income”* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Lethabong, 04.06.2002). An unemployed former soldier had the following to say, *“Financially they are the first to be approached when I need help. I feel more comfortable to approach my comrades for help than anybody else”* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Polokwane, 23.01.2002).

However, it is important to note that most of those who stated that they helped each other were the poor and unemployed. Some of those who were well off economically accused their comrades of laziness. Some respondents complained about the behaviour of their former comrades, evident in the following response:

We are in different fields and different places. Former comrades-in-the-struggle visit you driving Pajeros only to ask you, ‘What car are you driving?’

This brings back memories of time in MK. There were no proper support structures put in place to help ex-combatants in their transition to civilian life. Hence, MK soldiers are isolated. It is now every man for himself (Interview with Kho Maluke, former MK soldier, Soweto 09.10.2002).

Another respondent had a sense of nostalgia about life in MK camps:

'Comradeship' exists in name only; it is now everyone for him/herself. In MK camps we used to suffer together. I remember we used to eat the remainders of food from stocks initially meant for soldiers fighting in the Second World War. We used to be so united; now look at how divided we are (Interview with Dumi Matabane, former MK soldier, Polokwane, 22.01.2002).

Respondents provided various reasons why some of their former comrades did not help each other. In some cases, it was because they were living far away from each other. In other cases, it was mainly because they were all facing the same difficulties, especially financial hardship. Some accused their comrades of being lazy, evident in the following response: *"I regard [former APLA soldiers] as my comrades but lazy comrades. How can we help each other when they fail to help themselves? The comrades must take some initiative and stop waiting to be spoon-fed"* (Interview with a former APLA soldier, Soweto, 21.02.2002). Some former MK soldiers argued that some of their comrades suffered from a culture of entitlement: *"Due to the culture of entitlement among ex-MK soldiers I tend to isolate myself from the comrades. Generally I help those who try to pick themselves up. Currently one of my comrades owes me R50,000"* (Interview with Jomo Mashiane, Polokwane, 01.02.2002).

Respondents reported some isolated incidents in which some former combatants had been abandoned by their former comrades. An outstanding example was the death of an ex-MK soldier from Botokwa in Limpopo Province. The ex-combatant was once deployed in Matthew Phosa's (former Premier of Mpumalanga Province) office. According to one of the respondents, the comrade passed away in December 2001 when MK was preparing for its fortieth anniversary celebrations. Apparently as a result of the fact that "people were busy preparing for the big day", no one from the ANC, the ANC Women's League, the ANC Youth League, the South African

Communist Party (SACP) or the South African National Civics Organisation (SANCO) visited the bereaved family. According to the respondent, when he visited the family, the father of the deceased was very disappointed and told him, *“You call each other comrade, but during difficult times like this one, you all disappear”* (Interview with Ngwale Mamabolo, former MK soldier, Polokwane, 30.01.2002).

7.5 Political Reintegration

Political reintegration refers to the process through which an ex-combatant participates fully in the political life of his/her community, which may include taking leadership positions in local councils, schools, local security committees, etc. The survey of former APLA and MK soldiers revealed that most of them participated in community and political organisations. An overwhelming majority (81 per cent) of respondents belonged to one or more community or political organisations, while 18 per cent reported that they did not belong to any organisation. A majority (235 out of 320 respondents) of those who said they held membership of various organisations mentioned the ANC as the only or one of the organisations they belonged to. The majority (56.2 per cent) of all respondents stated that they were actively involved in the activities of these community or political organisations, while 25.5 per cent reported that they were ordinary members without serious involvement in the activities. Some stated that they held leadership positions in these organisations. These ranged from being chairperson of a Street Committee to being a branch chairperson of the ANC or PAC.

Respondents gave different reasons for belonging to these organisations. In some cases ex-combatants got involved in organisations to keep themselves busy in order to forget about their hardships. Others argued that since they were members of various communities, they had to participate in community organisations. A former MK soldier who held a position of responsibility said, *“I am a member of the Community Police Forum (CPF) and am involved in street patrols and conduct regular workshops on community policing”* (Interview with a former MK soldier, Soweto, 11.12.2001). Meanwhile, a member of a Street Committee had the following to say: *“I am the chairperson of the Street Committee and am responsible for calling*

meetings to discuss street problems. If I don't have money, community members help me out" (Interview with a former MK soldier, Soweto, 18.12.2001)

Some of the respondents reported that they belonged to their original political organisations for sentimental reasons. This was because some of them grew up within either the ANC or PAC structures in exile. They argued that they knew no other organisations apart from either ANC/MK or PAC/APLA. A key MKMVA informant confirmed the argument and stated that MK members' dependence on the ANC during the years of the struggle had left them with a "dependency syndrome". This made it difficult for them to take full responsibility for their lives. *"Comrades would come into this office and ask for money for food and transport. If you do not have any money they start insulting you and question whether you are a genuine MK member"* (Interview with a MKMVA informant, Johannesburg, 13.11.2002). Other respondents argued that they belonged to the ANC for material reasons:

The only organisation that I belong to is the ANC, because when I arrived in Johannesburg from KwaZulu-Natal, the ANC gave me temporary accommodation on Nomzamo [Madikizela]-Mandela's farm, until I found my own accommodation...One of my children is in a Teachers' Training College and the ANC is funding her studies. The ANC also paid school fees for my other two children (Interview with a former female MK soldier, Soweto, 11.12.2001).

