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Liberia: Reintegration 2.0?

The conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as well as their DDR processes, are often paired together. Liberia borrowed from and inherited reintegration programs in Sierra Leone, and adopted many of the ideas and assumptions that underpinned programs there. But a closer look at the Liberian conflict reveals that similarities in terms of the nature, duration, and outcomes of political violence are few. And although the reintegration programs initially offered to ex-combatants in Liberia replicated some of the least successful elements of programs in Sierra Leone (namely, by emphasizing vocational training), in Liberia actors designed several innovative and labor-intensive programs that followed original efforts.

These follow-up, or 'second-generation', programs targeted ex-combatants and non-combatant community members alike and provided support for several years after original reintegration programs ended.[1] They were designed and implemented by the Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Recovery (RRR) Section of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), and challenged DDR orthodoxy in significant ways. First, RRR worked with the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR), UNDP, the World Bank, and the Ministry of Public Works to adopt employment-focused projects focused on infrastructure rehabilitation in areas of high ex-combatant return. The projects were known as 'Infrastructure for Employment'. Second, RRR teamed up with an NGO, Land Mine Action (LMA), to provide alternative skills and employment to ex-combatants who had migrated to natural resource areas in the country (especially Liberia's rubber plantations). Third, RRR used UNMIL resources to produce several security assessments (called

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Hotspots assessments) that challenged traditional assumptions about ex-combatants as threats to post-conflict security – although, as I will show, the assessments reinforced problematic security assumptions about ex-combatants, too. RRR used the assessments to lobby donors for additional funding to provide further employment support, notably professionalization programs for motorcycle taxi drivers that were run by the Liberian YMCA.

Very differently to Sierra Leone, where international actors reduced assistance from the three years the government had envisaged to less than one year of support, in Liberia international actors led efforts to conceptualize reintegration in a longer term, more robust way, and advocated extending assistance to ex-combatants beyond original programs. Several respondents cited the creation of a DDR section within DPKO in New York, the adoption of the IDDRS, and the appointment of individuals with a background in development within RRR as reasons why reintegration actors were more disposed to a 're-boot' of DDR. A senior RRR official told me, 'Training is a first step and achieves demobilization and time buying, but it doesn't achieve reintegration.'[2] Another said, 'Training was to get [ex-combatants] off the streets. It was easier, but was not reintegration.'[3] A third RRR official said, 'We've shown you can have an employment-centered process that can reach countrywide and be community-based, including women, refugees, ex-combatants, and others.'[4] The results, at first glance, suggest the beginnings of an internationally led challenge to the normalization of a reintegration into poverty. The Infrastructure for Employment initiative, for example, provided periodic employment over a period of several years for tens of thousands of Liberians, and provided cash to communities in border areas that saw few other development and reconstruction efforts.[5] Even the final evaluation of the original DDR programs in Liberia differs significantly in its language and conclusions from the final evaluation of Sierra Leone's DDR. Commissioned by UNDP in 2006, it was critical of original reintegration efforts for failing to conceptualize success beyond time buying gestures.[6]

But neither the RRR staff and its programs, nor the critique proffered by the final program evaluation, could overcome the challenges that ultimately tabled the labor-intensive vision of second-generation efforts. Following UNMIL's withdrawal and the conclusion of the Infrastructure for Employment initiative, government and donors lacked interest in continuing labor-intensive public works. My interviews with officials at the Ministry of Public Works confirmed that the Ministry did not think it could attract further donor funds for employment-centered programs

of road rehabilitation. Instead, the Ministry said it intended to pursue capital-intensive approaches to infrastructure.

This chapter shows that deeply embedded – and problematic – ideas about DDR and ex-combatants ultimately allowed the conceptualization of reintegration into poverty to prevail. That conceptualization can be seen in the way actors relied on notions about ex-combatants as post-conflict threats to make second-generation programming palatable to donors. And it can be seen in the ambivalence with which donors greeted their own failures that produced a 'residual caseload' of ex-combatants who were not included on original reintegration programs. Curiously, several respondents within the UN system but outside of RRR were critical of second-generation programs for 'targeting' ex-combatants even though RRR programs allowed both ex-combatants and non-combatant community members to participate in all follow-up programs. The RRR programs also faced criticism from within the peacebuilding enterprise that they conceptually and programmatically 'stretched' reintegration to embrace a so-called maximalist approach to DDR.[7] In other words, programs aiming to do more than buy time for security are criticized for moving DDR beyond its immediate security objectives and for (dangerously) raising expectations for ex-combatant beneficiaries that cannot be fulfilled in the context of limited economic opportunity.

As with previous chapters, this chapter starts with background about successive conflicts in Liberia and then provides important contextual details about the UN mission, the disarmament and demobilization process, and the reintegration programming designed and implemented in Liberia before moving on to identify and analyze the various challenges that have impeded reintegration there. The chapter argues, first, that Liberia borrowed and inherited an ineffective strategy for ex-combatant reintegration, once again emphasizing vocational training. An NCDDRR official was quoted as saying that the Liberian DDR would be a 'twin brother' of the Sierra Leonean process, in which, among other problems, ineffective vocational training programs were given top billing.[8] Second, program templates alone do not explain the challenges impeding reintegration in Liberia; rather, ideas and assumptions about ex-combatants and DDR shaped outcomes and normalized a reintegration back to poverty. One of these ideas was the need to include more women and children in programs, following criticism of their exclusion from programs in Sierra Leone. Pressure for inclusion led to a permissive approach to eligibility and targeting, which produced a three-fold increase in beneficiaries, from an estimated 38,000

to over 101,000. The impact of this beneficiary overload was decreased demobilization and reintegration assistance. Other ideas underpinning interventions were continuing securitization of reintegration and reliance on assumptions about community resentment to rationalize short-term assistance.

Finally, the chapter isolates a number of features unique to the Liberian case in a bid to understand the impact (if any) of 'new thinking' on DDR that advocates providing more, and better 'integrated', support to ex-combatant beneficiaries. These Liberian features include the assistance eventually made available to the residual caseload, attempts to prioritize agricultural and educational assistance in the original reintegration programs, and the UN-led second-generation programs around infrastructure, motorcycle taxi unions, and natural resources. Despite new thinking and innovative programs, old ways of thinking and doing ultimately prevailed, from the replication and continued dominance of the vocational training model to the tendency of reintegration actors to blame the case overload on ex-combatant 'fraud' rather than on their own targeting and program design failures.

Analysis is based on available DDR documentation from Liberia, including evaluations, Secretary-General's reports, and a number of surveys conducted by practitioners and academics. In addition, I traveled to Liberia in both 2007 and 2009 and interviewed all reintegration actors involved in designing and implementing programs, and also interviewed government officials, civil society representatives, donors, and ex-combatants.[9]

Conflict and peace, 1989–2003

Liberia was founded in 1847 by freed slaves from America, who became known as Americo-Liberians and ruled the country from its founding date until 1980. The Americo-Liberian elite discriminated politically, economically, and socially against the indigenous population, and often used means of violent suppression to counter challenges to its power. In 1980, a group of officers led by Samuel Doe overthrew and killed President William Tolbert and Doe became the first indigenous president of Liberia. His rule, although initially promising to usher in a more representative polity, ended up relying on corrupt extraction and appropriation of natural resources and economic revenues. His regime reproduced discrimination and violent suppression of large segments of the population, but this time organized around ethnic and regional lines.

On Christmas Eve 1989, Charles Taylor and his army, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), crossed the border from Côte d'Ivoire into Liberia and initiated the country's first civil war that lasted from 1989 until 1997. A splinter faction of Taylor's forces killed Doe, and Taylor eventually overthrew Doe's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the armed groups that supported the AFL, including ECOMOG forces and a faction of anti-Taylor fighters that came to be known as the United Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO). During the war, ULIMO also split into two factions, ULIMO-K and ULIMO-J, and the leadership of these organizations eventually re-mobilized as the armed movements that initiated the second civil war in 1999. An estimated 150,000 to 200,000 people died in the 1989–1997 conflict. The July 1997 elections established Taylor as president and a period of relative peace ensued. But Taylor (like Doe and successive Americo-Liberian regimes before him) accomplished little in the way of economic improvements and equality. He also brutally repressed opposition, especially in the cities.

Increasing frustration with political and economic life contributed to the emergence (or re-emergence) in 1999 of two anti-Taylor movements, formed along the older affiliations of ULIMO. The first of these was Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), which originated in the northern area of the country and received significant support from Guinea. The second was the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), which emerged predominantly in the eastern counties of the country and received support from Côte d'Ivoire. Together, the two movements fought a second civil war that lasted four years and killed between 150,000 and 300,000 Liberians. The second civil war was more indiscriminate in its violence against civilians, with combatants comprising only 1–2% of casualties.

