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INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES OF REINTEGRATING CHILD EX-COMBATANTS IN POST-WAR LIBERIA

August, 2008

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PEACE AND CONFLICT), UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, IBADAN

August, 2008

ABSTRACT

Reintegration as a stage in post-war peace process is generally concerned with re-orienting ex-combatants into normal civilian lives. In the case of child combatants, defined as children under the age of 18, whose forced or willing involvement in conflict was a characteristic feature of the Liberian war, the reintegration programme adopted was similar to that applied to adult ex-combatants. The negative consequences of war on the personality of child combatants are largely ignored in most studies. This study examines the appropriateness and level of involvement of child ex-combatants in institutional frameworks of reintegration.

The choice of Monrovia as the study site was informed by the large concentration of child ex-combatants – the city being the main scene of the last phase of the civil war in Liberia. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to obtain data from child ex-combatants and other stakeholders in the reintegration programme. These methods included non-participatory observation, in-depth interviews of 31 key informants, and 13 Focus Group Discussions. Two hundred and fifty copies of survey questionnaire were administered on child ex-combatants who were randomly selected from the streets, schools, and welfare homes. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis.

Ninety-eight percent of the child ex-combatants had undergone reintegration programme. However, a top-bottom approach in the designing of the programme made it difficult to reflect the social needs of the child ex-combatants. This led to under-achievement of the reintegration variables such as educational support, skill acquisition and family re-unification. Ninety two percent of child ex-combatants lived outside the care of their immediate families; 28% out on the streets. About seven out of ten of the child ex-combatants, whose ages still fell within the child categorisation, frowned at being called child ex-combatants. Fifty-two percent of the child ex-combatants indicated that the lack of participation from their rank in the design and implementation of reintegration affected their perception of the programme negatively. Their attitude constituted a major challenge in the conceptualisation of the child. The programme equally failed to provide a quasi-family setting to nurture the development of child ex-combatants that could not be reunited with their families.

Violent crimes and other deviant acts continued to characterise the behaviour of many of the "reintegrated" children because institutions on which reintegration was rested were not well-equipped to achieve high level of success and sustainability. Inappropriate conceptualisation of reintegration and low level involvement of child ex-combatants in the institutional programme accounted for the low positive impact of the programme.

The number of child ex-combatants that still walk the streets of Liberia is an indication that the Liberian reintegration process has achieved minimal success. An approach to reintegration that will treat the child ex-combatants as a socially maladjusted category and, therefore, a target of re-socialisation is recommended. Such an approach would promote prospects for sustainable peace and development.

Key Words: Institutional challenges, Reintegration, Child ex-combatants, Conflicts, Liberia

Word Count: 469

Acknowledgements

If not for His grace, I would not have been able to accomplish this task. I, therefore, acknowledge the grace of God upon my life for making this work a reality. Thank you Lord. I must, as well, acknowledge the efforts of many people that have contributed to the completion of this work.

Mention must be made of my supervisor, Dr. A.T Simbine, who has taken her time to read the work and offer useful suggestions that have contributed greatly to the quality of this work. Thank you for giving me the necessary encouragement all the way. I appreciate your readiness all time to attend to me. Indeed, you have not only been a wonderful supervisor but also a sister.

I also wish to acknowledge the moral and financial contribution of my employer, Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abuja, for the rare opportunity given me to accomplish this task. My gratitude also goes to French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA) and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) for their research grants. These have helped in no small measure to enhance the quality of this work.

Thanks to Dr. Babajide Ololajulo for his scholarly contribution to this work. My appreciation equally goes to your entire family. Also worth mentioning are Professors Dele Layiwola, A.U. Iwara, Babatunde Agbaje-Williams, Drs. Isaac Olawale Albert, O.B. Olaoba, I.A. Jimoh, Adekola, Oka Obono, Emeka Okafor, L. Hammed, and the entire staff of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan for their wonderful contributions.

I am highly indebted to Dr. Sola Ayandele for his moral support that has proved invaluable. A friend in need is a friend indeed.

My sincere gratitude goes to my good friends and colleagues, Kunle Oyinloye, Yemi Kasali, Ade Olumo and his family, Mrs. Bolaji, Mrs. Komolafe, Mr. Ogundele, Joseph Ochogwu, Drs. Ojiji, Bakut, Francesca Essien, and Femi Adekeye. Bosede Babatunde, Iyabo, Jane Abubakar, Ernest Lartey, Gbolaro Sokunbi, Tayo Okekunle, Toye, Comfort, and Mama Dorcas. I thank you all for being who you are.

To my entire family, I say thank you for your support. I appreciate you, my dear Uncle T. Thank you for always being there for me. You have always been a driving force. I appreciate all your contributions, useful advice and discussions.

Finally, my gratitude goes to everyone who has made my stay in Ibadan a wonderful one. God bless you all.

Certification

I certify that this work was carried out by Awodola Bosede Florence in the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, under my supervision.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to God Almighty who makes everything beautiful in His own way, and my wonderful parents.

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List of Abbreviations

ACS	American Colonization Society
ADRA	Adventist Relief Agency
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
ALP	Accelerated Learning Programme
AU	African Union
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BTC	Barclay Training Centre
CAFF	Children Associated with Fighting Forces
CAP	Children Assistance Programme
CAR	Central Africa Republic
CBO	Community Based Organisations
CDDRR	Cantonment, Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration
CEIP	Community Education Investment Programme
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CFR	Community Focused Reintegration
CFSNS	Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CPR	Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction
CWA	Child Welfare Committe
DBH	Don Bosco Homes
DCOF	Displaced Children and Orphans Fund
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration
DDRR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of Secretary-General
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States

EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FRELIMO	Frete de Libertacoa National de Mozambique
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNU	Government of National Unity
GOL	Government of Liberia
ICC	Interim Care Centre
ICG	International Crisis Group
ID	Identity
IFCL	Interfaith Council of Liberia
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IDP	Internally Displace People
INPFL	Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JIU	Joint Implementation Unit
LDF	Lofa Defence Forces
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LPC	Liberia Peace Council
LURD	Liberia United for Reconciliation and Democracy
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
MOJA	Movement for Justice in Africa
NBI	National Bureau of Investment
NCDDRR	National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration
NDPL	National Democratic Party of Liberia
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NISS	National Intelligence and Security Services
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
NRA	National Resistance Army

OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAL	Progressive Alliance of Liberia
PPP	Progressive People's Party
PRC	People's Redemption Council
PRO	Public Relations Officer
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PS	Post-traumatic Stress
RENAMO	Mozambique National Resistance
RR	Rehabilitation and Reintegration
SACA	Somalia Aid Coordination Agency
SBU	Small Boys Units
SSS	Special Security Services
TNGL	Transitional National Government of Liberia
TWP	True Whig Party
UK	United Kingdom
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement of Liberia
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for Development
WEAW	War to End All Wars
WHO	World Health Organisation
YES	Youth Education for Life Skill

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1   BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The importance of reintegration to sustainable peace process has been underscored in scholarly literature (Godwin-Gill & Cohn, 1994; Kelly, 1998; Adekanye, 2001; Williamson & Carter, 2005). For instance, Adekanye (ibid) considers the implication of letting loose upon society, hundreds of thousands of organised groups of angry men and women previously engaged in war, without undergoing a proper reintegration and rehabilitation programme. Such oversight, he opines, poses a serious problem for any state, at any time, and anywhere. For every society transiting from armed conflict, reintegration, therefore, is a crucial aspect of the process that is meant to achieve a stable polity. It is seen as both a social and economic process by which ex-combatants acquire status and gain access to civilian form of work and income (Gleichmann *et al*, 2004:15).

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants is an initial step in the transition from war to peace which ensures a safe environment and transferring ex-combatants back to civilian life. The three phases of DDR, according to Massino (2003:1) are interconnected, and the successful completion of each phase is essential to the others. Meanwhile, the reintegration component is evidently more difficult because it involves programmes for protection and skills training for traumatised people and those that have been denied access to formal education. The process also involves the implementation of long and short-term skill training, education for young ex-combatants, and psychosocial support to both ex-soldiers and civilian population.

The objective of reintegration is to reduce the former combatants' ability and desire to become political spoilers, engage in criminal violence, or otherwise derail the peace and recovery process, prepare ex-combatants and their families for civilian life as well as promote reconciliation between ex-combatants and the civilian population. Apart from improving the potential of ex-combatants and their families to earn their livelihood by peaceful means and participate in

economic and social life, a reintegration process driven largely by government, international donor agencies, and non-governmental institutions must as well build the capacities of the absorbing communities to integrate demobilised soldiers. In which case, the general social conditions should be improved and macro-economic capacities for reintegration created (Gleichmann *et al*, 2004:65). When it involves child ex-combatants, reintegration poses a greater challenge. The task of reorienting and readjusting children who have lost childhood and have had their personality shaped by knowledge of crime and atrocities cannot but be daunting.

The use of child soldiers has been identified as one of the features of intra state armed conflicts in post cold war Africa (Oluwaniyi, 2003:140). In Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Uganda, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (1999) cited in (Malan, 2000:1), reported that over 120, 000 children under the age of 18 years were actively participating in conflicts. Although neither is it a new phenomenon nor unique to Africa, the use of child soldiers has assumed a magnitude that portends grave consequences for long-term peace of the continent. Keeping children away from armed conflict is thus seen as a viable means of safeguarding global peace.

In a move to forestall the continued use of children as soldiers, the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 legislated against the recruitment of children under 15 years as soldiers (Malan, 2000:8). In addition, legal obligations were placed on peacekeepers who encounter child soldiers. For instance, the fourth Geneva Convention and the Additional Protocols I and II include rules governing the recruitment and participation of youths in hostilities, their treatment when detained during conflict, and the status of youths who actually take up arms. There is therefore culpability of the commanders who use children in combat, and an obligation to bring them to book (ibid). The concern raised in respect of the plight of children is founded on their undisputable position as representatives of the next generation of leaders. For those that have already

passed through the harrowing experience of participating in armed conflicts, the only path to reversing their maladapted personality is in a genuine and holistic approach to reintegration.

Reintegrating child ex-combatants into the society is one of the major challenges confronting most post-conflict societies in the world. Apart from fear of rejection by their communities which is borne out of widespread atrocities committed during war, the reintegration of child ex-combatants is hampered by the maladjustment of their personality. Literature on reintegration of child soldiers has therefore focused on what should constitute proper approach to reintegration. Most scholars have, however, conceptualised reintegration as a socio-cultural process. They argue that reintegration challenges should ordinarily go beyond keeping the ex-child combatants in school or in vocation. It should also include efforts to give psychological support to those that have been traumatised as a result of their involvement in a series of heinous activities.

Verhey (2001:3) provides insight into the reintegration of child soldiers in armed conflict spots such as Angola, Uganda and El Salvador by examining the place of culture in the process of addressing the psychosocial impact of conflict on child soldiers. He dwells on the social importance of traditional healing rituals for child soldiers as part of the reintegration process. According to him, the rituals provide for the acceptance of the child, assuage the ill spirit associated with the child soldier's activities during conflict, and reconcile the child with ancestral spirits. Similarly, Utas (2004) reiterates the difficulty of rebuilding social solidarity as he emphasised the importance of knowing and engaging the social environment in the process of peacebuilding. Williamson and Carter (2005:13), in their review of the progress made by the International Rescue Committee in the implementation of the project, *Vulnerable Children and Youth Protection and Development*, recommend several measures, which are considered as elements critical to the successful reintegration of former child soldiers. These include traditional cleansing ceremonies, traditional healing, and religious support.

What should represent the appropriate approach to reintegration has so far been contentious. But irrespective of what it should be, Brett and McCallin (1998:122-123) suggest that such approach must counter any tendency to give up or accept child soldiers as part of a lost generation. According to them, rather than view child soldiers as psychopathic killers who are beyond rehabilitation and the boundaries of civil society, it would be more fruitful to move away from deeds committed to focus on the consequences suffered by child soldiers as children, and to attempt to address the deficiencies in personal development caused by participation in armed conflict.

The reunification of child ex-soldiers with their families and communities has been the dominant view of what reintegration should be. This might be said to be based on the consideration of the family by the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of its members. The convention further affirms that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. Meanwhile, Malan (2000:12) considers a situation where efforts to trace family fail or an entire family has perished in conflict, or probably is rendered incapable of providing the physical means of sustenance, happiness, love and understanding. In such situation, it is suggested that other care-giving arrangements that meet the child's physical, social and emotional needs be provided.

The Liberian civil war which broke out in 1989 spanned over a decade. The different phases of the war were actually marked by series of peace agreements, the latest and hopefully the last one being the 2003 peace deal which forced Charles Taylor, the ex-warlord and president into exile in Nigeria. The war left in its trail thousands of child soldiers whose hope of living meaningful and fulfilled lives would be wholly dependent on how fruitful the reintegration process turns.

Toward the end of 2003 a United Nations peacekeeping force was deployed to commence a process of disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Whereas there was evidence of former child soldiers having gone through a formal process of disarmament and demobilisation, some elements, considered critically important to the successful family and community reintegration, were missing. In this regard, Williamson and Carter (2005:13) identify community sensitisation, demobilisation and transition period, tracing and family mediation, return to family and community and follow-up, traditional cleansing ceremonies, and school or skills training as areas that needed further elaboration.

Fig. 1: Map of Liberia showing Monrovia and other Counties

Reintegration programme is not entirely new in Liberia. At the end of a phase in the Liberian civil war in 1997, a step known as the Quick and Dirty or Quick-Fix approach was taken toward demobilising and reunifying the child

soldiers with their families. This approach was faulty in that demobilisation, counselling and reunification were done haphazardly (Oluwaniyi, 2003:152-153). At the end of the DDR programme of 1997, a total of 4,306 child soldiers were demobilised out of an estimated 15,000 child soldiers. Out of this number, only 416 children were placed in transit centres (Kelly, 1998:48). The result was such that when Liberia found itself relapsing into another round of civil war in 2000, many of the child ex-combatants returned to join armed groups while others resorted to criminal activities (Oluwaniyi, 2003:155).

The ongoing reintegration of child soldiers is situated within the Strategic and Operational Framework of Reintegration Support for Ex-Combatants, a working document of the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR). From the intervention measures which emanate from the framework, integration assistance is designed around social and economic reintegration. The implication is that programmes for the child ex-combatants are located within the two broad measures. However, from the commencement of the programme till 2007, the reintegration process has been bedevilled with series of constraints that appear to undermine its general performance. For instance, demobilised child combatants are vexed over their inability to receive the monthly cash allowances that the JIU promised (Williamson & Carter, 2005:5). Meanwhile, as the reintegration process which was earmarked to last three years appears to be winding toward completion, there is great doubt about the success of the programme. The growing numbers of former child soldiers languishing in the streets of Monrovia and other towns really call for concern.

The strategic and operational framework of reintegration gave recognition to the roles of governmental institutions, local and international NGOs, faith and community based organisations, the family institution, as well as the private sector in the reintegration process. Such a holistic approach is based on the need to utilise every available capacity to further the objective of a successful programme implementation. For instance, the relevance of non-governmental

organisations, especially the locally based ones, was hinged on knowledge and awareness of socio-economic and political landscape of Liberia. Generally, the different institutions were expected to provide the process with specialised support.

The reintegration of child ex-combatants in Liberia, like other forms of interventions has followed the top-bottom approach. Instead of working with children, most agencies are known to be working for children, a situation which may amount to shaving someone's head in his absence. An approach to reintegration common in literature and policies is such wherein reintegration objectives are tailored toward achieving set goals determined independent of the children. In most cases, the process of reintegration is deemed completed once child ex-combatants are reunited with family members. From the manner reintegration is implemented, it can only be said that intervention agencies are just interested in quantitative reintegration, concentrating mainly on counting the number of soldiers reporting to assembly areas, turning in weapons, or the numbers that are enrolled in schools and skill centres. Several shortcomings are thus identified with those institutions responsible for supporting different legs of the process. It therefore becomes imperative that the conditions which will enhance the transition of child soldiers from miscreants to responsible children be examined. These are studied within the context of the institutional capacities, capabilities, and limitations. It is reasoned that the under-performance of institutions and the non-provision for child-oriented reintegration have set several limitations for the programme. An investigation into the institutional challenges that confront the reintegration of Liberian child ex-combatants is, for that reason, intended to set an agenda for policy implementation in the pursuit of an enduring peace process.

The post-conflict period is usually confronted with continuing activities of armed groups (ex-combatants) and misuse of weapons. With children being vulnerable targets in the recruitment drives of rebel forces, it is pertinent that those involved in earlier conflicts be immediately reintegrated and reoriented

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towards societal values. Reintegration challenges for the legitimate government should ordinarily go beyond keeping the ex-child combatants in school or in vocations. Effort should extend to giving psychological support to those that have been traumatised as a result of their involvement in a series of heinous activities. Therefore, the reintegration of the ex-combatants is very important to ensuring durable peace, stability, security, development and avoiding a resumption of the conflict.

The institutional challenges of reintegrating the child ex-combatants are determined from this study conducted in Monrovia, the capital of Liberia. The study involved the use of qualitative and quantitative data gathering techniques to obtain the views of child ex-combatants and other stakeholders on the implementation and performance of reintegration programme. This approach ascribes importance to the children's perception of the programme.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Civil wars often severely damage national social and economic structures in areas of public governance, social interaction, community cohesion, family values, and more importantly child development. Usually, the damages have long-lasting impact when parties in armed conflict engage children as soldiers. However, children and youths involved in armed conflict still have the opportunity to re-engage positive social relations and productive civilian lives. Among other resources needed to support the process of social and economic recovery in societies transiting from violent conflict, institutions, whether governmental or non-governmental, have the potential and perceived capability to successfully supervise reintegration programme.

The conditions of the institutions responsible for reintegration can, and often do, affect the implementation of a reintegration programme. For the desired objectives of such programme to be achieved, institutions must be well focused and positioned to drive the process. Consequently, only strong and viable institutions provide the key to sustainable post-conflict peacebuilding processes.

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Examining the various institutions associated with the reintegration of child ex-combatants of the Liberian civil war, therefore, allows for an assessment of their capacities, capabilities and limitations, which are crucial to achieving a successful reintegration programme. Traditionally, the emphasis on institutions has always been on their position as frameworks for reintegration.

The knowledge, over the years, of institutional formations such as governmental agencies, local and international non-governmental organisations, indigenous and religious structures, community and family settings and the extent of their contributions to reintegration programmes has informed the reasoning that institutions need to be strong and well equipped to meet the challenges of reintegration. Moreover, previous research efforts have emphasised the need for reintegration to be institution-driven (Sawyer, 2005). This study does not controvert this position but further provides insights into the preparedness of the institutions by taking into consideration their capabilities and the actual guidance they offer for coordination and implementation of reintegration programme.

A consensus does not exist and technical guidance has not been developed regarding what constitutes appropriate institution for reintegration. Research effort is needed to provide such direction and ensure that the success of reintegration is measured against the strength and readiness of institutions. Additional research is needed to identify the challenges and barriers that institutions are currently facing with reintegrating child ex-combatants.

Several institutions were involved in the reintegration of child ex-combatants in Liberia. The Liberian government and other formal and informal institutions were expected to take front position in returning child soldiers to normal civilian life. However, the number of children and adolescents that exhibit maladaptive behaviours associated with child soldiers in the streets of Monrovia called for concern, considering the fact that the reintegration programme would officially wind up during the first quarter of 2007. This in reality underscores the inadequacy of the programme and the implementing institutions. It is against this background that this study examines the institutional challenges of reintegrating

the child ex-combatants of the Liberian civil war. Relevant to the research problem are the following questions:

i.   What are the capacities, capabilities, and limitations of the institutions that support the reintegration process?

ii.   To what extent does the operational framework for reintegration address itself to issues relating to child soldiers?

iii.   What is the level of participation of child ex-soldiers in the process of their reintegration?

iv.   What are the social constraints of reintegration?

v.   What level of progress and impact has reintegration made as far as child ex-combatants are concerned?

vi.   What are the necessary strategies for achieving a successful reintegration?

1.3   OBJECTIVES

Following from the above, the central objective of this study is to examine the performance of the reintegration programme as it affects Liberian child ex-combatants. This will be done from the perspective of institutional challenges. Toward this end, the study aims at focusing on the institutions that were directly and indirectly involved with programme implementation with a view to determining their capabilities and limitations. Derived from this are the following specific objectives:

1.   To examine the capacities, capabilities and challenges of institutions involved in reintegration.

2.   To critically examine the various institutional frameworks on which the reintegration of child soldiers is based with a view to determining their appropriateness.

3.   To assess the level of involvement of child soldiers in the reintegration process.

4.   To examine the social constraints confronting child soldiers in the process of their reintegration.

5.   To examine the progress and impact of reintegration as implemented by the Liberian government and other non-governmental organisations.

6.   To suggest innovative strategies that will assist in accomplishing a genuine reintegration of child soldiers.

1.4   SIGNIFICANCE

Research and study on reintegration have focused on ex-combatants as an inclusive unit that encompasses adult and child soldiers. As a result, similar reintegration measures have been applied to ex-combatants irrespective of their age categories. In Liberia, the 2003 reintegration programme for child ex-combatants follows similar pattern with adult combatants. According to the Strategic and Operational Framework of Reintegration support for Ex-Combatants, an estimated 13,000 Children Associated with the Fighting Forces (CAFF) would go through programmes similar to the adults'. These set of children are entitled to training, allowance, and start-up kits upon completion of their training programmes. The totality of reintegration options open to the child ex-combatants includes the Community Education Investment Programme (CEIP), the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) and skill acquisition. The first phase of the DDRR Programme thus commenced on 7th December, 2003 at Camp Scheiffelin near Monrovia (UNDP, 2004), though reintegration aspect of the programme formally took off in 2004.

Despite the existence of these programmes, the streets of Monrovia are infested with young children and adolescents that have more or less constituted themselves into societal miscreants. The growing number of these children underscores the inadequacy of reintegration programme. The visible ineffectiveness of reintegration as it can be inferred from the large number of homeless and unengaged children represents, though in diverse forms, the challenges that confront the reintegration of Liberian former child soldiers. These challenges should inform both theoretical and empirical study. These involve

examining reintegration for qualitative measures that take cognisance of the institutions responsible for reintegration and the disruption in the personality development of the child ex-soldiers. The approach taken by this study involves identifying the institutions of reintegration and determining their capacities and limitations as platforms for reintegration programmes. The study also involves isolating child ex-combatants as a social category whose reintegration should be situated within the context of a personality that becomes maladapted due to series of negative values (violent behaviours) acquired during early stages of development. Rather than focus solely on the needs of the ex-child soldiers, this study dwells on the conditions that hamper genuine reintegration. These factors which are often overlooked in research and policy implementations have rendered ineffective other measures put in place to address the basic needs of child ex-combatants.

The study demonstrates the inadequacies of conceptualising reintegration as family reunification or provision of social and economic support which, mostly, are unsustainable. It considers the structural condition of the society where reintegration is taking place as a major determining force which can make or mar reintegration efforts. The study, therefore, justifies policy innovation which will take cognisance of the specific status of the child ex-combatants, their unique needs and the socio-economic situation of the Liberian society.

Williamson and Carter (2005:4) do not only report that 99% of demobilised child soldiers are reunited with family members or relatives, they also claim that some of those reunited subsequently migrate to other areas rather than reintegrate locally. While this study examines the social and economic conditions that informed many child ex-soldiers leaving their families in the interior parts of the country for Monrovia, it equally contemplates a process of re-adjustment and re-socialisation that will bring about genuine reintegration.

Most importantly, the study is a contribution towards creating knowledge about institutional strength and weaknesses in every reintegration process. It provides a perspective on the limited role of various institutions. In its analysis of

the content and context of reintegration especially as it relates to child ex-combatants, the study offers insight that has implication for conflict mitigation and quest for sustainable peace. The insight forms a basis for evaluating existing conceptual model of reintegration. The empirical relevance lies in the reference material that it constitutes for government and agencies that are engaged in the planning and execution of reintegration.

Finally, the study is significant in its use of ethnographic data to analyse the concept and practice of reintegration, in that the data emanates from direct observation and interviews conducted among the study population.

1.5   BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

The main assumption of this study is that weak institutions with inadequate measures are major constraints that hamper the reintegration of child ex-soldiers. Other assumptions are that:

i.   Reintegration of child ex-combatants is inadequately conceptualised and this accounts for lack of visible positive effect of the programme on former child soldiers.

ii.   Children involved in armed conflict are deprived of the normal cultural, moral and values socialisation usually gained from family and community, and as such, they require a process of re-socialisation to fit perfectly well into the society.

iii.   Family reunification, educational support, skill acquisition, and traditional cleansing cum religious support are core of reintegration of child ex-combatants.

iv.   Reintegration programme has not reduced the number of child ex-combatants living on the streets of Monrovia.

v.   Intervention agencies are more concerned with quantitative rather than qualitative reintegration.

vi.   The reintegration programme conceives of education as a means to a better economic circumstance with innate capacity to stem the tide of anti-social behaviour.

vii.   Child ex-combatants are devoid of internalised controls, and as such lack beliefs that are thoroughly ingrained to make each of them personally responsible for his or her good conduct.

1.6   SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In order to achieve an extensive treatment of the subject matter of this study, it is necessary that the scope of the study be defined in a way which will involve setting the spatial, temporal, and conceptual bounds. Thus, the main focus of this study is on reintegration of the child ex-combatants. Reintegration is viewed as a process which is dependent on several social and cultural variables. The institutional challenges of reintegration therefore are construed as those factors and conditions that hinder institutions from providing for a sustainable reintegration of Liberia's former child soldiers. These challenges represent the limitations of international donor agencies, the government of Liberia and her agencies, non-government organisations and social institutions like the family, in carrying out their mandates or fulfilling their obligations to the Liberian child ex-combatants.

There are several phases of the Liberian civil war. For instance, a reintegration process followed the ceasefire agreement of 1997. However, the study is limited to the reintegration process that came after the 2003 peace agreement mainly because it is more recent, with its entire components visible and accessible. The category of child soldiers which this study focuses on are children below 18 years who participated in the 2000 to 2003 phase of the Liberian war.

Female child soldiers equally constitute a category of demobilised combatants as they were recruited just as their male peers and face the same consequences of armed conflict as male child soldiers. However, being that they

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were further confronted with dual challenges as girls and fighters, they should have specific needs that must be considered separately in demobilisation and reintegration programmes. Their case, therefore, should constitute a subject for a specific study. This study focuses only on male child soldiers, as they are more visible in the conflict and in the reintegration programme.

Reintegration programme is currently being carried out in all Liberian counties. The study, however, is limited to the city of Monrovia, the country's capital. This choice is informed by the fact that it has the largest concentration of child ex-combatants. Moreover, the last phase of the war was fought mainly in the city, a factor which informed the huge number of children in the streets. It is estimated that at least half of all ex-combatants remain in the capital city. The choice of Monrovia is equally based on the reasoning that being a city, the level of family cohesion will be low thus allowing for the possibility of more children living outside the family system. Also, it was easier for the researcher to establish contacts that assisted in the field survey.

1.7.   DEFINITION OF TERMS

Institutional challenges: These refer to the constraints that public and social organisations, and other strategic parties in the Liberian reintegration process encountered and which limited their effectiveness and performances as key stakeholders in the reintegration programme.

Reintegration: Reintegration is defined here as the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain access to civilian forms of work and income. Reintegration is a social and economic process with an open time frame. It is a part of the general development of the country and represents a national responsibility, possibly necessitating outside help (Gleichmann *et al*., 2004:65).

Child soldier: A child soldier is any person under 18 years of age who forms part of an armed force in any capacity, and those accompanying such groups, other than purely as family members, as well as girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced labour (United Nations Report, 2000:5). When conflict comes to an end

and these children are no longer active, they are generally qualified as child ex-soldiers or child ex-combatants. The two concepts are used interchangeably. An ex-combatant is defined as the disarmed, demobilised fighter from formal government army, militia, and paramilitary groups and other persons associated with fighting groups. It is not a homogeneous group as it includes not only adults but also young people and children.

Armed conflict: This is the use of forces by two or more parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, and which results in at least 25 battle-related deaths per year. Armed conflicts can be categorised into minor, intermediate armed conflict and war. Minor armed conflict is said to have occurred when during the course of the conflict the battle-related deaths are below 1,000. Intermediate conflict is said to have occurred when there are more than 1,000 battle-related deaths recorded during the course of the conflict, and a War, is said to have occurred when there are more than 1,000 battle-related deaths during one particular year (Schmid, 2000:3).

Disarmament: Disarmament consists of the collection, control and disposal of small arms, ammunitions, explosives and light/heavy weapons from combatants, as well as from the civilian population, in many cases (Gleichmann *et al*., 2004: 29).

Demobilisation: This means the formal, usually controlled discharge of active combatants from the armed forces or from an armed group. The process of demobilisation comprises different scenarios, from individual combatants flowing through temporary centres, to the massing of troops together in camps designated for this purpose, or subsequent registration and disarmament (Gleichmann *et al*., 2004:45).

Rehabilitation: It is a stage that comes after demobilisation. In actual fact, rehabilitation represents temporary succour for victims of conflicts, including ex-combatants. The succour may be in terms of material and emotional support.

1.8   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this study include, but are not restricted to, the newness of the research topic. The study is greatly limited by the paucity of scholarly works on reintegration. Indeed, there are a few literatures that focus on reintegration from the perspective of a research subject. Works by development and intervention agencies are devoted to assessment of reintegration from the point of view of what they perceive as the success and challenges of the programme. In most cases, these works do not address any research problems and are devoid of any known theoretical approach. However, this research still relied on many of these materials as secondary sources of data. Consequently, the study would not claim to exhaust the discussion on the reintegration programme of child ex-combatants in Liberia.

1.9   OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

This section is an overview or a summary of subsequent chapters. In chapter two, a review of relevant literature and exposition of theoretical paradigm that give a direction to the study are carried out. The literature review covers works of other scholars in the following areas: the concept of conflict, nature and causes of armed conflict, the phenomenon of child soldiers, small arms and light weapons in armed conflict, disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration in post-conflict era. Under theoretical framework, greed and grievance, anomie theory, psychosocial theory and development are discussed.

Research methodology and design are discussed in chapter three. Areas of discussion include study population, sampling methods and procedure, justification for the choice of study area, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis.

Chapter four is an exposition on the Liberian civil war and the involvement of child soldiers. The chapter provides the necessary historical background for the data presentation and analysis that is done in chapter five.

The main focus of the work is contained in chapter five. Here, the research findings are presented and analysed under different headings that emphasise the objectives of the study. Analysis and findings cover institutional challenges of reintegration and their challenges. In all, the chapter addresses itself to the challenges that are made manifest by the current approach to reintegration.

The final and last chapter contains the summary, recommendations and conclusion. The summary of major findings is done, and recommendations are offered where necessary modifications in the approach are needed. The conclusions reached in the study emanate from the research findings and they indicate the principles, relationships, and generalisations that could be deduced from the results, and associated exceptions or problems. In all, the conclusion highlights the basic and fundamental challenges inherent in approaching and implementing reintegration for child ex-combatants

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0   INTRODUCTION

This chapter is devoted to the review of literature and exposition of theoretical paradigms which are utilised in explaining data that result from the fieldwork. The review of literature also provides insight into the concept of reintegration that functions as the main framework of this study. Accordingly, a mix of theoretical orientation and conceptual framework is utilised in analysing data.

2.1   LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to put the reintegration of child ex-soldiers in perspective, it is necessary that literature on related scholarly work be reviewed. Being an aspect in post-conflict peacebuilding, all areas covered in the review have conflict as nucleus. This is achieved under the following sub-headings.

i.   Concept of conflict;

ii.   Nature and causes of armed conflict;

iii.   The role of small arms and light weapons in armed conflict;

iv.   Phenomenon of child soldiers;

v.   Approaches to disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants as a means of bringing about lasting peace.

2.1.1   Concept of Conflict

Conflict refers to the opposition of persons or forces that give rise to some tension, skirmishes, battle, strong disagreement, warfare, clashes and so on. Hornby (1995:3) defines conflict as a serious disagreement, struggle, and fight arising out of differences of opinions, wishes, needs, values, and interests between and among individuals or groups. Other scholars like Coser (1956) conceptualised conflict as a struggle between, and among, individuals or groups over values and claims to scarce resources, state symbols, and power bases.

The objective of the individuals or groups engaged in conflict is to neutralise, injure or eliminate their rivals so that they can enjoy scarce resources, status symbols, and power bases. It is, therefore, along this reasoning that Himes (1980:2) conceives of conflict as a purposeful struggle between collective actors who use social power to defeat or remove opponents in order to gain status, resources and push their values over other social groupings. Conflict is equally prevalent within and between social relations such as families, ethnic groups, social institutions and organisations, political parties and state. Further, it is prevalent in situations where the goals, aspirations, interests, and needs of the social groups cannot be achieved simultaneously and the value systems of such groups are at variance. Invariably, the social parties purposely employ their power bases to fight opposition with a view to defeat, neutralise or eliminate one another (Anstey, 1991:4). In a related position, Nwolise (1997:39) argues that, conflict is a situation in which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive obtainable by one or the other, but not both. Accordingly, each party is mobilising energy to obtain a goal, a desired object or situation, and each party perceives the other as a barrier or threat to that goal.

That conflict is a natural attribute of the human society has equally been well emphasised in literature. Imobighe, cited in Garuba (1998:7) observes that all human societies experience crises, and indeed conflict, at one time or another, in the process of their regular interaction. Drawing from other scholars, he goes further to say that conflict can occur within a group and between groups, within a state and between states, within an organisation or between organisations, within a family and between families, as well as in interpersonal relationships. The view of Imobighe confirms the popular view that conflict is inherent in man.

While expressing a similar view, Adamu (1999:123) has presented forms of conflict. They are:

i.   *Individual versus individual:* Here it is argued that there are many examples of individual conflict. For instance, two individuals fighting over territory, two men vying for the

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same woman, and two executives arguing over a large share of corporate capital. In each case, individuals are competing for scarce resources by actually or symbolically eliminating rivals.

ii. *Individual versus Group:* Adamu argues further that conflict sometimes occurs when an individual wishes to satisfy security, or esteem needs in a group situation. It may also be a case of trying to be smarter than other group members by breaking the group norms (e.g. in making more money or individual's effort to promote his or her own interest). Such an offence will often results in collective retaliation on the unfortunate offender.

iii. *Group versus Group:* According to him, interdepartmental conflicts over authority and jurisdiction are as common as conflicts between one group and another group, competing between corporate and international welfare.

To Boulding (1984), most definitions of conflict contain conceptual ambiguities in that they tend to confuse the distinction of concepts of conflict with that of competition. He posits that conflict in its broadest sense exists when any potential position of two behavioural units are mutually incompatible. This is a broader concept than conflict. Whereas all cases of conflict involve competition, not all cases of competition involve conflict. Conflict according to him may be defined as situation of competition in which the parties are aware of the incompatibility of potential future position and in which each party wishes to occupy a position that is incompatible with the wishes of the other.

From definition, one can identify some fundamental features of conflict as follows:

i. Because conflict is an interaction relationship, it requires at least two actors, or parties who may be individuals or organisations etc.

ii. Conflict arises from a desire for scarce resources, status or power.

iii.   Conflict actors are designed to influence other actors. In other words, in a conflict relationship, the actors can gain only at each other's relative expense.

iv.   Conflict requires interaction among actors in which actors, actions and counter-actions are mutually opposed.

v.   Conflict relations always involve attempt to acquire and utilise social power.

2.1.2   Causes and Nature of Armed Conflict.

The increased wave of armed conflicts has become an issue of concern in many parts of the world. The number of wars taking place worldwide increased since the end of World War II, as more than 160 wars have been recorded (McNeely, 2000:4). As reported by Ojielo, cited in Okoosi-Simbine (2003:303), in 1996 alone, fourteen of the fifty-three countries in Africa were afflicted by armed conflict, accounting for more than half of all war-related deaths worldwide and resulting in more than eight million refugees, returnees and displaced persons. Although this upward trend in conflict may be inflated by the increasing number of independent countries (Gurr *et al,* 2000), this trend is of particular concern in Africa, which has experienced more than 30 wars since 1970 alone (Myers, 1996). Ordinarily, one would have thought that the end of the Cold War would lead to a great reduction in wars in Africa (Lodge, 1999:1). However, peace is eluding the world and the increasing wave of armed conflicts is alarming, especially in Africa. The increase in armed conflicts over the past decades presents Africa as a continent constantly in danger and in need of compassionate support or humanitarian assistance.