While an overwhelming majority (320) of respondents stated their active involvement in organisations, only a few (165 respondents or 41.7 per cent) were of the opinion that there was some benefit from being members. It is worth noting that while some of the ex-combatants did not see any benefit in their membership, they still belonged for various reasons.

I am a member of the ANC. It is only because they owe me, after that they must forget about me... The ANC leadership treat us like we never helped them outside the country and inside the country before elections. They know that there is no white man who can employ MK members who are called terrorists (Interview with a former MK soldier, Soweto, 11.12.2001).

Notable is the fact that over 50 per cent of all respondents (223 respondents) reported that they were members of various church groups. However, despite the high percentage of respondents who reported church membership, only 81 respondents stated that they were active in the activities of the church. The number included respondents who held the position of a secretary of a church youth group, a preacher and a member of a church financial committee. Those who reported that they did not belong to any church or religious association held very strong views about Christianity. Among former APLA soldiers the common argument was that the Bible was the most important weapon that was used to take land away from the Africans.

7.6 Conclusion

The discussion of the socio-economic needs of a sample of former APLA and MK soldiers indicated that they had not achieved economic reintegration in the sense of achieving a productive livelihood. Furthermore, analysis has shown that while respondents had achieved social reintegration, some of them continued to see themselves as a distinct group different from other members of the society. To evaluate the reintegration of former APLA and MK soldiers into civilian society, three questions need to be answered. Firstly, what were the needs and expectations of former APLA and MK soldiers? Secondly, to what extent were their needs and expectations met? Lastly, to what extent did the reintegration programmes contribute to their reintegration into society? As mentioned in the previous chapters, the demobilisation package consisted of a once-off cash gratuity, limited counselling for two weeks, and an opportunity to join the Service Corps. Most of the respondents reported that they took the cash payment but did not undergo counselling or join the Service Corps.

The majority (67.3 per cent) of respondents reported that their expectations of life in a free society had not been met. The economic needs of respondents varied from the need to secure a stable job, which was the most cited need, to the wish to obtain financial assistance in order to establish a small business. Most respondents reported that they expected an acceptable and decent standard of living equivalent to that of other members of society. A combination of the inadequacy of the demobilisation package and the national economic environment prevented respondents from

achieving economic reintegration. In general, the demobilisation package mentioned above was inadequate to meet the economic needs of demobilised soldiers. This was because not everyone went for Service Corps training, and the demobilisation gratuities given to demobilised soldiers were inadequate. The limited demobilisation package was given in the context of a high unemployment rate.

Chapter 3 mentioned a number of the disadvantages of monetary benefits as part of a demobilisation package. These included the fact that funds received by demobilised soldiers are often inadequate to meet their immediate needs. In South Africa, most ex-combatants used their demobilisation gratuities to buy basic needs such as food or clothing. As argued in Chapter 6, economic and social circumstances forced some demobilised APLA and MK soldiers to search for work. This meant that those who were planning to start small businesses lost an opportunity for investment as well as to acquire skills from the Service Corps. Among those who opted to search for work, very few were successful. The majority (62 per cent) of the respondents reported that they were unemployed and looking for work, 13 per cent of the respondents reported they were in full-time formal employment, 5.3 per cent reported they were self-employed, while 8.6 per cent reported that they survived on a Special Pension grant as the only source of income. Further evidence of the lack of economic reintegration was that, from a total of 244 respondents who reported that they were unemployed and looking for work, 124 had been looking for work for a period of between one and five years preceding the interview.

Like their economic needs, the social needs of respondents differed. They included health care, return to family life, and a better life for all. Social reintegration refers to the process through which ex-combatants are made to feel part of and accepted by the community (Kingma, 1998). House ownership is one of the main indicators of social reintegration. A significant number (157 or 39.7 per cent) of respondents reported that they lived in their own houses. A slightly higher number (160 or 40.5 per cent) of the respondents reported that they lived in a house owned by parents. The fact that most of the respondents lived with their parents was an indicator that they had reintegrated into their families. This was further indicated by the fact that an overwhelming majority (75.9 per cent) of respondents reported that at the time of the interview relations with family members were good and that family members were very

supportive. The analysis also indicates that respondents had achieved successful reintegration at a community level. The majority (81.2 per cent) of the respondents reported that the treatment they received from community members had remained constant since rejoining their respective communities.

While respondents reported that their families were supportive and that the treatment they received from community members remained constant, they maintained their “ex-combatants” identity. They still viewed themselves as a group that was distinct from other members of society. An overwhelming majority (380 or 96.2 per cent) of respondents reported that they still regarded former APLA/MK cadres as their comrades, while 209 (52.9 per cent) reported that they met their comrades on a daily basis. The fact that these respondents remained in their respective groups was an indication that the process of demobilisation had not fully succeeded in transforming the respondents from soldiers into civilians. This is further evidenced by the fact that some of the respondents stated that they were more comfortable requesting help from comrades than from anyone else, including family members.

An overwhelming majority (81 per cent) of respondents reported that they belonged to one or more community/political organisations. However, while this might be viewed as an indicator of political integration, further analysis indicates elements of poor social reintegration. Some of the respondents reported that they belonged to their original political organisations. They argued that this was because some of them grew up within either the ANC or PAC structures in exile. Furthermore, they knew no other organisations apart from either ANC/MK or PAC/APLA. This indicates the failure of ex-combatants to explore alternatives and make new choices. The fact that ex-combatants remained in coherent groups offered them an opportunity to organise against any grievances that they might have had. While this has not happened on a recognisable scale, the potential for ex-combatants to become a disruptive force is always present. This will be discussed in the last chapter.