Like the Mozambican and Sierra Leonean conflicts before them, the Liberian conflicts have been inaccurately described either using greed-based narratives to frame the war as the attempt by Taylor and his opponents to control and profit from the country's rich natural resources (rubber, timber, and minerals), or else portrayed in the language of New Barbarism as the outgrowth of irrational and barbaric violence between different ethnic and regional groups. The recurrence of conflict has also been used inaccurately as evidence that disgruntled fighters can return a state to war. Surveys of the ex-combatants participating in one or both wars paint a very different picture, of individuals making political determinations about which leaders or groups could best provide for their long-term security and best redress the political,

economic, and social exclusion produced by the Americo-Liberians and reproduced by successive ruling regimes.[10] Historical and critical accounts of the conflicts, including the account offered by Liberia itself in its 2009 TRC report, have also helpfully corrected greed-based and New Barbarism accounts by foregrounding the central issue of political representation in the context of a long history of oppression of indigenous groups.[11] While true that some of the protagonists were the same in the first and second civil wars, it is inaccurate to suggest that fighters returned the state to war because they were unhappy with DDR provision after the first war or because their criminal rent-seeking behavior spiraled up into all out war; instead, fighters were responding to the new security reality of Liberia under Taylor and to his exclusionary policies.[12]

LURD, MODEL, NPFL, and AFL combatants all committed war crimes and violations of human rights during both conflicts, but the manifestations and nature of violence have distracted from the politics underpinning both wars, not unlike what occurred in Mozambique with RENAMO or in Sierra Leone with the RUF. Condemnation of the brutality of violence in Liberia risks implying that the violence, because brutal, could not possibly qualify as political. But armed groups in Liberia, like many combatants in Sierra Leone, were responding violently to the lived experience of political, economic, and social exclusion, an exclusion that was felt in particular among youth. As a senior UNMIL official told me, 'This [conflict] is also about non-youth, including Taylor, instrumentalizing youth for their own ends. Youth have been perpetrators and also victims.'[13] It would be a mistake, however, to suggest that the dynamics and causes of war in Sierra Leone and Liberia were identical, because combatants in Liberia were also playing out a uniquely Liberian struggle over security fears that were both national and regional, over the right to be represented in and by the Liberian polity.[14]

LURD, MODEL, and Taylor's government reached a ceasefire in Accra in June 2003 and signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on 18 August 2003. The CPA requested that the UN deploy a peacekeeping force under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and mandated that the force take on responsibilities for disarmament and cantonment of troops. Article VI of the agreement established the NCDDRR and requested 'adequate financial and technical resources' from donors to assist the national commission with reintegration.[15] The CPA assigned to the UN mission the task of creating a new Liberian National Police (LNP) force and asked the US to take responsibility for creating a new

army that would be nationally balanced and draw from NPFL, LURD, and MODEL fighters. Article XXXIV of the CPA gave the transitional government the authority to approve a general amnesty for all individuals involved in the civil war.[16]

UNMIL arrived in October 2003 to implement the peace agreement. DDR was always considered integral to the UNMIL mandate. The UN Secretary-General wrote in 2005, 'The importance of ensuring that ex-combatants are provided with sustainable reintegration opportunities cannot be overemphasized.'[17] He further warned, 'If not provided with the necessary support and advice during this critical period, Liberia faces the risk of repeating the pattern of abuse of power, institutional breakdown and violence that has plagued the country for the past 25 years.'[18]

Disarmament and demobilization, 2003–2004

Relaxed eligibility requirements in Liberia meant to encourage the inclusion of women and children in the formal DDR process led to the opposite problem: beneficiary ranks swelled far beyond initial estimates of ex-combatant numbers, and made it impossible for reintegration actors to fund assistance programs of the type and duration initially envisaged. Just as in Sierra Leone, a strategic planning framework envisaged up to three years of support to far fewer beneficiaries than eventually joined programs.[19] Consequently, reintegration actors scaled back programs to accommodate the rise in beneficiaries, as they did in Sierra Leone. Disarmament began on 7 December 2003 and ended on 22 November 2004. Over 103,000 persons were disarmed, and about 101,000 passed through demobilization sites, a great deal more than the 38,000 estimated based on projections of factional troop strength.[20] The parties to conflict never provided verifiable lists of combatants to check against the tens of thousands presenting themselves for disarmament. Effectively, there was no screening process. The final evaluation reports that no one who presented himself or herself for inclusion at the disarmament site ('D1') was excluded at subsequent stages of the process.[21]

The entire process was internationally and intentionally engineered to be inclusive, the direct result of a decision by the Joint Implementation Unit (comprising UNMIL, UNDP, and the NCDDRR) to loosen eligibility requirements. The JIU was responding to criticism of the exclusion of women and children in Sierra Leone. The final numbers for Liberia were certainly more inclusive: one-third of

beneficiaries were women and children.[22] Minutes from planning meetings show that donors were fully aware of the large increase in numbers, and record UNDP expressing alarm over the issue.[23] The increase is also detailed in successive Secretary-General's reports but is not explained or commented upon – the numbers are simply revised upwards with successive reports.[24] The eligibility criteria did not require presentation of a weapon to access TSA cash allowances and reintegration assistance; instead, one personal weapon was stipulated per group of five individuals and, in fact, women and children were exempted even from this requirement and needed only to 'present' themselves with fighting forces.[25] But rather than reconsider eligibility guidelines and verification procedures, UNMIL continued with disarmament and demobilization until the caseload was over 100,000. Meanwhile, it is also clear that hundreds of bona fide armed combatants were excluded from the DDR process. These ex-combatants never disarmed, demobilized, or registered for reintegration programs. At Guthrie plantation, for example, of 580 ex-combatants determined to be occupying the plantation after the war, only 180 were registered on the DDR database.

Another lesson not learned from Sierra Leone concerned cash payments. TSAs were again paid at the point of disarmament, in demobilization centers and not in areas of return. A consequence of this decision was that commanders were observed recruiting children living nearby demobilization centers to present them for DDR registration (these commanders agreed to split the cash with the child's family). Other combatants routinely distributed ammunition to family members in order to allow them to access programs and qualify for TSA payments. Additionally, there were several reports of ex-combatant involvement in the smuggling of arms into Liberia from Sierra Leone to take advantage of its ongoing DDR process.[26] In fact, when disarmament targets in Liberia were not being met, the program increased the amount of the reinsertion benefit, which further increased incentives to traffic weapons into the country.[27]

Although the intent was to include individuals who served in both combat and support roles during the conflict, it is clear that the permissiveness of programs also included many individuals who were involved neither in combat nor in support roles. Combatant mortality rates relative to the number of 'ex-combatants' ultimately disarmed illustrate the likely inclusion of thousands of non-combatants on Liberia's DDR program. So, too, do comparisons of weapons collected to number of individuals disarmed. Tables 6.1 and 6.2, in providing

Table 6.1 Number of Combatants Killed as Percentage of Number of Combatants Disarmed

Conflict	*Est. Number of Combatant Deaths*	*Est. Number of Combatants Disarmed*	*Percentage*
Mozambique	145,400	92,000	158%
Sierra Leone	14,212	72,000	20%
Liberia	2,487	103,000	2%

Table 6.2 Number of Weapons Collected as Percentage of Number of Combatants Disarmed[28]

Conflict	*Est. Number of Weapons Collected*	*Est. Number of Combatants Disarmed*	*Percentage*
Mozambique	200,000	92,000	217%
Sierra Leone	41,760	72,000	58%
Liberia	29,794	103,000	29%

these data, chart the increased permissiveness of reintegration eligibility over time across cases, and give a sense of how many non-combatants are likely to have gained access to DDR programs in Liberia. The percentage of weapons to persons disarmed in Liberia, for example, is the lowest in the history of DDR efforts.[29]

Because the eligibility requirements and the timing and location of TSAs were not altered, and because actors decided to validate the large caseload of 101,000, subsequent budget pressures reduced the time ex-combatants were to spend in demobilization centers (from 30 days to five), thereby also reducing the amount of information and support they received there. Per capita reintegration spending was also reduced as a consequence of the case overload.[30]

'Original' and 'residual' reintegration, 2004–2009

Of the 101,000 ex-combatants demobilizing and receiving TSAs, over 92,000 accessed reintegration assistance under a US$75 million program of support. This program was divided between projects administered by a UNDP Trust fund, benefitting 63,000 ex-combatants, and projects administered by various 'parallel partners', intended to benefit 36,000 ex-combatants.[31] The parallel partners were donors and agencies who chose to run reintegration programs through channels other than the UNDP-managed Trust Fund. They included the UK

Department for International Development (DfID), Japan, the EC, Danish Refugee Council, and two programs run by the US Agency for International Development (USAID). The parallel partners all signed Memoranda of Understanding with the JIU. Liberia was the first mission where DDR (including reintegration) was funded from the assessed peacekeeping budget.[32] The JIU was in charge of all planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of reintegration.