Armed conflict is a very serious problem in parts of Africa today, where many countries are at risk of conflict, engaged in conflict, emerging from conflict, or in a long-term recovery phase. These conflicts are devastating. They have caused untold suffering and enormous loss of human lives; they have fragmented societies and shattered economies. They have also wreaked devastating harm on

the environment, biodiversity, and the natural resources upon which people depend (Shambourgh *et al*, 2001:2).

Conflicts that have bedevilled Africa range from the internal armed conflict between rebels and government forces in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Democratic Republic of Congo, to the factional fighting in Somalia, the inter-state war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, the guerrilla war in Algeria, that of the Angolan government versus rebels headed by the late Jonas Savimbi, to the current conflicts in Sudan and Cote d'Ivoire. Apart from these conflicts, Africa has also, seen more than 200 coups or attempted coups since 1950 (Renner, 1999:6).

Various factors can be attributed to causes of armed conflicts. Most writers on the issues of conflict seem to agree that the causes of conflict include competition for scarce resources, differences in terms of goals, value systems, interests and structural imbalances, ambiguity in coordinating social structures, socio-economic inequalities, ethnicity, absence of opportunities for political participation, differences in religious inclination, fragile government structures, inadequate civic structures, and differences in political ideologies (Pondy, 1967; Ruble & Thomas, 1976; Dessler, 1980; Moore, 1986; Pruit & Rubin, 1986; Klingebiel, 2002). In a similar vein, today's conflicts, in addition to the factors identified above, are fuelled by patronage systems and the hegemonic desire of the political elites or military strongmen to control and exploit natural resources – particularly mineral resources such as gold, oil, and diamonds as well as timber (Plumptre *et al*, 2001).

The reality in most war-torn countries has informed a situation where war and economic exploitation have become closely linked. In Africa, for instance, local elite and transnational corporations have increasingly used war as a cover to generate wealth through natural resource extraction (International Famine Centre 2000:2). Considerable international attention has recently focused on war economies in such countries as Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Furthermore, Anstey (1991) explains that conflict is caused by actual or perceived inequality of control, use, ownership and distribution of scarce resources. It takes place in a heterogeneous society where the dominant group, using its power, enforces its own value systems, culture and language over powerless groups. Causes of conflict are "relative deprivation where a dominant group attempts to enforce its own symbols, culture and language over others in a heterogeneous society" (ibid, 29). Lack of equitable share and control of resources as well as access to social services among and between societal groups give rise to power struggles and contribute to rising levels of mistrust and disagreements which ultimately lead to conflict.

There is growing evidence that the elite in African societies, particularly members of the political class, have shown no restraint in manipulating the people through feeding them with prejudices against, and stereotypes about, other ethnic groups to win support for self-centred objectives. Personal interests and ambitions of such leaders are framed in ethnic terms and the bells of ethnic solidarity are rung to rally support even at the risk of developing animosity against other groups which are considered the enemies. This sometimes degenerates into people-to people violence and pogrom (Adedeji, 1999:9). This is evident in the Liberian civil war where Charles Taylor exploited the ethnic sentiment of the Gio and Mano people against the Krahn ethnic group to garner support for his own ambition. It was also evident during Doe's regime, as the politically and militarily dominant Krahn group of the president were engaged in frequent hostilities with other ethnic groups in the country. Historically, in Liberia, a sense of ethnic supremacy was used to build and sustain an oligarchy that comprised the descendants of the Americo-Liberian pioneers. The system perpetrated an exclusive elite class that discriminated against the indigenous population.

Furthermore, within the African context, Steadman as cited in Nwolise (1997:37), notes that 'conflict in Africa arises from problems basic to all population. The tugs and pulls of different identities, the distribution of resources and access to power and competing definitions of what is right, fair and just'. Yet

even if it is conceded that crises and conflicts are human phenomena evident in all regions of the world, their manifestations in Africa have been aggravated by the management of resources which often brings even the most equitable sharing arrangement under acute stress. The levels of ignorance and illiteracy among the competing interests which make them highly susceptible to both internal exploitation and external manipulation have equally served to aggravate most conflicts.

Also, economic vulnerability and political instability are two major factors frequently blamed for conflicts in Africa (Garuba, 1989). Other factors, so far, alluded to include historical legacies such as the Berlin Conference of 1885, which disregard ethnic realities to establish colonial commercial and political structures that were designed primarily to extract resources (Kofi Annan cited in Sikod, 2004: 1). Speaking broadly, therefore, armed conflicts since 1990 can be constructed under the following seven issues.

i. ethnic competition for control of the state ;
ii. regional or secessionist rebellions;
iii. continuation of liberation conflicts;
iv. fundamentalist religious opposition to secular authority;
v. wars arising from state degeneration or state collapse;
vi. border dispute; and
vii. protracted conflicts within politicised militaries (Lodge, 1999:1).

Some of the above issues are also central to the Liberian civil war. Subsequently, literature has identified several factors as responsible for the Liberian conflict. These include insurgencies arising from lack of opportunities for political participation, socio-economic inequalities, ethnicity, mismanagement of disagreement, and competition for scarce resources or access to resources. Others are value system, interest, greed, structural imbalance and ambiguity in coordinating social structures and distribution of power among social groups, fragile government structures, weak states, and lack of good leadership.

The historical background to the Liberian crisis indicates that Americo-Liberians of only five percent of the Liberian population, dominated the political and economic power of the country. In fact, Liberia never produced an indigenous president until the coup of 1980 that brought Master Sergeant Doe to power. Other presidents had been of American descent (Sesay, 1992:30). These leaders (presidents) paid little or no attention to the sensibilities of indigenous Liberians with regard to their laws, customs and religious beliefs. Indeed, before 1946, there were separate laws for the indigenous people and the Americo-Liberians who inhabited Monrovia and other coastal areas of the country that form the Montserrado County. In addition, much of the revenue realised from investment boom was spent on white elephant projects centred on Monrovia and the coast where most of the Americo-Liberians live. The Americo-Liberians, forming the core of the country's national bourgeoisie, also dominated all top government and cabinet posts, occupied most of the strategic positions in commerce, industries, the church, fraternities (especially the Masonic temple), and provided most, if not all, the officer corps in the armed forces of Liberia. This was before the coup in 1980 that brought the first indigenous President, Master Sergeant Doe to power. In short, Americo-Liberian elite controlled effectively all the vital vehicles for political participation and expression of dissent in the country (ibid, 31).

Apart from the indigene-settler problem that underlies the politics of Liberia, the role of natural resources in the prolongation of the Liberian civil war cannot be overemphasised. There is active international concern about the link between the illicit trade in rough diamonds and armed conflicts in Africa. While diamonds from conflict areas constitute only a small percentage of the overall diamond trade, the implications of this problem for peace and human security in affected areas have been devastating. In Angola and Sierra Leone, rebel groups exploited their control over diamond producing areas to finance military activities. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), competition for control of this resource is also undermining a fragile peace.

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In Liberia, all the warring factions tried to outsmart the other in several respects, most importantly, in terms of gaining access to natural resources for funding personal ambitions and the war efforts and, in the process, committed atrocities against unarmed civilians as well as wantonly destroyed social facilities and infrastructure (Reno, 1998:95). This point was further buttressed by Kofi Annan, cited in Okoosi-Simbine (2003:308) that the struggle for the control and exploitation of diamonds, timber and other raw materials was one of the principal explanations for the prolongation of the civil war in Liberia. A similar pattern emerged in the case of Sierra Leone where the decade-long conflict was as a result of a combination of diamond-plundering warlords and undisciplined militia. In fact, the chance to loot central bank reserves was a key motivation of those who seize power from the elected government in May 1997 (ibid). The same happened in Angola, where protracted difficulties in the peace process owed much to lust for the lucrative diamond fields (ibid). According to Alao and Olonisakin (2000: 29), whereas natural resources cannot be regarded as a primary cause of the Liberian conflict, it helped to sustain the war. For instance, both the warring factions and the peace-keeping mission took active part in the struggle to control and plunder natural resources in Liberia in order to fund their rebel projects and war efforts (ibid). It was estimated that Charles Taylor alone must have earned over 400 million USD per year from trade in natural resources (timber, diamond and iron ore) during the war that took place from 1992 to 1996 (Reno, 1996).

The nature of armed conflicts has drastically changed from what used to be conflict between nations. Contemporary conflicts are often within states, unlike the traditional conflicts that usually involved two or more states. McNeely (2000) supports this view. According to her, most conflicts today share a few common characteristics: first, the majority of conflicts are fought within national borders, rather than between different nation-states. Renner (1999) attests to this, stating that in Africa, only 6 of the 103 armed conflicts are fought between countries. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI,

2001:17), of the 25 major armed conflicts taking place in 2000, all but two were not internal. SIPRI went further to explain that the majority of internal conflicts do not in fact remain confined within the borders of a single country, but eventually affect neighbouring countries in some ways.

The West African sub-region is a classical example. The conflict in Liberia had a spill over effect on the Mano River Countries. Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire witnessed the movement of fighters through their porous borders in the conflicts that eventually occurred in these countries, thereby, creating instability in the sub-region. These conflicts also affected the neighbouring countries indirectly or directly as they played host to many of the refugees fleeing their countries for safety.

Other scholars have also elaborated on the changing nature of armed conflicts. According to Nduwimana (2004:1),

> the African experience over the last 20 years, bears witness to a profound change in armed conflicts. This change is essentially characterized by the transgression of ideas; the continent has shifted away from war of independence waged in the name of common goal toward internal and regional conflict, civil wars, ethnic conflict, etc. Marked by a trend towards fabricating popular consent with regard to deliberate violence and victimization, today's wars lack credibility in the eyes of the civilian populations, a population it holds hostage.

Another feature of armed conflict is its unstructured nature. It is difficult, if not impossible, to predict contemporary armed conflict. Reno, cited in Shambourgh *et al* (2001:2) further explains:

> Most of these conflicts are unstructured and difficult to predict. They are often fought by multiple actors with interdependent interests, and the distinction between combatants and civilians is often blurred. Actors in these wars frequently target civilians, including women and children, as tragically witnessed in such places as Sierra Leone.

In these conflicts, Anderson (1999) states that a larger percentage of the population has direct experience of atrocities, as victims, perpetrators, or both.

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In the Liberian conflicts, there were different rebel groups and breakaway groups with different interests and ideologies. The first phase of the conflict between 1989 and 1996 had National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor, as the leading opposition group against the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). This group fragmented into factions. The last phase of the conflict (2001-2003) equally witnessed groups such as the Liberia United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and Government of Liberia (GOL). The story is not different in Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, and Sudan with different factions emerging.

Furthermore, Cilliers (2004:4) argues that contemporary armed conflicts are usually characterised by

> …proliferation of small arms, forcible recruitment of children, sexual violence, killing and maiming of civilians, ethnic cleansing and genocide. African conflicts are more often internal than inter state. Civilians, rather than fighters are by far the worst affected by these wars, both in terms of the risk of violent death and in terms of losing their livelihood. Such communal conflicts also erode state structures and legitimacy and steep the country deeper in poverty, increasing the risk of a renewal of fighting within a few years setting the country off on a downward spiral of poverty, bad governance and conflicts.

These conflicts have accounted for the loss of innocent civilians and combatants lives. Many have been displaced and many have become refugees. According to Time International (16 May 1994), Rwanda in only three months of fighting, (April to June, 1994) lost 1 million lives, compared to Bosnia Herzegovina with 200,000 people in three years. It was also established that only 3% of those who lost their lives were combatants. Others were defenceless civilians. In two months, 1.7 million refugees fled into Zaire and Tanzania.

The impact of armed conflict is so much that it affects every aspect of the human society especially the economy. The World Bank estimated that conflict is knocking two percent a year off Africa's economic growth. According to Fondo (2004: 1):

There have been 9.5 million refugees and hundreds of thousands of people slaughtered and million others have died as a result of civil strife and famine. The large number of refuges put a burden on neighbouring countries and this breeds regional instability and cripples efforts to control diseases.

African conflicts, be they rooted in the colonial heritage (e.g. an inter-ethnic crisis in the Great Lakes region of Africa, or in Liberia, Sierra Leone, etc.), or initially motivated by the pursuit of justice, the fact of the matter is that the usury exacted by modern African warfare is reducing war to an end in itself. The common practice of trans-regional criminal alliances, the current reality of the schism in political coalitions and armed opposition, extreme violence against civilians, particularly women, and the synchronization of the traffic in arms and raw materials and the widespread use of child soldiers and so on, confirm the shift away from the pursuit of justice and towards predatory reasoning (Nduwimana, 2004:1). The Liberian experience is so similar that the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission became necessary. The commission was mandated to investigate gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law as well as other grave abuses that occurred from January 1979 to 14 October 2003. Sexual and gender-based violence, particularly rape of children, was reported after the Liberian war (UNMIL, 2007). In May 2006, for instance, it was record that 12-year-old girls, and, in some cases girls as young as eight, were involved in transactional sex in camps for internally displaced people and after being resettled in their communities. Abusers allegedly included camp officials, humanitarian workers, businessmen, peacekeepers, government employees and teachers (Save the Children UK, 2006).

The commision was to pay particular attention to gender-based violations, as well as to the issue of child soldiers, providing opportunities for them to relate their experiences, addressing concerns and recommending measures to be taken for the rehabilitation of victims of human rights violations in the spirit of national reconciliation and healing.

On the whole, contemporary armed conflicts are mostly internally driven, and are highly responsible for the increased use of child soldiers, poverty, famine, civilian casualties, rape, killings, instability, HIV spread, as well as small arms proliferation, more especially in Africa. The availability of small arms in pre-conflict and post-conflict societies as well as proliferation and the use of child soldiers are primary contributors to violent crime and even a return to war, particularly when adequate measures are not taken to disarm and reintegrate child ex-combatants at the end of the conflict. As a report of the UN Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (2005) indicated, some of the children demobilised from Liberian former fighting forces were from neighbouring countries – 120 from Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire – countries that were equally engaged in armed conflict

2.1.3   Phenomenon of Child Soldiers

The use of child soldiers is not a new phenomenon in the world, except that the radical transformation in the nature of armed conflict has led to increase in the number of child combatants and has also changed their contributions to conflicts. United Nations Children Fund (2007) claims that roughly 300,000 children fight in armed conflict around the world. The use of children in wars has a long history. According to Honwana (1999:4), many children participated in the children crusade of 1212. In fact, a large number of the 30,000 child crusaders were sold into slavery and many more drowned in the Mediterranean Sea. In 1813, France used quite a number of children as combatants for fighting the Russians and Prussians. Henry V served at the age of 14 as General in his father's army in the war against Wales (Said, cited in Oluwaniyi (2003:141).

In modern history, it has been suggested that Napoleon army in the early 19th Century featured a number of 12 year old boy combatants (Honwana, 1999: 4). The "War to End All Wars" (WEAW) of 1915 has become significant in Britain up till today because of the death of Jack Cornwell, who enrolled and was trained along with six hundred boys by the Royal Navy but died in the cause of

defending his country. Today, his statues adorn over 120,000 schools in Britain (Ennew and Milne, 1989:78). The 20th Century saw children drafted as soldiers in both World Wars I and II in which children were used as a last line of defence by the Germans and their allies (Shananan, 1997:20). The Liberian war was characterised by the use of child soldiers who in most cases were forcefully conscripted. The government of Liberia denied that children were made to fight on its side but confirmed few cases where local commanders received young volunteers eager to defend their country. In a similar vein, children recruited to fight on the side of the LURD rebel force were made to believe that Charles Taylor was against their ethnic group, the Mandingo.

Still in Africa, children have long been known to participate in wars alongside their fathers, fighting to defend their villages. Among the pastoralists in the East and Horn of Africa, children are organised in age-grade system as part of a military administrative system with military roles. But they never participate in wars until they graduate to a warrior age grade in their late teens (Waal, 1997: 318-320).

The phenomenon of child soldering is a global issue, except that the pattern of recruitment varies from one country to another. According to Sesay and Ismail (2003:140), the child-soldier phenomenon exists in developed countries of the world such as the United States where under 18-year olds are exposed to military training through programmes such as the Peace Corps and Young Marines, and are eventually recruited into the armed forces. In the United Kingdom, it is increasingly taking the form of volunteers into military service in a bid to overcome the persistent shortfalls in recruitment quotas. In contrast, in most third world countries where child soldiering exists, recruitment takes the form of conscription and press ganging (ibid). The later mode of recruitment (conscription, intimidation or force) of child soldiers can be ascribed to war torn societies. For example, recent events in the Middle East show that the use of children as soldiers is becoming worrisome and startling among different Islamic groups and armies in countries such as Iraq, Iran, Egypt, and Lebanon. Singer

(2005) confirms that in 1984 Iranian president, Ali-Akbar Rafsanjani, declared that all Iranians from twelve to seventy-two should volunteer for the Holy War. Thousands of children were pulled from schools, indoctrinated in the glory of martyrdom, and sent to the frontline only lightly armed. Wearing keys around their necks (to signify their pending entrance into heaven), they were sent forward to help clear paths through minefields with their bodies. Iran's spiritual leader at the time, Ayotollah Khomeini, delighted in the children's sacrifice. All told, some 100,000 Iranian boy soldiers lost their lives (ibid). In Liberia, child soldiers were thrown to the battlefield immediately after conscription. Many wear talisman on their necks for protection from enemy bullets.

Equally, Singer (ibid) further has it that, in Iraq, during the Gulf and more recent wars, Saddam Hussein constructed vast recruitment programmes – sophisticated in their institutional nature – that targeted boys between the ages of ten and fifteen. The camps involved as much as fourteen hours per day of military training and political indoctrination, intended to desensitise the youths to violence, and included beatings and deliberate cruelty to animals (ibid). Rebel groups fighting Saddam have been identified as having employed similar tactics, targeting street and homeless children, such that today, children as young as twelve serve in the Mahdi Army of Iraq (McClay, 2006: 3). Furthermore, families in Iraq were threatened with the loss of their food ration cards if they refused to enrol their children in the military training course. The Liberian child soldier was recruited to service an immediate need and little or no protocol was required for conscription. In many cases, the children were enlisted from the refugee camp where they stayed with their parents.

Recent statistics on these regions are instructive. According to Mack (2005:4),

> of ongoing or recently ended conflicts, 68 percent have children under eighteen serving as combatants; 80 percent of these conflicts where children are present include fighters under the age of fifteen.

McClay (2006:3) on his part, reports that in Afghanistan, 30 percent of all children have been active in war, with the Taliban and Northern Alliance relying

on children for strategic adaptability and strength. Myanmar has in excess of 75,000 child soldiers that served in both state and rebel armies (ibid, 4). Time and again, children are forced into wars and battles under numerous headings and ideologies, such as communism, nationalism, Christianity, and Islam (ibid). This applies to the Indonesia case where thousands of Muslim and Christian boys have formed local paramilitary units that protect and raid against the other community (Singer, 2005).

In the Liberian case, ethnicity was a major resource. There is no doubt that some of the children recruited by LURD rebel force were actually convinced that Charles Taylor was against the Mandingo. They might, therefore, have found it patriotic to fight in defence of their ethnic group. However, the extent of their conviction cannot be wholly determined due to the fact that many of them were forcefully conscripted.

In Africa, a large number of child combatants are found in the heart of modern warfare. For example, in Angola, children under the age of eighteen comprised 52% of the population but 3,000 were used in the conflict (Machel, 2001: 9). In Mozambique, the figure was between 8,000 and 10,000 (Honwana, 1999: 6). The Mozambicans learned that children were the perfect weapons: easily manipulated, intensely loyal, and fearless and, most importantly, in endless supply (Daily Trust, 2007:28). In Somalia, within the month of April 2007, more than 1,000 people have been killed in Mogadishu, the capital, in a complex civil war compounded by warlords who command armies of teenagers (ibid). In Congo, a civil war that started a decade ago to oust the cold-war tyrant, Mobutu Sese Seko is now a multi-headed fight in which the players are the government and the rebel forces. Both sides, according to a report issued in May, 2007 by Human Rights Watch, rely on child soldiers (ibid). Towards the east in Uganda where under eighteens represent an overwhelming 56% of the population of 20 million, between 8,000 to 10,000 children had been adopted in the north by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led by Joseph Kony, who has been fighting the government since 1989 (The Coalition to Stop the Use of Children, 1999: 114).

The ranks of LRA are filled with 13-year-old brides and boys who have been brainwashed to burn down huts and pound new-born babies to death in wooden mortars, as if they were grinding grain (Daily Trust, 2007: 29).

Figures from Ethiopia where under-eighteens form 53% of the population are harder to elicit as the government vehemently denies the participation of children in its conflict with Eritrea that began in May 1998. However, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Children cited credible reports that indicated that thousands of children were forcibly recruited into the Ethiopian army, particularly during the build–up to the major offensive launched in May 2000 (The Coalition to Stop the Use of Children, 2000: 4). In Sudan, both groups in the civil war have recruited some 100,000 children for combat purposes (McClay 2006:3). These figures only begin to show the shocking rate at which children are being used as combatants.

In West Africa, the use of children as soldiers' dates back to the start of the Liberian conflict in 1989. Taylor's NPFL became infamous for the abduction and use of boys in war, a tactics later adopted by other Liberian fighting factions as well as other fighting groups in West Africa. Between 6,000 and 15,000 children are estimated to have taken up arms from 1989-1997 (Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1994). In Sierra Leone which has one of the worst records of using children in war and where 50% of the population is under 18, more than 10,000 children served as soldiers for the various fighting factions (Kelly, 1998: 39).

Generally, the child soldier phenomenon in Liberia was very similar to what obtained in other countries. However, the study of the Liberian conflict showed most of the child soldiers as barely literate or complete illiterate. This is understandable as the vast majority of them that participated in the 2000-2003 phase of the civil war were indeed born into a country in conflict. Under that condition, many have their learning interrupted while others never stepped into a classroom. The key to fully integrating former child soldiers and breaking the cycle of future child recruitment in Liberia appears to lie in education for all children.

In all societies, children are considered the leaders of tomorrow. But after years of warfare, Liberia's infrastructure lies in ruins and social services appear to be non-existent. Under the prevailing condition, there is a possibility of a bleak future for such children and their country. There are efforts against the use of children as soldiers, such efforts are in the form of the child's right agenda as contained in the 1991 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Article 21) which, 'unequivocally' makes eighteen years the minimum age for soldering (Sesay & Ismail 2003:143). Also, African states have adopted several other legal instruments including the 1996 Yaounde, the 1999 Maputo and the 2000 Accra declarations, all of which aim at eradicating child soldiering in Africa (ibid). Unfortunately, the use of children as combatants is on the increase in the region. Many reasons have been given as to why children are targets of armed factions and commandants. Karl Maier (1998) posits two broad and plausible explanations as to why children are targeted in armed conflicts:

> Firstly, in many impoverished African, Asian, and Latin American conflicts, children are cheaper and more pliable soldiers. Adults are more difficult to control because they can migrate, hide, refuse, or resist the pressures of armed factions (which they have done in many cases). Adults are also expensive to support, more difficult to discipline and command and most importantly, can switch allegiance at critical moments. Secondly, children are easier to indoctrinate and can more easily become emotionally attached to adult soldiers.

Olonisakin (2004: 247) further brings this to fore when she explains that both Charles Taylor, the leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and Foday Sankoh, the head of Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, were fondly called "Papay" (meaning papa or father), by their juvenile followers.

Many reasons have been given by scholars as to why children join military factions. Richard and Williams (1996) state that with limited access to education, employment, and political power, many young people and children became alienated from the state and mainstream society. Thus, a vulnerable pool of children and young people already existed before the outbreak of widespread conflicts in West Africa, and these became the cannon fodder of the sub-region's

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ruthless warlords. To some of these children, joining military factions is a means of survival, owing to the fact that most of the affected countries are invariably poverty stricken, with a large percentage of their population living below the $2 mark per day. According to the UN Human Development Report 2002, Colombia, Philippines and Sri Lanka, though classified as having medium human development, have 36.0, 36.8 and 45.4 percent respectively of their populations living below the $2 per day mark (UNDP, 2002:157). Worse still, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone have an appalling 76.4 and 74.5 per cent of their respective populations below the $2 poverty benchmark (ibid, 159).

The children who join military factions are those that have been badly affected by the economic situations of their country. They form the bulk of the less-privileged in the society, whose parents could not afford to send to school or learn meaningful handiwork to earn a decent living. This is not unconnected with the inability of state to run a vibrant economy that would benefit ordinary citizenry; Many of these children have ended up as miscreants, vagabonds, labourers, beggars, hawkers of petty goods, thugs, or perpetrators of petty criminal activities such as stealing, drug abuses and trafficking in drugs among others. These children become vulnerable and susceptible to temptation to join rebel factions seeing it as an opportunity to ameliorate their poor condition.

From further studies carried out by Furley (1995:1) in selected African cases, it is noted that rather than any convincing political or military ideology, many children join warring factions because of personal gains including prospect of looting. In fact, false promises of $5 and a pair of Levi's blue jeans by rebel commanders easily lure poor semi-literate children from rural subsistence-level farming families into childhood soldering (Kelly, 1998:13). This fact is not unrelated with the paucity of their economic situation.

A UN official in Liberia once opined that children went to fight because their economic situation was bad (Human Rights Watch, 1994:27). Pentecostal Bishop, W Nah Dixon, equally attributed the reason why children joined armed parties to the prospect of enriching themselves. According to him, "many of the

Liberian youths who joined Charles Taylor's NPFL to overthrow the Doe administration saw the civil war as an opportunity to acquire properties and riches. Their motives was not liberating the people but looting their property by use of the gun (Ellis & Stephen, 1998:158).

Between 1989 and 1997, most of the factors that influenced the use of child soldiers as well as the patterns of recruitment in Liberia followed trends observed across the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region (Sesay & Ismail, 2003:145). The pre-1989 economic mismanagement by the Doe regime created the debilitating socio-economic conditions – high unemployment, hyperinflation, and acute poverty – that were aggravated by the war and ultimately drove many children into voluntary enlistment (ibid.). Richards (1995:134), in an analysis of the Liberian rebellion, identifies youth alienation and economic frustrations of the rural population wherein young teenagers remain largely unemployed, partly educated as a result of the high drop-out rates and limited economic opportunities due to state corruption, as reasons for their involvement in the civil war.

Further studies reveal that some children joined rebel factions because of the loss of members of their family or to avenge the death of their family or relation as a result of conflict. This usually led to cases of reprisal killing and vengeance, thus providing a rational justification for joining military factions. For example, the presence of children in the ranks of the National Resistance Army (NRA) in Uganda, the RUF in Sierra Leone, the NPFL and other factions in Liberia, and the factions in El-Salvador, illustrates the fact that children see their membership of rebel groups as a rare opportunity to avenge the death of family members and loved ones, seek alternative sources of emotional security, and oust corrupt governments/regimes from power (Sesay and Ismail, 2003:141).

Another report indicates that, the cycle of violence, marked by killings and counter killings, created a chain of vengeance on the part of the children (Human Rights Watch, 1990). The initial set of children who volunteered to join the NPFL in the Lofa and Nimba counties, were driven by the reckless counter-insurgency operations of the AFL in early 1990. Moreover, availability of light and easily

operable weapons, especially, AK 47, and Kalashnikovs and the proliferation of these weapons by factions, especially the NPFL's policy of distributing weapons in all areas under its control facilitated the recruitment of children into combat role (ibid). The story of a 10year-old Martin typifies this: " I became a soldier to avenge the death of my father. I came home one day to find him dead…'' (UNICEF, 2000:5).

A significant consequence of the cycle of war in many developing countries relates to the child's "*social ecologies*" which is described as how a community or family values a conflict, either as a form of social justice, religious duty or ethnic service. Social ecologies, for example, could also permit child soldiering. The Mujahedeen in Afghanistan, the Iranian volunteers in the 1980s, Palestinian children and the Intifada, are poignant examples of this phenomenon (Sesay and Ismail, 2003:141).

Furthermore, the large use of child soldiers in the West African sub-region could be seen as *'band wagon'* effect resulting from the precedence set by Charles Taylor NPFL, which eventually became *'contagious'* among the warlords (ibid) who saw the children as both productive and easier to maintain. Equally, warlords took advantage of the geographical location of countries to undertake trans-border recruitment of children into soldiering, coupled with the nature of armed conflicts that are internally driven and usually have spillover effect on neighbouring countries.

Most countries have long and porous borders, and at times, it is difficult to know where one border stops and where another starts, therefore making effective policing by law enforcement agents very difficult. The major effect of this is free movement from one country to another which enhances the activities of warlords in terms of arms movement, recruitment of child soldiers across national borders and so on. A classical example is found in the Mano River countries of Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia.

Evidently, the massive use of child soldiers in the Liberian civil war of 2000-2003 is predicated on the precedence set in the first phase (1989-1996), in

which children were largely used as combatants. The August 2002 International Crisis Group (ICG) report on Liberia noted widespread use of child soldiers by the government of Liberia and the LURD movement. While David Chea, Liberia's Minister for Defence justified the government's use of children in the now familiar tone of patriotic nationalism, he blamed the United Nations for failure to reintegrate former combatants, a development he argued, has led to their easy re-recruitment by the LURD movement (BBC News-Africa, cited in Sesay & Ismail, 2003:95).

Finally, another factor that necessitated the use of child soldiers is the nature of arms used in armed conflicts. The technological revolution in weaponry, especially small arms since 1945, has encouraged under-age soldiering, especially, the essential features of small arms–portability (weighs 4.5) (Klare, 1999:4). The weight and size of small arms makes it easy for a child as young as eight years of age to be taught to fire an assault rifle or machine gun. They have only nine moving parts that require minimum infrastructure for maintenance. Moreover, their low cost (between $6 and $15 in the informal market across the sub-Saharan Africa region, for example) makes them readily affordable to factions and for use by children (Small Arms Survey 2001:17). These weapons have played negative role in recent conflicts especially as regard the use of child soldiers.

During conflicts, small arms and light weapons devastate children's lives. The vast majority of casualties are directly attributable to these firearms. In addition to being victims, children have been taught to handle these weapons, which are lethal but light and easy to use. The use of small arms in conflicts has scarred and traumatised generations of children, both physically and emotionally. Long after peace agreements have been signed and the soldiers have gone home, the high prevalence of small arms in post-conflict societies perpetuates a culture of violence. Some former combatants view the gun as their means to economic survival. In other cases, civilians armed themselves to protect their families and

property. Children are then exposed to the dangers of weapons within their own homes, resulting in a vicious cycle of crime and violence.

2.1.4 The role of small arms and light weapons in armed conflicts

One of the consequences of armed conflicts in Africa is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Amongst other factors, small arms have played a conspicuous negative role in most armed conflicts today. The proliferation, easy access and misuse of small arms and light weapons endanger the security of people, communities and nations; and West Africa is no exception. Small arms are the main weapons used in armed robberies, intra and inter communal feuds, local wars; armed insurrections, armed rebel activities and, at times, drug trafficking, smuggling and so on. Small arms are capable of transforming small conflicts into bloody carnage.

The phenomenon of the use of small arms and light weapons in conflicts is not new. For example, in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, the issue of small arms has been a thing of concern since contact with Europeans. The quantum of weapons, according to Carland, cited in Ukeje (2006:13), that flowed between coastal middlemen and their slave-raiding partners in the hinterlands was evident in the large amount of weapons retrieved after one of the most engaging expeditions by British colonial authorities in southern Nigeria against the Aro people in 1902, which resulted in unprecedented casualties on both sides (ibid). The British reportedly captured over 25,000 guns, mostly rifles and cap guns. The account also claimed that the Aro had one 75mm battery gun, one 7pr four-gun battery; 62mm guns and ammunitions; and large quantities of small arms and ammunitions (ibid).

Most of the wars of the 19th and 20th centuries witnessed widespread use of rifles, carbines, machine guns and other such weapons. But the prevalence of these weapons in contemporary combat appears to be growing. An estimated 347 to 500 million small arms have been manufactured since 1945, half of which were made between 1980 and 1998. The annual worth of legal trade in military style

small arms is between $4 and $6 billion, while the black market (illicit) trade is thought to be worth $1 billion a year (Small Arms Survey, 2001:12).

At that time, United Nations Secretary General, Boutros-Ghali, identified five major factors that had been fuelling the accumulation of small arms and light weapons in Africa and other regions of the developing world. These were

 i. early supplies during the cold war;

 ii. escalation of internal conflicts;

 iii. competition for commercial markets;

 iv. the upsurge of criminal activity and the collapse of governmental law and order (Boutros-Ghali, 1995).

This study, however, looks at the escalation of intra state conflicts, surplus colonial and Cold War stockpiles, inadequate export controls, black market syndrome/arms traffickers and the porous nature of many countries' borders to explain the sources, role and the relationship between small arms and light weapons in armed conflicts.

Armed conflicts are stoked by the easy availability and usage of arms. Small arms do not create the conflicts in which they are used, however, they tend to provoke conflict by affecting the lethality, duration and intensity of violence, encouraging a militant rather than a peaceful resolution of unsettled differences, and generating a vicious circle of greater sense of insecurity leading to more widespread demand for the use of such weapons (Global Security, 2003:1).

In essence, there is a relationship between conflict and small arms. Small arms are the tools for destruction during conflicts to kill, maim, and rape and displacement of many fleeing for safety. Krause (1996), in his contribution to this subject, asserts that some $176 billion worth of weapons was exported to the third world in 1987-1991. He notes the relationship between arms and conflicts, averring that weapons availability is an independent variable, causing conflicts, a dependent variable following conflicts, or an intervening variable acting as catalyst in conflict.

Since the end of the cold war, most deaths in intra-state armed conflicts have been caused by small arms and light weapons. Keegan (2001) observes that nuclear weapons have, since 1st August 1945, killed no one. According to him, the 50,000,000 who have died in war since that date have, for the most part, been killed by cheap, mass-produced weapons and small-calibre ammunitions, costing a little more than the transistor radios and dry-cell batteries which have flooded the world in the same period.

Accordingly, the 2001 United Nations General Assembly Session on small arms noted that over 500,000 were killed yearly (1,300 daily deaths) from (military style) small arms (UN, 2001). The Russian-made AK-47, a family of the Kalashnikovs, for instance, with over 55 million sold since it entered the Russian arsenal in 1947 (Louise, 1995:10), is held as the most popular small arm.

The importance ascribed to small arms proliferation by the international community is attested to in *We the People*, the October 2000 Millennium Report of Secretary General Kofi Annan to the UN General Assembly. According to him, the death toll from small arms dwarfs that of all other weapon systems, and in most years, greatly exceeds the toll of the atomic bomb that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In terms of the carnage they cause, small arms, indeed, could well be described as 'weapons of mass destruction.' Small arms proliferation is not merely a security issue; it is also an issue of human rights and development.

Apart from the current United States led war in Iraq, (the Persian Gulf war that involved the use of heavy weapons), of the 49-armed conflicts since 1990, all but three, relied on small arms and light weapons as the only instrument of war. Modern small arms – especially assault rifles like the Russian AK-47 and the U.S – made M-16 have played an especially conspicuous role in recent conflicts, accounting for anywhere between 35 to 60 percent of all of the deaths and injuries in warfare since 1990 (Klare, 2005:1).

Small arms have been playing devastating roles in armed conflicts but it was not until 1995 that they were officially recognised as the catalyst of armed conflict. It is estimated that there are about 550 million small arms circulating in

the world. Out of this figure, 100 million are estimated by Oxfam to be in Africa (Yakubu, 2003:1). Substantial amounts of these weapons can also be found in West Africa. According to Fleshman, cited in Simbine (2006:39), the small arms employed for the destabilisation of African states and undermining both human and national security, made their way into the hands of criminals, separatists and militia groups, through diverse sources. Some have their roots in South Africa's destabilisation campaign in Angola and Mozambique during the apartheid era. Others can be traced to the cold war "military assistance" programmes that armed several African dictators heavily. Newer weapons can, however, be traced to surpluses from the former Eastern Bloc and East Asia, theft from government sources and licensed owners, black markets, and, though few in number, the work of independent skilled craftsmen (ibid).

It is an irony that a closer examination of states which are plagued by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons shows that they are invariably weak, vulnerable, and open to threats from various internal and external sources. These societies suffer from low levels of socio-economic development, unequal access to resources, high unemployment, and high levels of poverty (Pax West Africa, 2001:23). For instance, most of the armed conflicts fought during the 1990s have occurred in countries that are too poor to buy weapons. One then begins to wonder how they got arms to execute the conflicts.

As reported in *Armed Conflict and War in Africa* (2004:1), millions of small arms and light weapons are simply given away by militaries that are downsizing or weapons are recycled from one conflict to another. This is due to the porous nature of many countries' borders, which are usually long and un-policed. For example, in West Africa, a good number of these weapons are illegally moved across porous borders with ease. Also, the ECOWAS protocol that allows for free movement within the sub-region could be a major contributing factor.

The Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d' Ivoire civil wars are classical examples of where weapons are illegally moved within the Mano River countries

and beyond. Charles Taylor invaded Liberia's north-eastern Nimba County from Cote d'Ivoire. The location is strategically important because of its closeness to the Liberian and Ivorian borders, a location that permits the flow of arms, ammunitions and supplies. Cote d 'Ivoire and Burkina Faso allowed arms to pass through their territory/border to Charles Taylor's NPFL, who later extended such gestures to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone.

Apart from illegal transfer of arms from one place to the other, it is also, observed that huge supplies of guns pass legally from nation to nation. As noted earlier, after the Cold War, armies in both the East and West were reduced, and governments gave or sold excess equipment to friends and allies. According to an author at the Peace Research Institute in Oslo, Norway, the United States alone has given away more than 300,000 rifles, pistols, machine guns, and grenade launchers since 1995. It is reasoned that giving weapons away is cheaper than dismantling or storing and guarding them. Some analysts estimate that perhaps three billion dollars worth of small arms and light weapons are legally taken across national borders each year (ibid).

Also, an extensive 1998 report by Oxfam has revealed that UK involvement in small arms trade is much higher than previously acknowledged. Between 1995 and 1997, UK sold small arms to over 100 countries. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council – France, Russia, China, the UK, and the USA – together account for 88 percent of the world's conventional arms export; and these exports contribute regularly to gross abuses of human rights (Oxfam, 1998).

The quantity of arms in circulation in Africa, most especially, in West Africa, constitutes a great factor of instability, especially, in post- conflict countries. Just as weapons are being recycled from one conflict to another on the continent so also are some of the combatants including children. Therefore, sustainable peace and development in Africa, especially in West Africa, can be achieved through proactive and pragmatic approach to check the menace of small

arms proliferation on the continent. In a post-war society, one of such effort tends towards DDR.

2.1.5   Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration

Many of the problems associated with the post-conflict period arise from the continuing activities of armed groups and misuse of weapons. Countries emerging from war are particularly at risk of the re-emergence of armed conflict, and also from widespread violence and intimidation. Availability of small arms, are often an important factor in the escalation, intensity, spread and duration of conflict and violent criminality, which obstructs and undermines peacebuilding, humanitarian and development aid. Consequently, at the end of any conflict, DDR of the ex-combatants are very crucial to the peace process. Sesay (2006:134) sheds more light on this:

> DDR is perhaps the most popular model used in small arms and light weapons collection in immediate post conflict societies in many parts of the world……. as it is often embarked upon to stabilise the immediate post conflict security situation and ensure the success of the peace agreement that led to the cessation of hostilities.

He further explains that DDR responds to the simple logic that leaving small and light weapons in the '*wrong hands*', and in particular, with those individuals and groups that have participated in the conflict, could torpedo peace and stability and throw a country back to war. Equally, in many post-conflict situations, DDR process is seen as a veritable confidence building measure, an assurance that the peace process is firm, on course and sustainable. This measure is indispensable in a post-conflict situation and society because it 'holds the ring' (ibid) so to speak, while politicians, military strategists and diplomats search for lasting solutions to the issues that led to war. The DDR, Sesay avers further, is expected to choke the supply side of proliferation and deprive those in possession of weapons the opportunity to use them thereby paving the way for lasting peace and reconciliation in the long run. It is believed that if those who had taken up arms, the ex-combatants, were reabsorbed into their families, communities and

indeed, civil society at large, they would be weaned away from violence and undue influence of their former field commanders (ibid).

Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) typically refers to the process of collecting arms, particularly small arms and light weapons, from combatants after agreement or cessation of civil wars and returning combatants to civilian life (Ginifer, Bourne & Greene, 2004: 3). The principal objectives of DDR programmes are to prevent the resumption of armed conflict and help create conditions for post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. According to Ginifer, Bourne and Greene (2004:2), the first disarmament stage involves amassing combatants in assembly or cantonment areas, collecting their weapons for destruction, storage, or re-allocation, identifying and registering them, and assessing some of their basic needs and requirements. The process of demobilisation builds on this by preparing combatants for entry into a new and reformed national army under civilian control or by returning them to civilian life. This process is frequently facilitated with transitional allowances to tide ex-combatants over until they find a peaceful livelihood. The third phase – reintegration – is designed to provide assistance in the form of training, allowances, and tools, so that ex-combatants can be productive and rehabilitated members of society that no longer pose a threat (ibid).

The linkage between armed conflicts, ex-combatants, small arms and light weapons and DDR in the context of post-conflict reconstruction is obvious. Without proper disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, small arms available during the conflict and ex-combatants would continue to constitute a threat to peace settlements, hamper conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction and sustainable development.

Reintegrating ex-combatants into society is one of the major challenges confronting most post-conflict societies in the world. Africa and West Africa in particular are no exception. During war, combatants commit widespread atrocities against civilians including those in their own communities. These acts of violence

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create suspicion and fear about the prospect of ex-combatants returning to their communities.

The Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) designed to end Liberia's 14-year war provides for the reintegration of former fighters. The objective was to transform ex-combatants to live a decent life, respect the rule of law and human rights. But this exercise requires global assistance. While appealing for global assistance for Liberia's peace process, Kofi Annan reiterated that the programme for the reintegration of former combatants and the repatriation of non-combatants would equally require the generous support of the international community. He opined that without an effective reintegration programme, the entire DDR programme could be seriously undermined, possibly resulting in renewed insecurity in the country (UN News Centre, 2005:1).

Prior to the Liberian general elections held on 11th of October 2005, the issues of ex-combatants was well discussed as a factor that might make or mar the success of the election. This fear was not unconnected with the cases of violence reported across the country. According to a Monrovia-based newspaper, The Analyst:

> Violence overflows the streets of Ganta, Liberia's Northern Nimba region, as former fighters went on the rampage throwing missiles and disrupting voters' registration activities in demand for their resettlement benefits… Chanting anti-government slogans, the angry rioters, armed with stones and other odd objects went amok, ransacked voters' registration centers and carried away several electoral materials… (The Analyst, 12 May 2005: 1).

Now that the election has come and gone, the sustainability of peace and democracy must not be assumed or taken for granted. Failure or laxity on the part of the stakeholders means that these children could resort to banditry and criminality, thereby posing a serious threat to the sub region in general. For instance, if the issue of reintegration of ex-combatants is not taken seriously, high criminality is imminent, indeed inevitable. *Human Rights Watch* on women and children attests to this, stating that many of the former combatants remain idle while others are petty traders, drug traffickers and many others are secretly

recruited as soldiers to help destroy neighbouring states. It predicts another round of trouble in Liberia after the election, if all former child soldiers are not reunited with their parents and community members especially in their communities (The Analyst 2005:1).

International Crisis Group (ICG) equally reported that hoards of idle former fighters and hidden caches of arms which escaped a UN-led disarmament programme would provide a prime recruiting pool, so the ICG urged foreign donors to immediately provide the $42 million needed to reintegrate ex-combatants and help them adjust to civilian life (Africa Focus Bulletin, 2004:3).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on its part appealed for an additional US58 million dollars to help train demobilised combatants over the next three years. It affirmed that any disruption in placing these ex-combatants in the RR programme would have serious consequences on the overall peace process in Liberia. "Failing a quick payout of the cash needed for reintegration, idle former fighters and hidden caches of arms, which escaped disarmament, would offer a prime recruitment pool" (UNDP, 2004:4).

Another concern around the porous border areas is that combatants, idle for more than a year since the end of the Liberia civil war, might be sucked back into conflicts across the frontiers. Ould-Abdullah in UNDP (ibid) said, "…if they find a new employer, they will go." The UN's top official in West Africa, said that aid workers were also fretting that a child soldier could be a particularly vulnerable prey to foreign recruiters. Fear has further been expressed that many of the Liberian child combatants recently disarmed, demobilised and unified with their families will be recruited by the fighting factions in Cote d' Ivoire.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is said to be gravely concerned over the slow pace of the Rehabilitation and Reintegration (RR) component of the DDRR process in Liberia (The Inquirer, 2005:1). The RR component that is applicable to the ex-combatants has not fully taken place. Most ex-combatants are out of school, and others are roaming about without engaging in any vocation. The report further affirms that the RR component of the DDRR

must be tackled; otherwise, the issue of ex-combatants could be a time bomb for the sub-region.

Myriad dimensions of reintegration are referred to in the literature on post-conflict intervention scenarios. A UNDP internal evaluation (January 2000) recommends that the organisation "should concentrate its support to political, social and economic reintegration of war-affected populations on restoring social and human capital while contributing to political and economic stability. Kingma (2002) agrees with the three components of reintegration highlighted by the UNDP evaluation team but goes further by noting that there are distinct psychological aspects as well. Berdal (2002) acknowledges the importance of both the economic and social dimensions of reintegration but also argues that within a post-conflict environment, these two areas are inexorably-linked to political and security considerations. While a cursory examination of the literature tends to corroborate the necessity of categorising integration along social and economic dimensions, the institutional frameworks that supposedly drive the social and economic dimensions require further investigation.

Reintegration for the child ex-combatant should be different both in content and context from reintegration for adult combatants. Generally seen as the process of attempting to return childhood to young soldiers, reintegration for child ex-combatants should involve introducing child soldiers back into their home or community, so that they can rejoin the society on positive terms. Malan (2000) opines that there is doctrinal lacuna regarding child soldiers. According to him, UN and regional peacekeeping forces have had to confront many situations involving child soldiers and child victims, but have at times demonstrated an inability to react appropriately and in accordance with international standards. In Liberia, for example, ECOMOG troops were engaged for a number of years in combat operations against factions comprising child soldiers — some as young as six or seven. In the process, they confronted and killed child soldiers in combat, and detained and committed abuses against child combatants and suspected faction members (ibid).

The International Children's Institute (2000) opines that an approach to support the acceptance and well-being of ex-child soldiers into the society is to involve them in solving communal problems, such that child soldier DDRR programmes are integrated within the broader peacebuilding activities. In this category of programmes are activities that set them to repair damaged community infrastructure, such as schools or wells, or participation in weapons and landmine location. According to ICI, these programmes work best if structured into group activities, designed to decrease the stigma placed on the children and promote their sense of self-esteem and accomplishment.

In Malan's (ibid) view, considerable research and writing are available on the unique demobilisation and rehabilitation needs of former child combatants, whereas there is a dearth of expertise and documented experience in dealing with the combined and unique challenges of disarming and demobilising child soldiers, as a specialised dimension and task within peace missions. The problem, according to him, is that doctrinal development is based not only on concepts, but also on real experiences in the application of these concepts, as they are recorded through the various 'lessons learned' mechanisms. Malan (2000), therefore, suggests that a closer look be made at the psychological needs of child soldiers for their successful reintegration into society. He highlights the need for transformation of the ideologies of violence, focusing on replacing alternative values of non-violent conflict resolution strategies. He also prioritises the material, physical, judicial and psychological needs child ex-soldiers that should be addressed in reintegration. Many of these – the need for respect and self-esteem, human dignity, community sensitisation, amnesty from prosecution, protection from repeated recruitment, and mental 'disarmament'- he opines can be achieved through transitional justice and healing mechanisms and supported by the community.

Malan's sentiment is echoed in a release of the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit (CPRU) of the World Bank (2002). The CPRU identifies three components of reintegration of child soldiers. These include family

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reunification, psychological support and education, and economic opportunity. Family reunification – or where that is not possible, foster placement or support for independent living – the CPR describes as crucial to successful reintegration. Psychological support, including traditional rituals and family and community mediation are equally seen as central to addressing the asocial and aggressive behaviour learned by child soldiers and to help them recover from stressful experiences. On the other hand, education and economic opportunities, the release suggests, must be individually determined and must include family livelihoods while a reasonable period of at least three to five years, of committed resources must be allowed for the process.

There are very few recorded and applicable lessons learned in the disarmament and demobilisation of children in peace processes. As Cohn has observed:

> Peacemakers and child welfare advocates interested in promoting the rehabilitation and reintegration of child participants in war will find a paucity of documented past experience to learn from. The El Salvador, Guatemala and Liberia peace processes [for example] provided for no child oriented demobilisation, reintegration or reinsertion programmes (Cohn, 1999: 166).

To sum up this discussion, failure to effectively reintegrate ex-combatants, more particularly child soldiers, in one state will adversely affect the stability of the neighbouring states and the sub-region in general. Realising the importance of disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration exercise, many post-war countries now engage in DDR or DDRR of ex-combatants. However, the experiences differ from one country to another.

2.1.6   Comparative international experience with reintegration

Reintegration programme for child soldiers is not peculiar to Liberia but common to all countries where children have been used extensively in armed conflicts. The process of returning former child soldiers to civilian lives is necessary in view of their training in the use of arms and the negative values they acquire during the war years. Failure to engage them in proper rehabilitation and reintegration would

portend great insecurity and loss of human capacity for the affected society anywhere. Both Article 39 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 6 (3) of the 2000 Optional Protocol recognised this need and on that account made reintegration a prerequisite for the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims of war (Oluwaniyi, 2003:152). It is within the above context that demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers are often built into peace negotiation and resulting peace agreements in many countries emerging from conflict.

The experiences and challenges of reintegrating child soldiers differ from one country to the other. The Angola exercise, which lasted from 1995 to 1997, was one of the most extensive in the history of the United Nations. It was perhaps the first time that children were specifically included in a peace process. Even though the position of children was not made explicit in the Lusaka Protocol, their demobilisation and reintegration was declared a priority in the first resolution adopted by the commission set up to implement the peace agreement. Furthermore, partnership was forged with local civil society networks in ensuring that many children return to their homes (Verhey, 2001:4). The accompaniment and family reunification was adopted as a strategy to prevent re-recruitment. The Angola program also featured an extensive community-based society network with members accompanying child soldiers from demobilisation through family reunification. Furthermore, the Angola framework on child soldiers included a provision that child soldiers would not be subjected to Angola's compulsory military service regime. In addition, the legal framework included a provision that child soldiers could receive demobilisation document and benefit outside of the formal demobilisation assembly areas (ibid.).

Cultural values are often mainstreamed into reintegration programme. This was applicable in the Angolan case as local culture was further employed as a tool for addressing the psychosocial impacts of conflict. Such was reflected in traditional healing rituals for child soldiers. The rituals provided for the

acceptance of the child, assuaged the ill spirit associated with the child soldier's actions during conflict, and above all, reconciled the child with ancestral spirits.

In Mozambique, the war that pitched the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) against the country's Government ended in 1992. During the period the war lasted for, nearly all the parties were involved in the use of child soldiers. Militia groups such as Naparamas, a military-religious movement conscripted children and used them to fight. However, substantial numbers of child soldiers were believed to have fought on the side of RENAMO. Although, FRELIMO the government forces and the RENAMO rebels signed a peace accord in 1992 and organised democratic multi-party elections in 1994, there was no doubt that the conflict took psychological and material toll on children, their families and communities (Mozambique Country Profiles, 2005:1-3). However, access to child soldiers was restricted such that it was difficult to implement reintegration measures. In February 1994, UNICEF initiated negotiation with the RENAMO authorities after which its (UNICEF) representatives were able to visit a group of 60 children living in RENAMO's base at Jordao, Maputo province (ibid). In another meeting with UNICEF, RENAMO agreed to grant full access to their military bases so that UNICEF and other partner organisations could proceed with the registration of children and their removal from military to civilian areas (ibid.). Following the agreement, UNICEF registered about 850 children in 19 military bases around the country. Photographs and basic information about the children's identity was taken and their health nutritional status was also assessed. Family reunification was the major hallmark of Mozambique's reintegration programme (ibid.).

Reintegration of child soldiers in Mozambique was equally facilitated by the reactivation of traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution. Ex-child soldiers were welcomed and considered as returnees like most of the rest of the community. Religious leaders and *curandeiro* (traditional healers) systematically organised special purification ceremonies for ex-child and adult soldiers who were re-entering the community. The aim of these ceremonies was to help the

children cope with their past. The ceremonies were also a process of forgiveness by the community. The implicit consensus was that whatever happened during the war must be forgotten by everybody (ibid.) The Mozambique strategy represents an initiative to fully involve communities in reintegration processes. However, other recent DDR operations have sought to identify local and regional implementing structures, strategies and mechanisms to ensure the representation and inclusion of communities (including youths, women, elders and combatants) in DDR dialogues, design and implementation.

In Rwanda, it was not until 1997, three years after the genocide that the government set up a Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission for social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants (IRIN News, 2004:1). The demobilisation and reintegration programme was designed to help foster reconciliation among Rwandans after the 1994 genocide and to contribute towards poverty reduction and the strengthening of peace within the Great Lakes region (ibid). Unlike other experiences discussed earlier, the Rwanda program was designed in phases. The demobilisation of child soldiers occurred in the second phase during which about 454 of the ex-combatants under the age of 18years were demobilised. Children were given special help and were separated from adults in the demobilisation process. Other aspects included tracing their families towards effecting reunions, and providing them with trauma counseling, psychosocial care and access to education. Most of the returning children were taken to schools. Those who had completed primary education were either enrolled in technical schools or advanced to the secondary school stage (ibid.).

The mode of recruitment of children into armed groups in Burundi followed the pattern of adoption, while others joined after seeing their parents, relations or neighbours killed. According to Amnesty International (2004), children as young as ten years old were used as domestic labour, porters, and spies as well as in combat in Burundi and Congo DR by the government armed forces. Other children were knowingly exposed to danger by government soldiers who forced or bribed them to provide intelligence on activities by armed political

groups opposed to the government. By and large, all the armed factions in Burundi were guilty of using children as soldiers. In October 2001, the government and UNICEF signed an agreement on a programme for the demobilisation and reintegration of child soldiers (Amnesty International, 2004). The programme involved the participation of the ministries of Human Rights, Defence, Interior, Public Security and Social Action, as well as the indirect involvement of the Education, Crafts, Labour, Health and AIDS Ministries. UNICEF information (May 2004) cited in Child Soldiers Global Report (2004:3), indicated that the reintegration programme aimed at providing sustainable support to each family through appropriate assistance decided on an individual basis, including the possibility to provide vocational and professional education for an 18 months period. Psychosocial support and medical care were provided for those with severe illnesses and injuries. According to a United Nations Report, over 500 child soldiers who fought on government side (some as young as 11) were demobilised by late March 2004, and most of them were reintegrated with their families (UN, 2004:16-21). The programme targeted at that stage only child soldiers from the government, civil defence forces and the CNDD-FDD (Ndayikengurukiye) and FNL (Mugabarabona). Child soldiers with other armed movements, estimated to number around 3,000, were slated for reintegration under a general DDR programme. Concern was expressed that this might lead to some children not being covered by either programme (Human Rights Watch, 2004:3). The number of girls identified in the Burundi case was very low.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), like many other countries engrossed in many years of civil war, the use of child soldiers by different parties was quite enormous. In 1997, President Kabila's government initiated a programme to demobilize 75,000 soldiers, including child soldiers. UNICEF was engaged to work with local authorities to develop programmes to reintegrate ex-child soldiers back into civil society. During 1997, UNICEF in conjunction with provincial authorities and local NGO's, supported reintegration programmes for ex-child soldiers in Goma (North Kivu), Bukavu (South Kivu) and Kisangani

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(Province Orientale) (UNICEF, 1998:1). The demobilisation and reintegration programmes consisted of three phases. The first phase lasted for three months and under it, children received psychological counseling and participated in community building activities. At this stage, family visits were encouraged and children with special needs were identified. In phase two that was designed to last for six months, children were reintegrated into their families or put with other care givers and were given literacy and vocational training. While phase three comprised close monitoring of the reintegration process, the continuation of counseling, and additional capacity-building training was provided (ibid.).

Lesson learned from DRC shows that the schemes were not ultimately successful because many ex-child soldiers who participated in war were re-recruited by armed forces. This happened because the programmes took place in conflict areas where military authorities were yet to give child protection guarantees. This was an important learning experience for UNICEF (and reintegration exercise in general). It showed that demobilisation in a state of crisis may not be successful, and that there could not be a guarantee of success until demobilisation is made official. UNICEF needed to work more closely with political and military authorities in order to secure their support for demobilisation of child soldiers and for an end to recruitment of children as soldiers. It was precisely this activity that has been at the forefront of UNICEF's child soldier programme in DRC since 1998 (ibid.).

Also, unlike the experience gathered in other war torn countries where reintegration of child soldiers had taken place, the DRC experience showed that family/community reunification did not materialise. UNICEF explained that child soldiers were afraid to leave the armed groups and the communities that would receive ex-child soldiers were normally afraid to do so. The immediate families of child soldiers were often disadvantaged and were ill-prepared to receive and reintegrate children. Moreover, support structures needed to reintegrate ex-child soldiers back into civilian life were also largely non-existent (ibid.).

Inter-clan conflicts in Somalia, particularly, in the southern parts have continued over the years. In all these there was widespread use of children as soldiers by all parties. The UN Independent Expert on Somalia (2002), for instance, noted large numbers of child soldiers with factional militias in Mogadishu and Baidoa, and reported that often, young boys carrying weapons were riding with larger groups of armed men on anti-aircraft or similar vehicles. The Independent Expert estimated that over 200,000, or five per cent of Somali children have carried a gun or been involved in militia activities at some point in their lives (UN, 2003). In 2002, UNESCO helped demobilise and provide vocational training for 450 militia members between the ages of 15 and 35 in Mogadishu (UN, 2002). The reintegration activities involved the collaboration of The Rule of Law and Protection Working Group of the Somalia Aid Coordination Body (SACB). The group coordinated international support for disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration of clan and faction-based militia. A pilot demobilisation and reintegration program for 118 former combatants, girls and boys, was undertaken in 2001 and 2002 by UNICEF and the Elman Peace Centre, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that has offered vocational training for former militia members since 1992. A second phase of the programme continued in 2004 with funding support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for 420 more child soldiers, 20 per cent of them girls, in Mogadishu, Merca and Kismayo (UNICEF, 2002.).

Sierra Leone probably holds the world's worst record for recruiting children as soldiers. Between 1992 and 1996, the period of the fiercest fighting between the Government forces and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), an estimated 5,400 children were forced to fight on both sides. In 1997, 60% of a group of 1,000 fighters screened by the DDR Committee were children. In 2001, when the Sierra Leone conflict officially came to an end, the country immediately initiated programmes aimed at the rehabilitation and reintegration of all war affected children, especially, the child soldiers. The programme was adjudged successful. The success of the reintegration recorded in Sierra Leone was not

unconnected with the proper coordination, support and cooperation from the communities and the welfare organisations (Oluwaniyi, 2003:153). The implementation process included components such as counselling and the tracing of child soldiers' family members. The reunification of child soldiers with their families was carried out by tracing network partners immediately the location of communities and families were confirmed and sensitisation and mediation completed. At the end of the DDR programme in Sierra Leone, a total number of 4,892 children were reunified with families out of a total number of 5,037 demobilised children (UNICEF, 2002). A significant weakness of the Sierra Leone programme and many others was the exclusion of girls from demobilisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration processes. Girls were excluded from the demobilisation program and left with their rebel captors (Becker, 2004). Such oversight may not be unconnected with the usual underestimation of the involvement of girls in armed conflicts.

The first Liberian experience of reintegration programme took place after the cessation of hostilities in 1997. The exercise adopted a quick and dirty approach because of improper planning strategy by UNICEF (coordinator) and its regional network. Tracing of families was left to the Save the Children Fund (SCF-UK) and Don Bosco only (Kelly, 1998: 48). This was unlike the Angola programme which featured a broad community-based network whose members accompanied child soldiers from demobilisation through family reunification. Furthermore, the importance of cultural elements in addressing psychosocial problems was downplayed in the Liberian reintegration programme. In contrast however, were the Angola, Sierra Leone, and Mozambique experiences, where ritual and traditional cleansing ceremonies for child soldiers were essentially made components of reintegration programmes. The Liberian reintegration programme might have further been limited by the lack of recognition for the need to economically empower the immediate families of former child soldiers who became saddled with the responsibility of taking care of the children after demobilisation. The Burundi programme, on its part, emphasised this aspect as it

provided economic support for families of child soldiers, whether they were biological relatives or foster parents.

Another vital feature of reintegration that was probably under-implemented in Liberia was skill acquisition and education. Countries like Somali, Rwanda, and DR Congo, however, provided for these aspects. Also, the position of girl combatants in the Liberian reintegration programme was also not emphasised, unlike in DR Congo and Somalia, where girl soldiers were included in the reintegration plan though the numbers of them reintegrated were relatively few. Finally, the 1997 reintegration programme in Liberia treated ex-combatants as an all-inclusive category, merging adult combatants with child soldiers. This would have accounted for the inability to focus on the special needs of children. Some other countries, however, took cognizance of this and treated ex-child soldiers as a special category within the reintegration plan. For instance, in Rwanda, children were separated from adults in the demobilisation process and were given special help which included trauma counselling, psychosocial care and access to education.

The lessons learnt from the weaknesses of the 1997 exercise should, therefore, provide sufficient knowledge for the 2003 programme, which is expected to be more comprehensive and better coordinated. The programme is also expected to adopt a holistic approach to reintegration, drawing from the above experiences of reintegration in other countries.

2.2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical approaches to any study are formulated in response to the specifics that influence the ways in which the research problems are posed. In the case of this study, the very nature of the subject may likely fraught the application of a single paradigm with inadequacies. This is because while some aspects of the study are well explained by one or more perspectives, no single perspective or framework may provide sufficient explanation for all aspects. For instance, our framework covers motivation and opportunity as explanation for civil war, and

further encompasses social disorderliness and asocialisation to account for both the causes and persistence of defiant behaviour among child soldiers. By combining motivation, opportunity, and social dysfunction, our framework takes into account the context and challenges of reintegration. This study has, therefore, identified the relevance of greed and grievance, anomie, and psychosocial theories to the reintegration process in Liberia.

2.2.1 Greed and Grievance Theory

In recent years, academic economists have utilised two phenomena to explain the causes of civil war: greed and grievance. The former is due to the influential work of Paul Collier (see, Collier and Hoeffler, 2002: 13-28, 2004: 563-595), and is more popular amongst economists. According to this view, conflict reflects elite competition over valuable natural resource rents, concealed with the fig leaf of collective grievance (Murshed and Tadjoeddin, 2007: 3).

The greed motivation behind civil war has been popularised by empirical work on the causes of civil war where a cross-section of conflicts in different nations is analysed together econometrically. In Collier and Hoeffler (2004), civil wars emanate from the greedy behaviour of a rebel group in organising an insurgency against the government. Greed is about opportunities faced by the rebel group. The opportunities can be disaggregated into three components: financing, recruitment and geography. Natural resource wealth is the chief among the three in terms of its relative importance. Since rebellions need to be financially viable, civil wars have been supported by natural resource based rents like blood diamonds or oil, or through finances provided by supporters in the Diaspora and multinational companies interested in the region. Recruitment is about opportunity to induct fighting manpower; something made easier when there is a high proportion of young unemployed males in population, in a setting of endemic poverty and poor education. Geographical situations favourable to rebel groups include mountainous terrain. In short, greed simply means the 'economic opportunity' to fight. In a nutshell, a proper greed-based theory of civil

war must relate to the trade-off between production and predation in making a living, where we may view war as theft writ large (Murshed and Tadjoeddin, 2007: 6).

The grievance-based account is a subset of accounts based on motivation. While for purposes of propaganda rebel leaders are likely to explain their motivation in terms of grievances, other plausible motivations for organised private violence would include predation and sadism. Indeed, since the typical civil war lasts for many years and rebel victories are rare, if rebellion is rational, motivations are likely to reflect benefits during conflict, rather than prospective benefits consequent upon a victory which must be heavily discounted both by time and risk. Further, if the rebellion is rationally motivated it is more likely to be due to benefits that accrue to the rebel leadership itself, rather than to the attainment of social justice for a wider group. The grievance theory may be further sub-divided into three categories. These include relative deprivation, polarisation and horizontal inequality (Murshed and Tadjoeddin, 2007: 16).

The notion of relative deprivation dates back to the work of Ted Gurr (1970) who defines it as the discrepancy between what people think they deserve, and what they actually believe they can get; in short, the disparity between aspirations and achievements. Gurr puts forward the following hypothesis, 'the potential for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity' (p.24). This lays down the notion of relative deprivation as the micro-foundation for conflict. Relative deprivation is considered to be a major cause of civil war, as well as sectarian and routine violence.

In their original and seminal concept of polarisation, Estban and Ray (1994: 819-851) focus on the identification and alienation framework. Their idea is as follows: polarisation is related to the alienation that groups of people feel from one another, and such alienation is fuelled by the feeling of within-group identity. Furthermore, Estban and Ray argue that the traditional measures of inequality are only concerned with interpersonal alienation, but fail to capture the

dimension of group identity. It is important to note that ethnic polarisation requires two or a few ethnic groups. When a society has a very large number of identities, then the term ethnic fractionalisation is more appropriate.

The notion of horizontal inequalities between groups, classified by ethnicity, religion, linguistic differences, tribal affiliations etc., is thought to be an important cause of contemporary civil war and sectarian strife, but not routine violence. The idea of horizontal inequality may overlap with the notion of relative deprivation and polarisation. The expression, horizontal inequality, originated in the work of Frances Stewart (Stewart 2000: 245-262) should be distinguished from vertical inequality, which is the inequality within an otherwise homogeneous population. There are four sources of horizontal inequality. These are discrimination in public spending and taxation, high asset inequality, economic mismanagement and recession, and grievance related to resource rents (Murshed and Tadjoeddin, 2007: 18).

Discrimination in public spending and taxation occurs when a segment of the population is excluded in public spending or is made to bear unfair tax burden. In societies where public employment represents the principal avenue for personal advance, discrimination in allocation of public employment can lead to conflict. High asset inequality relates to the relative distribution of asset such as land among the population. Where this is skewed in favour of a group, there is likelihood of conflict. In the case of economic mismanagement induced grievance, there is perceived uneven and unfair distribution of the burden of adjustment with public spending believed to have favoured a segment of the population such as the elite or a particular ethnic group. Natural resource rents, too, can become a source of grievance, if local population feel that they are not getting a fair share of these.

The greed model postulates that the cause of initial conflict is an economic calculus of relative military advantage, the government's ability to finance defence expenditure, the scale of primary commodity exports, and the costs of rebel recruitment. By contrast, the grievance model postulates that the cause of

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initial conflict is not an economic calculus but a protest generated by objective grievances: ethnic or religious hatred, inequality, oppression, or historical vengeance (Collier and Hoeffler, 2000: 2). Greed and grievance can co-habit. Where the conditions for greed-rebellion exist but those for grievance-rebellion do not, a group initially motivated by grievance may become dependent upon primary commodity predation for survival, thus transforming itself into greed-rebellion (ibid). Conversely, greed-rebellion needs to manufacture subjective grievance for military cohesion and may find an objective grievance an effective basis for generating it. Hence, the presence of primary commodity exports may sustain rebellions which are motivated by objective grievance, while the presence of objective grievance may sustain rebellions motivated by predation (ibid).

The relevance of the greed-grievance theory to the Liberian civil war is not in doubt. While it started as grievance (contains elements of ethnicity and horizontal deprivation), it became sustained by greed (access to natural resources like diamond).

2.2.2 Anomie Theory

This theory is designed to explain causes of deviant behaviour. It refers to the psychological condition of ruthlessness, futility, anxiety, among others that are afflicting individuals who live under such condition as in the case of child soldiers. In the concept of anomie, Durkheim best manifests his concern with the problems of a weakened common morality (Hilbert, 1986). Individuals are said to be confronted with anomie when they are not faced with sufficient moral constraint, that is, when they do not have a clear concept of what is and what is not proper and acceptable behaviour.

This meant that rules on how people ought to relate with each other are breaking down and, people do not know what to expect from one another. Anomie, simply defined, is a state where norms (expectations on behaviours) are confused, unclear or not present. It is normlessness, which to Durkheim, leads to

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deviant behaviour; while in subsequent work he applies anomie in his study on suicide, as a morally deregulated condition (Hilbert, 1986).

In the division of labour in society, Durkheim proposes two concepts. First, that society evolved from a simple, non-specialised form, called mechanical and from that point developed or moved toward a highly complex, specialised form, called organic. In the former society, people behave and think alike and more or less perform the same tasks and have the same group-oriented goals. When societies become more complex, or organic, work also becomes more complex. In such societies, people are no longer tied to one another and social bonds are impersonal (ibid).

Robert Merton developed Durkheim's concept of anomie into a general theory that has helped to explain and account for many different kinds of deviant behaviour (Merton, 1957). Merton perceives anomie as a state of dissatisfaction arising from a sense of discrepancy between the aspirations of an individual and the means that the person has available to realise these ambitions (Bynum & Thompson, 1989:15). Anomie thus refers to a breakdown of social norms and it is a condition where norms no longer control the activities of members in society. It is a form that societal incoherence takes when there is significant detachment "between valued cultural ends and legitimate societal means to those ends" (Akers, 2000: 143, 161). This means that individuals cannot find their place in society without clear rules to guide them. Changing conditions as well as adjustment of life leads to dissatisfaction, conflict, and deviance. Merton observes that social periods of disruption (economic depression, for instance) brings about greater anomie and higher rates of crime, suicide, and deviance (ibid).

The theory, as conceived by Emile Durkheim, assumes that behaviour and expectations of human beings are subject to social control and restrictions. There are two main ways in which war was a factor, if not the main cause, of anomie in Liberia. First, there was the bastardisation or indeed disorientation of indigenous norms. As the people came into conflict with hostility and new rascally behaviour of individuals and groups, social disorder ensued. Conformity to contradictory

and inconsistent social requirements was a cause of anomie. In order words, there was a state of anarchy, as the state could not be held together.

Second, with the breakdown of law and order as a result of war, obnoxious aspirations of individuals and groups at the moment of hostility increased economic and political criminality, for instance, looting and unwarranted killings.

According to Merton (1968), in all societies there are institutionalised means of reaching culturally defined goals. Therefore, in a balanced and stable society, equal emphasis is placed on cultural goals and institutionalised means, and members are satisfied with both.

Accordingly, in a situation of rapid change, engendered by war or conflict, society becomes unbalanced, unstable, and there is tendency to reject the rules of the game and strive to acquire material possession by any available means. When, rules cease to operate, a situation of normlessness or anomie results. In a situation of permissiveness, norms no longer direct behaviour, and deviance is encouraged. However, individuals will respond to a situation of anomie in different ways. In particular, their reaction will be shaped by their position in the social structure. Merton outlines five possible ways in which individuals could respond to anomie situation.

First is conformity in which case an individual accepts both goals and means of attaining these goals. The second way an individual could respond to anomie situation is by the innovative approach (Merton, 1968). This involves the rejection of normative means of achieving a goal, and turning to deviant means to achieve a goal (for example, looting in war situation). Merton uses the term ritualism to describe the third possible response. Individuals who select this alternative, according to Merton, are deviants because they have largely abandoned the commonly held success goals. Merton terms the fourth and least common response retreatism. This applies to psychotics, vagrants, vagabonds and so on. They are deviants in two ways: they have rejected both the cultural goals and the institutionalised means. Rebellion forms the fifth response. It is a rejection of both the goals and institutionalised means and their replacement by different

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goals and means. Those who adopt this alternative, wish to create a new society. Thus an urban guerrilla fighter is a deviant because he wishes to use terrorism to achieve certain goals. In short, Merton's anomie theory shows that anomie situation in society could generate deviant and disorganised society.