Original programs

As in Sierra Leone, Trust Fund programs gave ex-combatants a 'reintegration opportunity' choice between vocational training and formal education; agricultural assistance was considered a vocational training option. Demobilized government soldiers who had joined the army before 1989 were also eligible for pensions. Vocational training included Monthly Subsistence Allowances (MSAs) of $30 per month for eight months. Formal education involved three years of support, with MSAs of $30 per month for nine months during the first academic year, $15 per month for nine months during the second, and no monthly support during the third. As in Sierra Leone, toolkits were given at the conclusion of vocational training programs but not for formal education. And as in Sierra Leone, very few combatants (4%) opted for agricultural assistance and training. But unlike in Sierra Leone, many chose formal education (38%), with the remainder (58%) enrolling in vocational skills courses focused on auto mechanics, tailoring, and masonry.[33]

The reintegration programs offered under the Trust Fund and through the parallel partners varied significantly. The parallel programs were meant to model the Trust Fund program, but the type and duration of the training varied greatly, with some providing three or fewer months of support. In one often-cited case, an implementing partner offered a three-month 'road brushing' program, despite the fact that all reintegration programs were to have been eight months long and include classroom training in approved skills.

The JIU also decided to allow ex-combatants to register proxies for reintegration benefits, since many ex-combatants preferred to enroll their children on formal education programs; this in part explains why higher percentages chose formal education than in Sierra Leone, where proxies were not allowed. Respondents were divided about whether allowing proxies was a good idea. Liberian ex-combatant respondents overwhelmingly approved of the decision to allow proxies because they said it allowed them to assist family members, which not only

provided flexibility but also facilitated reconciliation within families after the war. A senior UNDP official also approved of the decision, saying that the decision should be 'the choice of the ex-combatant cardholder'.[34] A senior RRR official, however, said, 'Proxies defeat the purpose [of reintegration].'[35] And the NCDDRR disavowed the decision, saying, 'Having proxies had never been our idea … Proxies started with the beneficiaries of phase one and the JIU allowed it.'[36]

Unsurprisingly, given the similarities of program design between Sierra Leone and Liberia, many of the same problems with vocational training programs repeated. Many implementing partners (IPs) were not accredited and so the quality of vocational training varied from good to poor. There were serious problems with IP corruption, with one IP claiming ex-combatant MSAs for ex-combatant beneficiaries not enrolled on programs. There were delays with MSAs and toolkits, and delays in setting up NCDDRR field offices, which delayed the provision of assistance in rural areas. Unemployment remained high despite training programs. And initial plans for internships, apprenticeships, job placement schemes, and public works projects were discarded along the way.

But the biggest problem with original programs was the failure of the parallel partners to fulfill their agreement to provide assistance for 36,000 beneficiaries. The Trust Fund and parallel partner programs operated independently of each other, and many parallel programs neglected to check beneficiaries against the database, and so although they provided assistance to 30,000–36,000 beneficiaries, they did not provide assistance to verified *ex-combatant* beneficiaries, creating a residual caseload of ex-combatants who had received no support by the time programs were meant to close.

Residual caseload programs

By March 2007, the JIU reported that the database showed that 22,601 registered former combatants had not yet received reintegration assistance. Of these, 791 belonged to the Trust Fund caseload and 21,810 to parallel programs.[37] A UN-commissioned evaluation of the residual caseload (which I co-authored) concluded that many of the parallel partners had not followed MoU stipulations regarding ex-combatant registration, nor had they provided the requisite targeted programming. Many parallel partners mistakenly understood themselves to have met their MoU obligations to provide support to 'x' number of people but the JIU understood the parallel partners to have failed to provide support to 'x' number of database ex-combatants. A high

number of non-combatants therefore accessed the parallel partners' programs and were not accounted for separately.[38]

The late 'discovery' of the residual caseload, mere weeks before the Trust Fund was to close, presented a serious problem, since the parallel partners indicated that they were unwilling to fund further programs targeting ex-combatants. Many actors, including the Liberian President, considered the residual caseload to pose a security threat to the state – they feared that excluded ex-combatants would riot or foment violence. A UNDP respondent said, 'They are frustrated. We don't know what is the "what's next?" after frustration.'[39] To respond to the residual caseload, the DDRR Technical Working Group (comprising NCDDRR, UNDP, UNMIL/RRR, UNICEF, ILO, and relevant government ministries) designed a residual caseload program that began in March 2008. The program cost $7 million and was funded by Norway.

Over 18,000 individuals initially presented themselves for the program and the database confirmed 7,388 of these as registered ex-combatants. Of this number, 5,024 participated in the residual program. Some were placed into apprenticeships (1,789) and plans were made with the private sector to place up to 2,000 into jobs, but the global financial crisis meant that many of these arrangements never materialized. The majority, therefore, joined vocational training programs similar in design to the original programs. The program document stated, 'While no miracle can be expected in an economy with 85% unemployment, the packages are designed in such a manner that they will seriously enhance the possibility of the beneficiaries to find decent jobs, to start a small business, or engage in viable agricultural initiatives including establishing small farms.'[40]

In contrast to original programming, the residual program was country-wide, included a market assessment and opportunity mapping, subjected IPs to capacity assessments, and provided beneficiaries with career counseling and psycho-social support. No proxies were allowed. All practitioner respondents positively reviewed the program, but acknowledged that the employment outcomes would have been better were it not for the global financial crisis and the obligation to provide assistance that was roughly equal to (as opposed to better than) that of original programs. Summarizing the tension between equality of provision and designing programs that learned from the mistakes of original programming, one RRR respondent asked, '[Are we only] interested in the remaining caseload? Or should we still be concerned about all of them?'[41]

Second-generation programs, 2005–2009

Traditionally, DPKO has focused on disarmament and demobilization efforts, with reintegration programs left to UN agencies and partners, most often UNDP or the World Bank. Through RRR, however, DPKO ended up playing an active role with ex-combatant reintegration. RRR's second-generation programs developed out of the Hotspots assessments and included professionalization training for motorcycle taxi unions (MTUs), labor-intensive road projects, and alternative skills training for ex-combatant and non-combatant residents on rubber plantations (e.g., from rubber tapping to farming or ranching).

Hotspots assessments

UNMIL wanted security monitoring to investigate potential breaches of security in the run-up to the 2005 elections and in response to the planned initial drawdown of UNMIL forces. The Hotspots confirmed some UNMIL security worries linked to ex-combatants but challenged others, determining that ex-combatants did not pose a national threat and that national chains of command were not intact. But the assessments also concluded that lack of livelihood opportunities was the biggest security challenge in the geographic areas under review, and this conclusion led to second-generation programs designed to address unemployment of ex-combatants and non-combatant community members in those areas, with emergency employment projects focusing on infrastructure rehabilitation. A related challenge analyzed in the Hotspots was the presence of large numbers of ex-combatants within Liberia's rubber plantations.

Working with UNMIL's Joint Mission Analysis Cell (JMAC), RRR produced seven Hotspots assessments, in October 2005, November 2005, April 2006, April 2007, August 2008, January 2009, and May 2009. In addition, RRR and JMAC issued periodic reports on the security situation within rubber plantations and in mining areas and undertook biannual missions, jointly with UNOCI, to monitor the involvement of Liberian ex-combatants in Ivorian militias in western Côte d'Ivoire. The Hotspots found that ex-combatants were active and visible within communities across several economic, social, and political roles. They discovered, for example, that ex-combatants were active in the leadership of trade unions and other economic interest groups. The Hotspots also concluded that although ex-combatants were occasionally involved in community disputes, sometimes their involvement was in *resolving* community disputes.

Hotspots assessments were a monitoring and programmatic tool for UNMIL – the monitoring provided the Mission with critical information about how to address the problems identified in the assessments. As such, Hotspots helped UNMIL to decide where peacekeepers should be deployed and identified the need for second-generation programs in strategic areas of the country. All follow-up projects included both ex-combatants and non-combatant community members, and were implemented in areas determined by UNMIL to be vulnerable (mainly rubber plantations and counties located in border areas).

The last Hotspots analyzed the increase in several communities of MTUs, whose membership comprises significant numbers of ex-combatants. The Hotspots identified both positive (increased economic opportunity, provision of cheap transportation connecting rural areas to towns and cities) and negative (accidents and other road safety problems, and violent reprisals and vigilantism by taxi driver groups) effects of this phenomenon. Based on Hotspots analysis, RRR suggested to UNDP a joint YMCA-LNP-Ministry of Transport project to provide traffic training, drivers' licenses, psycho-social counseling, and conflict resolution and business professionalism training to motorcycle taxi drivers. The project began in September 2009 with funds from the PBF.