Anomie theory is widely applied to delinquency in many different subcultures (Akers, 2000: 145), but during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the theory lost some of its credibility because some sociologists found Merton's postulation lacking in empirical validity. Merton recovered quickly from this criticism, as he and his co-researcher, Rasklin White, were able to produce empirical evidence that indicated the relevance of anomie to delinquent behaviours (Akers, 2000).

A criticism of anomie theory, as expatiated by Merton, is related to its point of analysis; wherein it is discovered that analysis is not ultimately aimed at the individual level. For instance, the theory has failed to explain why an individual deviates while others do not. It is deemed to have placed more prominence on deviance at the level of groups and societies. While this may be a shortcoming to those who are interested in studying individual behaviour, it is a strong point for the work on child soldiers, who are mainly conceptualised as a social category. Merton himself highlights the weak points of his analysis. He considers his essay on the structural sources of deviant behaviour a prelude. Areas so far neglected by the theory, according to him, are:

i.   a detailed treatment of the structural elements which predispose toward one rather than another of the alternative responses open to individuals living in an ill-balanced social structure, and

ii.   the social psychological processes determining the specific incidence of the responses.

Merton also agrees that his work touched only briefly on the social functions performed by deviant behaviour (Merton, 1968).

The relevance of this theory is in its ability to shed light on the processes which generate the dysfunctional behaviour that ramify among child soldiers.

This theory could best be used in explaining deviant behaviour but limited in explaining how this behaviour could be unlearned.

2.2.3 Psychosocial Theory of Development

This theory explains the dynamic relationship between psychological and social effects in which one effect influences the other. These effects include emotions, learning, behaviours, perceptions, deaths, separations, as well as family and community breakdown. However, psychosocial developments reflect specifically the various stages of a person's life from birth to death. They are formed by social influences interacting with a physically and psychologically maturing organism. As Erikson (1975) cited in Hall and Lindzey (1989: 88) posits, there is a

> mutual fit of individual and environment, of the individual capacity to relate to an ever expanding life space, of people and institutes on the one hand and, on the other hand, the readiness of this people and institutions to be part of an ongoing cultural concern.

Boeree (2006:1-14) considers Erikson as most famous for his work in refining and expanding Freud's theory of stages. Development, he says, functions by the epigenetic principle. This principle says that we develop through a predetermined unfolding of our personalities in eight stages. According to Boeree (ibid), our progress through each stage is, in part, determined by our success, or lack of success, in all the previous stages. A little like the unfolding of a rose bud, each petal opens up at a certain time, in a certain order, which nature, through its genetics, has determined. If we interfere in the natural order of development by pulling a petal forward prematurely or out of order, we ruin the development of the entire flower.

Each stage involves certain developmental tasks that are psychosocial in nature. Although Erickson follows Freudian tradition by calling them crises, they are more drawn out and less specific than the term implies. The child in grammar school, for example, has to learn to be industrious during that period of his life,

and that industriousness is learned through the complex social interactions of school and family (ibid).

The various tasks are referred to by two terms. The infant's task, for example, is called "trust-mistrust." At first, it might seem obvious that the infant must learn trust, and not mistrust. But Erikson makes it clear that it is a balance we must learn: Certainly, we need to learn mostly trust. But we also need to learn a little mistrust, so as not to grow to become gullible fools (ibid). He further opines that each stage has a certain optimal time as well. It is no use trying to rush children into adulthood, as is so common among people who are obsessed with success. Neither is it possible to slow the pace or to try to protect children from the demands of life.

If a stage is managed well, a certain virtue or psychosocial strength which will help us through the rest of the stages of our lives is carried away. On the other hand, if we don't do so well, we may develop mal-adaptations and malignancies, as well as endanger all our future development. A malignancy according to Erickson is the worse of the two, and involves too little of the positive and too much of the negative aspect of the task, such as a person who can not trust others. A mal-adaptation is not quite as bad, and involves too much of the positive and too little of the negative, such as a person who trusts too much (ibid).

According to Erikson's (1963, 1968) time table, development has been categorised into eight stages. The first four stages occurred during infancy and childhood, the fifth stage during adolescence, and the last three stages during the adult years up to, and including, old age. Of all these stages, particular emphasis is placed on the adolescent period because it is then the transition between childhood and adulthood is made. What happens during this stage is of the greatest significance for adult personality (Hall and Lindzey, 1989). Moreover, each stage is not passed through and then left behind; instead, each contributes to the formation of the total personality (ibid, 1989). Erikson (1968), cited in Hall and Lindzey (1989), further affirms that anything that grows has a ground plan

and that out of this ground plan the parts arise, each part having its time of special ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functional whole.

The diverse and often violent experiences of armed conflict have profound effects on child development and well-being. Child soldiers experience a process of asocialisation in armed conflict. As a national NGO in El Salvador explains, child soldiers have been socialised into a polarised existence (Verhey, 2001:2). The usual moral, normal culture, and values socialisation gained from the community and family are missing. The restoration of these elements has to be done during the reintegration process. The stages are shown in Table 1.

A basic assumption of the psychosocial theory of development is that each stage of development is crucial to producing a well-adapted personality. In which case, a disruption that occurs in one or more stages may have a far-reaching effect on human development. At any rate, the involvement of children in conflict or their recruitment as combatants is supposed to have broken the chain of development or tampered with the sequence. The outcome is predictable– maladaptation.

The reintegration of child soldiers raises difficult psychosocial questions. Adolescence is a time of establishing identity, and the child may resist changing his identity from soldier to civilian. Demobilised child soldiers model their behaviours on the violence and assertiveness learned in armed conflict. Overcoming the distrust they learn can therefore be difficult. This is why reintegration is important and must "emphasise the opportunity to form positive, trusting, consistent relationships with adults, with emphasis on family-based environment" (ibid: 17).

The psychosocial theory of development really emphasises the learning and unlearning of behaviour, especially during childhood and adolescence. The theory will be of great importance in the analysis of how maladapted child soldiers can be appropriately re-integrated into the society.

Table 1: Erikson's table of eight stages of development

Stage (age)	Psychosocial crisis	Significant relations	Psychosocial modalities	Psychosocial virtues	Maladaptation and malignancies
I (0-1)	Trust vs mistrust	Mother	To get, to give in turn	Hope, faith	Sensory distortion—withdrawal
II (2-3) – toddler	Autonomy vs shame and doubt	Parents	To hold on, to let go	Will, determination	Impulsivity—compulsion
III (3-6) preschooler	Initiative vs guilt	Family	To go after, to play	Purpose, courage	Ruthlessness—inhibition
IV (7-12 or so) school-age child	Industry vs inferiority	Neighbourhood and school	To complete, to make things together	Competence	Narrow virtuosity—inertia
V(12-18 or so) – adolescence	Ego-identity vs role-confusion	Peer groups, role models	To be oneself, to share oneself	Fidelity, loyalty	Fanaticism—repudiation
VI (the 20s) young adult	Intimacy vs isolation	Partners, friends	To loose and find oneself in a another	Love	Promiscuity—exclusivity
VII (late 20s to 50s-middle adult	Generativity vs self-absorption	Household, workmates	To make be, to take care of	Care	Overextension—rejectivity
VIII(50s and beyond) – old adult	Integrity vs despair	Mankind or "my kind"	To be, though having been, to face not being	wisdom	Presumption—despair

Chart adapted from Erikson's 1959 Identity and the Life Cycle.

In putting table one (1) in perspective, it is important to state that it represents a comprehensive cycle that the development of a personality must follow. However, in the case of child soldiers, substantial stages in the circle have been bypassed. Child soldiers in the last phase of the Liberian war were in actual fact born into conflict. As a result, the psychosocial crisis they were supposed to resolve in their earlier years remained with them. Links with significant relations were in most cases severed. The implication is, therefore, that they have experienced maladaptation from childhood.

From the age of seven through the entire stage of adolescence, children are introduced to outside-the-home socialisation. Significantly enough, it was at this

point that most of Liberian's child soldiers were recruited into rebel and government forces. Their psychosocial crises at these stages would have been industry versus inferiority, ego-identity versus role-confusion. Their significant relations ought to be neighbourhood and school, peer groups, and role models. Furthermore, psychosocial virtues to the children are competence, fidelity, and loyalty. The event of their recruitment, however, distorted the entire process. Psychosocial crises were resolved in a negative manner due to the presence of a different set of significant relations and a different sociocultural setting. They invariably displayed competence in the use of weapons and firearms, and loyalty to their commanders. The distortion in their personality development, as such, reflects in maladaptive behaviour of narrow virtuosity, inertia, fanaticism, and repudiation.

2.3.4   Theoretical Synthesis and Institutional Capacity

The greed and grievance explanations may be necessary for the outbreak of civil war, but certainly they cannot wholly account for institutional challenges of reintegration. Similarly, while both anomie and psychosocial theories may provide reasons for the dysfunctional behaviour of child soldiers, they are insufficient to offer a complete clarification on why institutions of reintegration fail or succeed. However, greed-grievance, anomie and psychosocial theories are useful entry points into the discussion of reintegration. For instance, the causes of the Liberian civil war and the condition of the maladjustment of child soldiers are supposed to be factored into the post-conflict peacebuilding process. We argue that the Liberian civil war, which is deemed to have been caused by greed and grievance, sufficiently weakened the diverse structures that embodied the society such that a reintegration process is confronted by fragile and dislocated societal institutions. Furthermore, the maladaptive behaviour exhibited by Liberian child ex-soldiers is seen as constituting great challenge to institutions of reintegration.

The implication of poor institutional quality or capacity to the Liberian case is far-reaching. In the first place, the weakening of state capacity allowed the

forces of greed or grievance to develop into full-scale civil war. Ironically, the peacebuilding process was placed on those institutions made feebler by years of violent conflict. Such unworkable institutions offer little or no prospect for sustainable peacebuilding effort which reintegration is, especially as it affects child ex-combatants.

Finally, it appears that reintegration as a field is currently "theoryless" and that has compelled some scholars to propose alternative definition that considered it as a societal process (Nilsson, 2005: 27, Lichem, 2006 as cited in Pugel, 2007: 9). Nilsson for instance, defines reintegration as "a societal process aiming at the economic, political, and social assimilation of ex-combatants and their families into civil society" (2005: 27). Society itself is not unorganised. Rather, it is governed by a set of institutions, each focusing on different societal aspects – social, economic, political. The purpose of using the word "institutional" to describe a category of challenges that confront the reintegration of child ex-combatants, therefore, is to focus research attention on a specific area of encumbrances. By so doing, a set of related outcomes should be derived. Invariably, within the "institutional" category is embedded the "social" or "societal" type, which constitutes the major focus for this study.

Lichem (2006) as cited in Pugel (2007: 9) thus suggests that "societal" should be the term of choice as a baseline for informing DDRR interventions. In a keynote address presented at a conference on post-conflict peacebuilding in Accra, Ghana, Lichem avers that:

> "Societal" ... refers to the relational capacities of a human being or of a community, the capacities for being able to live with others in community, the capacities for religious, ethnic, political plurality, the capacity for peace, partnership, friendship, solidarity etc. It also includes the capacity to forgive and to include as well as the capacity to become integrated and included. The "societal" dimension is basic to any post-war rehabilitation and reintegration process (Walther Lichem, 2006 as cited in Pugel, 2007: 9).

The "societal" dimension when applied to the institutions of reintegration has the potential for introducing a set of benchmarks upon which the capacities, capabilities, and limitations of institutions are measured.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.0   INTRODUCTION

In order to realise the set objectives of this study, the anthropological method of qualitative fieldwork is utilised to examine implementation of the reintegration programme for the Liberian child ex-combatants, including the institutional challenges of the process. With ethnography, the insider perspective is relied upon to provide data that represent the views, feelings and emotions of the study population. The ethnographic method concentrates on a holistic representation of a study area as well as offers both qualitative and quantitative database. The combination of these methods would enhance data quality, validity and reliability.

A three month fieldwork in Liberia was conducted from 2nd May to 30th July, 2006. The study was carried out in Monrovia where it was assumed many of the child ex-soldiers are residing. Qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collection were used in order to enhance the data quality. These were Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, non-participatory observation, and survey questionnaires.

With non-participatory observation, the behavioural attitudes of child ex-combatants and their day-to-day activities were observed. Attention was paid to the traits they exhibited, especially, the anti-social behaviour noticeable in their day-to-day activities and their coping mechanism as it related to socioeconomic reintegration. The general attitude of the citizenry toward child ex-combatants was also observed. All these were documented in the form of field notes by the researcher.

The study equally relied on secondary source of data collection based on previous work done in this area of study. These are contained in books and publications/journals, electronically downloaded materials (via internet), media reports such as news papers and magazines, government policy documents or

publications and reports/documents from Non-governmental organisations. Information on similar programmes elsewhere, reports from National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration, (NCDDRR) and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), and other related and reliable documents. These data are presented and analysed using the descriptive and narrative styles.

3.1   STUDY POPULATION

The study population includes children below eighteen (18) that fought during the Liberian civil war of 2000 to 2003. This category was selected because they could actually be referred to as children of the war era. Even though, some of them have grown into adulthood, their experiences as child ex-combatants were documented. The sample was selected within Monrovia with the help of the organisations and individuals concerned with the reintegration of child soldiers such as: Don Bosco Homes (DBH), Child Assistance Programme (CAP), and Principals of schools, UNICEF, government officials and other relevant stakeholders.

3.2   RATIONALE FOR THE CHOICE OF STUDY AREA

Liberia is made up of nine counties and six territories. The territories are located within the various counties. Monrovia, the capital of Liberia and the study area, is located in Monsterado County. The rationale for the choice of the city (Monrovia) as study area is based on the fact that it has been at the centre of reintegration activities since the end of the civil war in 2003. More importantly, many of the rehabilitating and reintegrating centres, both national and international are situated in Monrovia, with some having skeletal work in the interior. Moreover, there is reported migration of large number of demobilised child ex-combatants into Monrovia. The drift was likely influenced by the desire to find livelihood opportunities. Some child ex-combatants have been compelled

to remain in Monrovia after the war for other reasons like the internal displacement of their families.
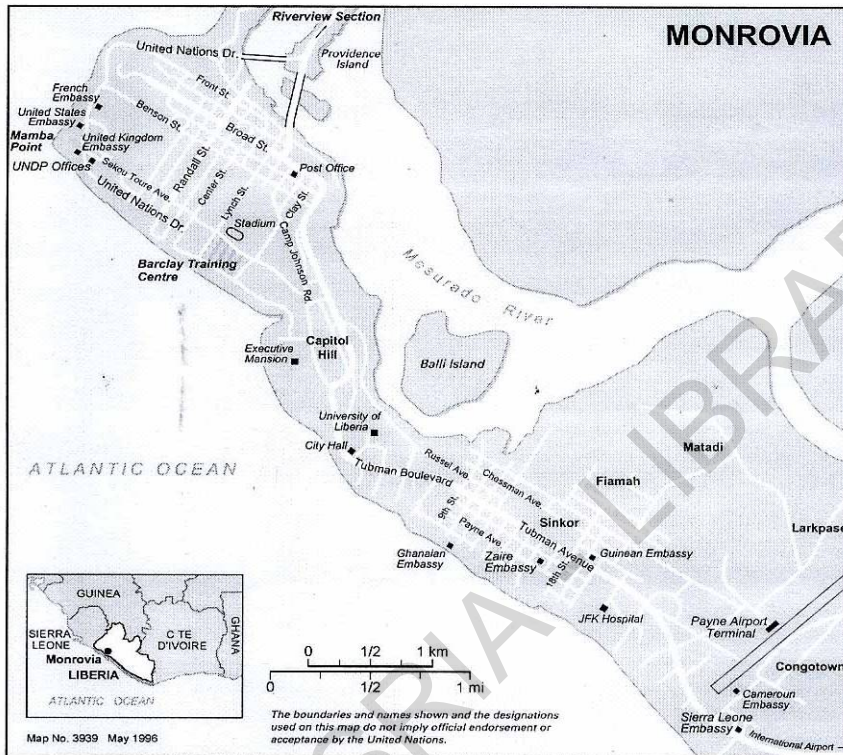
Fig. 2: Map of Monrovia showing major streets

Monsterado County is the central pivot of Liberia and the mainspring of the drive for national improvement. During the war, it was strategically important due to the seaport which permitted the flow of arms, ammunitions and other supplies. Another rationale for the choice of Monrovia is the fact that the most recent phase of the Liberian civil war (2000-2003) took place in and around the

city. The end of the war in 2003 left many child ex-combatants stranded in Monrovia. Many of them were recruited from the interior and preferred to stay back in the city. Locations where data was collected include the streets of Carey, Broad, Johnson, Centre, Gurley, Randall, Mechlin, Macdonald, Lynch, Warren, Ashmun, Benson, Buchanan, UN Drive/Sekou-Toure Avenue (Fig. 2 – northwest on the map), all in central Monrovia and some rehabilitation centres.

3.3   RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design, according to Nworgu (1991), specifies how data relating to a given problem should be collected and analysed. It also provides the procedural outline for the conduct of any given investigation. The ethnographic design utilised in this study offers both qualitative and quantitative data base. The use of a qualitative method in social research according to (Osuala, 1982) should be seen as not just an objective way of investigation but as a way of capturing "what people say and do as a product of how they interpret the complexity of their world…" In opposition to this viewpoint is the "epistemological underpinnings of the quantitative motive" (ibid), which sees social facts as definable and quantifiable.

Implementation of the design was conducted in a blended approach that incorporated a close-ended quantitative interview intake questionnaire with a set of qualitative participatory methods. A criterion for entry into the study was that a randomly selected prospective respondent must have self-reported that he served with a warring faction at some point during the 2000-2003 phase of the Liberian civil war. Participation in the formal DDRR programme was not a requirement. The study centres wholly on the male child ex-combatants from all former warring factions.

3.4   METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The methods of investigation used to gather data for this study include Focus Group Discussion, non-participatory observation, in-depth interviews, key informant technique and survey questionnaire.

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3.4.1   Sampling Methods and Procedure

Both the simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used in this study to select informants from the population. A Liberian friend and a key official in the transition government served as an entry point into Monrovia. He recommended the field assistant, a female and an active participant in the war. For the purpose of privacy, we refer to her in this study as Nancy. The field assistant was in a way a key informant and through her other key informants were identified and reached. Monrovia streets were purposively sampled and by random sampling method, 250 child ex-combatants were selected as survey respondents. A combination of purposive and simple random sampling method was also used in selecting the informants for in-depth interviews and participants in the focus group discussions.

3.4.2   Focus Group Discussions

Twelve (12) Focus Group Discussions were conducted among the child ex-combatants and the relevant stakeholders. Three FGDs at the Don Bosco Home, 2 FGDs at the Child Assistance Programme, 1 FGD each in three schools, and 4 FGDs in the most notorious areas of central Monrovia identified as the intersections of Carey Street and Gurley Street, Carey Street and Randall Street, Carey and Centre Street, and Broad Street, where many of the child-ex-combatants reside. Participants in each FGD were not more than 10 in order to allow for effective participation. In all, a total of 96 child ex-combatants and 12 stakeholders participated in the FGDs sessions. Apart from those conducted at the street intersections, discussions with other child ex-combatants and child welfare officers took place at the children rehabilitation centre, schools, as well as in offices.

Refreshment was also provided in the course of the discussions. This was done in order to elicit the cooperation and attention of the participants as well as to create a friendly atmosphere. All the FGDs were held during the day as it was

the only realistic period to have access to the children and other stakeholders. Moreover the daytime was expedient for security reasons.

The FGDs were aimed at measuring the accuracy of data obtained through sources like the key informant interviews and the survey questionnaires. The researcher served as a moderator throughout the discussions which were tailored to probe into the social background of the child ex-combatants, their experience as fighters, the mode of their recruitment, their attitude towards the questions of peace and war, and the success or failure of reintegrating them into society. The FGDs were equally meant to provide insights into the coping mechanisms and survival strategies of child ex-combatants in post-war Liberia and the level of success of efforts at reintegrating them into normal life. The research assistant was also in attendance at every FGD session. All discussions were documented on audio tapes and hand notes by the researcher. They were subsequently transcribed for purposes of data analysis.

3.4.3 Non - Participant Observation

The everyday life of child ex-combatants was examined through non-participatory observation. This was made possible by virtue of the researcher's length of stay (approximately three months) in the study area and her relative anonymity. According to Beattie (1964: 87) "stranger value is an important asset: often people talk more freely to an outsider, so long as he is not too much of an outsider." Particular attention was paid to the living conditions of child ex-combatants and the dysfunctional behaviour noticeable in their day-to-day activities. Observations were recorded in the form of detailed field notes. Other areas observed were:

i.   disposition of the general population toward the child ex-combatants, especially in terms of interacting with them.

iii.   The daily activities of the children in schools and in skill acquisition centres.

3.4.4 In-depth Interviews

Both structured and unstructured in-depth interviews were equally employed in the study. With this method, data about the social background of the child ex-combatants, their experiences as fighters, the mode of their recruitment, and their attitude towards the questions of peace and war, and success or failure of reintegrating them into normal society were obtained. In addition, interviews were conducted with the relevant stakeholders responsible for the welfare of children in Monrovia. Such organisations included UNICEF, DBH, UNDP, NCDDRR, JIU, local NGOs, and principals of schools. All the interviews were conducted in Monrovia often with the help of Nancy, the research assistant. The interviews were documented on audio tapes and field notes by the researcher.

3.4.5 Key Informant Technique

Key informants were identified by the researcher and the research assistant from among the residents of Monrovia. Emphasis was on people that were directly involved in the war as well as who are in touch with reality on the activities of child ex-combatants during and after the conflict. The key informants helped to provide data on their personal experiences and the perceived lives of the child ex-combatants. Major stakeholders in the reintegration programme were also used as key informants. They offered insights into the prospects and challenges of reintegrating child ex-combatants in Liberia.

3.4.6 Survey Questionnaire

In a field survey, the behaviour (past, present, or future), the underlying attitudes, beliefs, and intentions of participants are questioned. Field survey is mainly used to evaluate specific attitudes or behaviours (Bordens & Abbott, 2001). Examining the institutional challenges of reintegrating child ex-combatants requires that the attitude of the children toward the programme of intervention as well as their prevailing behavioural traits be determined. A survey questionnaire (Appendix 1) was therefore, administered on 250 child ex-combatants randomly

selected from different locations in Monrovia. At schools and skill acquisition centres, the researcher and her assistant introduced themselves to the principals or proprietors and solicited their assistance in obtaining a pool of prospective candidates for the study. Consent was also gained from each candidate and a final random selection of the respondents in the targeted location was conducted. The process of administration on the children was supervised by the researcher, with the help of two assistants and the cooperation of reintegration workers. Since the questionnaires were personally administered, the entire 250 were completed although not all questions were responded to in every case.

The survey questionnaire contained items that were meant to elicit respondents' attitude towards reintegration and what they consider as the grey areas of the programme. Items that indicate the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents such as their age, level of education, place of origin, economic status of immediate families and their breadwinners' profession were included.

It must be emphasised that no survey questionnaire may be a hundred percent valid no matter the effort taken to design or administer it. Meanwhile, face validity is accorded the questionnaire due to the fact that other qualitative methods were used to address most issues contained in it. The questionnaire combined the attributes of both closed and open ended types. This served to allow for respondents' idiosyncrasies, especially with some questions while at the same time tailoring their responses to fall in line with the objectives of the study.

Moving away from questions on the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, the next set of questions focused on the war activities of the respondents. For instance, questions were asked on their membership of armed groups, age at recruitment, mode of recruitment, length of stay with armed groups and their war experience outside Liberia.

Another set of questions bordered on the implementation of reintegration programme. These set of questions tested the capacities, capabilities and limitations of the institutions responsible for the implementation of reintegration programmes. Respondents were asked about their disposition to peace; their

current residence status; their present preoccupation; their most pressing needs; their awareness of reintegration programme; the number that have received or are receiving training; the number that have been reunited with their families; and if they would continue with their training/education without the payment of subsistence allowance. Other questions sought the views of respondents on the roles of different stakeholders in reintegration. For instance, they were asked who played the most important role in the reintegration of child ex-soldiers. Other questions included what they considered the major challenge in the reintegration of child soldiers; whether they or their friends were involved in the planning of reintegration programme; and if they felt the programme could have achieved more were child ex-soldiers to be involved in the planning process.

The social constraints of reintegration were addressed by other survey questions. Views of respondents were sought on what they considered the appropriate setting for reintegration; which act they considered disgusting and could make them feel a sense of shame; and the actions taken against them that they would consider humiliating. Other questions bordered on their belief in God and if they believed that God punishes or rewards bad and good conduct. Respondents were also asked if they attended church/mosque; if they underwent traditional healing and if they were taught societal morals and values during the process. Though these set of questions initially did not form part of the questionnaire, they were incorporated during the fieldwork to confirm some personal observations on the role of traditional cleansing and religious support. Finally, respondents were asked questions on their perception of themselves. For example, they were asked if they considered themselves better off in the last one year, and the extent to which they thought reintegration had fared.

The socio-demographic characteristics of respondents showed their age distributions as follows: respondents who are 10 years old and below constitute 6.8 percent of the sample. Those between 11 and 15 years were 18 percent, while 16 to 18 years category represents 31.2 percent and respondents 19 years and above constitute 44 percent of the sampled population. The implication of the

above age distribution is that more than a third of the sample has indeed passed the age category reckoned for a child. They formed part of the population because they were mainly children at the time they took part in the war.

Data on the level of education of the respondents show that many have never passed through any form of formal education. Thirty percent of the samples are enrolled in primary school; 10.8 percent are currently in secondary school, while 16.2 percent are attending technical school. Forty three percent or thereabout are not enrolled in any school. The above data shows that despite reintegration, many children in Liberia still are out of school.

The domicile status of the children showed their place of residence prior to the war. Data indicates that more than half of the respondents (55.4%) used to live in the interior of the country, or outside Monrovia. Only 33.6 percent had lived their entire lives in the city of Monrovia.

Data on the economic status of respondents' families indicated that most of them (84.4%) are from families with low income ($400-$800 per annum). Only 8 percent of the sample comes from families with middle income ($800-$1200 per annum). None of the respondents is from a family with a high income ($1200-$3000 per annum).

Finally on the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, the professions of respondents' breadwinners indicate that 11 percent are in government employment, 12.4 percent in private company employment, 7.1 percent artisans, 24 percent traders, 39.1 percent farmer and 5.3 percent in other professions.

Table 2: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

	Socio-demographic Characteristics	Fq	%
a.	*Age*		
	10 years and below	17	6.8
	11 – 15 years	45	18
	16 – 18 years	78	31.2
	19 and above	110	44
b.	*Education (formal)*		
	Primary	75	30
	Secondary	27	10.8
	Technical training school	40	16
	None	108	43.2
c.	*Place of origin*		
	Interior	166	55.4
	City	84	33.6

	Others	-	-
d.	*Economic status of respondents' families*		
	Low income ($400-$800 per annum)	211	84.4
	Middle income ($800-$1200 per annum)	20	8
	High income ($1200-$3000 per annum)	-	-
	No answer	19	7.6
e.	*Professions of respondents' breadwinners*		
	Government employment	28	11.2
	Private company employment	32	12.4
	Artisan	18	7.1
	Trader	60	24
	Farmer	98	39.1
	Others	14	5.3

3.5   METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data obtained through the qualitative technique was presented and analysed using the descriptive and narrative styles. Similarly, data from survey questionnaires was equally quantified and analysed by descriptive statistics. The presentation of the data was done in line with the objectives of the study. This was done with sub headings which go with the objectives of the study.

3.6   LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY

The security situation in Liberia, at the time of the field work, was still very unpredictable. For instance, some parts of the city such as Carey Street and other areas in central Monrovia were considered too risky to visit. Despite the risk involved, the researcher endeavoured to engage the child ex-soldiers in these locations though with a lot of precaution and the help of the field and research assistants.

Fear on the part of the informants and uncompromising bureaucracy of the Liberian government were also factors that hindered the data gathering process. Many key informants were unwilling to disclose their identities for fear of being hunted in future on account of any disclosure made. For instance, at CAP, relief workers interviewed literally refused to give their names. The official government secrecy that often refers to some useful information as "classified" documents also impeded the study. To overcome this problem, high level contacts and the use of third parties was employed to collect data.

The Liberian accent also proved problematic as special attention and concentration were needed to comprehend conversation. The research assistants were indeed helpful in overcoming this constraint.

Finally, access to secondary data such as books and official government documents was limited as most libraries and archives in Liberia had been looted during the war that lasted for years. However, the researcher improvised with some books made available by a few key informants in Liberia.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LIBERIAN CIVIL WAR AND THE ROLE OF CHILD SOLDIERS

4.1 LIBERIA: GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE

Liberia can be divided into three distinct topographical areas. It is mainly a flat coastal plain of some 10-50 miles (16-80 km), with creeks, lagoons, and mangrove swamps. Secondly, it is an area of broken, forested hills with altitudes from 600 to 1,200 ft (180-370m), which covers most of the country. Thirdly, it is an area of mountains in the northern highlands, with elevations reaching 4,540 ft (1,384 m) in the Nimba Mountains and 4,528 ft (1,380 m) in the Wutivi Mountains. Liberia has six main rivers that flow into the Atlantic. Vegetation in much of the country is dense forest growth. The climate is tropical and humid, with a heavy rainfall, averaging 183 inches (465 cm) on the coast and some 88 inches (224 cm) in the southeastern interior. There are two rainy seasons and a dry, harmattan season in December and January. In addition to the capital, other important towns include Buchanan and Harper, both port towns (Columbia Encyclopedia, 2005:1).

Liberia is a small country of 3.24 million inhabitants in 2004, with annual growth rate of 2.4 percent. The literacy rate is 56 percent and the work force in agriculture is 70 percent, industry 15 percent, services 2 percent, while unemployment rate in the formal sector is 80 percent. Liberia is made up of 16 ethnic groups, Kpelle 20 percent, Bassa 16 percent, Gio 8 percent, Kru 7 percent. 49 percent of the population is spread over 12 other ethnic groups. The Americo-Liberians, though featured prominently in the political history of the country constitute an insignificant portion of the country's total population. Religiously, Liberians are animists 60 percent, Christians 30 percent and Muslims 10 percent. Liberia occupies an area of 111,369sq.km (Bureau of African Affairs, 2006:1-2).

The country is richly endowed with water, mineral resources, forest and a climate favourable to agriculture. Traditionally, it has been a producer and exporter of basic products, mainly timber and rubber, while local manufacturing

has been limited in scope. Liberia borders Guinea and Sierra Leone (with which it forms the Mano River Union) and Cote d'Ivoire. The capital of Liberia is Monrovia and the official Language is English (ibid).

4.2   BACKGROUND TO THE LIBERIAN CIVIL WAR

Liberia has a unique political history which centres mainly on the domination of the political space by Americo-Liberians. So when on 12th of April 1980, a coup was successfully staged by a set of soldiers from the indigenous population, the people applauded the change in government. The coup put an end to 133 years of Americo-Liberian domination of the politics of the county. With Master Sergeant Samuel Doe leading the junta, Liberia, for the first time since independence in 1847, had an indigenous son as its head of state. The change in government thus meant a kind of independence from the control of Americo-Liberians.

The hopes and aspirations of the people were, however, cut short because no sooner had Doe settled down than he departed completely from the popular wave that threw up his regime. Corruption, ethnicity, mismanagement, high rate of unemployment, oppression, dictatorship, nepotism and human rights abuses became the dominant features of his government. Doe became highly self-serving with stories circulating about his high taste and lust for luxury. Worse still, altering of the framework of economic, political, and social systems that had been shaped over many years of settler domination did not happen. In a short while, therefore, the initial euphoria that attended the 1980 coup died off. As Doe continued to personalise power, his colleagues in the April 12 coup became real and imagined enemies, which he eliminated systematically one after the other.

Doe's government increasingly adopted an ethnic outlook as members of his Khran group soon dominated political and military life in Liberia. This caused grievance, a heightened level of ethnic tension, leading to frequent hostilities between the politically and militarily dominant Khrans and other groups in the country. Within a short while, the indigenous Liberians became polarised in their

support for Doe's government as he unleashed a reign of terror on non-Khran members.

By 1985, Doe was to have handed over to a democratic regime, according to the initial decision of the Provisional Redemption Council, when they seized power in 1980. As a result there was lifting of ban on political parties that had been outlawed since 1980. This gesture marked the beginning of multi party election campaigns after more than four years of military rule in Liberia. The presidential election of 15th October, 1985 featured five political parties that included the National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL) established by Samuel Doe who thereafter emerged as the party's presidential candidate. The party was composed of Khran ethnic group and the Mandingo people. Both groups were small and lacked political influence. Doe won an election that was characterised by widespread fraud and rigging, and became the first indigenous president of Liberia. His party also won majority seats in the National Assembly election.

Gradually, the Americo-Liberians who were initially targets of Doe's government were drawn into partnership with other ethnic groups which Doe had turned his repression against. Thomas Quinwonkpa, a former ally of Doe staged an abortive coup from exile. Under the auspices of National Patriotic Forces of Liberia (NPFL), he invaded Liberia from the border of neighbouring Sierra Leone on 12th November, 1985. He was however, captured by the members of the Khran-dominated Armed Forces of Liberia, and executed in Monrovia. Other coup plotters were put on trial, while some were summarily executed.

Charles Taylor, a close associate of Quinwonkpa, fled to the United States where Doe sought for his extradition on charges of corruption. He was arrested and detained. From detention, Taylor escaped into exile where he and other members of his group found it convenient to use the Quinwonkpa structure and his death as a platform for drawing sympathy from other indigenous ethnic groups for their rebellious activities. He later became the leader of NPFL.

4.3   THE LIBERIAN CIVIL WAR: 1989-2003

On December 24, 1989, a small band of rebels led by Doe's former procurement chief, Charles Taylor, invaded Liberia from Ivory Coast now (Cote d'Ivoire) through Nimba County with his Libyan trained forces. Charles Taylor said among other things that the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) had come to complete the November 12, 1985 failed mission of the late General Thomas Quinwonkpa and the patriotic forces. "We have come to free the Liberian people from the brutal and dictatorial hands of Samuel Doe" (cited in Youboty, 2004: 118).

Taylor and his NPFL rebel group rapidly gained the support of Liberians because of the repressive nature of Samuel Doe and his government. Barely six months after the rebels first attacked, it would have been possible for them to reach the outskirts of Monrovia. However, division within the NPFL made it difficult for the rebels to achieve their grand design within the shortest possible expectation. Prince Yomie Johnson who had been a member of NPFL broke out to form his Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), because of policy differences. It was in his hands that Doe met his unexpected capture and death on September 9, 1990. It was expected that the death of Doe would bring an end to the conflict. However, the conflict intensified with different factions emerging and engaging themselves in fighting. This prolonged the conflict with reports of atrocities against civilians and foreigners alike (ibid).

The barbarity of the conflict equally posed a serious threat to the stability of West African states as a whole. In addition, the conflict was a major challenge to ECOWAS' efforts to create a secure environment for achieving the original objective of promoting regional economic integration. Consequently, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Head of States intervened to reconcile the warring parties. An ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee was set up and had its inaugural meeting in Freetown, Sierra Leone on June 13th 1990 with the main objective of peaceful resolution of the Liberia crisis. The committee later established the ECOWAS monitoring group (ECOMOG) to

intervene in the crisis. Beginning from November 1990, the factions in the Liberian crisis signed numerous ceasefire and demobilisation agreements (Cook, 2003:4) which focused on creating a transition to civilian rule. None was however effected until 1995. The factions refused to disarm and continued to vie for influence in transitional coalition (ibid). The key agreements included the Bamako Ceasefire Agreement (November 1990); the Yamassoukro Accord (October 1991); the Cotonou Agreement (July 1993); the Akosombo Agreement (September 1994); Accra Agreement (a.ka. Akosombo II, December 1994); the Abuja Accord (August 1995); and Abuja II (August 1996). Most of these agreements set ceasefire conditions and provided for the establishment of transitional power structures. In some cases, they spawned ancillary working agreements. Factions and political parties also formed informal alliances and agreements (Ibid).