Infrastructure for employment projects

From 2006–2009, RRR implemented three separate labor-intensive employment projects. These projects focused on road rehabilitation because roads were determined to be important for the UNMIL mobility and for the country's emergency employment strategy. Road projects could employ large numbers of community members while simultaneously rehabilitating the country's infrastructure damaged by war and successive rainy seasons. The UNMIL Special Engineering Project allocated $1 million per year to employ people to repair and maintain primary and secondary roads. The Labor-Intensive Infrastructure Program (LIIP) used World Bank funding to expand the Special Engineering Project and was managed jointly by RRR, UNDP, and the Ministry of Public Works. The Food Supply for Local Initiatives (FSLI) project was similar to the others but gave workers food assistance instead of cash wages. Projects targeted all community members, including ex-combatants, in border areas or other areas deemed critical for security. Except for the FSLI, participants earned US$3 per day (US$5 for supervisors) and communities were encouraged to include women and war-affected persons in the workforce of each project.

By June 2009, RRR infrastructure projects had employed over 70,000 Liberians for a total of 2.5 million working days. RRR found that in areas where road projects were active, crime and re-recruitment into regional armed groups declined, community income increased, and conflict resolution capacity was strengthened (namely, employment projects reduced conflict between ex-combatants and IDPs due to limited job opportunities). RRR respondents also emphasized that the projects addressed the employment shortcomings of the original reintegration program and extended reintegration benefits to remote areas of the country that did not benefit from the original program.

Rubber plantation task force

At the end of the conflict, illegal rubber tapping was widespread, ownership and management of several plantations were in dispute, and large groups of ex-combatants had occupied Guthrie and Sinoe plantations. Ex-combatants migrated to the plantations after the war because of the immediate economic opportunities that rubber tapping afforded. Many of them exploited and abused plantation community residents, but ex-combatant occupants were also frequently victims of exploitation, as many local and state authorities forced them to pay bribes for their 'right to occupy'. A 2006 report from UNMIL's Human Rights Section detailed these issues and also uncovered evidence of serious abuses on the plantations (including killings and sexual assault), as well as deplorable living conditions for plantation residents.[42]

The Liberian President and the UNMIL SRSG established the Rubber Plantations Task Force (RPTF) on 20 February 2006 to address security and human rights concerns on the plantations. The RPTF visited all seven main rubber plantations and issued a final report with recommendations on management issues, concession agreements, land disputes, plantation rehabilitation, financial procedures, rubber marketing, human rights, labor, rule of law, environmental impact, and improvements to working and living conditions and security.[43] The RPTF established Interim Management Teams (IMTs) on plantations where no recognized management was in place and sought to encourage voluntary relocation of ex-combatants from plantations to alternative livelihood training programs. The Liberian President then asked the RPTF to re-establish state authority and rule of law on those plantations occupied by ex-combatants or other illegal management entities – Cocopa, Guthrie, and Sinoe.

Guthrie is one of the biggest rubber plantations in Liberia, with approximately 35,000 residents. After the conflict, 580 LURD ex-combatants were illegally occupying the plantation against the wishes of the plantation residents. The RPTF initiated negotiations with the ex-combatants to convince them to allow the extension of state authority on the plantation. The RPTF transported to training centers 159 ex-combatants who opted to join the national reintegration program, and repatriated 25 ex-combatants to Sierra Leone (they were Sierra Leonean ex-combatants who had been re-recruited to fight in the Liberian conflict). LMA brought 350 of the remaining ex-combatants to Tumutu Agricultural Training Center in Bong County for alternative vocational training. By the end of 2006, Guthrie was fully under the control of the IMT, but this does not mean ex-combatants had ceased to perform a security function on the plantation. A former NPFL general, who had been the head of Guthrie's PPD under Taylor, was re-installed as the deputy head of the so-called security monitors after the LURD leadership was forced out. Ex-combatants from different factions were also present in every monitoring group at Guthrie. Finally, at least one of the former LURD commanders has returned to a prominent position of power at Guthrie.[44]

At Cocopa plantation, members of ex-President Taylor's militia had been employed within Cocopa's Plantation Protection Department (PPD). The PPD's violent methods on the plantation led to clashes with local defense forces. In January 2007, the escalating violence led the RPTF to replace the plantation management temporarily. The RPTF disarmed the PPD and laid off several PPD members. The RPTF restored management to plantation owners in April 2007.

The final task of the RPTF was the re-establishment of state authority on Sinoe Rubber Plantation (SRP). In 2003, former MODEL combatants took control of SRP and formed an organization called the Community Welfare Committee (CWC) to manage the plantation. By 2009, RRR estimated that 500 ex-combatants resided at Sinoe. Initially, the RPTF planned to repossess SRP; however, the government failed to identify the rightful owners of the plantation and UNMIL refused to forcefully repossess the plantation unless ownership issues were resolved. Meanwhile, the Sinoe County Superintendent repeatedly tried to repossess the plantation on his own but the CWC, with support from the resident plantation population, resisted these attempts. An August 2008 forcible repossession attempt by the superintendent led to violent confrontations between the CWC and local representatives. The CWC's nine core members were subsequently arrested without indict-

ment in October 2008 and released in February 2009. Illegal taxation schemes allegedly run by local authorities further fueled tensions. These local actions made it difficult for UNMIL to assist repossession efforts since any UNMIL cooperation with state authorities could be misinterpreted as support for the illicit and violent actions of the local authorities. The collapse of rubber prices in the wake of the global financial crisis ultimately led many CWC members and non-combatant plantation residents to join RRR road projects in the area and to participate in LMA alternative income projects at an agricultural training center near to SRP. The Minister of Internal Affairs announced in August of 2009 that the government would take over SRP and establish an IMT.

Practitioner respondents reported that infrastructure improvements in plantation areas, provision of social services through Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) that built schools, clinics, and police stations, and employment opportunities through road rehabilitation projects and alternative livelihood training all helped plantation communities see the benefits of the extension of state authority.

With the exception of the program for MTUs, UNMIL's second-generation programs ended in 2009, around the same time that the final phase of the residual caseload program ended (April 2009). President Johnson-Sirleaf officially closed the DDR process in a ceremony on 21 July 2009. In September 2009, RRR reduced its staff and became part of UNMIL Civil Affairs, ceasing operation as an independent section.

RRR versus the world: Analyzing reintegration challenges in Liberia

The Hotspots concluded that ex-combatants had been integrated into their communities because they met the overall economic profile of everyone else in those communities and because communities by and large accepted ex-combatants back.[45] UNMIL and government respondents largely praised second-generation projects for establishing a reconstruction presence and creating temporary, emergency employment in remote areas that lacked sustained employment opportunities. No other development actor was engaged in emergency employment on a similar scale and with a similar countrywide reach. RRR's strategic field presence, local relationships, and access to peacekeeping assets and to the SRSG and Liberian president enhanced RRR's ability to recruit participants in a community-based manner.

But the challenges identified and analyzed below show that RRR efforts to focus reintegration on employment, although innovative, were not sustained. Programmatically, false debates once again pitted targeted against non-targeted approaches. The original, residual, and second-generation programs all relied upon an assumption of ex-combatants as security threats in their rationale, design, and implementation. Programs also drew on tropes about the capability of ex-combatants to return Liberia to war through protest, crime, and as the result of unemployment. Security debates about ex-combatant threats have deepened political, social, and economic marginalization of ex-combatants, for instance by framing ex-combatant association and economic activity as threatening, criminal, and 'gang-like'. Reflecting the dominance of macroeconomic approaches, several national and international actors discounted the RRR model of labor-intensive second-generation programming. Even respondents within the UNMIL system were critical of RRR for trying to do too much and accused RRR of assisting ex-combatants over communities (these respondents neglected to mention or else did not know that RRR projects involved non-combatant community members, too). Institutional competition between actors over who should 'do development' during post-conflict transition also disrupted RRR's ability to convince other reintegration actors to embrace labor-intensive follow-up. Finally, the Liberian case reinforces how deeply embedded ideas about political violence and ex-combatants impede integration, and reflects how problematic and inaccurate assumptions about ex-combatant fraud and menace impact upon DDR interventions.

These challenges all impeded the sustainability of RRR's approach and helped to normalize reintegration into poverty by suggesting that unless ex-combatants are noticeably threatening, for example through protests or occupation of rubber plantations, then they are no longer a group in need of assistance.