The conflict officially came to an end in 1997 with internationally supervised elections which produced Charles Taylor, leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), as president. Charles Taylor's problems began almost immediately upon his election. Distanced from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for shady business and involved in constant disputes with ECOMOG over the rebuilding of the national army, Taylor was placed in a difficult position at the international level. Domestic issues followed and threw Liberia back into conflict. Conflict resumed in 2000 with two armed groups, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), trying to overthrow the government. Many members of these armed groups were adherents of factions that had participated in the first civil war. By May 2003, the two armed groups had gained control of much of the country and were threatening to seize the capital, Monrovia. A ceasefire in June 2003 was followed by a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in August which provided for the establishment of a Transitional National Government. Charles Taylor handed over power and negotiated his departure to exile in Nigeria. The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) established by UN Security Council Resolution

1509 took up peacekeeping duties on 1 October 2003. Despite this accord, there was tension among the factions in the national unity government which also threatened the peace.

The many years of conflict destroyed every segment of the Liberian society. Infrastructure and basic services such as pipe-borne water supply and electricity were destroyed. The 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which provided for a programme of cantonment, disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration (CDDRR) set Liberia on the path of national reconstruction. The CPA was run by the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR) in coordination with UNMIL and UNICEF, which coordinated the process for under-18s, with input and assistance from other UN agencies and international bodies (UN Doc., 2004) The program was launched in December 2003 and it was formally closed in November 2004 (UN Doc., 2005).

Other highpoints of the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement included the restructuring of the Liberian armed forces. The agreement also provided for the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was established by an act of the Liberian parliament in June 2005. The nine-member commission began its work in June 2006, having been inaugurated the previous February. It was mandated to investigate gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law as well as other grave abuses that occurred from January 1979 to 14 October 2003.

4.4   LIBERIA'S CHILD SOLDIERS

More than half of Liberia's war ravaged population are children. Of the 1.4 million children (country profile: Liberia), it is estimated that as many as 15,000 had served as child soldiers in Liberia's civil war. However, it is important to note that figures refer to only those fighters who were officially demobilised and as such, do not truly reflect the composition and characteristics of the fighting force as a whole. Precise figures are very difficult to ascertain because the groups

which used child soldiers did not generally keep accurate records of the ages of their personnel. Some even deny having child soldiers in their ranks. However, at the end of hostilities in August 2003, before the commencement of the official DDRR program, many children voluntarily came to child protection agencies to seek help to be demobilised. By October 2004 more than 10,000 children, including over 2,300 girls, had been disarmed and demobilised and more than 9,600 reunited with their families (Williamson and Carter, 2005).

The typical child soldier in Liberia was a boy in primary school when he joined the faction (s). After spending 3-5 years fighting, he would have disarmed when he was between the ages of 15 and 17, placing him between the tender ages of 8 to 12 when he first picked up a gun. Most of them were traumatised by the experience of war. Incidences that accounted for their trauma include, but are not limited to, death of relatives of war-related causes, torture of family member(s), serial killings, sexual abuse, being compelled to shoot people, and cannibalism. Even after the war, many child ex-soldiers remained filled with rage and are traumatised. Child ex-soldiers, once identified, are usually removed from refugee or internal displacement camps because of their fear that they will be recognised by their victims.

During the war, children were recruited by both rebel and government armed forces either by force under the threat of violence or by persuasion. Sometimes it was simply a case of survival – the soldiers had food or could provide the guns to get food. The Human Right Watch Report, "How to Fight, How to Kill: Child Soldiers in Liberia," documents how more than 15,000 child soldiers fought on all sides during the 2000-2003 phase of the Liberian civil war, and that many units were composed primarily of children. According to the report, more children became involved with the fighting forces both as combatants and helpers, driven by the need to help find scarce food and water for their families. Some, the report indicates joined particular forces to avenge violations committed against their family members whereas others joined those

same forces that committed abuses in their communities to offer protection to themselves and their families.

There are so many arguments on why child soldiers were used to prosecute the Liberian war. Catherine Wiesner, an emergency child protection specialist with the International Rescue Commission (IRC), for instance, was of the view that child soldiers were cheap to maintain, malleable, obeyed orders and did not have the same fears as adults (Personal Communication, 2006). Another popular view has to do with the level in which the personality of a child has developed. To this school of thought, children having not fully developed a sense of right and wrong are relatively easy to be conditioned into obedient killing machines. A shortage of manpower was equally considered a factor that might have propelled unscrupulous warlords to look among children to fill the ranks.

Some child ex-soldiers interviewed during this study presented different accounts of how they were recruited. For instance, seventeen-year-old Mohammed Kamara described his experience in the following words:

> Myself and my friends were chatting under a tree when LURD people captured us. They took us to a place I don't know and trained us on how to fire and how to take cover during battles. We were trained for only one week after which we joined the fighting force. I have not seen any of my friends since the end of the war and I don't know what happened to them (Personal Communication, 2006).

Lasana Kollie, fifteen-year-old, was conscripted from Gbanga. He spent over four years fighting for different forces:

> I was first captured by Charles Taylor forces and later I chose to fight for the LURD forces. I was never afraid during the training. I fought in Monrovia on the front lines and was not wounded (Personal Communication, 2006).

Another child soldier, seventeen-year-old, Romeo Wheeler counted himself unlucky to have been captured by the LURD forces. According to him, he and other children of his age were conscripted after an attack on Rick's Institute (a school outside of Monrovia) IDP camp.

Other child ex-soldiers claimed they fought on the side of the Liberian government forces. Among them, many were picked up in round-ups on the streets, or while on their way to and from schools, or while on errands for their parents. They were hurriedly trained and then enlisted in battles against rebel forces. Weah, the Principal of Henry Dennis United Methodist High School, Monrovia explained that schools literally closed during the war as many parents kept their children at home from fear that they might be picked up by either of the warring factions. Matthew Davies, sixteen-year-old, recounted how he joined the government forces:

> We were in school when government forces came in pickup trucks. Before we knew what was happening they rounded us up and forced us at gunpoint into the trucks. I was taken to Lofa County to help government fight the LURDS forces (Personal Communication, 2006).

Some children, who fought on the side of the government forces, said they joined the militia to protect their families from incessant abuse by government troops. For instance, seventeen-year-old Franklyn Watson said he voluntarily enlisted into the government forces to defend his family from further abuse:

> Government militia always come around to maltreat us, especially my mother and my sisters. I join the government forces to put an end to these constant abuses thinking that if I join them all these evil they do to my family will stop (Personal Communication, 2006).

Many other child ex-soldiers cited instances of personal abuse and instances of government forces raping their sisters and mothers as reasons for voluntarily enlisting in the warring factions.

Once recruited, the children were hurriedly trained in combat, the same way adults were trained. The training was strenuous and usually lasted few days and, at most, two weeks. Brutalisation through making the children to kill and commit other atrocities was often a deliberate policy, making it very hard for the children to return to their communities. There are many reports of child soldiers being drugged to reduce the fear of being on the battle frontlines. Many of them

were made to occupy dangerous positions, usually the frontlines. Quite often, too, they manned road blocks. Sixteen-year-old Richard Jack described the training process that was meant to prepare them for combat:

> The training was to make us less afraid. Our trainers fired at our direction while we advance crawling toward them. We crawled under barbed wire and tried hard not to raise our heads. Some of us died during the training sessions (Personal Communication, 2006).

Generally, child soldiers killed and were killed, looted and plundered alongside the adult combatants. They were also widely linked to a wave of widespread sexual violence against women and young girls living in camps for displaced people in and around Monrovia. Amnesty International, for instance, documented cases where boy fighters as young as 12 raped women and girls sheltering in camps for displaced people. The human rights group gathered evidence on 40 cases of sexual attacks against women and a further 20 against young girls at the Samuel Doe sports stadium during one week in August. Nixon Manwean, 18 years, fought on the side of government forces for about two years. He described his roles and responsibilities as a child soldier:

> We are used for different roles during the war. Many times we were fighting on the front lines of the battle. At other times, we may be manning checkpoints. Some of us that were too much afraid to fight were made to carry ammunitions and other supplies, or used as spies (Personal Communication, 2006).

By and large, there were no fixed roles or responsibilities assigned to child soldiers. They may serve as porters on a day and, the next, they are involved in combat.

Some of the child soldiers earned a reputation of being brave and fearless as a result of their prowess on the battlefront. Many were said to be very courageous, fighting hardest at the frontlines. In some of the fighting groups, children as young as 15 years were made commanders because of their courage. In this category was twelve-year-old Patrick F. who spent one and a half years fighting in a government Small Boys Unit (SBU). Patrick was promoted to

commander of the SBU for his bravery and he recounted his experience to Human Rights Watch researchers:

> As a commander, I was in charge of nine others, four girls and five boys. We were used mostly for guarding checkpoints but also fighting. I shot my gun many times; I was wounded during World War I, shot in the leg. I was not afraid, when I killed LURD soldiers, I would laugh at them, this is how I got my nickname, 'Laughing and Killing' (HRW, 2004).

Child soldiers were also given names to depict their acts of brutality and cruelty towards other children and adults. Such names were 'Castrator', 'Ball Crusher', 'Disgruntled', 'Nut Bag Mechanic', 'Knock Out', 'Bizarre, and so on. Other names signified particular characteristics of the children. For example, a boy soldier was named 'Mother's Blessing' by a commander who had earlier told the boy that his mother was killed in the fighting and that she had blessed him (the boy) to go and fight against the government troops. Thereafter the same boy found out that his mother was still alive (HRW, 2004). The practice of name-giving, the Human Rights Watch Report, suggests was to help keep the children in control as they would forget about their old lives and families.

These children, themselves, were often victims of abuse. Many were beaten on recruitment and given scanty training before being sent to the frontlines. Child soldiers, especially those with LURD and MODEL, were not paid, thus surviving mainly on looting and stealing from civilians. However, boys with government militia were occasionally paid, principally when they were involved in active combat or sent on spying mission. The pay, which ranged between 200 and 300 Liberian dollars (approximately $5 and $7), served as incentive for them to continue fighting. With this meager amount, it was almost certain that living off the civilian population would remain the most reliable means of survival for the children.

Child soldiers were not usually given military uniforms. Rather, they were clothed in T-shirts which bore names of their fighting groups. Children serving with government forces were issued with yellow T-shirts though other colours

like green, red, or black were not uncommon. Name of the fighting unit, such as Jungle Lion or Jungle Fire, was written on the front, and the division on the back (HRW, 2004). Children were also part of units like the 'Buck Naked Unit' where fighters went into combat naked in order to terrorise their opponents and civilians. They fought with RPGs, AK-47s, submachine guns and what they described as '60's, automatic weapons where the ammunition belts would be worn wrapped around the upper body.

Most child soldiers wore talisman and charms around their necks, arms or on their waists. The talisman, they explained, was for protection from enemy bullets. Many were also initiated into their respective units through scarification. While they exercised restraints in disclosing details about their initiation, they proudly displayed the scars on their bodies. With the scars and the charms, the children believed no bullet could penetrate their bodies. Some rules, however, guided the use of the charms. For instance, the charms were not to be worn while having sexual intercourse if the potency must be assured. The fear of being killed made the children to adhere strictly to the rules governing the use of their charms and amulets. Apart from scarification, amulets and charms, child soldiers were also given herbal concoctions to drink as a form of protection from enemy bullets. Dolo Weah, an 18 year old ex-fighter believed in the efficacy of the herbal concoctions he took. He explained the process thus:

> We always drink medicine before we go to fight. The medicine protects us from bullet. If a bullet hit you, it will automatically bounce off from your body. There is just no way it can enter (Personal Communication, 2006).

Boy soldiers were permitted to have sexual relationship with girl soldiers and captured civilians. While girl fighters were able to determine their preferences, captured girls were often victims of sexual abuse. Even in the jungle, mating rules were strictly adhered to. For instance, a girl was not supposed to have affairs with two soldiers or two friends. Girls who violated these rules were disciplined by the girl soldiers.

At the end of the war, child ex-soldiers were burdened with physical and psychological scars. These made the process of their rehabilitation very difficult. Of necessity was their physical treatment to restore them back to good health. Those that contacted incurable diseases or lost limbs need medical support. In view of this, operational planning should of necessity cater for hospitals and treatment clinics. Furthermore, the civil war meant that several young people had their education interrupted and did not finish their schooling. Many of them hope to return to school but may be unable to pay the fees and other costs related to education. Although the Liberian government has promised universal primary education, international financial assistance is needed to make schooling available to all Liberians. From these, it is safe to conclude that all which child ex-soldiers needed is a welcoming local community institutions and stable local social environment to return childhood to them. This step, however, involves introducing child ex-soldiers back to their homes and communities while strengthening societal institutions that are crucial to their development.

CHAPTER FIVE

INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES OF REINTEGRATION IN POST-WAR LIBERIA

5.0   INTRODUCTION

The problems faced by countries emerging from years of violent conflict are enormous, highly complex and intricately interconnected. Amongst the greatest challenges are the presence of large numbers of ex-combatants (Bell and Watson, 2006:3), especially child ex-soldiers. In the case of the Liberian civil war, diverse reports have it that government militia and rebel fighters recruited and used children as young as seven years old as combatants (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2004:76). From 1989 to 1997, between 6,000 and 15,000 children are estimated to have been used in prosecuting the civil war (Kelly, 1998:39).

A demobilisation programme conducted in 1997 was only partially successful in rehabilitating and reintegrating children. Therefore, many of those who had fought previously became easily re-recruited when fighting resumed in 2000 (Human Rights Watch, 2003:2). The Report of Amnesty International (2004:1) states that all parties to the conflict, the former government of Liberia and the two armed opposition groups, the LURD and MODEL made extensive use of child soldiers. For example, in advancing on Monrovia in early 2003, LURD forces rounded up civilians from displaced camps, and pressed hundreds of children into service. Around the same time, government militia and paramilitaries operating in and around the capital also conducted roundups of children at schools, displaced camps, and from the streets, creating units that were composed primarily of child soldiers (Human Rights Watch, 2004:3). Equally, underage fighters made up the rank and file of MODEL in counties under their control and these child soldiers were involved in active combat during an offensive in Nimba County in November 2003 (Human Rights Watch, 2004:1).

At the end of 2003, UNICEF (2004:1) estimates that between 15,000 and 20,000 boys and girls were associated with various fighting factions in the Liberian civil war. Another report by Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (2004:76) indicates that some 21,000 child ex-soldiers needed demobilisation at the end of the war in 2003. It is quite difficult to come up with the exact figure of child soldiers that participated in the 2000-2003 war. However, the number that was officially demobilised may provide an insight (see Table 3).

Table 3: Combatants demobilised after 2003

	Liberia
Start of war	December 1989
Disarmament and demobilisation period	December 2003 – January 2005
Boys below 18 years demobilised	8, 771
Girls below 18 years demobilised	2, 511
Male adults demobilised	69, 281
Female adults demobilised	22, 456
Total demobilised	103, 019

Table adapted from Williamson and Carter (2005) Children's Reintegration in Liberia.

The above figures signify only a snapshot of the problem because, with the conflict coming to an end, the greater challenge tends to revolve around rehabilitating and reintegrating child soldiers into normal life, in order to prevent them from becoming spoilers or security threat. Realising the implication this could portend for a post-conflict country, therefore, Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) are generally accepted as part of the peace agreement for sustainable peace and security in post-conflict societies.

The Liberian conflict officially came to an end in 2003 but it was not until middle of 2004 that the reintegration of ex-combatants especially child ex-soldiers commenced. The institutional framework, operational strategy and policy

guidelines for reintegration were defined in the form of an action plan immediately after the signing of the Accra Peace Agreement and Security Council Resolution 1509. Under this Action Plan, the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR) has a national obligation to provide a clinical and psychological platform for ex-combatants and other victims of the civil crisis to be educated and receive the appropriate treatments for post-traumatic stress (PS) and other mental health challenges. The NCDDRR was to execute this mandate by providing policy guidance to a Joint Implementation Unit (JIU) which has the primary responsibility for the implementation of the DDRR programme.

The objectives of reintegration, according to the action plan, are to enable ex-combatants contribute to national security, reconciliation and development of Liberia through economic self-reliance, dedicated citizenship and proper conduct. The overall goals include national reconciliation, conflict prevention, sustainable development and ensuring welfare of all citizens of Liberia. Expected results are social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants into the civil society and the national economy (UNDP, 2004). According to the framework, social reintegration implies for the ex-combatants,

- acceptance as active members of their society

- participation in traditional and social events, and

- improvement in the perception of social security.

Economic reintegration on the other hand describes

- the acquisition of initial marketable skills,

- ability to access employment opportunities, and

- engagement with at least subsistence income generation activities.

The objectives are also fed into medium and long term development framework. Meanwhile, according to the UNDP 2003-2004 Activity Report on Liberia's DDRR, reintegration programmes for child ex-combatants between the ages of 14 and 18 would be similar to the adult programmes but with child-friendly curriculum.

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As an intervention measure, social reintegration support covered activities for the restoration of social capital, individual social adaptation measures, psychosocial counselling, traditional reconciliation measures as well as programs for child ex-combatants, other war-affected groups and the handicapped population. Measures of economic reintegration assistance include vocational skills training, small enterprises development, apprenticeship and job placement, agriculture and community based initiatives, public works programme – job placement and job creation, formal education, and reintegration of child ex-combatants (UNDP, 2004).

From the above, it is explicit that the issues of child ex-combatants' reintegration is addressed at the two levels of intervention measures, but it is left to be determined how much attention the case of children draws from the intervention agencies. The challenges of reintegrating child ex-soldiers (some have grown into adulthood) into the society, no doubt, are daunting and multifaceted. They range from institutional and economic to social and cultural. The study appraises mainly the institutional challenges and the implication they portend for the quest at achieving sustainable peace and development in Liberia. An assessment of the assistance packages which are provided child ex-combatants is thus meant to reveal the strength and weaknesses of institutions supporting reintegration of child ex-combatants.

5.1 INSTITUTIONS OF REINTEGRATION

Demobilised child soldiers are confronted with myriads of material, physical, and psychological needs that include nutrition; medical treatment (including for sexually transmitted diseases and substance abuse); respect and self-esteem; human dignity and confidentiality; and consultation and participation in determining their fate. Other needs are reintegration packages and benefits; community sensitisation in advance of family reintegration; amnesty from prosecution and/or protection from retribution for acts committed during hostilities; protection from repeat recruitment; mental 'disarmament'; education,

peace education and vocational training; and employment creation. The responsibility of meeting these needs rests on different societal institutions. However, it is a common knowledge that the Liberian civil war extensively destroyed institutions of national transformation, especially in areas of public governance, infrastructural provisions, and social interaction. The damages are bound to have long-lasting effects on economic performance and social welfare. Within this latter context, it is pertinent to determine how strong the institutions responsible for reintegration to achieve the fundamental focus of reintegration are; and the adequacy and sources of measures used in prosecuting the programmes. The presentation and analysis of data on institutional framework for reintegration are thus devoted to providing answers to the above questions.

The assumption formulated in respect of the above is that weak institutions with inadequate measures are major constraints that hamper the reintegration of child ex-soldiers in Liberia. A consideration of the strength of the institutions and the options available for reintegration is made. Among factors employed in analysis are the content of reintegration assistance package and challenges of the institutions. This study identifies for discussion some of the institutions that are central to the reintegration of the child ex-soldiers.

5.1.1 The Joint Implementation Unit (JIU)

The Joint Implementation Unit (JIU) was vested with the primary responsibility of implementing the DDRR programme. It was headed by a Programme and Policy Advisor who reports to the UNDP Country Director on all management issues, as well as provides policy guidance to the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Operations and Rule of Law (UNDP, 2004). The JIU comprised both local and international initiatives such as the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the UNDP, the European Commission (EC), Department for International Development (DFID) and other international non-governmental organisations.

The JIU structure was not designed for direct implementation and delivery of reintegration assistance. Rather, the unit only provided the framework for programme design, maintenance of technical supervision and coordination. As such, it relied on the participation of various local and international NGOs, CBOs, relevant sector ministries, and private sector for a successful programme implementation.

There were four units of the JIU dealing with disarmament and demobilisation; rehabilitation and reintegration; monitoring and evaluation; and information and sensitisation. The Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (M&E) was central to the work of JIU. The unit was responsible for designing the instruments used in the DDRR Programme to collect and collate information on the combatants. The unit also worked closely with the JIU Reintegration Unit to provide information on the socio-economic profiles of ex-combatants. It summarised the training and resettlement preferences of the programme participants and validated all programme participants before they were placed in programmes to prevent 'double dipping' or abuses in the access to entitlements and reintegration opportunities. The JIU was staffed with international staff who function mainly in the capacity of programme and policy coordination and unit-based technical advisory activities. In order to facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of the ex-combatants, JIU set up six field referral and counselling offices in Monrovia, Vonjama, Gbarnga, Zwedru, Buchanan, and Harper (Personal Communication with Charles Achodo, UNDP and Policy Adviser, JIU).

The level of available financial resources to implement reintegration programmes sponsored by the Trust Fund limited the effectiveness of the JIU. Much of the available financial resources at the disposal of the UNDP Trust Fund were consumed by services to ex-combatants at various cantonment sites. The strong priority and coordination emphasis given to the disarmament and demobilisation process, in a way, deprived the reintegration process the importance it deserved in the peace process.

5.1.2   The National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL)

Following the war, Liberia has become the classic "failed state" in every respect. All national institutions have been destroyed or so neglected that they are completely non-functional. The central and local governments are virtually non-existent and unable to provide basic and essential services like security, water, electricity, and road maintenance and so on.

Immediately after the war, a transitional government was set up to supervise a post-conflict peacebuilding process. From the multi-party peace talks held in Accra, Ghana, the NTGL was created. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) under which the NTGL was established provided for a four-way power-sharing arrangement that shared out positions in the cabinet and the rest of the government among Taylor's National Patriotic Party (NPP), the LURD and MODEL rebels, and representatives of civil society organisations. In similar fashion, the Accra agreement shared Liberia's publicly owned corporations and autonomous government agencies and commissions. From every indication, the NTGL consisted of all the key stakeholders in the Liberian conflict. The transitional government took office on October 14, 2003. Under the CPA, which was confirmed by a U.N. Security Council resolution, the transitional government was to remain in office until January 16, 2006, when it was expected to cede power to a government elected in a 2005 poll.

Progress in governance under the National Transition Government of Liberia (NTGL) was mixed. Although it carried out most basic functions, the restoration of state authority and the rehabilitation of state institutions under its authority were hampered by central government ministry inefficiency, widespread resource constraints, and lack of institutional and financial system capacities and trained manpower (Cook, 2007).

Persistent reports of corruption within the NTGL were among the most challenging issues facing governance capacity-building efforts. There were alleged acts perpetrated under the import-export transactions, government contracts, budgeting, and the issuance of commodity marketing or land, natural

resource, and associated concession rights (The Analyst, 2006). In mid-March 2005, the United Nations Secretary-General reported that there was a lack of transparency in the manner NTGL collected and used revenues. He equally berated the resistance of some government and public corporation officials to reforms and audits aimed at fighting corruption. Observations similar to the above were equally made by the World Bank and bilateral donors.

Members of the Transitional Legislature were also culpable of corruption acts. For instance, they were accused of appropriating for private use and paying very nominal lease fees for expensive vehicles they were given. To this effect, U.S. Embassy in Monrovia made a public release stating the United States Government position on the subject. The release described the transfers of Liberian Government property and resources into private ownership as abuse of public trust and impunity that had contributed to two decades of decline in Liberia. The embassy concluded that the transfers were unscrupulous, irresponsible, and contrary to the public interest of the people of Liberia (IRIN, 2005). All of these ultimately affected peacebuilding and socioeconomic and infrastructural development efforts.

Although Liberia is blessed with abundant natural resources, the years of conflict have disorganised the economic sector of the country. The activities of the NTGL were, therefore, constrained by lack of funds. The overall financial situation in Liberia is very difficult and the conflict has left behind the need for major redevelopment and repair. Much of the pledged aid by donor governments and agencies to NTGL were halted due to concern over transparency. This negatively affected the scale and pace of the reintegration programme.

5.1.3 United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Following the signing of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the successful disarmament and demobilisation of fighting groups was the need to commence post-war reintegration and reconstruction. Toward this end, the government of the United States, the Congress, the USAID and other donor

organisations held a conference in the U.S. to prioritise the needs and strategies for the two-year transition programme. Some of the most important needs and priorities identified in this process were as follows:

i. Security, including UNMIL deployment of 15,000 military and 1,100 international civilian police;

ii. Repatriation and reintegration for approximately 700,000 Liberian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs);

iii. Reconstruction of damaged physical infrastructure;

iv. Restoration of some of the productive capacity of the economy through employment generation programmes, community-driven development activities, private sector development, etc.;

v. Re-establishing limited governance institutions, including the provision of some basic services such as water, electricity, sewage, education, and health.

USAID participation in identifying these needs and contribution to the strategic framework for the expenditure of the $200 million Liberia Supplemental Appropriation formed the background of its involvement in the Liberian reintegration process (USAID, 2005).

From the inception of the reintegration programme in 2004, USAID significantly increased the provision of emergency and transition assistance to Liberia to meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups, such as the IDPs, and to provide short-term, quick disbursing aid to those institutions that needed immediate resuscitation (USAID, 2005). It equally commenced the design and implementation of a major programme to generate employment for ex-combatants. USAID also initiated numerous NGO-managed, village-level community development activities to foster the peaceful reintegration and rehabilitation of combatants and other war-affected population. USAID, along with several NGOs, also initiated numerous informal learning opportunities for children and youths affected by the war. It helped to re-establish primary health care facilities in selected rural areas and provided psychosocial support and

protection for war affected youths. Among other assistance, USAID initiated activities to strengthen the development of political parties, built the capacity of the National Elections Commission, and developed the capacity of civil society organisations to participate in voter education efforts (ibid).

USAID's intervention in Liberia was implemented through its programmatic units. For instance, its office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) contributed directly to USAID's post-war recovery strategy by providing substantial, critical, life-saving interventions for Liberia's most vulnerable, war affected population. This programme was implemented through twenty NGOs and international organisations, and included therapeutic and supplementary feeding for malnourished children; primary health care; and improved planning for IDPs, refugees, ex-combatants and other war affected groups returning to their communities.

USAID's intervention effort also extended to the reintegration of displaced children and orphans. Through the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF), USAID offered assistance in the area of social and economic integration of children and adolescents. DCOF's fundamental approaches are to strengthen the capacity of families and communities to protect and care for their most vulnerable children, as well as strengthen children's own capacities to provide for their own needs. Between 1994 and 2004, DCOF provided over $6.3 million to support projects for war affected children in Liberia. Grantees were the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

The Community-focused Reintegration (CFR) was instituted by USAID and it entailed the reintegration of former combatants. The programme targeted both ex-combatants and other at-risk youths. The programme worked by establishing community structures to select and guide young participants, who then became involved in either training or projects for six months to a year. The training curriculum covered literacy, numeracy, life-skills, agriculture, and peace education, psychosocial and vocational counselling. It employed local instructors

using a training-of-trainers model. USAID's CFR programme in Liberia, known as Youth Education for Life Skills (YES) aimed at helping refugees, IDPs, and child ex-combatants reintegrate into their communities and civilian life to advance an inclusive, peaceful, political transition in Liberia.

YES programme in Liberia operated in two distinct phases, the start-up and the roll-out, and involved several implementing partners. In start-up, USAID worked with the international contractor, Creative Associates International, Inc., which awarded grants to two international NGOs, Mercy Corps and ActionAid. For the roll-out phase, USAID entered into cooperative agreements with Mercy Corps and a consortium of World Vision, Action Aid and Search for Common Ground.

USAID demonstrated high level capacity in the provision of medical care in post-war Liberia. In 2004, it resuscitated its primary health care programme that was interrupted by the war. In the past years, the programme provided primary health care services to over 500,000 people in 450 targeted communities in Liberia's Nimba and Bong counties through its network of forty clinics. Implemented by a consortium led by Africare, the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Moorehouse School of Medicine, the programme also assisted the Liberian Ministry of Health to develop a national information programme on malaria prevention for use at the community level and a radio series on malaria, safe motherhood and immunisation, nutrition and diarrhoea control. USAID also provided 85% of the commodities used to support Liberia's Reproductive Health Programme and to fight STI/HIV/AIDS. In 2005, it supplied more than 4 million condoms and other contraceptives. USAID was also a major contributor to the WHO Global Polio Eradication Initiative for Liberia since the programme commenced in 1998. In 2004, the agency contributed $300,000 to the programme. At the end of 2004, Liberia had no confirmed cases of polio virus, and the indicators for polio continued to meet the certification criteria for the polio eradication established by the World Health Organisation (USAID, 2005).

USAID in 2005 supported series of "cleansing" of individuals and "purification" of clan land ceremonies meant to honour civilians who died in the bush during the war, and as such did not receive "proper" burial. The ceremonies were planned and organised by Loma and Mandingo elders and youth representatives from the immediate locality and from the dispersed populations in Monrovia and Guinea. The ceremonies were announced in IDP camps throughout Liberia, ex-combatant 'ghettoes', and in towns and refugee camps in Guinea and were conducted in sodality shrines and Mandigo Mosques (World Bank Social Development Notes, 2007).

Despite these, a major shortcoming of USAID intervention was the preference for short-term, quick-fix approach. Though the areas supported are critical to successful reintegration, they do not in any way stand for long-term solutions that emerged from research and policies that provide new approaches to social ordering and opportunities to transform the Liberian society. Like other international donor agencies, USAID's intervention was situated within a specific timeframe which funding covers. There is a limited effort at sustainability of many of its projects after the timeframe might have elapsed. Finally, even when USAID claimed that its projects were needs based, there was always the possibility that donor interest and local needs would sometimes diverge.

5.1.4   United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF Liberia headed the Liberia Child Protection Working Group which brought together all government, UN and NGO organisations that worked on child protection issues in Liberia to ensure a coordinated, effective approach. At the forefront of UNICEF Liberia's protection strategy was advocacy for the immediate and unconditional disarmament of children, as a first step to a more comprehensive demobilisation and reintegration of children associated with fighting forces (UNICEF UK News, 2003).

UNICEF in Liberia worked with the government, local and other international NGOs to ensure child-protection agencies received children and

mobilise services for their reintegration. In addition, UNICEF supported partners in setting up Interim Care Centres, mobilised family tracing systems and worked at the community level. UNICEF played a pivotal role in coordinating, supervising, monitoring and in the provision of technical support in the running of the Interim Care Centres (ICCs). Out of the 34 established ICCs in Liberia, UNICEF funded 25 ICCs and two drop-in Centres in seven cantonment sites of Gbarnga, Buchanan, Tubmanburg, VOA, Zwedru, Ganta, and Voinjama (UNDP, 2004).

In 2003, UNICEF launched a 3-year program in Liberia that focused on education, protection, water, and sanitation and targeted 350,000 vulnerable and internally displaced children in the country. The programme provided counseling as well as vocational and literacy training, to 6,000 children. UNICEF also coordinated a special residential project for former girl combatants, which provided vocational and literacy training to girls with babies that were fathered by rebels (IRIN, 2003).

Specifically, UNICEF, with funding from USAID set up a number of vocational training sites that targeted war-affected youths. The Support to War Affected Youth Project, that offered vocational skill training, literacy and numeracy, and trauma counselling, was specifically established for former child soldiers. The training programme which lasted between six and nine months, offered the children a wide range of skills in agriculture, mechanics, carpentry, cosmetology and baking. In addition to vocational training, a UNICEF centre in Kolahun provided basic primary education. UNICEF also provided resources for more than 1,100 teachers to give much-needed psychosocial counseling to former child soldiers (Personal Communication with Fatumah Ibrahim, UNICEF Child Protection Officer, 2006).

UNICEF also worked with various child protection partners to bring rehabilitation and reintegration services to war-affected children. For instance, Don Bosco Homes, a key UNICEF partner in programmes for child soldiers and street children set up reception centres to receive child soldiers prematurely

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released by their commanders. Children who found their way to the centre benefited from initial assistance while awaiting the real disarmament and demobilisation programme. Similarly, the International Rescue Committee, another UNICEF partner, established an interim care centre that catered for child soldiers. The project was particularly aimed at addressing the special needs of female child soldiers, as the normal DDR program did not make any special provisions for them. Furthermore, to reach out to more war-affected youths, UNICEF worked with over 700 Liberian communities on implementation of additional training and reintegration programmes. More than 2,500 former child soldiers graduated from these programmes, while nearly 2,500 more children in all but one of Liberia's fifteen counties were enrolled as at 2006 (Personal Communication with Fatumah Ibrahim, UNICEF Child Protection Officer, 2006).

5.1.5   Liberia's Health Sector

The years of civil war adversely affected all sectors of Liberia's national life. In the health sector, there was destruction of health infrastructure, dislocation of health personnel, massive looting of equipment, drugs and medical supply inventories. From available statistics, Liberia's basic health indicators are among the worst in the world. Infant and under-five mortality rates are 157 and 235 per 1,000 live births, respectively. Chronic malnutrition rates are extremely high in all 15 counties. Of children below five years, 39% are stunted, 27% are underweight and 7% are wasted (World Bank, 2007). The war, which caused colossal destruction to the economy, did not spare physical infrastructure, equipment and functioning of the health sector. Moreover, only 10% of communities covered by a recent Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey (CFSNS, 2006) reported having a health care facility within their communities.

The disruption in the Liberian economy occasioned by the war also compounded the problems of the country's health sector in the context of health care financing. Total health budget, as a proportion of GDP, fell significantly

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below the WHO stipulated minimum of 5%. Thus, the low level of government resources allotted and expended on the sector grossly affected the level and quality of health services (Personal Communication with Bill Jarkloh, Journalist and Public Commentator, 2006).

As regards health infrastructure, 30% of all major hospitals in the public sector since 1996 have been reduced to health centres, while 70% remain out of commission. These facilities had all been badly looted and vandalised. Also, services at the secondary level (Primary Health Care) virtually collapsed throughout the country. Rural health facilities are run by physician assistants and nurses who often refer major cases to hospitals with doctors, using ambulances if the patient can foot the fuel bill for the trip to the next health post.

A World Health Organisation Report for 2003 presented the precarious state of Liberian health institutions. With respect to health manpower training institutions, only two were partially functional. Even the two are complemented by a mission institution owned and operated by the Catholics. This has resulted in the shortage of critical health manpower. In 1989, there were estimated 5,056 health workers within the sector; with 3,526 in the public sector and 1,855 in the private sector. These were 237 physicians/specialists, 656 nurses and nurse midwives, 2,782 trained traditional midwives, and 1,381 other supporting personnel. By 1998, the number of health workers had reduced drastically by 28% to 1,396, disaggregated as follows; 89 physicians/specialists, 329 nurses, and 274 midwives including other support personnel. There are currently less than twenty (20) medical doctors and specialists in the country. Other cadres of health workers have also been reduced by sixty percent (WHO, 2003).

International non-governmental organisations were reported to be providing the lion share of health care services as the capacities of both government (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and JFK Medical Center) and church missions became eroded on account of the conflict. Funding for these activities came mainly from donors and UN Agencies. The bulk of the drugs and

medical supplies for public health also came from donation by the European Union, UNICEF, international NGOs and friendly governments.

Institutions like the A.M. Dogliotti College of medical and the Tubman National Institute of Medical Arts (TNIMA), responsible to train doctors, physician assistants and nurses were not spared their share of neglect. The medical college which turned out 25 to 30 graduates annually in pre-war years was reported to be producing an average of ten doctors, while TNIMA's output of physician assistants, nurses, mid wives and environmental health workers, turned out to be unsatisfactory due to low intake at the school (Kahler, 2000).

The precarious state of medical care left the majority of impoverished Liberians at the mercy of the private health facilities now burgeoning across the country.

5.1.6 Formal Education System

Fourteen years of intermittent civil war have undermined the education system on which the future of Liberian children depend. The system of education in the country is in need of massive rehabilitation. Liberia's education system has been one of the weakest in sub-Saharan Africa due to inadequate resources, poor infrastructure, and limited expenditures from the national budget. As a result, over half of Liberian children at primary school age are estimated to be out of school; the dropout rate is high with only 35% of boys and 27% of girls reaching grade five; and illiteracy is estimated at 70% of the total population (World Bank, 2007). The conflict years, no doubt, destroyed the institutional space for providing primary and secondary education and other essential services.

The burden of education on families is enormous. School fees and money for supplies, books, and other materials are presently beyond the means of the majority of Liberians. About 2,400 public schools (primary, secondary and tertiary) operated in Liberia before fighting broke out. However, 80 per cent of these were put out of operation by the conflict. The existing ones are in disrepair, teachers are not well paid, and books and other supplies have been systematically

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looted during the war. About 12,000 teachers were said to be on the public school payroll in pre-war Liberia but many of these have emigrated, or took up alternative employment to make ends meet during the war. The teacher training institutes in south-east and central Liberia were also destroyed during the war. The government of Liberia is presently off-track to meet the universal primary education target. The HDI Report (2006) for Liberia indicated that the country is "unlikely to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education by 2015 (p. 15). This is largely due to low levels of school completion, high school fees and difficulties accessing schools for reasons such as lack of school buildings and lack of sufficient teachers.

Changes in demographics pose significant challenges to education in Liberia today. In post-conflict Liberia, tens of thousands of people who were displaced are now returning to their homes and are being assisted by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Since 2003, hundreds of thousands of young people who could not attend school before are now enrolling. However, fewer schools are open and functioning. In addition, the student age-grade profile has changed. Today, the ages of the students are disproportionately older than the traditional age-grade level system for Liberia as older children enter school at lower grade levels (MOE, 2004).

Another problem with the public schools is lack of space. In fact, most classrooms are filled beyond capacity. Sometimes a class contains over fifty pupils, many of whom are too old for their grade. The classroom environment is for most times noisy. The private schools are different in this regard. A quieter atmosphere prevails and classes are about half those of public schools. Pupils and teachers are properly attired, and their conduct is regularly monitored. Certain private schools also have the luxury of facilities like laboratories and libraries.

Majority of teachers are under-qualified**.** According to the Education For All National Action Plan for Liberia (2004), about 65% of children in primary schools in Liberia are taught by unqualified teachers and about 41% of teachers have not completed high school (UNICEF, RALS Report, 2004). Closely related

to this is the problem of brain drain of teachers, especially in higher education. In the wake of the civil war, many trained teachers left the country to seek higher paid jobs in West African countries like The Gambia, and others relocated to the United States under the resettlement programme of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR).

As government struggles to rebuild the education system, private schools are springing up to provide education to children of those who can afford the fees. For instance, while public schools charge up to $20 fees at private schools are between $100 and $175 per annum. Owing to this fee disparity, private schools are generally considered as providing better quality education than their public counterparts, while also surpassing them in the matter of salaries paid to teachers. While salary in the public school can be as little as 10 U.S. dollars a month, teachers in private schools are paid in the region of 50 U.S. dollars. Low salaries - and late payments - have further combined to erode the morale of teachers in public schools. Teachers interviewed in the course of this study stated that their inabilities to care for their own families impacted their well-being negatively. They identified low pay as a kind of trauma in their lives (Personal Communication with Zaw-Acoh Weah, Moses Tobah and Jonathan Clitton, 2006).

The implication of teachers' low morale on the output of the educational system cannot be overemphasised. According to Moses Tobah, the Vice Principal of St. Peter's Lutheran High School, Sinkor Monrovia, "the salary earned by teachers affects the way they teach in that the time they have to spend to make their lesson plan is generally committed to doing other works to earn money to take care of their families." Invariably, the multiple jobs taken leave little time for lesson planning and preparation. Poor salary regime also makes teachers to become distracted and anxious about making provision for their own families.

The post-war government in Liberia, working with UNICEF, has committed itself to providing universal primary education. Under the new program, school fees are waived for the poorest children. UNICEF also provides a

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certain number of exercise books and pencils for children and textbooks for teachers. The success of this programme, however, depends on long-term investment by the government and the international community in paying teachers' salary arrears, training new teachers and rebuilding schools.

Various NGOs and United Nations agencies have also stepped in to try to help Liberia's ailing educational system. These include the Adventist Relief Agency (ADRA). Through this initiative, food and non-food items are provided to schools within the country. Other forms of assistance provided include subsidies to schools that are badly in need of material assistance such as textbooks and repair materials.

Teachers in post-war Liberia face enormous challenges in their day-to-day work. Apart from lacking necessary tools like textbooks to do their job, the Liberian teacher is confronted with the task of dealing with child ex-soldiers who are more familiar with weapons than academic work. With the limitations of the Liberian educational system, teachers interviewed said they were coping with their own tragedies and family needs while at the same time trying to care for their students' psychosocial needs.

5.1.7 The Family Institution

The family is the smallest organisational unit in society and it is the taproot with which society draws nutrients for long-term survival. It is undisputedly the foundation on which every society stands. The Liberian family was made weak by the civil war and rendered dysfunctional in all aspects. Although nearly every segment of the Liberian society was affected, as a unit, the family received the most terrible blow. In order to recover from high levels of adversity, therefore, the post-war Liberian family requires structures to aid it in coping or rising above devastating socio-economic stressors. Unfortunately, organised extended families that hitherto provided social support and once protected the family against risks and shocks have been depleted by adverse

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effects of the civil conflict. The mass displacement of Liberians during the war stripped the family of social cohesion.

The aftermath of the war has occasioned a high wave of rural-urban migration. Many Liberians moved out of their communities in search of a better life elsewhere, but were unprepared for the challenges of adjusting to a new environment. Invariably, they ended up experiencing joblessness and their peril increased. As income level in Liberia continues to experience sharp decline, many Liberian families find themselves living below the poverty line. The economy-induced migration has further diminished the contacts between parents and their children as the quest for survival continuously forced family members to live apart.

The Liberian family system is also faced with post-war psychological adjustments. The problems of teenage pregnancy, child labour, drug abuse and addictions, separated families, and mental illness were identified as great challenges that put serious strain on the family system. For all these social disorders, there is lack of strong government-run social welfare service delivery system to perform mitigation functions.

Family tracing and unification was one of the features of the Liberian reintegration programme but, even then, many children still lack contacts with their biological parents, uncles, aunts, and other surrogate parents. The impact is felt in the form of many anti-social conditions in which the children have found themselves. The civil war has also created more single parent families. There is the phenomenon of single mothers, especially amongst young women, many of whom were raped and ended up with unwanted pregnancies. Others include girls who unwillingly accepted the fighters for survival; those who willingly gave themselves to the fighters for material gains; and women whose husbands or children's fathers were killed. The divorce rate has risen to an alarming level and more single earner households developed with chronically sick, disabled or foster children.

Liberia lacks a robust child protection system that can act as recourse against abuse and neglect and facilitate proper channels for fostering and adopting children. The child welfare systems are embattled by lack of coherence and competence, and, where they function, these institutions are dominated by international providers, whose roles are limited statutorily, even culturally.

What the post-conflict government in Liberia has done to strengthen the family system has been in the form of allocation of funds for poverty reduction or social welfare. It is assumed that such programmes will enhance the general well-being, thereby making the family stronger and better prepared to respond to social stress. While the dividend of the programme is yet to manifest, it is important to emphasise that mere allocation of fund for social welfare without an adequate definition of objectives may achieve little or no result. In its generalised approach to issues (national security, jobs, public infrastructure, health, etc.) that could promote societal well-being, the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) falls short of a direct intervention that can mitigate the weak Liberian family system.

5.1.8   Communities

Community as an institution of social support has roles to play in the reintegration of demobilised child ex-soldiers. In Liberia, communities are products of interaction between local practices and the Liberian state under indirect rule. The town community is basically a network of descent groups working in contiguous or adjacent areas of lands. Citizens of a town, and strangers recognised as resident under the authority of a landed patron, reside in a main centre and a number of subsidiary villages, and are generally linked by inter-marriage (Richards et al, 2005).

The years of conflict have destroyed much of the elements of trust and capacity for collaborative action that existed at the community level in Liberia. More importantly, the notion of community in Liberia is deeply contested, reflecting the different levels of historical inequalities that manifested in access to land, and distinction between people considered to be civilised and aboriginal. As

a matter of fact, the Liberian conflict was an outcome of Liberia's dualistic legacy. The issue of land is the key factor of inter-ethnic tensions. The most prominent lines of conflict divide various groups in the north (Gio, Mano) and northwest (Loma) of the country from the Mandingo.

Reintegration normally should be community-driven. Functional community-based development initiative can only be driven and sustained in an environment where community organs of decision-making have been restored, IDPs and refugees returned and capacity for local governance is re-established or restored. In Liberia, two major tensions (ethnic and religious tensions and the lack of reintegration of former combatants) persist in the return process and these undermine community cohesion.

The Mandingo, for instance, were classified as "strangers", and were largely excluded from their communities' political affairs. At the break of the Liberian conflict, a large population of the Mandingo were driven into exile (Højbjerg 1999; Sawyer 2005). Since 2004, many Mandingos have come to resume their previous activities but have been prevented from reclaiming their property and denied access to market places and farmland by the "indigenous" people who had driven them away. The war provided an opportunity for members of these groups to fill the void of commercial activity that the absence of the Mandingos had created. They are in direct competition with the Mandingos and invoke their "customary" right to the land, market spots and housing space to use the spots formerly owned by Mandingos (Richards et al, 2005).

The specific targeting of ex-combatants for employment, skills-training and other reintegration programmes may equally have implications for social cohesion and sense of community. In the first instance, resentment for ex-combatants was exacerbated by the perception among other population groups that reintegration assistance focused wholly on the ex-combatants, and not on their victims. Secondly, the ex-combatant label was also considered to have prolonged their alienation from the wider society and further jeopardised their reintegration prospects.

In the absence of community cohesion, any community-based reintegration activity would be mostly driven by external facilitators who assume the responsibility for defining the problems and needs of the community. Child soldiers are alienated and disconnected from their communities and confronted with the challenges of reintegration. For the community to play any role in this regard there is the need to trigger a process in which rural people are challenged to devise more inclusive notions of community and social cohesion as part of the post-war rebuilding process.

5.1.9   Indigenous and Religious Institutions

Indigenous institutions could be identified as platforms or mechanisms for coping with violence and conflict associated with the Liberian civil war. Among such institutions are the pan-ethnic *Poro* and S*ande* societies in northern and north-western Liberia, the *Kwee* institutions in the forests of the southeast, and the neighbourhood watches in urban communities. These local institutions have deep roots in the history of the country's indigenous communities and modern Liberians have found them flexible and adapted them to help cope with state collapse and its attendant violence. They exist as traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution, socialisation and integration and many Liberians think they may have a part to play in restoring community discipline, and in the ritual reintegration of ex-combatants (Richards et al. 2005). Their first concern was to turn young men and women into full adults through initiation. Sawyer (2005) describes how *Poro* symbols and authority, for example, were creatively co-opted to restrain the actions and behaviours of armed men who operated with hardly any supervision and whose loyalty was only to a leader in Monrovia, as well as how appropriate rites of restoration were performed and the basis for reconciliation established between Guinean Loma communities and Mandingo communities during the long conflict.

The extent to which these indigenous institutions were appropriate as reintegration platforms was defined by the division of Liberians over the role of

the secret societies. Apart from the fact that initiation into the societies was disrupted by the war, many urban youths were said to be no longer interested in becoming initiated into the *Poro* and *Sande* and would refuse to be forced. Urban parents were reported to be generally less inclined than before the war to send their children to the so-called "bush schools". Moreover, international actors and some NGO activities are critical of the *Sande* society on account of their practice of circumcising girls during initiation (Fuest, 2007: 8).

Religious organisations have equally been involved in reintegration programme. The involvement of the church through the Liberian Council of Churches, for instance, dates back to the breakout of war when it took responsibility to provide support to the needy, vulnerable population and other displaced persons in the city at a time international NGOs closed down their offices and operations. Since the end of the war, the church has been engaged in the task of rehabilitation, reconstruction and reintegration.

As part of the church's effort in facilitating the reintegration process, it conducted a pre-discharge orientation through which it helped re-orientate ex-combatants and prepared them for their new life and challenges as well as possible hostile reactions from their victims. On the other hand, communities receiving disarmed and demobilised ex- combatants were also psychologically prepared by the church through further sensitisation training and counselling that they may live together and have a common living. The church also made efforts in the process of trauma healing and reconciliation at the community level. Apart from domestic action, the church also reached out to its partners overseas for moral support through international advocacy. This indeed made an impact at that level as some of the actions of the international community were influenced by the church's initiative. Financial support from partners enabled the church to perform these functions.

The involvement of religious organisations in post-war peacebuilding was also demonstrated in the form of collaboration between church and mosque under the auspices of the Interfaith Council of Liberia (IFCL). In post -1997 Liberia, the

IFCL has contributed to staving off incipient religious intolerance creeping into Liberian society. The group played an important mediating role in easing tensions in Lofa and Nimba counties following attacks on Mandingos between 1999 and 2000 (Toure, 2002: 16).

5.1.10 Local and International Non Governmental Organizations

The strategy and operational framework of reintegration support for ex-combatants stipulated that for successful programme implementation, the participation of various local and international NGOs, community based organisations (CBOs) as well as relevant sector ministries and the private sector would be of vital importance to ensure maximum impact. The relevance of these organisations, especially the locally-based ones, was hinged on knowledge and awareness of the socio-economic and political landscape of Liberia. Moreover, non-governmental organisations are generally seen as maintaining a higher level of transparency and accountability in the conduct of their businesses. This study identifies different organisations whose participation has proved vital to the reintegration of the child ex-combatants. Some of these are the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Don Bosco Homes (DBH), the Zorzor District Women Care, and Children Assistance Programme (CAP).

Before any analysis of the role of the organisations is done, it is important to take cognisance of the fact that nearly all of them depend on one United Nations agency or the other for financial support. Some others raise funds from individuals and foundations through their different programmes. Being largely donor-driven in their agenda and having a lifespan determined by external funding sources, non-governmental organisations are faced with the challenge of reconciling donors interest and local needs. The extent to which these organisations have achieved their mandates is thus the focus of analysis here.

Don Bosco Homes is one of the most visible non-governmental organisations in Liberia. At the time of this study, it was working in four of Liberia's 15 counties offering the following services: rehabilitative community

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and in-centre skills training, counselling, recreation, family tracing and reunification, academic tuition and fees support, HIV/AIDS awareness, family mediation, child rights and protection besides legal assistance among others. In addition to these services, DBH offers two shades of fast-track learning programme: Accelerated Literacy Programme (ALP) as well as literacy and numeracy. ALP was designed for street and community-based children. It is supposed to be a quick method of teaching children who have missed many years or have not been to school at all. The curriculum is designed to make learning attractive and this is interspersed with activities like football, video, bike riding, and playing checkers. On the other hand, the literacy and numeracy education is offered only at skills training centres to allow trainees know how to read and write and to keep basic records in their work places (Don Bosco Link, 2005:14).

DBH believed it had done enough within its capacity to rehabilitate and reintegrate child ex-combatants. Criticism of some aspect of the DDRR is, however made by workers at the home. For instance, DBH has queried the rationale behind the subsistence allowance paid the child ex-combatants. According to Nathaniel Roberts, a worker at DBH, "from my own professional point and DBH's, we do not believe in giving these children money." The payment, most other informants at the home opined, had given the children the feeling that they should be rewarded. Despite the differences in approach, the Don Bosco Homes, in the opinion of Nathaniel Roberts had been collaborating with the JIU in achieving reintegration for the child ex-combatants especially in the area of providing educational support.

The major constraint faced by DBH was inadequate fund and lack of support from the international agencies. Wellem Bohlem, the Child Protection Coordinator at DBH commented thus:

> We are not equipped financially, but if we can get the kind of support, the needed support, we will definitely ensure that the reintegration programme continues when the UN eventually leaves the country. For instance, I can say that out of about 11,000 children that were disarmed, not more than 25% have been covered by the programme. There is the need for us to continue the

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rehabilitation and reintegration activities (Personal Communication, 2006).

Workers at the DBH were asked which aspect of the reintegration programme they considered more challenging. Out of the five workers interviewed, four considered placing the children into family and community as a major constraint. Although, in their view about 75% of the children were taken back home, it was frustrating to see more and more children in the streets. The situation was put in perspective by Wellem Bohlem when he further stated that:

> I remember we did a survey in 2003 and in that survey it was revealed that about 3,000 children were in the streets of Monrovia alone. In the follow up that we did in March, 2006 we discovered that between 5,000 and 6,000 children were roaming the street every day. (Personal Communication, 2006).

The implication of the above is that child ex-combatants are not really fully integrated into families. Informants ascribed different reasons to this. These included placing children in families that were broken or with single parent and the fact that some were reunited with relatives who had no economic capacity to support them. The Don Bosco Homes reiterated its readiness to continue with reintegration work with or without the support from international agencies.

The International Rescue Committee's (IRC) Vulnerable Children and Youth Protection and Development project had just about three months to wind up at the time this study was conducted. The goal of the project was to mitigate the effect of violence and displacement on Liberian young people by engaging communities in addressing protection concerns and ensuring psychological well-being. Specifically, the project aimed at ensuring that children and youths in and out of school participate in activities promoting their psychological and educational development, with particular attention paid to vulnerable children such as former child soldiers and separated children. Funding support for this project was provided by USAID under the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF).

The IRC, like many other international NGOs addressing the issue of reintegration in Liberia, got funding support but lack the necessary knowledge of the grassroots. As such, the organisation operated mainly by giving funding support to community based organisations (CBOs) that were constituted into Child Welfare Committees (CWCs). The CWCs were mandated to carry out the following activities:

- identify the primary issues affecting the welfare of children,
- survey current human and organisational resources in their communities to identify and mobilise existing community resources to support war-affected children,
- engage in dialogues on identifying and revising the best child protection practices that communities relied on prior to the conflict,
- carry out community wide awareness raising events around child protection issues,
- lead discussions with smaller groups of community members,
- raise awareness of prevention of separation strategies
- carry out joint sensitisation activities with teachers, teaching assistants and school administrators regarding the need for inclusion of vulnerable groups in the classroom,
- design the most appropriate methods for addressing the child welfare concerns, and
- work with the community to identify solutions and reform local policies.

In Monrovia the activities of IRC were limited to Soul Clinic, PHP, and Chocolate City. The work of the IRC, which was implemented by the CWCs centred on mobilising community action for vulnerable children. Although direct intervention was said to have been contemplated in their operation (Williamson and Carter, 2005), it remained a wish, at least throughout the period this study was conducted. The implication of this is that IRC's intervention was devoid of direct engagement with the child ex-combatants. Many of the children interviewed did not really know of the organisation's existence.

Another organisation that is visible in the reintegration programme for child soldiers is the Children Assistance Programme (CAP). A child rights based advocacy organisation, CAP works for the well-being of all people, especially children, by rendering various forms of social services to all categories of disadvantaged children, abandoned and unaccompanied, war-affected, and those that are socially and economically deprived. Although the scope of its work transcends child soldiers, CAP has shown a great deal of commitment to the cause of reintegration. Being more of a skill acquisition centre, CAP's role in reintegration is more of helping ex-child soldiers to acquire the necessary skill that will make them economically sufficient. By building the capacities of ex-child combatants, CAP would have succeeded in creating more jobs in the informal sector.

From the interaction with some ex-child soldiers that were undergoing training at the centre, it was apparent that CAP was a success story as far as the reintegration programme was concerned. Interviews were conducted with child soldiers and staff of the organisation. The interviews revealed on the one hand, the challenges faced by the children in the course of their reintegration and, on the other hand, the constraints confronting CAP in executing its mandate. One of the general views expressed by the child ex-soldiers was that though in CAP, their lives appeared to be meaningful, on leaving the centre at the end of each day, they were confronted with the harsh reality of life, especially in the areas of feeding and accommodation. The children considered their placement in jobs and in schools after the initial rehabilitation process as desirable but lamented the apparent lack of financial assistance afterwards. Members of staff interviewed spoke on their programmes for the ex-child soldiers. According to them, CAP regularly monitored the progress made by those children placed in schools. The organisation also assisted those who wanted to be on their own to establish small businesses. Most of the children who had learnt one skill or the other were also engaged and paid to execute some contracts.

Inadequate funding was identified by the staff as the greatest challenge the centre faced. In most cases, the organisation only functioned within the limit of the fund it received from international donor agencies. According to them, inasmuch as CAP would have loved to keep the children for a longer duration, the lack of fund compelled them to be released earlier once it was confirmed that some of the behavioural traits they exhibited at the point and early period of admission had disappeared. Insufficient funding was equally identified as an encumbrance to staffing. For instance, most of their staff were on contract and were not so sure of continued employment and even the sustainability of the centre.

A contentious aspect of the role of non-governmental agencies in reintegration is the relationship that exists between local NGOs such as Zorzor District Women Care and other international non-governmental organisations. Zorzor District Women Care was established to assist in resettling victims of the Liberian war. Its mode of intervention took the form of skill acquisition training for women and girls. The organisation hired few staff and maintained a manageable number of trainees. Although the organisation was not as big as those discussed earlier; inmates claimed that their lives were touched by the support provided. Like other organisations discussed, inadequate funding was mentioned as the main constraint of Zorzor.

The executive director of Zorzor, Agnes Kortimai was of the opinion that preferences were given to international NGOs by the donor agencies in terms of funding. These bigger NGOs, she averred, did not consider it expedient to engage the local NGOs in the process of project implementation. The difficulty in accessing fund, she claimed, accounted for the low profile maintained by the organisation. If her view is anything to go by, local NGOs are sidelined in the scheme of things and effort is not being made toward utilising their local knowledge. Agnes Kortimai felt that local NGOs were not well-empowered to participate in the reintegration process. According to her:

> The international NGOs are implementing for themselves. They
> are not empowering the local NGOs who are supposed to go down

to the grass roots and work. Whenever the international NGOs move out, they just pass through the town, they don't know the people, they don't speak their dialect. But the local NGOs are community based NGOs that work and know the people in the community. The international NGOs go to UNDP to get job, but remember if the international NGO go, it is the local NGOs that would remain and work with the people. People must know that even though they accused some NGOs that they have their offices in their bags, some are well established (Personal communication, June 2006).

It can be deduced that a kind of unhealthy rivalry exists among organisations that are engaged in the reintegration process. We can equally infer that there is apparent lack of trust in the local NGOs, a condition that makes it difficult for them to access fund from international funding agencies.

A major shortcoming of most local NGOs is that many are wholly dependent on international donor support; consequently, they are donor-driven in their agenda and their lifespan is determined by external funding sources. Furthermore, most of the local organisations have lost their service delivery capacity during the conflict sustained for 14 years. Even though the proprietors of these agencies have got the experience, their agencies fail to meet the assessment criteria put in place by funding agencies awarding rehabilitation and reintegration contracts.

It is also not infrequent that donor interest and local needs diverge. A classic example has to do with approaches to reconciliation. Donors seem more willing to support superficial projects in reconciliation characterised by radio jingles and sound bites than to invest in long-term solutions that could emerge from research and policies that provide new approaches to social ordering and opportunities to transform conflict. Preference for short-term, quick-fix approaches have often encouraged the creation of local NGOs, as indicated by number of jingles played on the radio, for example. Considered closely, such arrangements look very much like a scam pulled on both the targeted population, which is promised a quick-fix, and on tax payers of the donor country, whose money may not have been properly used

Consequently, Liberia's post-conflict reconstruction also requires the strengthening – if not the wholesale overhaul – of those institutions of civil society that, if not destroyed during the years of fighting, remain compromised by either their involvement with previous regimes or their pursuit of individual interests. This charge, advanced by Liberians themselves, covers political parties, religious groups, and other non-governmental organisations. Sawyer (2005), for example, discreetly notes that during the most recent conflict, donor-driven NGOs were also more easily manipulated by Charles Taylor's government through threats to withdraw their legal registration. Ensuring donor funding and remaining in the good books of the government require such skilful navigation that some NGOs spend more time on these than pursuing the objective for which they are established.

5.2   CHALLENGES OF REINTEGRATION

Reintegration programmes for child ex-combatants is carried out in partnership with specialised agencies like the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Assistance offered children and other vulnerable groups, however, is within the context of the general intervention measures for reintegration. For instance, children's social and economic intervention measures are the same as those applied to adults.

The years of war and a corresponding disruption of life have taken a toll on the economy of Liberia. With a limited economic base and the slow pace of the national recovery process, the Liberian government is at the mercy of international agencies and donors to achieve sustainable reintegration. However, if the effort channelled at reintegration of child ex-combatants must yield desirable outcomes, the government of Liberia must not only be part of such effort but should be at the forefront. Hence there is the need to know the level of involvement of the government in the process that is meant to safeguard the future of the country and forestall any possibility of a return to violent conflict. In order to analyse the constraint of government in respect of the stated points,

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intervention measures are reviewed for the participatory level of government, and informants' views on same was sought.

A key element in the peace agreement which signalled the end of the Liberian war was the establishment of a National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (NCDDRR) to implement a DDRR programme. The mandate was, however, to be achieved with the collaboration of the international community. The capacity of NCDDRR to continue with the reintegration programme when the UN and her agencies are gone is, however, in doubt. Informants were of the view that the home organisation had not been actively involved in the reintegration process. They claimed that NCDDRR was not visible in all the programmes so far executed. The response of respondents to the survey question, "who plays the best role in the reintegration of child ex-soldiers" indicated that little consideration was given the role played by the Liberian government (Table 4). Welfare organisations refer to the non-governmental organisations that are directly involved in implementing reintegration programmes.

Table 4: Assessment of the roles of stakeholders in reintegration programme
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
Liberian government	45	18
Welfare organizations	85	34
United Nations agencies	62	24.8
United Nations Mission in Lib.	58	23.2
No response	-	-
TOTAL	250	100

Question: Who plays the most important role in the reintegration of child ex-soldiers?

5.2.1   Family re-unification and Re-Socialization

The challenges of reintegration, especially for the child ex-combatants are daunting and enormous. Amos Sawyer, a onetime president of Liberia's interim government once presented the challenges in the following words:

> We have lots of kids who, in addition to all kinds of activities in the past, are now comfortable with weapons and killing. It's a very serious problem. How do you undertake rehabilitation, to change their orientation from where the use of weapons equals success, to where going back to school and respecting authority is success? Many kids know the places, and the people they killed, so there's quite a bit of hostility toward them (Amos Sawyer quoted in HRW Report, September 1994).

The above quotation is a convenient starting point for the discussion of the maladjusted personality of the child ex-combatants.

Anthropologists and psychologists have viewed childhood years as impressionable years when, through the process of socialisation, children learn the morals, values, and indeed the culture of their society. It is along this thinking that Uzoka (1980) and Kenkel (1966) posit that the major directions of personality can best be understood in terms of its development rather than its contemporaneous existence. For the child ex-combatants groomed in a culture of violence, it is only left to be determined, the level at which violence is internalised. There is, therefore, a great doubt that they feel any sense of shame or disgust when they behave badly. Their maladjustment hence makes them probable candidates for rejection and discrimination. In a way, sustainable reintegration must put into reckoning the process of unlearning the behavioural traits that run contrary to acceptable social norms.

Placing child ex-combatants in family and community setting was identified by informants, especially reintegration workers as a major challenge of reintegration. Their views were based on the notion that only a family or community setting could appropriately sanction a particular conduct. Unfortunately, some children have lost all family in the fighting while others are unable to locate theirs. Responding to cases of child soldier orphans, therefore, constitutes a knotty task for the Liberian government and other stakeholders in the reintegration programme. Responses generated from the survey of child ex-combatants equally confirmed the position of family and community in the

reintegration process (Table 5). More than 60% of the sample agreed that child ex-combatants can be best reintegrated into a family or community setting.

Table 5:   Appropriate setting for reintegration
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
School	19	7.6
Welfare homes	76	30.4
Family/Community setting	153	61.2
No response	2	0.8
TOTAL	250	100

Question: What do you consider the most appropriate setting for reintegration?

However, from views expressed by informants during in-depth interviews, providing family setting for many child ex-combatants may be next to impossible. Many that migrated to Monrovia in search of livelihood showed unwillingness in going back to their parents, and were living on their own, either alone, or with friends. Children in this category considered themselves as adults.

Under that condition, many of the informants believed the appropriate form of intervention would be to simulate a family and community setting for the children. This approach, they claimed, was used at the rehabilitation stage of DDRR and had so far formed the fulcrum of support offered by non-governmental agencies like the Don Bosco Homes. It was reasoned that if child ex-combatants are grouped into families which are headed by reintegration workers and other welfare officers, the likelihood of affinal or camaraderie bonds developing among the children would be very high. Along this line, it was also observed that children in welfare homes are more civil than those found in the streets. This is, however, without prejudicing the fact that many of those in the streets had passed through welfare homes. In social welfare, the most promising practice is a shift from institutional care towards family and community care; the latter considered to be more efficient, cost effective, and sustainable than the former. It allows

people to intervene early when social problems that leads to family break-up looms.

Placing children in family and community setting was, therefore, considered a great challenge to the government of Liberia. To many of the informants, the fact that a great deal of the child ex-combatants live on their own, without parental care, is a limiting factor on the level of success that can be achieved in reintegration. Others reasoned that the programme, when eventually terminated, would leave behind many street children with dire consequences on the security situation in and around Monrovia. The JIU had so far claimed a high level success with tracing and reunification. This was confirmed in Williamson and Carter (2005) report, which ascribes the high number of child ex-combatants in Monrovia to migration from the interior:

> Of the children formally demobilized, 99 percent were reunited with family members or relatives. However, some of those reunited subsequently migrated to other areas rather than reintegrate locally. This drift to other areas was likely influenced by the desire to find livelihood opportunities (Williamson and Carter, 2005: xi).

Considering the high level of individualism and social disorderliness for which cities are known, it may prove difficult to reintegrate children who have learned to survive through illegitimate means. The effort of JIU at reintegrating child ex-combatants economically is noted. However, such efforts fit into the long-term plan. A major challenge to the Liberian government is, therefore, how to provide daily livelihood for children living far away from parents or relatives such that they can concentrate on measures that aim at their economic reintegration. On how this can be achieved, informants were of the opinion that children living away from parents should be offered boarding facility throughout the period of schooling or skill acquisition. In this manner, the urge to survive by all means could be repressed in their consciousness. Although this measure, they all agreed, could be expensive for the government to bear, they were of the view that with the help of international communities, it could be achieved.

Many of the child ex-combatants are no longer children in the context of the word; they have passed 18 years and have established families of their own. To this category, their most urgent need is employment. They want to work and earn a living. However, the challenge of providing employment for a large number of people made either jobless or unemployable by war is daunting. Informants held that the government of Liberia must do everything possible to woo foreign investors. If many of the child ex-combatants are not gainfully employed, peace in Liberia cannot be guaranteed. It may not take the form of a return to war, but will imminently manifest in a surge in cases of robbery and petty stealing. The employment need of the child ex-combatants was further confirmed in the response to a survey question on their needs (Table 6).

It may be argued that a fewer number of respondents identified schooling and skill acquisition as most pressing needs because a large number of them were currently enrolled in schools or skill acquisition centres.

Table 6: Respondents' perception of their needs
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
School	38	15.2
Skill acquisition	26	10.4
Housing	73	29.2
Job	113	45.2
TOTAL	250	100

Question: Which of these represent your most pressing need?

Another factor in the re-socialisation of child ex-combatants is self-awareness of the children. An important aspect of self-awareness is the attachment of positive value to self. When this is lacking, it will be difficult to motivate individuals to act to their advantage rather than disadvantage. Readiness to acquire formal education and vocational skills was taken to be positive value. In this study, this being the case, majority of the children would be said to possess

positive value as many indicated their interests in either going to school or attending a skill acquisition centre (see Table 10).

Recognising the harmony and divergence in the professed and observed behaviour of people is the task of every ethnographer that is interested in knowing why people behave in a particular form. Most often than not, it is found out that the actual behaviour of people is different from that which they profess. This may be the case with the child ex-combatants. Observation showed that many choose the option of school or vocation as the case may be not out of conviction or desire to make something tangible out of their choice. Rather, their involvement with either is a matter of routine. The implication of this has started manifesting as many that acquired vocational skills have sold the tool kits given to them at graduation. Many that attend schools have equally been shown to be interested more in the subsistence allowance paid them than in what the school can make of them.

In order to know if the child ex-combatants feel any sense of shame or disgust when they behave badly, and those conducts that they consider shameful, survey respondents were asked to specify such acts that they consider disgusting (Table 7). About 66% mentioned stealing, 7% thought raping, and 12% felt fighting could make them feel a sense of shame. The remaining 15% mentioned other acts that include killing, smoking Indian hemp, and other sundry misdemeanour.

Table 7:   Respondents' perception of Shameful Acts.
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
Fighting	30	12
Raping	18	7.2
Stealing	165	66
Others (killing, smoking etc)	37	14.8
TOTAL	250	100

Question: Which act do you consider shameful to commit?

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The children view that they would feel indignity committing any of the stated acts that run contrary to their day-to-day behaviour. They perpetrate different ranges of crimes such as stealing from shops, snatching mobile phones and bags, breaking into homes, and getting involved in armed robbery activities. The implication of the contradiction in the children's attitudinal profile in a way is that the child ex-combatants might have in them an element of internal control but are constrained by the prevailing economic condition of their environment, in which case they are likely to behave more responsibly if they are more secured socially and economically. The thought that the child ex-combatants have formed themselves into street children with a special sub-culture may as well confirm them as maladapted children who deserve appropriate intervention.

The child ex-combatants were also asked to specify actions taken against them which they will consider too humiliating to bear. Majority of the respondents (58%) said if they were publicly apprehended and beaten for stealing. Twenty four percent said they would feel humiliated if the police arrested and put them in cell. Others cited instances that include being sent out of school for not paying school fees, and being deprived of their subsistence allowance (Table 8).

Table 8: Respondents' perception of humiliating acts
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
If arrested by the police	61	24.4
If held and punished for stealing	146	58.4
If sent out of school for fees	13	5.2
If deprived of subsistence allowance	21	8.4
No response	4	1.6
TOTAL	250	100

Question: Mention an action taken against you that you may find too humiliating?

The admission that certain action taken against them can make them remorseful one may probably draw a conclusion that child ex-combatants have some self-

esteem. It was however observed that this may not necessarily be the case, especially with those that live on their own and those permanently in the streets. Many informants were of the view that child ex-combatants committed atrocities on daily basis despite the fact that they have been apprehended several times. In their opinion, it did not really matter to the children the actions taken against them. Past action, they opined, have not deterred the children from continuing with crimes.

From all of these, it may be inferred that whereas child ex-combatants are aware of vice and virtue, the structural conditions of weakened family system and dysfunctional communities have proved incapable of neutralising the negative values that they have imbibed and imbue them with values that are acceptable to the society. An approach which from data may achieve success is the issue of religious support to child ex-combatants.

5.2.2   Educational Support and Skill Acquisition

UNICEF estimated that about 7,000 child ex-combatants were identified for its Community Education Investment Programme (CEIP). This component of the child reintegration programme focused on placement of child ex-combatants in standard elementary education and provision of material support to elementary schools (Personal Communication with Fatumah Ibrahim, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF).

So many children walk the streets of Monrovia in a manner that places a huge question mark on the ongoing reintegration efforts. It may be ordinarily thought that they, after all, are without knowledge of the programme. But most of the child ex-combatants interviewed claimed they were aware of the process (Table 9). This reality forces the conclusion that the programme has failed to meet the needs of the children.

Table 9: Respondents' awareness of reintegration programme
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
Aware	165	66
Not aware	80	32
No response	5	2
TOTAL	250	100

Question: Are you aware that there is currently a reintegration programme for ex-child soldiers?

Meanwhile, the high level of awareness can be said to have as well translated into huge participation in the different empowerment programmes of reintegration (Table 10). Sixty two percent of the respondents are currently enrolled in school, 24% have been trained in a vocation, 12% are still undergoing training and 2% have not participated in a measure toward achieving economic reintegration.

Table 10:   Current occupation of respondents
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
Enrolled in school	155	62
Have been trained in a skill	60	24
Still undergoing training	30	12
Not engaged	5	2
No response	-	-
TOTAL	250	100

Question: What are you currently doing?