Programmatic challenges

Similar to the reluctance of the international DDR enterprise to emulate long-term cash schemes like Mozambique's RSS despite its favorable reviews, the most notable successes of DDR programming in Liberia have not been copied elsewhere. After the closure of the RRR office in Liberia, actors in other post-conflict states have shied away from modeling RRR employment projects, although some missions have modeled the Hotspots assessment format to link community programming to security assessments.

Lessons supposedly learned from Sierra Leone were also unlearned in Liberia. As previously mentioned, TSAs were again paid at the point of disarmament, creating a cash incentive that drove a market for arms and beneficiaries. Programs again emphasized vocational training that was sub-par, poorly coordinated, and lacking in oversight. Vocational training was not demand-driven – it was simply what reintegration actors knew how to organize and provide. Once again, no market needs assessment was carried out before training programs were designed. And, once again, ex-combatants lacked time and information in demobilization centers to make informed decisions among training options.

But differently from Sierra Leone, reintegration actors in Liberia themselves articulated most of these criticisms about program approaches. (In Sierra Leone, the tendency was to justify vocational training as all that actors could realistically provide in a highly constrained post-conflict environment.) A JIU official said of the absence of a market survey, 'The immediate need for action meant there was no time for market research.'[46] Another said, 'I really feel sorry for the [original caseload]. There was no market assessment or integrated approach. They didn't have time for that … These guys were left high and dry, and so thousands went to fight elsewhere, or to tap rubber.'[47] A senior UNMIL official said, 'Parallel partners signed on but didn't carry out their obligations.'[48] And a senior RRR official said, 'When we arrived, UNDP was in this big effort of training. Ex-combatants were coming out of these programs without any reintegration. One other problem, by telling New York that the reintegration program was attending to these people and that reintegration was "completed", someone in New York assumes [ex-combatants] are going towards reintegration. This wasn't true. It was training and coming out without a job.'[49] Differently to Sierra Leone, reintegration actors in Liberia also proposed alternatives, reflected in their advocacy for the residual caseload program and for second-generation programs. The senior RRR official added, 'We've approached reintegration through this optic: what was missing from 2003 to 2006 was employment.'

Despite the critical awareness of many reintegration actors in Liberia, however, debates persisted that unnecessarily pitted targeted against non-targeted approaches, and suggested that a zero sum view that actors must choose *whether* to assist ex-combatants *or* communities is deeply embedded in reintegration practice. Residual caseload ex-combatants, for example, existed because of a programmatic experiment to see whether targeted or non-targeted approaches were more

effective. One respondent confided that the dual structure (with the Trust Fund targeting ex-combatants and parallel programs including both ex-combatants and non-combatant community members) was devised because 'donors wanted to compare an integrated approach (ex-combatants plus others) and targeted support'.[50]

These programmatic debates thrive even when facts call them into question. Several respondents within the UN system and donor community accused second-generation programs in Liberia of 'unfairly' and 'obsessively' targeting ex-combatants even though no second-generation programs targeted ex-combatants only. Programs for MTUs, rubber plantation residents, and road rehabilitation in border communities were all open to both ex-combatants and non-combatants.

Strangely, debates over targeting blame the lack of community assistance on DDR programs and not on the wider development enterprise tasked to help communities. My field visits to Voinjama in Lofa County in 2007 and Greenville in Sinoe County in 2009 corroborated that the most visible development assistance on offer was attached to DDR programming (although, it is worth emphasizing again that this assistance reached both ex-combatants and non-combatant community members). Interviews with UNMIL officials verified that recovery assistance and development aid to war-affected communities was slow to reach remote areas in the border regions and mining and plantation communities. Scapegoating reintegration programs for the absence of development assistance in communities would therefore appear to be part of a strategic effort to deflect attention from the failures of post-conflict reconstruction more generally to provide robust, countrywide assistance.

Like in Sierra Leone, a national commission administered DDR in Liberia in order to promote national ownership of the DDR process. But the problems with the case overload and the residual caseload illustrate how donors, UNDP, and UNMIL did not give the NCDDRR the authority and power to 'own'. Even though the residual caseload resulted from external actors' targeting failures, external actors used the national commission to deny their role in creating the residual caseload. A UNDP official said in 2007, 'UNDP is definitely downsizing by June. It is still the responsibility of government to make a pledge to the outstanding caseload. *They* can decide whether that is targeted or community-based.'[51] A senior NCDDRR official responded, 'The numbers [of the residual caseload] shock me. We have not had much say in the management of the funds. Everything has been managed by UNDP … I will not accept or condone being scapegoated for UNDP's

failure … I won't accept blame for what I have not created.'[52] Another NCDDRR official said, 'With Phase One, the government – no matter how weak – should have played a role. The project was donor-run, donor-funded, donor everything, and the government gave it political coverage until elections. Then we pushed for national ownership and it was as if we were committing a crime, like we were the bad guys coming into the good guys' camps.'[53]

Security challenges

In 2004 and 2005, the UN Secretary-General argued that ex-combatant dissatisfaction following the first Liberian civil war in 1997 contributed to return to war in 1999, and he described Liberian ex-combatants collectively as a 'volatile group'.[54] It is true that some ex-combatants posed serious and immediate threats after war. But to suggest that ex-combatant riots, presence within rubber plantations and mining areas, or potential re-recruitment into regional wars threaten(ed) post-conflict security overstates the threat posed by ex-combatants. The suggestion also overlooks non-combatant sources of persistent and ongoing security threats in the country – such threats are also arguably more serious and frequent than those that ex-combatants are said to pose. Securitization of reintegration assistance also suggests that behavior deemed threatening (such as protests and migration to areas of economic productivity) is related to ex-combatants' proclivity (even predilection) for violence when such actions actually were triggered by the failures and shortcomings of programs.

Sometimes, ex-combatants posed serious threats to communities after the war. At some rubber plantations, ex-combatants used intimidation and violence to assume control of plantation management and production. A 2006 UNMIL report documented ex-combatant involvement in murder and sexual violence on the plantations. At Guthrie, in particular, plantation residents opposed the ex-combatant presence until UNMIL successfully relocated them by inducing them to join alternative vocational training programs. UNMIL respondents worried, however, that rubber plantation efforts merely encouraged ex-combatants to migrate into mining areas (northern River Cess County, Sapoe National Park, the corridor connecting Gbapolu to Weasua and Bapolu, and the Zwedru gold mining areas), which they said were even more remote and dangerous than rubber plantations. They often referred to mining communities as the 'Wild West' of Liberia. Ex-combatants at Sinoe Rubber Plantation told me, 'We came to Sinoe because rubber was lucrative and it provided economic opportunity, but no more. If

[RRR] road programs do not resume, and we are not taken up by [the LMA alternative livelihood] training, we will go to Sapoe and to the mines.'[55] Meanwhile, in Monrovia, successive ex-combatant riots occurred, often in response to exclusion from programs (the residual caseload) or else exclusion from the most popular training options (computer skills courses). UNMIL routinely deployed Quick Reaction Units and Formed Police Units to monitor protests and respond to any violent incidents observed.

But threat assessments of ex-combatants in Liberia often took on the character of a tree falling in the woods – ex-combatants were deemed threatening only in areas where UNMIL or the government maintained a robust security presence (rubber plantations) allowing them to witness threats, but not in areas where they were not present (mining areas). An UNMIL Political, Policy, and Planning official told me that the government, as a matter of deliberate policy, had decided to overlook the activities of ex-combatants in mining areas while UNMIL focused on plantations. He said that ex-combatants in mining areas 'are a potential flashpoint if and when government decides to enforce the law, or if and when we reestablish local authority there'.[56]

As in the other cases reviewed in this book, the perception that ex-combatants could 'return Liberia to war' was crucial to rationalizing assistance for former fighters, and to the design of programs and evaluation of outcomes. But the worry about a return to war emanating from ex-combatant dissatisfaction with DDR misinterprets the causes of Liberia's return to war in 1999, which cannot be reduced to ex-combatant frustration or disgruntlement over unemployment or failed DDR from 1997. The worry about a return to war also conflates 'normal' ex-combatant behavior after war with an existential threat to the state. In the decades after WWI, US veterans staged demonstrations and protests, and also flocked to areas of economic opportunity in a highly constrained economic environment. To claim that ex-combatant street protests in Liberia could lead to widespread political instability and war suggests that ex-combatant dissatisfaction has only one outlet (war) and overstates the popularity of that outlet among ex-combatants. A 2008 US Institute of Peace survey found that two-thirds of Liberian ex-combatants said they would never go back to war.[57] The suggestion that the disgruntlement of ex-combatants in 1997 Liberia contributed to their subsequent re-mobilization in 1999 fails to account for the policies of Charles Taylor, regional political dynamics, and the desire for political inclusion and representation that analysts of the 1999–2003 conflict recognize as having precipitated conflict.