Considering the number of respondents enrolled in school (62%), and those that have been either trained in a skill (24%) or are still undergoing training (12%), it may be suggested that about 98% of the ex-child soldiers have either undergone or are undergoing reintegration. This, however, is at variance with the

claim of not being aware of the programme made by 32% of the respondents (see Table 9). This has a far-reaching implication. One way it can be explained is that some of the child ex-soldiers do not really consider enrolment at schools and skill acquisition as reintegration per se. On the other hand, they may be denying knowledge of reintegration just because some of their expectations have not been met.

An in-depth interview conducted with child ex-combatants who have been trained revealed that majority are not practicing the vocation they learnt. Indeed many confirmed selling the tools given them at the various training centres immediately they left the centres. In this case, the skills have not translated into livelihood in the absence of an expanding economy and/or express linkages to income generation opportunities. Further insight into the attitude of the children was provided by a key informant, Bill Jarkloh:

> I must tell you, most of these children are big now. Many of them are not convinced to go to school. Those that received training on handiwork like carpentry, engineering, soap making, they get few tools and are told to go and work. How do you think that can be possible! Somebody who was used to making a lot of money from the way they used gun to harass people to collect thousands of dollars from them…. I think what they (JIU) should have done after giving them tools to work with was to put in place mechanism that will monitor them that will check on them, know where they are and encourage them to apply the tools. There have never been any follow up. (Personal Communication, 2006).

From this view, it is pertinent to conclude that the mere training and handing over of start-up tools to the former child soldiers would not amount to reintegration. In fact, some of the child ex-combatants reported having families which they cater for. They claimed that even with the tools, there was no way they could meet their financial commitments to their families.

What could be deduced from the above scenario is that measures of economic reintegration for the children were not well researched into before being adopted. But Fatumah Ibrahim, the head of Child Protection in UNICEF, thought otherwise. In an assessment of the programmes of intervention, she opined thus:

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> The other part of the reintegration programme consists of providing children with skills training and that is usually for the older children. They could get a lot of support with the local NGOs to provide skills training and apprenticeship for the children and before we did that, we actually team up with ILO in 2004 to do our assessment of their training needs. However, as much as these children are accessing these programmes, there are a lot of challenges (Personal Communication, 2006).

The view of this informant points toward the inadequacies of reintegration measures. For instance, it indicates that the institutions are not built around popular participation and sound knowledge of the socio-economic reality of the Liberian situation.

The conceptualisation of certain needs as universal may be a defining factor in the prioritising of intervention measures like skill acquisition. In most Third World countries, skill acquisition and capacity building are prioritised in poverty reduction programmes. In doing so, little or no consideration is given the societal needs and the size of the economy. For example, effort is not always made to match the supply of a skill with the demand. In the case of Liberia, with the economy still struggling to develop, and the earning power of the people yet low, newly trained child ex-combatants may find it very difficult to garner enough patronage for their skills.

In Williamson and Carter (2005:5), education is identified by many youths as being essential to building peace in Liberia:

> Whenever children and youth spoke with the DCOF team in Liberia, they emphasised the importance of education. Adults did frequently stress the same point. For example, at the youth rally in Monrovia on February 12, Mr. Carter asked participants to divide into five groups and the first question he asked them to address was "what do we consider most important to our survival today? The first and in two cases the only response of all five groups was "education".

Truly, the child ex-combatants may yearn for education but how viable to achieving reintegration for him is the educational measures provided in the

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reintegration programme? An assessment of the implementation context of the educational support for child ex-combatants is done to ascertain the effectiveness of the assistance structure in the overall context of reintegration.

The programme (educational support) was said to be initiated against the backdrop of collapsed educational system in Liberia so as to meet the demands of about 30% of more than 70% demobilised ex-combatants who indicate preference for formal education (UNDP, 2005:2). The programme makes use of existing and available institutions. The schools are mainly private institutions run by religious groups or organised private sector and are located in Monrovia and its extended environs. The support provided to the students covers registration and tuition fees, books and study materials, uniform and subsistence allowance, and related charges including external examination fees. The fees are paid in three equal instalments and subsequent payment is made on the basis of participation tracking by a team of field monitors and submission of progress report to the JIU by the relevant school authorities. Educational support to the students covers an initial period of one year while subsequent support is based on the performance of the students and availability of resources. In all, the total duration of support is not to extend beyond three years. The duration is linked to the 6-3-3 education system and the duration of the DDRR programme (UNDP, 2005:2). The placement of the child ex-combatants in formal education is, however, not automatic, as the ex-combatant is required to choose any school of his/her choice in Liberia and meet the minimum requirement for admission into that school independent of the JIU.

In the Focus Group Discussions held with school-going child ex-combatants, most of them reported the education support as problematic. The area where most of them found disagreeable and unacceptable was the duration of the support. They could not imagine what would become of their fate after spending three years in school. Many of them that claimed to have lost their parents to the war, and had also lost all hopes of being reunited with relatives decried the insensitivity of the Liberian government and the JIU to their plight. For instance,

Richard was 12 years old when he was conscripted at Gbarnga. He has been reunited with his father and has this to say about the education support:

> I am going to school through reintegration programme presently. When we started they were giving us $30 but they reduced it to $15 and it wasn't what they told us. So that is trying to bring conflict in the programme. After 3 years, there would not be any allowance or assistance for us. I love education. I want to go to higher institution that I will be well taught. I want to graduate from high school to be a good person in future. (Personal Communication, 2006).

However, many are not as lucky as Richard to be in school. For Hassan, 14 years old from Lofa County, there is no equity in the education support programme.

> I went through the reintegration programme but my ID got some problems. I still want to go back to school. My parents are not having money to send me. They make farm, sometimes they cut bushes to make money. I am not happy with the reintegration programme because some of my friends are going to school but I cannot go to school. It is not everybody that is benefiting from it. They should change my ID card so that I can go back to school. (Personal Communication, 2006).

In a condition somehow similar to Hassan's, at least in respect of education support, is Akwoe, 14 years old. He presents his experience thus:

> I started fighting when I was 8 years and I fought for 4 years. I was living by myself at Westpoint…. Now I live with my friend in Clara town, he is 19 years and he is selling bread. I am not doing anything now. I went through the reintegration programme but when I went to school they said I should come back because the school is full. (Personal Communication, 2006).

Other respondents shared the view of child ex-combatants about the limited educational support granted them. Key informants that include school heads and rehabilitation homes officials were worried over what fate would befall the children after 3 years of assistance. They all emphasised the importance of education to achieving sustainable peace and development in the country. It was the view of many that the Liberian war was due to the high level of illiteracy in the country as most of those that fought the war were illiterate. They therefore

opined that the issue of education must not be taken with levity. The view of Mr. Weah, the Principal of Henri W. Dennis United Methodist High School is quite instructive in this regard:

> They said it is going to last for 3 years, but the question I asked was that here is a boy in Monrovia without parent; you put him in school for only 3 years, 7, 8, 9 grades. If he gets to the 10th grade who pays the fees, this is a great problem they have to address. We met with them in our meetings and we raise some of the issues. We are insisting that they should go all way as long as the children remain in school. If the donors are not coming with fund, let government design a programme through which they will pump money into the education of the people (Personal Communication, 2006).

The mode in which education support was offered to the child ex-combatants undermines the effectiveness and sustainability of the programme. Children are not housed and many live all alone. The number of them that claimed to be living in the streets is alarming (Table 11). With majority of them let loose to be on their own especially after school hours there is much doubt about the level of impact which the hours spent in school can make in their readjustment process. The inability to monitor and control what the children do within the larger period of the day is a major setback for the programme.

Table 11: Residence status of respondents
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
Welfare home	15	6
Street	70	28
Foster parent	12	4.8
Immediate family	20	8
Family friend	10	4
Friends	38	15.2
Own my own	82	32.4
Others	3	1.2
TOTAL	250	100

Question: Where have you been living since the commencement of reintegration programme?

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In order to ensure that the children are regular in school, there is in place an extensive tracking to ascertain that they have 75% attendance. It is usually on this that the payment of subsistence allowance is based. However, many of the child ex-combatants claimed that they go to school so as to qualify for the allowance. This view tallies with the opinion expressed about the relevance of subsistence allowance to participation in reintegration programme. Majority of the child soldiers claimed that they would not be willing to participate in training or go to school without the subsistence allowance.

At the Focus Group Discussion sessions conducted with the children, the issue of the relevance of the subsistence allowance was well debated. Many of the discussants claimed they used the allowance to transport themselves to their various training centres and schools. Some of the discussants were, however, of the view that the allowance would have been irrelevant had it been that they were housed in their training centres or schools. The views expressed tallied with the responses generated from the survey respondents (Table 12).

Table 12: Respondents' attitude to the payment of subsistence allowance
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
Cannot	90	36
No	74	29.6
Maybe	52	20.8
Yes	30	12
No answer	4	1.6
TOTAL	250	100

Question: Would you continue with training/schooling without the subsistence allowance?

Many other factors point towards the constraints that the Liberian government faced in reintegration. For instance, it was observed that the level of infrastructural decay put the government at the mercy of private sector operators. In the case of schools, it was observed that the schools where the child ex-

combatants were put were mainly private/mission schools. Making public infrastructure work requires that huge fund be pumped into the different sectors. As the case is presently, such fund is still out of reach of the Liberian government. Another observation made was in respect of the level of corruption in the country. So many public officials were seen by the masses to be benefiting hugely from the reintegration programme. The recent sack of the head of NCDDRR on allegations of corruption confirmed this (Personal Communication with Johnson Doe, 2006).

5.2.3 Trauma Counselling and Psychological care

Many child ex-combatants were reported to have suffered Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome such as nightmares, sleeplessness, hallucination, anxiety or depression. Others had difficulty concentrating or displayed aggressive or hyperactive behaviour. As part of reintegration measures, UNICEF established some community-based transit homes where children were de-traumatised and reunited with their families. The transit home usually followed up the reunification to see how the children and families were faring.

During the focus group discussions, participants were asked if they felt guilt about their acts during the war. All of them said they were sorry for what they did but claimed ignorance of the full implication of their acts as of the time they were involved in the conflict. In their view, acceptance into the society and provision for their basic needs constituted the only way they would be healed of the constant trauma they passed through. They considered the hardship they currently passed through as reducing the prospects of their forgetting the war experiences.

In a study funded by UNICEF, Whittington (2005) suggests that it is appropriate to consider that traditional healing and religious support are additional forms of support that can potentially aid healing of those who suffer violence or abuse. He further avers that traditional practices are not universally benign, because some are harmful. On the strength of this is the suggestion that organisations determined what a practice involves before encouraging or

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supporting it. The suggestion of Whittington (ibid) dwells wholly on those who suffer violence and abuse. If cultural support may assist in healing victims of violence, this study contemplates the possibility of religious support as measures that may assist child ex-combatants in overcoming trauma and other psychological problems. It is opined that built-in or internalised controls mainly rely on such deterrents as the fear of supernatural punishment, in which case the individual expects to be punished, even though no one in the community may be aware of wrongdoing. This type of control can only be achieved with religion. Christianity and Islam are the main religions in Liberia though, in Monrovia, the presence of Christianity is rather total.

The child ex-combatants that formed part of the survey were asked if they believed there was God (Table 13). About 96.8% said they believed, while 3.2% were undecided. None of the respondents said that there was no God. The question on their knowledge of God was supposed to form the basis of other questions that are relevant to the issues of religious support.

Table 13:   Respondents' attitude toward God
Source:Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
Yes	242	96.8
No	-	-
I don't know	8	3.2
No response	-	-
TOTAL	250	100

Question: Do you believe that there is God?

The respondents were also asked if they believed that God punished those that broke his laws and rewarded those who kept it (Table 14). Almost ninety three percent claimed they believed and the remaining 7.2% said they did not know.

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Table 14: Respondents' perception of the nature of God

Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
I believe	232	92.8
I don't believe	-	-
I don't know	18	7.2
No response	-	-
TOTAL	250	100

Question: Do you believe that God punishes those that break His laws and rewards others that keep them?

The importance of this question was to determine their knowledge of sanction for both good and bad conduct at the realm of the supernatural.

Another question asked them was if they worshiped in church/mosque (Table 15). Here, only 11.2% claim attending regularly, about 8.8% claim they sometimes attend 14% say they seldom attend and 65.2% do not attend at all. The above data indicates that more than half of the child ex-combatants do not have any link with an avenue of religious support. From observation, only the children that live in welfare Homes have access to religious support. For instance, at Don Bosco Homes, the inmates are evangelised on daily basis.

Table 15: Respondents' attitude toward place of religious worship

Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
Regularly	28	11.2
Sometimes	22	8.8
Seldom	35	14
Never	163	65.2
No response	2	0.8
TOTAL	250	100

Question: How often do you attend a church/mosque?

The state of religious support to the child ex-combatants constitutes a challenge to religions, especially Christianity which is renowned for evangelism. A key informant who was an active member of Saint Lutheran Anglican Church was asked if the church had any special programme by which it reached out to child ex-combatants. His response was in the negative. The informant further said that even if such programme was put in place, it would be difficult to track down the children as many of them did not have a fixed address. From the observation made during the church services attended by the researcher, even the church did not anticipate the threat inherent in the absence of a sustainable reintegration process as it affects the former child soldiers. Mention was not usually made of them, neither was intercessory prayer offered on their behalf. Their importance to the entire peace process was visibly down played.

There was evidence of religious support offered at the level of traditional religion (Table 16). For instance, 18% of child ex-soldiers claimed to have undergone traditional cleansing and healing ceremonies.

Table 16: Extent of participation in traditional cleansing ceremony
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
Yes	45	18
No	201	80.4
No response	4	1.6
TOTAL	250	100

Question: Did you at any point pass through traditional cleansing ceremony?

The ceremonies at the primary level were to assist in overcoming trauma and other psychological problems. The implication of this is that while the healing and cleansing ceremonies may serve to obliterate the memory of the nasty experiences especially the atrocities and heinous crimes committed during war, it may be inadequate in filling the gap in the social life of the children. The ceremonies, according to Agnes Kortimai, the Executive Director, Zorzor District Women Care, is similar to baptism ceremony for a person who wants to live a Christian

life (Personal Communication, 2006). The very essence of baptism cannot be fulfilled if the person is not taught the ethics of Christianity. In the same manner, the traditional healing and cleansing ceremonies would not graduate from being just a symbolic ritual if there was no effort to impact the ethics, values and norms of the society on the children. These aspects, many of the children claimed were not part of the cleansing process (Table 17).

Table 17: The content of traditional cleansing ceremony
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
Yes	5	2
No	36	14.4
I don't know	195	78
No response	14	5.6
TOTAL	250	100

Question: Did the traditional cleansing ceremony incorporate any form of teaching on what is right or wrong?

Religious support may not only serve the purpose of building in the children internalised controls but equally come as a means of showing love to the child ex-combatants. In this regard, it is expected that religious bodies and organisations impress on the society, the need to show love to the children. In the case of Christianity, the stories of the prodigal son and the missing sheep are apt to teach forgiveness and love. It was, however, observed that while forgiveness was a common theme in Sunday sermons, the case of the child soldiers was not prioritised. What this shows is that even at the realm of religion, the awareness of children as a group with special reintegration needs is just not there.

5.2.4 Community Factors

In 2005, the United Nations adopted the following definition for reintegration:

> Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility and often necessitates long-term external assistance.

From the above definition, one can identify "social" and "economic" as dimensions of reintegration. Historically, the literature on DDR utilises the term "social" to characterise aspects of reintegration relating to the constructs of acceptance, community integration and relationship capacities. It is definitely within this context that the Liberian DDRR programme focused on community reconciliation and participation as essential to post-conflict recovery. The Strategy and Implementation Framework for the Liberian DDRR drafted in 2003 identified five programme results tied to the general objective of contributing to the consolidation of peace, national security, reconciliation and development through the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration of ex-combatants into civil society. The number four programme result of the framework emphasised the "social" dimension of reintegration, with the indicative activity: "Ex-combatants are received into and contribute to the development of their communities." In considering the social constraints of reintegration therefore, it is pertinent to examine the extent of their acceptance into their communities, the level of their participation in community, social and traditional events, and the coverage of their social networks.

Central to the reintegration process in Liberia is the issue of the public perception of ex-combatants, including child soldiers who are mostly seen as enfant terrible. The major challenge in this regard revolved around making the civil populace, especially victims of the war, perceive the ex-combatants in more positive ways and, more importantly, accept them back into the society. The way

reintegration assistance was packaged, has in a way resulted in more resentment of the ex-combatants. The civil population is of the view that all the assistance from development agencies goes to ex-combatants and not their victims. This has perpetuated the ex-combatants/victims dichotomy. The specific targeting of ex-combatants for reintegration assistance such as skill acquisition trainings and employment equally have implications for social cohesion at the community level. Some of the child ex-combatants complained that their enrolments in specialised reintegration programmes had made the ex-combatant label stick on them. This, in their view prolonged their alienation from the wider society and jeopardised their reintegration prospects.

The reception some child ex-combatants received when they went back to their families was mixed. Some families refused to accept the children, fearing them as killers, or afraid of neighbours' reactions to their return. In other cases, some were accepted by their families but were taunted and ridiculed on their return, forcing them to leave home. The integration of child ex-combatants into their communities was also hampered by the displacement of families.

Two levels of acceptance were identified in this study. The first has to do with the level of acceptance gained through self-reporting and the second entails the perceived level of acceptance from the community of the child ex-combatant. During the Focus Group Discussions, 68 of the 96 child ex-combatant participants, representing 70.83% reported that they encountered rejection when they returned to their communities and that they were viewed with fear and distrust.

The immediate communities of the child ex-combatants were the schools and the vocational training centres. Interviews with school principals and proprietors of skills acquisition centres revealed that it was commonplace for some ex-combatants to refuse to participate in some activities. Mr. Jonathan Clitton, the Principal of Roxel High School was of the view that the reintegration process was not easy. According to him,

> It was not easy coping with these children because on daily basis
> they have confrontations with the teachers. They were like

frustrated in school... they like to do what they wanted and not to be told what to do (Personal Communication, 2006)

In short, they lack the sense of belonging to the wider society. Many of the ex-combatant respondents when asked during the FGDs, how they might fit into the school environment, could not offer any answer or a meaningful suggestion.

Child ex-combatants engaged in social interaction, mainly, among their ranks and this has further accounted for their alienation from the wider society. During the FGDs, the child ex-soldiers were asked whom they spent their free time with. Seventy-two participants, representing 75% of the FGDs population reported that they were always with some colleagues they met at the various rehabilitation camps. Child ex-combatants in this category said they had no family in Monrovia. Bill Jarkloh, a key informant, explained that many people still found it difficult to trust the child ex-soldiers because of the atrocities committed by them and other people believed that they were still violent.

The child ex-combatants must recognise their problem of maladjustment and accept the fact of their moral ineptitude. In order words, they should face the cognitive challenges of coming to terms with the ways of thinking and feeling that are in consonance with the value system considered appropriate in the Liberian society. In view of the containment of the operational framework for reintegration and the observable attitudinal behaviour of many of the child ex-combatants, this study has examined the level of social support, especially moral and religious, available to the ex-combatants in the course of reintegration. This is done, bearing in mind the assumption that child ex-combatants are devoid of internalised control, in which case, they are seen to lack beliefs that are thoroughly ingrained and that make each of them to be personally responsible for his good conduct. It is, therefore, hypothesised that the absence of a moral framework for reintegration may be responsible for the slow pace of reintegration of child ex-soldiers.

5.2.5 Child Ex-Combatants Self-Perception

By the middle of 2007, the reintegration programme would finally come to an end after three years of implementation. In order to further determine those factors that constitute challenges for the programme, this study examines the local perception of the entire process. Under this purview, data was collected on how child ex-combatants perceived themselves, how the society perceived the children, and the way different segments of the Liberian society assessed reintegration. An analysis of the local perception of reintegration, it must be understood, is essential to determining the level of success of the programme. In which case, the approval or disapproval of an intervention programme as the case may be, will go a long way to indicate if the programme actually meets the aspirations of the people.

Before the commencement of reintegration, child ex-combatants were assumed to be socially maladjusted. Three years after the programme has commenced, it may be necessary to know how these children now perceive themselves. When asked about their perception of themselves, 48% of participants in the survey said they were better off now compared to one year ago. About 18% claimed they were worse off, while 33% felt their condition remained unchanged (Table 18). The implication of this data is that about 51% of the respondents felt that reintegration had not impacted positively on their lives.

Table 18: Respondents' perception of their current living status
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
I am better of	120	48
I am worse of	44	17.6
Nothing has changed	83	33.2
No response	3	1.2
TOTAL	250	100

Question: How would you consider your life now compared to one year ago?

Another point to be considered about the child ex-soldier's perception of himself has to do with the inclusiveness of the child soldier's category. From 12 FGDs sessions conducted with former child soldiers, 67 out of 96 participants, representing 70% of the respondents, took exception to being considered as child soldiers. The conviction of those in this group was exhibited in the outrage of a participant in the Focus Group Discussion. Although Mohammed Kamara was still 17 years old and indeed started fighting at the age of 10 years, he objected to being called a child soldier. According to him:

> But let me tell you, not all child soldiers you see are child soldiers. What do they mean calling us child soldiers? As for me, anything you expect me to use, I can use it, so am not a child soldiers. Where you feel a big man will reach, am first to reach there, am not happy they call me child soldier. If I know about gun, am not a child soldiers. Someone who fought from the beginning to the end is not child soldiers. In fact I go to the hottest spot where big men cannot go. I go there without being hurt. So am not child soldier (Personal communication, 2006)

From the data on self perception, it is apparent that many of the child ex-soldiers considered themselves to have outgrown the child typology. Meanwhile, it was observed that the desire of some to be treated as adults was not supported by the behaviour they exhibited. On many occasions they yelled intermittently during discussions.

The picture of the child ex-combatants which the larger society harbours is a major factor in determining the performance of reintegration programme. For instance, if the children are no longer treated with contempt, it will be assumed that they have been reintegrated. On the other hand, if their presence brings fear in the minds of people, it will be that there is still much to be done. Although many of the informants claimed the children had been accepted into the society, from personal observation, we should rather talk about tolerance than acceptance. Everything in the relationship between the larger society and the former child soldiers suggests suspicion. In fact, many Liberians who suffered from the war felt bad that the children were offered monetary assistance in the form of subsistence allowance.

The rate at which reintegration has fared is depicted differently by child ex-combatants and key stakeholders involved in the implementation of the programme. Within the child ex-combatants ranks, 36.4% of respondents were of the view that reintegration programme has performed creditably well. Fourteen percent felt it has performed averagely, and 46% believed that the programme was a failure (Table 19).

Table 19: Respondents' assessment of reintegration programme
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
Excellent	91	36.4
Average	36	14.4
Bad	115	46
No response	8	3.2
TOTAL	250	100

Question: How would you rate the performance of reintegration programme?

A further analysis of the survey instrument indicated that many of those that considered the programme a failure were living on their own, whereas those that believed it was a huge success were currently living in rehabilitation homes.

Similarly, many of the key informants were of the view that there had not been much to commend the programme for. The planning and implementation processes were popularly condemned. From the views expressed by Agnes Kortimai (Personal communication, 2006), reintegration has not succeeded in Liberia like in other countries she had read about. According to the woman who is the Executive Director of Zorzor District Women Care, if reintegration has been working, many of the children would not have been in the street stealing from people, harassing many and robbing with knives and cutlasses. She opined further that the Liberian experience with reintegration was different from that of Bosnia which she had read. Lavana Kortimai, Liberian Deputy Minister of Commerce equally considered the programme a failure. In his words:

> For me I don't know much about the programme, but it does not
> seem to be happening. A lot of children are moving around in
> Monrovia and in other counties. There is no comprehensive
> development programme for the children (Personal
> communication, 2006)

From this, it can be inferred that many Liberians have no faith in the programme. Other informants as well regard the programme as a form of window dressing since there will not be much on ground to build on when the programme eventually winds up.

5.2.6   Child Ex-Combatants' Assessment of the Reintegration Process

What consideration is given the role of the child ex-combatants in the reintegration measures that are put in place on their accounts? How knowledgeable are they about the concept and context of reintegration? And are they well prepared for participation in the programme? Answers to these and more questions will here reveal more, the challenges that confront the reintegration of the child ex-combatants in Liberia. Above other things, it must be emphasised that if reintegration must achieve the purpose for which it was established, the process must not only involve participation from the child ex-combatants, rather its success must be seen in the very context of the extent to which the children agree that they have been or are being reintegrated.

There may not be any doubt that former child soldiers are aware that there is a programme going by the name 'reintegration' in the country. This has been confirmed earlier in this chapter. But it may be necessary to determine the kind of awareness that confers knowledge, since knowledge must equally be seen as the basic factor which stimulates capacity. In which case, how well the child ex-combatants are aware of the objectives of reintegration, and what level of understanding they possess from the awareness. This is very important, most especially when reintegration is also about reorienting child ex-combatants toward cultivating positive values. The main factors of analysis here are the

policy framework of reintegration and both the qualitative and quantitative data which the field work yielded.

The background of the programme can be used as a pointer to the level of involvement of the child ex-combatants in the deliberation that led to the design of the programme. For instance, the JIU and UNDP Reintegration Briefs, Paper No 2, provided insight into how the measures of reintegration programme adopted were arrived at. It is written in the paper that:

> Therefore during the Demobilization process in Liberia, sets of questionnaire were administered to the ex-combatants whereby they were expected to choose which of the options met their preferences for reintegration. It was on the basis of the expressed options of the ex-combatants that specific measures of assistance were elaborated (JIU & UNDP, 2005:1)

What can be inferred from the above is that the ex-combatants were taken as an all inclusive category, containing both adult soldiers and child soldiers. An arrangement like this may, therefore, not yield a desired end because efforts were not in place to prioritise the needs of children. This was further confirmed by the absence of a distinctive category for the child ex-combatants in the structural framework of reintegration. According to UNDP's Strategic and Operational Framework of Reintegration Support for Ex-Combatants (May 2004:25), "the estimated 13,000 CAFF will be going through programmes similar to the adult programs as described in the standard reintegration assistance package matrix gaining identical benefits where the modular training programs to be designed for them will take their age into consideration and include literacy and numeracy components". It was further said in the framework that for those who were going into programs similar to the adults and were in the 14-18 age category, their entitlements would include training allowance and start-up kits upon completion of their training programs (ibid). This " by the way" approach to the reintegration of child ex-combatants can be said to be due to the failure of intervention agencies to consider the child ex-combatants as a major factor in the Liberian civil war. The failure of reintegration to conceptualise child soldiers as adolescents who

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have missed out of the usual moral, normal culture and values socialisation gains from the community and family is a daunting challenge of the programme.

During various FGDs, the child ex-combatants were asked what in their own view constituted reintegration. The response generated indicated that most of the children felt the programme was all about going to school or acquiring a vocational skill. In the same vein, the respondents in the survey, when asked to indicate the area they considered the main challenge of reintegration programme, largely identified education and skill acquisition (Table 20).

Table 20: Respondents' consideration of the main challenge of reintegration
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
Going back to school	95	38
Skill acquisition	60	24
Reunification with parents	52	20.8
Others	38	15.2
No response	5	2
TOTAL	250	100

Question: What would you consider as the main challenge of reintegration of child ex-soldiers?

As can be seen from the above table, about 38% of respondents specified going back to school, 24% felt it was skill acquisition, about 21% indicated that they would like to be reunited with their parents. Some 15% mentioned some other challenges, while 2% failed to respond to the question. It is instructive that none of them mentioned attitudinal change as crucial to the reintegration process. An inference that can be drawn from the above data is that only a few of the children are indeed willing to go back and live under their parents.

It was observed that what the child ex-combatants claimed they desired were those things which the agencies had been focused on. As children or maladjusted youths, they may be seen to be ignorant of their deficiencies, especially their not being imbued with sufficient moral constraints and not having

a clear concept of what is and what is not proper and acceptable behaviour. The consistency and strength of the value placed on education can be said to reflect the assumption that education is seen as a means to better economic circumstances with innate capacity to stem the tide of anti- social behaviour. What this assumption may after all have failed to consider is the fact that the model or behaviour associated with child ex–combatants are manifestations of identity established as adolescents. Changing the imbibed identity may prove problematic. Overcoming the distrust they learned can be difficult. These and others may go beyond the scope of what three years educational support and skill acquisition can overcome. If the culture of violence learned must be unlearned, the process must be best conceptualised as involving culture change and its social concomitants.

Local participation is mostly reckoned as a solution to the problem of project implementation and advocates of participation often point to its potentials for improving the technical effectiveness of service delivery and its importance for enhancing local control, self-determination, and political freedom (Brinkerhoff, 1980). Although emphasis on local participation is mainly with reference to rural development, the importance of local participation in the context of reintegration is seen in the light of making the child ex-combatants have a say in both the manner and approach to their reintegration. In order to ascertain the level at which child ex-soldiers were involved in the process of designing or planning the reintegration programme, survey respondents were asked if they or any of their friends were involved in determining what they would do. Two hundred and forty six respondents representing 98% of the sample answered the question in the negative, whereas 4 respondents or 2% were undecided. No respondent answered the question in the affirmative (Table 21).

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Table 21: Participation in design and implementation of reintegration
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
Yes, we were involved	-	-
No, we were not involved	246	98
I don't know	4	2
No response	-	-
TOTAL	250	100

Question: Were you or any of your friends involved in the planning of reintegration?

The child ex-combatants were also asked whether they thought the reintegration programme could have achieved more if their views were sought on the programme. Whereas 52% believed the programme would have achieved more, only about 7% felt it would have under-achieved. Thirty eight percent felt it would have made no difference, while two percent were undecided (Table 22). From the above data, it may be rightly said that about 40% of the former child soldiers do not in a way know the importance of their having input in a process that is meant to reshape their lives. Such response could not be considered strange at least when thought is given to the level of education of the children. This, meanwhile, will not serve as a suggestion that the children were not capable of rational thinking. Instead, it is meant to denote the children's ignorance of what may be rightly called the power of participation.

Table 22: Prospect of reintegration with child soldiers' participation
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
It would have been better	131	52.4
It would have made no difference	96	38.4
It would have been worse	18	7.2
I don't know	5	2
No response	-	-
TOTAL	250	100

Question: Do you think reintegration would have made more impact if former child soldiers were involved in the planning?

The non-inclusion of the child ex-combatants in the design and implementation of reintegration programme would generally generate an assumption that enough study had been done to identify the needs of the children. As such, whatever agencies were doing would have been seen as representing the real desire of the child soldiers. It was, however, observed that this was hardly the case. For instance, it was observed that many of the children lived on the streets without a place they could call home. Others lived on their own, devoid of means of livelihood. Under these conditions, the child ex-combatants were expectedly constrained to turn up at schools and skill centres. The effects, which the neglect or absence of participation has on the sustainability of reintegration was examined. Even though a third of the respondents was of the view that participation would have made no difference in deciding the outcome of reintegration, the observation made on the condition of living of the children coupled with 52% of the respondents' view that participation was essential, underscored the importance of participation.

Even though government may be incapacitated by funds in setting its own course in the reintegration process, it should have been thought that it would provide a local leeway toward a conceptual understanding of the DDRR programme by child ex-combatants. Data from the research showed that the low educational level of child ex-soldiers was a major constraint as far as the conceptualisation of DDRR programme was concerned. Although many of the children confirmed knowledge of the programme, such knowledge was observed to be superficial, devoid of deep understanding of the nitty-gritty of the programme. To many of the children, reintegration had to do with giving them financial support and getting them back to school. And these were what JIU and other intervention agencies harped on. Nathaniel Roberts, an official of the Don Bosco Homes (DBH), was of the view that conveying the message of reintegration was a real challenge, as many of the children did not really understand the meaning of the programme. According to him:

The meaning of reintegration posed a lot of difficulty into our work. Most of them do not really know the meaning of reintegration and so, that posed a lot of problem to us (Personal Communication, 2006).

It was observed that little or no effort was made to address the behavioural attitude of the child ex-combatants. A scene during the Focus Group Discussion captured this lapse. The researcher and the research assistants were gathering the child ex-combatants for discussion that was scheduled to be held in Carey Street. The number so gathered was still five when it was noticed that shops in the street were closing. In another five minutes the UN police arrived. After the researcher and her assistant briefed the police on the purpose of the gathering, the policemen left but with the advice that police escort be sought during future meetings. They hinged their advice on the fact that the children were still very dangerous and could wreck havoc within a short period. Although the concern of the police for the safety of the researcher was well appreciated, the knowledge of the researcher that no genuine information could be generated from a Focus Group Discussion with policemen in attendance made the researcher to jettison the idea of bringing police into FGDs. The full import of the advice, however, dawned when in another discussion at DBH, one of the child ex-combatants locked the room in which the discussion was being held, seized the key and threatened to set the place ablaze. It required tact and diplomacy of the staff of the organisation to make him release the key. The important thing as far as the above scenes are concerned is that most of the children involved may have undergone the process of rehabilitation or were currently attending school or a skill centre. Some have even completed the process of acquiring a skill. But certainly, they have not been prepared well for reintegration.

The wrong conception of the motive behind reintegration posed serious challenge to the government of Liberia and as well questioned all efforts so far put in place. Hannah Jean Diamond, inter-agencies coordinator with NCDDRR believed that the reintegration of child ex-combatants was not achieving the

desired outcome due to lack of cooperation from the ex-combatants. According to her:

> I will say that some of them were afraid to get into the NCDDRR programme, they felt that if they have to go through the programme and they have their photos taken, they have their names in the data base, in the future when they want to travel, that will be used against them and they would not be able to travel. (Personal Communication, 2006)

The children knowing fully how they were perceived may have every genuine concern about releasing their names and photographs. However, a well focused awareness campaign and education of the children about the importance of the programme would have allayed fears. More importantly, their fears need to be addressed in such a way to negate them through full documentation affirming government's sincerity by not using the information against them in future.

In view of the above, how seriously the Liberian government was taking the reintegration of child ex-combatants became a subject of enquiry. Informants like Hannah Jean Diamond, an inter-agencies coordinator with NCDDRR, believed that the government was well aware of the importance of complete reintegration of the child ex-combatants to the overall success of the reintegration programme. According to her,

> These children are the future of our country. As such, whichever way we take their welfare today will determine what Liberia will be in future. If the child ex-combatants are not successfully integrated then the peace process cannot be said to be sustainable. (Personal communication, 2006).

Taking the above view in the context of the limited capacity of the Liberian government, it will be rightly concluded that the government, though has good intention, is incapable of matching intent with action. For instance, the researcher observed that whatever input one can attribute to the home government was wholly integrated into the JIU. In this manner, no effort is made to directly intervene in any area where the JIU and other non-government agencies are seen to be deficient. The case of educational support was mentioned as an area where

the Liberian government was supposed to have intervened and be seen to be taking responsibility for the children that the programme could not absorb.

Informants were asked what they thought the government could do to assist child ex-combatants in view of the limited resources available for reconstruction. Many opined that the reintegration of ex-combatants, especially child ex-soldiers should take precedence over reconstruction. They argued that funds and energy channelled at reconstruction would have been wasted if child ex-combatants were not fully integrated into the society. The import of this argument is made explicit in the current orientation of the children towards war. A survey question that sought to know the disposition of child ex-combatants to peace in Liberia was quite revealing (Table 23). A significant 28% answered 'Yes' to the question, "if the need arises, would you want to fight in any war again in Liberia or in any other country? Equally, in answering this question, 12.8% of the sample chose not to answer the question, in which case, they may be seen as undecided.

Table 23:   Respondents' disposition to peace in Liberia
Source: Fieldwork 2006

Response category	Fq	%
Yes	70	28
No	148	59.2
No response	32	12.8
TOTAL	250	100

Question: If the need arises would you want to fight in any war again in Liberia or in any other country?

Also, in the focus group discussion, some of the child ex-combatants freely expressed their willingness to take up arms. They claimed to be frustrated with the reintegration process which, to them, did not offer any prospect of better future. Hassan, a 17-year-old boy who joined an armed group at the age of nine and fought for six years commented thus:

What the DDRR programme promised to do, they didn't do it. They said we will learn but nothing. I went through DDRR programme but am not doing anything presently because I did not have ID card …. I can't say anything about the DDRR programme because it is bad to me. I went through the process until the last stage but nothing for me (Personal Communication, 2006).