Two of the focus groups I conducted in Liberia help to illustrate the contradictions embedded in the securitization of DDR and the tendency to construct ex-combatants as post-conflict threats. The conclusions I draw from the first group call into question the extent to which ex-combatants constitute a security threat to the state. The conclusions I draw from the second group call into question the directionality of presumed security threats in Liberia – i.e., that ex-combatants are assumed to be (always) perpetrators of violence and communities (always) their victims.

At Voinjama Multilateral High School in Lofa County in 2007, there were 242 ex-combatants enrolled out of a total of 856 students from 7th to 12th grade. The school referred to ex-combatant students as 'scholarship students' or 'JIU students' in order to avoid using the 'ex-combatant' label which, it was believed, would negatively affect social reintegration of the students. Most of the students were, at the time, 22 and 23 years old, although some were between 18 and 21 years old. School officials said that attendance rates of ex-combatants enrolled in the programs were remarkably good, and that attendance was not tied only to receipt of MSAs because students continued to attend school even after MSAs ended. I met with five of these students in 2007. Two were 18 years old, one was 21, one was 22, and one was 27. All of them indicated that they wanted to pursue computer school after graduating. They gave three reasons for choosing education over vocational training programs. First, most of them were in school anyway before their names were validated for reintegration assistance. Second, they did not perceive vocational training as helpful or beneficial and they liked that formal educational assistance lasted for three years, which was longer than the eight months of assistance under vocational training programs. Third, they perceived receipt of a high school finishing certificate as a concrete benefit of reintegration assistance and something that would bring long-term advantages. All of them denied having any interest in re-recruitment into the conflict in neighboring Guinea. One said, 'No. The war is over. Now we want to go to school.' All of them also said that they took up arms to protect their families (from rape, from murder, from looting, from recruitment) and said they had little choice but to become fighters.[58]

The interviews with JIU students in Voinjama challenge narratives about both mobilization and demobilization. These young former fighters did not join the war for money or loot. They joined for security. Of course, the account they provided was an ex post facto explanation of their motivation for joining the armed movement, but survey

data corroborate their account by showing that most Liberians who fought for LURD and MODEL understood themselves as fighting for long-term security interests. Once demobilized, these fighters were not interested in chasing money or loot via re-recruitment in Guinea. They wanted to stay in school. Their experiences conform to survey data showing that few ex-combatants viewed fighting as an economic opportunity. One survey found that only 4% of ex-combatants cited money as a reason for fighting in the conflict.[59] A second survey found that, like my Voinjama respondents, ex-combatants before and after the war 'lived quite ordinary Liberian lives, and based their decision on whether to join an armed group on the security predicament that they believed that they and their families were facing'.[60]

The Voinjama respondents also contest the proposition that youth join armed movements because they are unemployed. Even though surveys find the same levels of unemployment among ex-combatants as the rest of the population, reintegration actors often construct the ex-combatant unemployed as uniquely threatening.[61] The problem with this assumption is that unemployment and idleness did not cause Liberian youth to take up arms in the first place. Nor were youth idle or unemployed before conflict: 60% were in school, and 25% were working.[62]

On one hand, reintegration actors in Liberia sang from the same song sheet as my Voinjama respondents. Many actors challenged tropes about the greed motivations of combatant recruitment and ex-combatant re-recruitment. The Hotspots confirmed that ex-combatants did not constitute a threat to state security. As a JMAC official said, 'Someone who wants to learn the worst has gone out on the ground and learned that things aren't so bad.'[63] An RRR official said that ex-combatants are sometimes 'better behaved' than non-combatant youth.

But on the other hand, UN reintegration actors also perpetuated tropes about ex-combatants as security threats, and about the greed-based motivations underlying their decisions. Several RRR officials asserted that second-generation employment projects in Lofa County dissuaded ex-combatants from joining fighting groups in Guinea. One said that infrastructure for employment efforts 'provided so many jobs we know it had an effect even on illegal recruitment. Commanders from Guinea couldn't find recruits because people in Lofa had jobs.' A 2009 joint UNOCI/UNMIL mission in Côte d'Ivoire found that the lure of gainful employment on roads projects facilitated the return of over

25 Liberian ex-combatants to Grand Gedeh County, Liberia, from Côte d'Ivoire.[64] Although positive in their assessment of the need for longer-term reintegration assistance, these conclusions problematically reinforce the idea that ex-combatants fight for money, when quantitative and qualitative data underscore the essential political and security motivations behind decisions to fight, and the same political and security motivations that structured an ex-combatant's decision to fight in Liberia would not transfer to a decision to cross over into Guinea to fight. These perceptions reflect how ideas about political violence as greed-based bleed into DDR assumptions – that security relies upon keeping ex-combatants occupied and ushering them into livelihoods that will distract them from their natural inclination to engage in natural resource predation or mercenary behavior.

In 2009, I conducted a focus group with ex-MODEL fighters and core members of the CWC in Greenville, Sinoe County. The CWC had occupied SRP until they were arrested, imprisoned without charge, and released five months later by local authorities. At Guthrie, nearly all residents opposed the ex-combatant occupation. But at Sinoe, MODEL ex-combatants had family members and ties to other individuals already resident on the plantation, so the relationship between them and the plantation community was more complex (which is not to say that all plantation residents welcomed or supported the CWC). By the time I met with the CWC members, they had been out of prison for just over three months, were unable to return to the plantation because they had lost the power, assets, and weapons that had helped them assume leadership there and because rubber prices had since collapsed, meaning that rubber tapping was no longer profitable for them. They were unemployed and uncertain about what to do to make a living.

The CWC members were both perpetrators of community violence and victims of community violence. They certainly were not saints, before or after the war. Some of them were alleged to have committed atrocities during the war, and all of them had used intimidation and the threat of violence to retain control over Sinoe after the war. But they enjoyed some community support during their occupation of the plantation. And they were also the victims of extortion, illegal detention, and illegal seizure of their assets by 'community' leaders at the local and state level. The lines blur between community and ex-combatant, and between perpetrator and victim.

During our hour-long conversation, what they said sometimes confirmed but more often challenged ideas about ex-combatants as

security threats after war, and as perpetrators of violence against communities. Their statements included the following:

> We agree that the time for ex this and ex that is over but we need opportunities.
> Without opportunities, our minds think of many things. Many things.
> [Without RRR], there would be no opportunities on the plantations, and no roads. We appreciate the jobs, but we need more.
> We are part of the community. We come from SRP.
> Because of what happened to us, we are now isolated from our communities. But we are also the community.[65]

These men echoed the statements of the ex-combatant residents I interviewed on Sinoe plantation – that were it not for RRR projects, there would have been no assistance on offer in Sinoe County. They also laced their observations about their own situation with implicit threats to commit violence ('our minds think of many things') while simultaneously putting the violent past behind them ('the time for ex this and ex that is over'). Their imprisonment and unemployment, and the words they used to discuss these issues, confirm that social reintegration is not just a matter of community 'acceptance' of ex-combatants but is also affected by post-conflict power arrangements and experiences, too. The CWC ex-combatants face reintegration challenges not simply because of what they did during the war but also because of what they did after the war and what was done *to them* after the war. Emphasizing their own status as community members regardless of their combatant past also disrupts taken-for-granted assumptions about social reintegration and the directionality of security threats after war. In other words, after the war, who threatens whom in Sinoe County?

Post-conflict violence in Liberia has taken several forms, with ex-combatant violence against communities only one of these. Reports of the UN Secretary-General list several security threats that involve non-combatant community members, including violent land disputes, electoral violence, and ritual and reprisal killings in communities.[66] Surveys show that Liberians do not rate threats from ex-combatants as among the top reported sources of actual or potential violence.[67] The Hotspots found that violence was more likely to be committed by deactivated police personnel than by ex-combatants, and that the non-combatant community was just as likely to resort to criminal enterprise.[68] A JMAC official told me, 'I can't remember the last time

we've had a confirmed report of armed robbery using combat weapons.'[69] Liberia's TRC concluded that domestic and foreign businessmen and political authorities, and not the ex-combatant rank-and-file, committed the most serious economic crimes during the war.[70]

Reintegration programs in Liberia reduced ex-combatants to the security threat they were said to pose to the state. Although some ex-combatants were sometimes threatening in Liberia, sweeping statements categorizing and classifying all ex-combatants as always threatening are commonplace. President Johnson Sirleaf wrote in her memoir, 'The hard truth is that a good number of these young former combatants – our children, yes – are hardened criminals. They have known violence for the better part of their lives, and combating that truth is very difficult. Theft and even armed robbery remain serious problems in Liberia, and these hardened former combatants are largely the source of it.'[71] Another variant of the reductivist, securitized logic of reintegration is to pathologize the whole of Liberian society as *potentially combatant*. A senior UNMIL official told me, '[Non-combatant unemployed youngsters] can easily become future combatants …'[72] A UNICEF official said, 'Given special needs, how do we do something to address the needs of the whole group [population as a whole]. After all, all are potential new combatants.'[73] The securitized approach to reintegration even implies that when non-combatants engage in violence, they are merely mimicking the violent behavior of ex-combatants, as if structures of violence did not exist before the war. The May 2009 Hotspot assessment, for example, argues that violent incidents by non-combatant plantation workers 'illustrate that citizens without a combatant background may have adapted a post conflict behavior and tend to react in ways *considered typical for ex-combatants*'.[74]

In Liberia, as in the other cases evaluated in this book, reintegration actors also suggested that ex-combatants deserve assistance only if they are threatening. Some donors and UNMIL officials argued against residual caseload programs because they said ex-combatants no longer constituted a security threat to the state and so further programming was unnecessary. When asked whether failure to deliver original programming to the beneficiaries listed in the database meant that donors had an obligation to fund provision for the residual caseload, a JMAC official replied, 'The residual caseload is not making a fuss. It is not about a moral right or wrong of making promises but about the impact/threat they pose.'[75]

Other respondents, meanwhile, used the threat of insecurity to advocate *in favor of* residual caseload programming. A senior NCDDRR

official said in 2007 that the remaining caseload 'are seriously threatening to agitate' and that 'only our willingness to engage them has kept the situation calm'.[76] Security is therefore used both to rationalize increased assistance and to oppose further assistance. Both sets of arguments locate threats within an alleged ex-combatant proclivity for violence. Yet episodes of insecurity in Liberia did not occur in a vacuum – they were a consequence of DDR decisions. Ex-combatants staged protests and moved to occupy areas of natural resource productivity in response to program decisions and contours. The case overload, a product of deliberate program inclusivity, meant that there were more individuals than during the war who were considered potential threats to, and spoilers of, the peace.[77] The migration of ex-combatants to rubber plantations arguably could have been reduced or mitigated had the original cantonment plans for 30 days not been reduced. The final evaluation says that ex-combatants 'riot easily' but also makes clear that riots do not simply occur for any old reason but rather followed program failures, such as long delays in payment of stipends or provision of toolkits. Ignoring these potentially pertinent distinctions, the evaluation suggests that ex-combatants are inevitably and collectively prone to violence, quoting a religious leader who said, 'Ex-combatants are not troublesome but they are not far away from trouble.'[78]

Political challenges

Reintegration programs sometimes exacerbated obstacles to ex-combatants' political inclusion in Liberia by framing ex-combatant economic activity as dangerous and threatening, further separating ex-combatants from their communities by stigmatizing them. Activities were alternatingly portrayed as criminal (rubber tapping and mining) or 'gang-like' (MTUs). To locate criminalization only within the ex-combatant population that migrated to natural resource areas is problematic given the broader context of exclusionary and disputed ownership of plantation and mining concessions. Ownership rights have long been held either by non-Liberians or the Americo-Liberian elite, and the RPTF, although it was interested in promoting the welfare of both plantation residents and ex-combatant occupants, helped to return Liberia to the pre-conflict status quo by endorsing a natural resource governance scheme that did little to revise the preexisting political and economic inequalities of natural resource control.

Hotspots assessments found that ex-combatants often maintained contact with each other for personal, economic, and political reasons.[79] But the Hotspots evaluated that association mostly in terms of the

threat it was assumed to pose; association was linked only with the restoration of 'chains of command'. For example, the final assessment found, on the one hand, that ex-combatants associated in civil society groups as community members and not as ex-combatants – but then that assessment evaluated those same groups as potentially threatening simply because they included ex-combatants as members.[80] Ex-combatant participation in MTUs was also evaluated in terms of threat to the community. Practitioner respondents frequently referred to the 'gang mentality' of MTUs and mentioned the high levels of ex-combatant membership in some MTUs. The May 2009 Hotspots assessment cites MTUs as 'the greatest potential threat to public order' and 'an easy target for mobilization in the context of the 2011 elections'. Some MTU members have been involved in violence against each other or against the police. But the same Hotspots assessment that classified MTUs as 'the greatest potential threat to public order' also found that MTU violence was often a response to abusive and exploitative behavior of the LNP, such as police extortion of bribes in exchange for protection. One problem with classifying all MTUs as gang-like threats to public order is that several MTUs operate without violence and enjoy good relations with their communities and the LNP. Another problem is that such classification furthers the political and social alienation of ex-combatants from communities by framing them as threats.

Structural challenges

As initial funding for Infrastructure for Employment projects ran out and as UNMIL planned to downsize both military and civilian personnel in Liberia, RRR went to the Ministry of Public Works, the ILO, the World Bank, and other actors to suggest that labor-intensive approaches to infrastructure rehabilitation continue to be pursued in order to provide badly needed jobs in the north and east of the country.

But RRR faced resistance in extending the projects. A senior Ministry of Public Works official told me that the loss of UNMIL personnel and vehicles would make it difficult to extend the projects and said, 'Public Works has not been directly involved with a strategy for youth employment.'[81] An RRR official explained that it had been difficult to engage the government, ILO, or the World Bank on the issue. Donors and government officials criticized labor-intensive road rehabilitation, saying that it encouraged beneficiary dependency and that 'road brushing' was not a sustainable skill. The RRR response was that under severely constrained economic conditions, and absent other economic

opportunities, road rehabilitation represents the cheapest and easiest way to employ large numbers of people. Furthermore, the need for constant road maintenance because of the effects of the rainy season makes infrastructure projects sustainable, at least in the medium term.

The opposition to continuing the road projects illustrates how deeply embedded structural challenges are to employment-based DDR approaches. Part of that opposition has to do with reintegration actors continuing to erect barriers between 'doing development' and 'doing security'. Several respondents from UNDP and UNICEF bristled that DPKO was 'doing development'. There has been historical tension between UNDP and DPKO about whether DPKO should be involved in employment efforts. The same attitude prevailed at the World Bank, where one official said, 'I would by all means discourage DPKO from getting involved in reintegration.'[82] But RRR responded that no one else seemed to be 'doing development' on the scale of RRR programs or in remote areas where RRR was active. Institutional competition between actors over who should 'do development' during post-conflict transition disrupted RRR's ability to convince other reintegration actors to embrace labor-intensive follow-up. In other words, the politics of who 'does development' can interfere with the integrative objectives of reintegration.

Although the development background of RRR's staff helped to smooth over institutional rivalry, and although many UNDP respondents praised RRR's efforts and RRR respondents praised those of the UNDP, actors outside of RRR nevertheless did not always understand that RRR's projects did not exclusively target ex-combatants. Further, newly rotated UNDP and UNICEF respondents who had not worked with RRR disapproved of DPKO involvement in the design and implementation of second-generation reintegration programs. That disapproval, however, did not take into account the almost wholesale absence of community-based programs other than RRR projects in remote areas of the country. In 2009, a senior RRR official said:

> There is big resistance in New York [to labor-intensive approaches]. They say, 'Employment is not peacekeeping.' At the end of the mission, this becomes more the case. But even now it is still our job to make sure the government is doing emergency employment because [other actors] are not doing it.[83]

Another said that the reason labor intensive approaches are not pursued is that they cost more to run and require more work and coordination on the part of donors, who would prefer to implement voca-

tional training programs not because they are proven to be more effective but because they are familiar.[84]

Actors preferred to replicate the same, largely discredited vocational training approaches from previous DDR interventions in other countries. Once again, actors appealed to limited economic opportunities to explain the absence of market surveys (an ILO official said that 'there's no market to survey' in Liberia[85]). Once again, agriculture was underprioritized. RRR argued that the same techniques used in labor-intensive road repairs could have been applied in the agricultural sector, in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, to create emergency employment but, as with Public Works, RRR found little support for the extension of community-based agricultural assistance from the Ministry. Once the initial impetus to assist ex-combatants for security purposes faded so, too, did support for labor-intensive community support in remote areas.