The implication of the above is far reaching as far as effort at achieving sustainable peace in Liberia is concerned. With 63.6% of the sampled child soldiers disenchanted with the process, reintegration programme cannot be said to have achieved optimum success.

CHAPTER SIX
SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

6.0   INTRODUCTION

This study has examined the various challenges of reintegration in post-war Liberia. The research assumed that limited capacities of institutions and the inadequate conceptualisation of reintegration undermined a series of efforts and intervention programmes put in place to achieve sustainable peace in the country. Rather than rely mainly on implementing agencies or organisations for data on the institutional constraints of implementing a successful reintegration of former child soldiers, this study focused on the child ex-combatants as a dependable source of primary data. This was done with the understanding that, as target of reintegration, the child soldiers were in the best position to know what was right or wrong with the programme and the institutions responsible for implementation. This can be said to be in consonance with the bottom-top approach to development – an approach that is currently acclaimed to be the best route to achieving sustainable development. Whereas some of the study's findings align with the reintegration measures suggested in the operational framework of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), others indicate the insufficiencies in those measures.

6.1   SUMMARY

A major undertaking of this study was to show that the institutions on which reintegration was based were too weak to achieve a viable and lasting reintegration. Research findings revealed this to be true. For instance, the NCDDRR and other governmental and non-governmental organisations directly involved in the programme all complained of inadequate fund to implement reintegration.

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Another finding of this study has to do with the role of the Liberian government in the reintegration process. Other than being a part of the Joint Implementation Unit (JIU), the study reveals that the government of Liberia was generally not seen as playing a central role in the process. The study shows that the Liberian government did not set a direction for reintegration nor provide a back up where there was apparent failure in the approach of the JIU. The reason for government's inactivity, as revealed from the study was the collapse of the Liberian economy, a situation which puts the country at the mercy of international communities, especially the western world.

In line with what may be regarded as a conventional view about reintegration of child soldiers, this study also reveals that reintegrating children within family and community setting is the most appropriate means of achieving reintegration for the former child soldiers. However, it was revealed that many of the child ex-combatants in Monrovia have become street children or urchins in the real context of the word. In which case, they should be regarded as having lost touch with their families and communities. For this set of children, findings indicate that reintegrating them within a traditional family or community setting would require more than what was provided within the operational framework of reintegration. The family tracing and unification programme was hindered by the weak family system and dysfunctional community that were outcomes of the 14 years of civil war. The study reveals that the socio-economic condition of post-war Liberia made the re-socialisation process of child ex-combatants under a family setting extremely difficult. The level of poverty had a direct impact on the reintegration of children with families that separated in the bid to seek livelihood outside their communities.

Formal education and skill acquisition were measures which the operational framework of reintegration considered as viable approaches toward economic empowerment of former child soldiers. The study shows that these were achieved with a sizeable number of child ex-combatants. However, the study reveals that these measures were underachieved, considering the increasing

numbers of former child soldiers in the streets of Monrovia. For example, the three year educational support provided in reintegration programme was regarded as insufficient to see a child through elementary and secondary schools. Furthermore the condition of educational infrastructure was poor as the numbers of functional schools on ground were few; they also lacked the necessary tools and materials to impart knowledge. For skill acquisition, findings indicate that many of those who completed trainings at vocational centres and were given start up tools, sold them and returned to the streets. The implication of the above is that there was faulty isolation of certain needs.

Moreover, this study reveals that the intervention measures – social and economic reintegration – on which the process was rested, were not based on local participation or sound knowledge of the socio-economic reality of the Liberian situation. As such, the educational support and skill acquisition that were meant to achieve economic reintegration for the children were superficial, having been haphazardly implemented. Findings show that former child soldiers were not well educated about the essence of reintegration. Their lack of knowledge and understanding of the programme's fundamentals was associated with their exclusion from the process that produced the programme. In view of the above, the study shows that child ex-soldiers' views of reintegration were mainly within the ambit of what operational framework provided.

Another major finding of this study relates to the role of local and international agencies in reintegration process. An analysis of the roles of the two indicates that though local NGOs were more familiar with the social and cultural landscape of Liberia, they did not get the necessary support from international agencies especially in the area of providing fund for reintegration works.

Children are better motivated to act to their advantage when they attach positive value to the self. Reintegration measures (economic and social) were all aimed at making the former child soldier possess positive value. In which case, formal education and skill acquisition were indicators of positive values. The study reveals that majority of child ex-combatants were favourably disposed to

acquiring either. This ordinarily indicates that they possessed positive values. However, beyond the general readiness to identify with education and skill acquisition, research findings indicate a low level commitment to either of the choices. For instance, it was revealed that most children were propelled more by the subsistence allowance paid to them, other than the values which education or vocation could add to their lives.

Due to the structural conditions under which child ex-combatants were socialised, it could be assumed that they lacked self-esteem. Reintegration, therefore, was supposed to fill the gap or vacuum which had been created in their lives. This study reveals that although most of the children claimed to feel ashamed of bad conduct, they in actual fact lacked self-esteem. The study further shows that many of the child ex-combatants, especially those living on their own, still harboured and exhibit anti-social traits.

An element in reintegration usually harped on as necessary for providing psychosocial support to traumatised child soldiers is religious support through traditional cleansing and healing. This study reveals that former child soldiers' are not organised to access religious support beyond initial healing and cleansing ceremonies that few of them passed through. The study shows that these ceremonies were nothing beyond symbolic, as they failed to provide the children with means of imbibing the morals, ethics, and values of their societies. Furthermore, this study reveals that even the larger society did not offer the necessary religious support that would make society accept the child ex-combatants and forgive them. Research findings have also shown that whereas the children were overwhelmingly aware of the existence of the supernatural, and believed that good conduct or bad conduct were both rewarded and punished, the institution to reinforce their beliefs and further translate them to virtue were not well enhanced.

How former child soldiers perceived themselves is considered a factor necessary in assessing the success or otherwise of reintegration. This study shows that child ex-soldiers' perception of themselves, three years after the

commencement of reintegration, is dependent on the domicile status of the children. For instance, those living on their own, either in accommodation or in the streets, are of the view that they are worse off while child soldiers living in welfare homes feel their living condition was better. An important finding of the study is that many of those in the streets have at a time passed through welfare homes. It is further revealed from the study that many of the former child soldiers, though by age still fall within the child categorisation, took exception to being called child soldiers. They saw the categorisation as ploy to underestimate their roles in the Liberian war. This finding is of particular significance to the reintegration process as it challenges the conceptualisation of child which is central to the programme.

Finally, apart from determining child ex-soldiers' perception of reintegration in terms of success and effectiveness, this study equally sought the views of the larger society on the same topic. Findings indicate that many people believe that in spite of not having access to gun and other dangerous weapons, most of the former child combatants are still wild. They still move around terrorising people, breaking into shops and depriving people of their belongings. The study has further revealed that, despite reintegration efforts, the Liberian civil populace finds it difficult to accept the children fully back into the society.

6.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

A research into the concept and practice of reintegration as it affects former child soldiers in Liberia has revealed several challenges which border on inadequate conceptualisation of the process. Reintegration of former child soldiers, this study shows, has been considered basically in terms of the number of children that have passed through rehabilitation homes or that are currently enrolled in schools or vocational centres. The reality in Monrovia, however, shows legions of former child soldiers, scattered over the streets of the capital city, who have constituted themselves into miscreants. For the reintegration programme to be deemed to have achieved its objectives, not only must the

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number of former child soldiers living in the streets be reduced to the barest minimum, efforts must be in place to ensure that they are purged of all dysfunctional behavioural traits associated with them. It is thus imperative on the part of intervention agencies that reintegration be moved beyond its current operational framework to consider, among other things, the socio-cultural and economic factors that may hinder a successful and sustainable reintegration. In view of the above, the following recommendations are made.

6.2.1 The United Nations Development Programme/Joint Implementation Unit

A separate measure that is specifically designed to reach out to former child soldiers in the city must be formulated. This is made necessary by the social structure arrangement of a city which is characterised by weak community cohesion. As control theorists point out, the weaker the social bond, the stronger the likelihood of norm violation (Bynum & Thompson, 1989). In order words, the loose social bond of urban areas may not augur well for reintegration of child soldiers, especially those that are not absorbed into a family setting. The above situations can be neutralised with the constitution of former child soldiers into family units that will be headed by father and mother figures.

One factor which this study reveals as accounting for the inability of many former child soldiers to be reintegrated into their families is the weak economic situation in many homes. Families in this category cannot function well as social agents. In fact, there are instances where child ex-soldiers are responsible for providing means of sustenance for their parents. Making provision for poor families within the operational framework of reintegration will assist in keeping former child soldiers within their immediate family set-ups. This will further stem the tide of migration from the interior into the city.

Local NGOs are shown to be better equipped to provide assistance for former child soldiers. This is due to their familiarity with the sociocultural system of the country. However, in most cases, local NGOs are made to play second fiddle to their international counterparts, especially in the disbursement of fund.

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Considering the vantage position of local NGOs vis-a vis reintegration assistance, supporting them in the area of funding and capacity building will serve to promote qualitative reintegration.

6.2.2 UNDP/UNICEF

For reintegration to be sustainable, it is suggested that child ex-soldiers be made to spend at least one year in rehabilitation homes. Though this goes with funding implication, it is believed that achieving sustainable reintegration should be at all costs. Under the present arrangement, the children only spend few months at homes and are considered rehabilitated. This study has shown that hardly do the children learn or unlearn during the period. If the former child soldiers spend longer duration in rehabilitation homes, it will definitely be easier to monitor their adjustment. Closely related to the above is the idea that rehabilitation and reintegration be made to last the entire period of reconstruction. This will, among other things, allow for long-term reintegration measures for the former child soldiers.

Moreover, it is imperative that former child soldiers be involved in the planning and implementation of reintegration agenda. So far, it has been a case of planning for them rather than with them. If they are well involved in the process from conception, certain variables that crop up during implementation stage could have been tackled from the onset. For instance, reintegration has always assumed that former child soldiers will be reunited with either biological or foster families. This assumption has been shown to be faulty. With the right level of participation from the children, such grey areas would have been contemplated and provided for *ab initio*.

6.2.3 The Liberian Government

Under the current programme, the Liberian government is a passive partner in a process operating within the country. Even though the NCDDRR remains as the general coordinator of reintegration activities, the Liberian

government is in the dark over how the programme operates. Not minding the fact that they lack the necessary fund to prosecute reintegration programme, the home government should be made to set direction for reintegration.

So far, religious organisations have not been well-utilised as agents of reintegration. As found out, the involvement of religion has not actually gone beyond the ritual of traditional healing and cleansing ceremonies. Religion, however, can be a veritable tool of instilling in the child ex-soldiers ethics, morals and values of society. The sense of right and wrong which they lack can be bestowed on them by the various religions. Agencies' collaboration with religious organisations for reintegration work may be an effective way of ensuring qualitative reintegration.

Child soldiers are products of conflict situations that are instigated by societal poverty and inequality. Reintegrating the victims, therefore, implies a frontal attack on the conditions which precipitated the occurrence of violent conflicts. In this regard, it is opined that effort toward reducing poverty and inequality within the system will go a long way in creating a conducive environment for achieving sustainable reintegration.

Another policy suggestion is that the Liberian government should endeavour to declare a national pardon for child-soldiers that were directly involved in the Liberian conflict. Accordingly, the burden of guilt they carry may be reduced.

Finally, whereas reintegration is a key aspect of post-war peacebuilding in every human society, it is rather essential that each society develops unique and innovative approaches to dealing with the problems of former child soldiers. Such approaches must take into consideration the socio-cultural context and the structural conditions which define and allocate roles to the child. It is also essential that time limit should not be established for reintegration programme. In essence, it ought to be a continuous process that is tied to a national development programme. Above all, good governance would surely be an antidote to future conflict in the country.

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6.3.   CONCLUSION

This study considers the challenges of reintegration of former child soldiers of the Liberian civil war as being borne out of weak and limited capacities of institutions responsible for the process. The failure of the various programmatic units is considered as direct outcomes of the inability of the concerned institutions to live up to their responsibilities. Other conclusions emanating from the research findings indicate the principles, relationships, and generalisations that could be deduced from the results and associated exceptions or problems. In all, the conclusions highlight the basic and fundamental challenges inherent in approaching and implementing reintegration for child ex-combatants.

The first relates to inadequate conceptual cognition of reintegration as it affects child ex-combatants. Reintegration measures adopted were that which derived from intervention plans that focus on adult combatants. In which case, former child soldiers were not treated as a major factor in violent conflicts but rather as a category among target groups with special needs. Other groups contemplated as having needs similar to child soldiers' include children and young people who have grown up in military camps, elderly, war-disabled who left either the armed forces or armed groups prior to the end of the war, and war-widows (Gleichmann *et al,* 2004).

The reintegration of former child soldiers was based on two broad assumptions – that support and assistance in areas of social and economic needs are viable tools to returning former child soldiers to normal and meaningful lives, and that ex-child soldiers are socially-maladjusted and, as such, require a process of re-socialisation to fit perfectly into the society. Other assumptions which may constitute measures to actualising the two broad assumptions are: reunifying child soldiers with their families/reintegrating them within a family or community setting, providing formal education to those that desire it especially the younger ones among them, and placing former child soldiers in vocational skills

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acquisition centres. Others include providing psychosocial support to traumatised combatants. Traditional healing and cleansing ceremonies were also identified as tools of reintegration. As it were, all the measures are applicable in the case of reintegration in Liberia. Whereas it may be said that knowledge of the relevance of economic status of former child soldiers informed the payment of subsistence allowance to the children, the approach adopted hardly indicates a serious attempt at recognising the economic variable in reintegration. Apart from this being a short-cut approach, it also gives credence to the fact that measures at child soldiers' reintegration are appendages of adult reintegration packages which among other things assumed that most ex-combatants always find individual ways of improving their life situation (Gleichmann et al, 2004). The major conclusions for this study are thus arrived at in view of the limited assumptions made in respect of child soldiers' reintegration.

This study shows that the assumption that every child soldier will be reunited with his family or be reintegrated into a family or community setting is inaccurate. Research findings indicate that for as many child soldiers that are reunited with their families or reintegrated into a community, there are several others that roam the streets of Monrovia. This study equally demonstrates that even those that were reunited with parents and families soon abandoned homes to join their friends in rented accommodation or in the streets. What may be concluded from the above is that the basis for the assumption is itself faulty in the sense that child soldiers were seen and constructed as normal children who were likely to value parental care.

The way reintegration has been approached can be said to conform to the conventional pattern that the West has always adopted in her dealings with developing countries. Every aspect of the data obtained during the fieldwork indicates that the process was not locally owned. It is obvious from the findings that the home country and other local NGOs have to be content with the direction given the programme by the international communities. While it may be inappropriate to entrust the entire process on the local people or rely solely on the

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Liberian government to set the direction for a sustainable reintegration programme, the complete dependence on the international community for the funding of the programme will likely relegate whatever initiative they may have to the background. Apart from the fact that the implementation of reintegration has sufficiently undermined local participation, whatever input that may emanate from the local people is limited by the power relations between leadership and officials of international agencies and their local counterparts.

The behaviour of child soldiers who have graduated from skill acquisition centres contrasts the assumption of reintegration on the role of skill acquisition in the peacebuilding process. That many former child soldiers, on graduating sold their tool kits and returned to the streets indicates a deficiency in the assumption. This finding calls into reckoning the underlying condition in which intervention measures were implemented. Three things can be deduced. In the first instance, it may be that the children were not mentally prepared for the skill they learnt. Secondly, it is possible that an immediate need which must be met informed the selling off of their tools. Thirdly, it is yet possible that the former child soldiers are not even willing to engage in productive work in order to earn a living. In which case, they still possess a mindset that is anti-work. At any rate, it is necessary that these be given adequate attention for skill acquisition to be considered a viable tool of reintegration. The provision of formal education as a reintegration measure also constitutes a challenge. Apart from the fact that it is selective, the time duration covered does not suggest an effort at sustainability. For instance, how a three year primary or secondary education programme will translate to economic empowerment for a child ex-soldier is yet to be determined. More importantly, there is the need for the injection of more funds into the educational sector for it to serve the purpose of reintegration.

A conclusion can be reached in respect of the method adopted in this research. The reliance on the former child soldier for most aspects of data for this work is based on the need to put them and their views in perspective as the central factors in the design and implementation of reintegration. Despite the justification

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of Monrovia as the ideal study location, there are reasons why the results of this study may not represent the case for the entire country. The problem of reintegration in Monrovia may be connected with the menace of street children, a phenomenon that exists in most cities of the world. Within the framework of this study it is certainly difficult to distinguish between dysfunctional behavioural traits that are of street children or of former child soldiers. It must, however, be emphasised that child soldiers turning street children pose greater danger to the peace and security of any nation. Even though Monrovia may not likely represent the picture of reintegration in the entire country, it must be seen as offering the worst scenario of challenges that confront the process.

Several theories have been postulated to explain dysfunctional and deviant behaviour in children and adolescents. The theories propounded by Durkheim, Merton, Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin are classified as social strain theories, and they all share the underlying assumption that non-conforming behaviour arises out of social circumstances in which individuals or groups experience normative confusion or disruption (Bynum & Thompson, 1989). These theories, though could explain some aspects of former child soldier' lives, prove not useful in analysing the success or failure of reintegration. The understanding of reintegration as a development process immediately rules out the application of any behavioural theory in explaining what after all may be a function of policy objectives. Therefore, rather than dwelling on a theoretical paradigm for explanation, this study has based its analysis on the conceptual framework of reintegration which has as its major goal, the promotion of better living for former combatants. However, as more and more researches are conducted into reintegration challenges as it concerns child ex-soldiers, it is imperative that effort be made toward situating the former child soldier within a theoretical tradition of dysfunctional behaviour among youths. For instance, the behavioural pattern of child soldiers can make them fit into the category of juvenile delinquents. In such situation, reintegration will give due consideration to delinquency treatment.

A conclusion can also be reached from the manner in which the child concept is defined. One scathing revelation from the study is the insistence by many former child soldiers that they are not children or child soldiers. Most of them are convinced that, though they are not yet above 18 years, they have attained adulthood. This kind of conviction calls for scrutiny of the attempt to evolve a universal definition of child as could be seen from the effort of the UN Declaration of the Rights of a Child. The relativity in the child concept should be brought to bear on plans and programmes for reintegration. As it were, a faulty conceptualisation of the child will definitely not place the steps taken in respect of reintegration in the right direction.

This study has so far assessed the social burden placed on the child in the quest for reintegration. The reference to burden is made in view of the fact that the onus for its removal is on the society and not on the child soldier. So far, there are several activities that go by the name reintegration works, but whether these could be translated into accomplishment in the form of genuine reintegration is something else entirely.

It is important to state that while the weak capacities of institutions constitute a major challenge, it will be too sweeping to consider this as the only reintegration challenge. Several factors such as inadequate conceptualisation of reintegration, and some that have already been identified, will constitute challenges in the reintegration of the child ex-combatants in Liberia. For instance, the political will behind the programme and wanton corruption within the system may directly affect the volume of fund that is channelled to the programme.

Being a contribution to the strategy of achieving sustainable peace in Liberia, a study on the institutional challenges of reintegrating child ex-soldiers has direct policy implications for the implementation of post-conflict peacebuilding in Liberia. The findings make imperative a more purposeful holistic approach that will consider a series of issues involved in the reintegration of children. Among the considerations are the capacities and limitations of the institutions responsible for reintegration, the economic platform on which

reintegration works will rest, the social environment, the views and perceptions of the child ex-soldiers and the interest of other stakeholders.

Finally, in most parts of the world, the task of reintegration as a post-conflict peacebuilding process is mainly carried out by international communities in conjunction with the home country. A lot of factors, however, determine whether the home country will play a significant role in the process. This may include the economic strength of the country and the outcome of the war, as if there is a clear winner situation, a clear loser situation, or a no clear winner or loser situation. This study has shown that the economic situation in Liberia is so dire that it may often not have any choice but kowtow to demands put in place by the international agencies bankrolling reconstruction and reintegration. However, the process which commenced three years ago will come to a close at the end of 2006. The implication is that a lot will still be left undone by the time the last of the agencies step out of Liberia. If development initiative is most sustainable when it is locally-driven, the onus is on the Liberian government to rise to the challenges of channelling a course that will lead to genuine reintegration of former child soldiers and guarantee lasting peace in the country.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

THE CHALLENGES OF REINTEGRATING CHILD EX-COMBATANTS IN POST-WAR LIBERIA.

INTRODUCTION:

Dear Respondents,

The questionnaire you are about responding to is meant to elicit your views on the process of the reintegration of the ex-child soldiers of the Liberian civil war 2000-2003. Your responses form part of the data for a Ph.D research work at the Peace and Conflict Studies Department, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

This study aims to evaluate the entire process of reintegration, especially as its affects the Liberian ex-child soldiers. You are therefore, implored to answer the questions in a manner that reflects your opinion on the question. Thank you.

1.   Name (Optional) …………………………………………………………

2.   Age ……………………..

3.   What was your level of education before the civil war? (Please circle the

   right answer)

   a. Primary

   b. Secondary

   c. Technical training school

   d. None

4.   Where were you resident before the conflict?

   a. Interior

   b. City

   c. Others………………………………………. (Please specify)

5.   Were   you   leaving   with   your   family   then   or   who?   (Please

   specify)………………..

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6. What was your family background before the war?
   a. Low income ($400-$800 per annual)
   b. Middle income ($800-$1200 per annual)
   c. High Income (($1200-$3000 per annual)

7. Which of these represent your bread winner's profession?
   a. Government employment
   b. Private company employment
   c Artisan
   d. Trader
   e. Farmer
   f. Others (Please specify) ……………………………………

8. Which of the armed faction did you belong to? (Please circle the right answer)
   a. Lurd
   b. Model
   c. GOL

9. How old were you when you joined the armed faction? ……………………….

10. How did you join the armed faction?
    a. Force
    b. Voluntary
    If you choose **B**, please give reason(s) for joining the armed faction voluntarily……………………………………………………………………
    ……………………………………………………………………………………
    ………………………

11.   How long did you stay and fight with the armed faction group? (Specify the years)……………………………………………………………….

12.   Have you fought in any other country other than Liberia?
       a. Yes
       b. No

13.   If yes, which country? ………………………………………….

14.   Are you happy that the war is over?
       a. Yes
       b. No.

15.   If the need arises would you want to fight in any war again in Liberia or any other country?
       a. Yes
       b. No

16.   When were you demobilized? (Please specify the year) …………………………..

17.   What are you doing presently?
       a. Schooling (Please circle your level)
              i. Primary
              ii. Secondary
              iii. Technical School
              iv. University
              v. Completed school (Please specify the level)…………………
        b. Trained for a particular skill or craft? (Please specify) …….……….

18.   Are you employed now? (Please circle the right answer)

a. Yes

b. No

19.   If yes, what are you employed as?

a. Government employment

b. Company jobs/employment

c. Self employed

20.   If no, why are you unemployed?

a. Looking for a job

b. Because of physical problem/disability.

c. Scarcity of job

d. Others …………………………. (Please specify)

21.   Are you aware of reintegration programme for child ex-soldiers?

a. Yes

b. No (If no, please go to question 27)

22.   How would you rate the reintegration programme for child ex-soldiers?

a. Excellent

b. Good

c. Fair

d. Worse.

e. Others………………………………………… (Please specify)

23.   What is your assessment of the on-going reintegration programme?

a.   Successful

b.   Not so successful

c.   Others ……………………………………….(Please specify)

24. What area in the reintegration programme for the child ex-soldiers do you think needs more attention?

a. Social-economic reintegration

b. psycho-social/ trauma healing

c. community/family reunification

d. Traditional healing

e. Advocacy

25. What would you consider the main challenge of reintegrating child ex-soldiers in Liberia? (Please specify) ……………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………

26. Have you received any training that would enable you to be self-employed?

a. Yes

b. No (If no, please go to question 29)

27. If yes, what type of training? (Please specify) …………………………

29. Has it been satisfactory?

a. Yes

b. No

30. If yes, are you happy to have received such training?

a. Yes

b. No

31. If no, what else needs to be added to the training? (Please specify)

………………………………………………..……………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………

32.   Would you continue with training/schooling without the payment of
        subsistence allowance?

        a. cannot

        b. No

        c. May be

        d. Yes

        e. No response

33.   Where have you been living since the reintegration programme started?

        a. Welfare home

        b. On my own

        c. With friends

        d. With commander

        e. Family member

        f. Foster parent

        g. Other……………………………………………………(Please specify)

34.   Which of these represents your most pressing need?

        a. school

        b. skill acquisition

        c. housing

        d. job

35.   Have you located any family member since reintegration programme
        started?

        a. Yes

b. No   (If no, please go to question 38)

36.   Are you now reunited with them?
        a. Yes
        b. No (if no, please go to question 37)

37.   If yes, what was the reaction of your family and community toward your
        home coming?
        a. Positive
        b. Negative
        c. Indifference
        d. Warm

38.   Would you like to continue to be living with your family?
        a. Yes
        b. No

39.   If no, why? (Please specify) …………..………………………………..
        ……………………………………………………………………………….

40.   Were you or any of your friends involved in the planning of reintegration
        programme?
        a. Yes, we were involved
        b. No, were not involved
        c. I don't know
        d. No response

41.   Would you have been happier if you were part of the planning for the
        reintegration programme for child ex-soldiers?
        a. Yes

b. No

42. Who currently plays the most important roles in the reintegration of child ex-combatants in Liberia?
   a. Liberian government
   b. Welfare organization
   c. United Nation agencies
   d. United Nation Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

43. Do you think reintegration would have made more impact if former child soldiers were involved in the planning?
   a. It would have been better
   b. It would have made no difference
   c. It would have been worse
   d. I don't know
   e. No response

44. What do you consider the most appropriate setting for reintegration?
   a. School
   b. Welfare homes
   c. Family/Community setting
   d. No response

45. Which act do you consider shameful to commit?
   a. Fighting
   b. Raping
   c. Stealing
   d. Others (killing, smoking etc)

46. Mention an action taken against you that you may find too humiliating?

a. If arrested by the police

b. If held and punished for stealing

c. If sent out of school for fees

d. If deprived of subsistence allowance

e. No response

47.   Do you believe that there is God?

a. Yes

b. No

c. I don't know

d. No response

48.   Do you believe that God punishes those that break His laws and rewards others that keep them?

a. I believe

b. I don't believe

c. I don't know

d. No response

49.   How often do you attend a church/mosque?

a. Regularly

b. Sometimes

c. Seldom

d. Never

e. No response

50.   Did you at any point pass through traditional cleansing ceremony

a. Yes

b. No

c. No response

51. Did the traditional cleansing ceremony incorporate any form of teaching on what is right or wrong?

   a. Yes

   b. No

   c. I don't know

   d. No response

52. How would you consider your life now compared to one year ago?

   a. I am better of

   b. I am worse of

   c. Nothing has changed

   d. No response

Appendix II

Table 24 List of Key Informants

No.	Names	Date	Location
1	Charles Achodo - (UNDP) Policy Adviser JIU.	9th June, 06	JIU Office
2	Fatumah Ibrahim - (UNICEF) Head of Child Protection	16th June,06	UNICEF Office
3	Bill Jarkloh - Journalist and Public Commentator	15th &18th June , 06	Carey Street, Monrovia
4	Lavena Kortimai - Deputy Minister of Commerce	27th June, 06	Broad Street, Monrovia
5	Nathaniel Robert – Welfare Officer, DBH.	14th June, 06	DBH, Sinkor St. Monrovia
6	Agnes Kortimai – Executive Director, Zorzor District Women Care	13th June, 06	Carey St. Monrovia
7	Wollem Bohlem- Child Protection/Cordinator Officer	14th June, 06	DBH, Sinkor St. Monrovia
8	Zaw-Acoh Weah – Principal, Henri W. Dennis United Methodist High School	30th June, 06	Principal's Office
9	Moses Tobah - Vice Principal, Student Affairs, St. Lutheran High School	30th June, 06	Vice Principal's Office
10	Jonathan Clitton – Principal, Roxel High School	5th July, 06	Principal's Office
11	Jean Diamond Hannah – Inter-Agency Coordinator (NCDDRR)	14th July, 06	NCDDRR, Conf. Room.
12	Vance Garba – Special Assistance to the UN Police Commissioner	16th June, 06	UNMIL, Sinkor
13	Thompson Gaya	20th June, 06	CAP Office
14	Roland Daywhea	20th June,06	CAP Office
15	Eunice	20th June, 06	CAP Office
16	David Washington, Rolem, Foche, Charles, Nancy, Yosuf, Dalow, Jackson, Weah.	30th June, 06	Methodist High Sch. Liberary
17	Mohammed Kamara	21st June, 04	DBH, Sinkor, Monrovia

18	Charles Weah	21st June, 06	DBH, Sinkor, Monrovia
19	Jay Berzee	22nd June, 06	Johnson St. Monrovia
20	Highson G.Ulo	22nd June, 06	Johnson St. Monrovia
21	Emmanuel Tozzy	22nd June, 06	Johnson St. Monrovia
22	Santiki Kamara	23rd June, 06	DBH, Sinkor, Monrovia
23	Struggle Geo	23rd June, 06	DBH, Sinkor, Monrovia
24	Franklyn Watson	23rd June, 06	DBH, Sinkor, Monrovia
25	David G. Mulbah	23rd June, 06	DBO, Sinkor, Monrovia
26	Puwee Kpadeh	23rd June, 06	DBH, Sinkor, Monrovia
27	Junior Doe	23rd June, 06	DBH, Sinkor, Monrovia
28	Romeo Wheeler	23rd June, 06	DBO, Sinkor, Monrovia
29	Lansana Kollie	25th June, 06	Broad St. Monrovia
30	Nixon S. Manwean	27th June, 06	DBH, Sinkor, Monrovia
31	Richard S.Jack	27th June, 06	DBH, Sinkor, Monrovia
32	Weah Dolo	27th June, 06	DBH, Sinkor, Monrovia

Appendix 3

Plates

Plate 1: An interview session with Charles Achodo of the UNDP and Policy Adviser on the Joint Implementation Unit (JIU). Photograph by Bosede Awodola, (2006)

Plate 2: Fatumah Ibrahim, Child Protection Officer with UNICEF, at an interview session. Photograph by Bosede Awodola (2006)

Plate 3: An interview session with Moses Tobah, the Vice Principal (Student Affairs), St. Peters Lutheran High School, Sinkor, Monrovia. Photograph by Bosede Awodola (2006)

Plate 4: The researcher with Zaw-Acoh Weah, Principal Henri W. Dennis United Methodist High School, Monrovia. Photograph by Bosede Awodola (2006)

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Plate 5: The researcher with one of the Children Assistance Programme (CAP) staff in Monrovia. Photograph by Bosede Awodola (2006)

Plate 6: The researcher and the assistant, Mercy during a visit to DBH. Photograph by Bosede Awodola
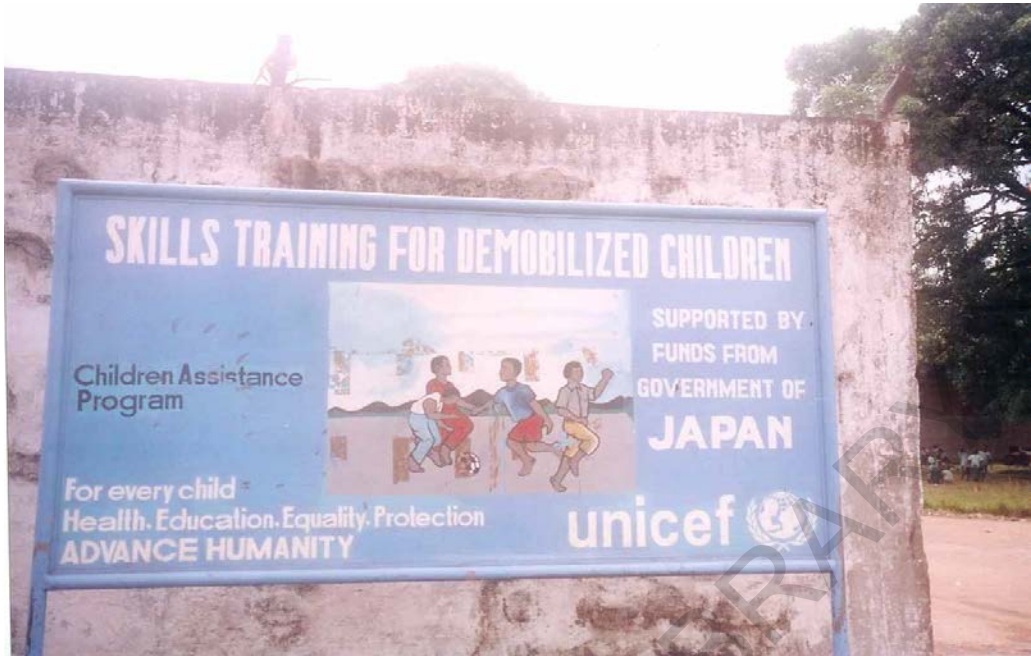
Plate 7: The front view of CAP Skills Training Centre. Photograph by Bosede Awodola (2006)

Plate 8: The researcher with members of staff of DBH, Monrovia. Photograph by Bosede Awodola

Plate 9: An FGD session with child ex-soldiers at DBH. Photograph by Bosede Awodola (2006)

Plate 10: The researcher and a group of child ex-combatants. Photograph by Bosede Awodola (2006)

Plate 11: The researcher with a group of child ex-combatants. Photograph by Bosede Awodola (2006)

Plate 12: The researcher with a group of child ex-combatants. Photograph by Bosede Awodola (2006)

Plate 13: Houses destroyed during the war. Photograph by Bosede Awodola, (2006)

Plate 14: Houses destroyed during the war. Photograph by Bosede Awodola, (2006)

Plate 15: The St. Lutheran Church, Sinkor St. Monrovia where 600 people were murdered. Photograph by Bosede Awodola, (2006)

Plate 16: The Church where Liberia's independence was proclaimed in 1847. Photograph by Bosede Awodola (2006)
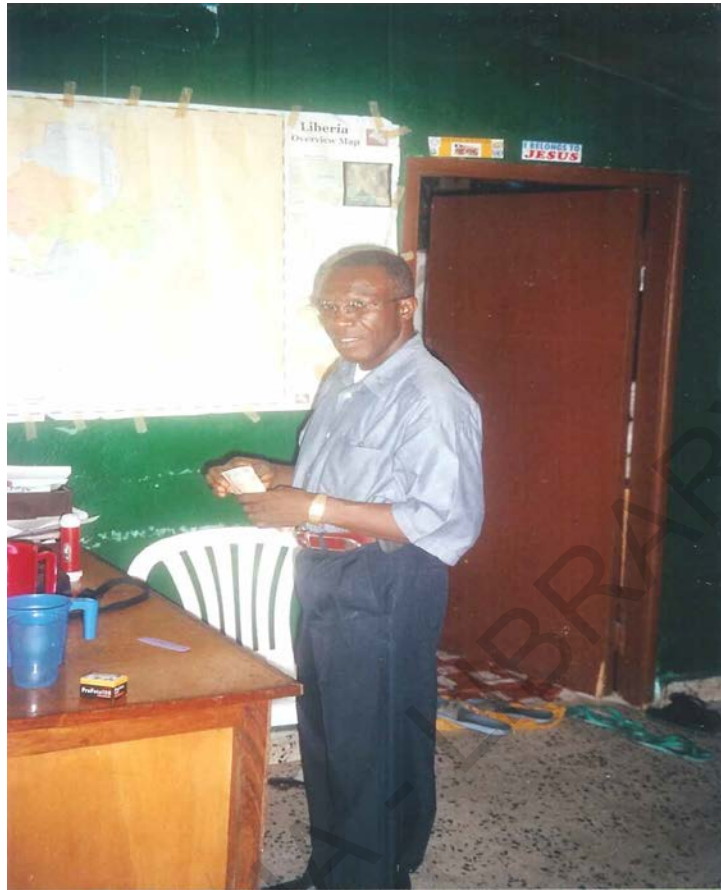
Plate 17: Bill Jarklor, a Journalist and Public Commentator during an interactive session with the researcher. Photograph by Bosede Awodola, (2006)