Organizational opposition to labor-intensive reintegration approaches also has to do with neoliberal preferences for macroeconomic modes of development and reconstruction after war. The track record of those modes in Liberia, however, has been poor. Orthodox, neoliberal approaches to economic governance are not delivering promised benefits to Liberians. Economic growth has steadily increased from 2.8% in 2009 to 6.4% in 2011 but Liberia has the 7th highest maternal mortality rate, the 18th highest infant mortality rate, and one of the lowest life expectancies in the world.[86] Liberia's Human Development Index ranking is 182 out of 187 countries.[87] Like Sierra Leone and Mozambique, Liberia is ranked below the average for sub-Saharan Africa. Liberia's ex-combatants share in the unemployment of the general population. About two-thirds of ex-combatants in Liberia say there are no jobs and that work available is sporadic and temporary.[88]

As in Mozambique and Sierra Leone, Liberian ex-combatants' reintegration into poverty has been framed as successful, even intentional. An UNMIL/Civil Affairs official said in an interview, 'You don't want to have ex-combatants as a privileged group. These people are going to reintegrate into poverty, into a level playing field. Ex-combatants should not be elevated above that.'[89] One survey advocated decoupling DDR from job creation, concluding, 'The international community needs to fight the perception that the DDRR is a "jobs" program when, in fact, the capacity for the Liberian economy to absorb many of the training graduates into formal sector employment is quite limited.'[90] External actors took structural constraints for granted and ascribed

limited economic opportunities to domestic, Liberian failures. They attributed unemployment to lack of national economic opportunities without discussion of how global economic practices and macroeconomic aid prescriptions might structure limited economic opportunity.

Actors downscaled expectations and objectives, seeking to contain reintegration to its immediate security objective of time buying. A senior UNDP official said, 'You don't want to have ex-combatants as a privileged group. These people are going to reintegrate into poverty – into a level playing field. Ex-combatants should not be elevated above that.'[91] An IP program coordinator said, 'It's impossible to train a mechanic in one year, so [training is] a way to divert the mind of the ex-combatant.'[92] And a senior UNMIL official argued:

> Let's judge DDR as a contribution to a broader set of political objectives … There is a danger of stretching the 'R'. Bearing in mind that ex-combatants are a much broader group of people, there's a tipping point – too much support builds resentment. We should not see DDR as a solution to broader societal ills. It is unfair to see reintegration as job creation. It was a stabilization program.[93]

The problem with these actors' analysis is that they are postulating ex post facto assessments that rationalize and normalize reintegration into poverty, when the initial strategic framework for reintegration in Liberia – like the strategic framework before it in Sierra Leone – referenced numerous opportunities and programs to be stretched over a longer time period that never materialized. The final evaluation of DDR in Liberia concludes that framing reintegration as 'time buying' alone glosses over the agency that reintegration actors exercised to override initial and national plans of longer-term assistance in favor of shorter-term programming with more limited objectives:

> [T]he reintegration phase was done largely on the basis of ad hoc decisions, looking essentially at economic reintegration as a quick intermediary transitional measure, designed to buy peace, rather than as a comprehensive reintegration measure. A number of activities originally foreseen in the [Strategic Framework] were simply not undertaken.[94]

Ideational challenges

Ideas about ex-combatants reinforced keeping reintegration assistance short term. First, actors reverted to tropes about ex-combatants in order

to rationalize short-term assistance, including now familiar ideas about ex-combatants as threatening and entitled, and about community resentment of ex-combatant assistance. Second, reintegration actors tended to blame ex-combatant beneficiaries for program failures, even going so far as to blame the case overload and residual caseload on ex-combatant 'fraud'.

Speaking about unemployed ex-combatants, a senior UNMIL official said to me, 'If youth don't get economic opportunity they will either move to opportunity or destroy opportunity.'[95] Absent from his narrative is the potential of youth to *create opportunity* after war. Reintegration is consequently designed around mitigating the effects of ex-combatants' 'moving to opportunity' (hence the creation of the RPTF to discourage ex-combatant settlement in natural resource areas) and is conceptualized as a security measure aiming to prevent ex-combatants from 'destroying opportunity' through violence or a return to war. Talk of opportunity creation for ex-combatants is deemed to be part of an unrealistic, maximalist development agenda that might backfire by producing dangerous expectations that cannot be fulfilled.

A UNDP official contrasted Liberian ex-combatants with Sierra Leoneans, and said that Sierra Leonean ex-combatants were ashamed to identify as such in their communities but that Liberian ex-combatants would freely label themselves as ex-combatants. She said, 'In most countries, ex-combatants hide their identity. Here, people want to be identified as ex-combatants, even those who were not ex-combatants … it is high time we stop that.'[96] The comment ignores differences between political violence in Sierra Leone and Liberia and its outcomes, and conflates ex-combatant association and identity with insecurity. It also ignores the way in which reintegration actors created incentives for non-combatants to identify as ex-combatants, instead locating 'risky' behavior within a so-called Liberian culture of entitlement. The comment additionally implies that 'integration' ought to imply a complete renunciation of one's ex-combatant identity and a passive acceptance of limited economic opportunity. Finally, ex-combatants might have perfectly good reasons to identify themselves as ex-combatants to a UNDP official (because that official is associated with job projects, training programs, or aid of one sort or another). Field staff, in contrast, contended that most ex-combatants preferred to be seen and preferred to label themselves as community members when they were in communities. One field official observed, 'It is very clear here [Lofa County] that ex-combatants do not want to be seen as ex-combatants. Many were seen as protecting their communities and

are therefore community heroes. They prefer to be seen as community members.'[97]

Another trope commonly leveraged to rationalize short-term assistance for ex-combatants in Liberia was potential community resentment of assistance targeting ex-combatants. As I already mentioned, all second-generation programs were community-based but this feature was not enough to save the programs from charges by several respondents that they increased community resentment.

But data from my interview respondents and from surveys conducted by others calls into question the extent to which community resentment is a significant phenomenon. The Bøås and Hatløy survey found that in most cases communities welcomed the return of ex-combatants.[98] The majority of ex-combatants also reported feeling accepted by communities in Liberia. In a 2008 UNMIL survey, 43% of both ex-combatant and non-combatant respondents said ex-combatants are viewed with acceptance, and another 20% went further, saying they are viewed with respect.[99] Ex-combatants also returned in high numbers (58%) to home communities.[100] NCDDRR officials pointed to intermarriage between ex-combatants and non-combatants and to close family and friendship ties between the two communities. RRR officials and field staff said that the community focus of second-generation projects helped to mitigate resentment of ex-combatants and that those who resented ex-combatants were not in the majority even if sometimes 'their voices were loud'.[101] The final evaluation agreed that resentment was not significant and that, where resentment problems did occur, these were the result of UNMIL failures to accurately and correctly explain assistance programs to communities.[102] The Hotspots assessments also challenged an assumption of community resentment of ex-combatants or assistance targeting ex-combatants. They found that several communities were unwilling to reveal ex-combatant identities and acted to protect ex-combatants in other ways.[103]

Nevertheless, reintegration actors often attributed problems of program design to character flaws of ex-combatants, arguing that ex-combatant fraud exacerbated the case overload and created the residual caseload. A senior UNMIL official said, 'The bush telegraph works very well with DDR.'[104] A senior USAID official said of ex-combatants, 'They're savvy. They're very savvy.'[105] Even though the case overload and residual caseload were failures of reintegration actors, these actors shifted the blame to ex-combatants, attributing targeting errors and challenges to the cheating and fraud of beneficiaries. With the case

overload, UNMIL never asked commanders for lists and the JIU purposefully pursued a 'permissive' scheme to counteract criticism of exclusion from the Sierra Leonean DDR process. With the residual caseload, even after the JIU established that the residual caseload was the result of IP failures to provide assistance to database beneficiaries, several respondents persisted in blaming the use of proxies or double registrations by ex-combatants for the problem.[106] With the proxy issue, it was uncontroversial (and even applauded) that the majority of ex-combatants in Mozambique used their RSS payments to fund their children's education. But when Liberians permissibly transferred their reintegration to their children as proxies to fund education, such action was viewed suspiciously as fraud and as subverting the aims and objectives of DDR.

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Discourse about ex-combatant entitlement and fraud was not monolithic during the DDR process there. As this chapter shows, the actors closest to ex-combatants on the ground tended to articulate counter-narratives. For example, an RRR official said, '[Ex-combatants] are not asking for more than what was promised to them. They are just asking for what was promised.'[107] The chapter also shows how RRR and field officials often articulated a sophisticated critique of the short-term program templates that have come to characterize reintegration since the first UN-designed programs in Mozambique. A senior RRR official summarized this critique by saying, 'Training is a first step and achieves demobilization (time buying), but it doesn't achieve reintegration.'[108]

Ex-combatants also critiqued the securitized conception of reintegration as a time buying gesture alone. When an ex-MODEL combatant in Sinoe County was told that the improved condition of the road and UNMIL's downsizing would mean the end to employment projects in the area, he asked, 'Can I eat the road?'[109] Critique of reintegration as only buying time also calls into question the track record of neoliberal, macroeconomic interventions to deliver real benefits to individuals in war-affected communities. 'Can I eat the road?' is a way of asking, 'Time buying for what?'

In Liberia, unlike in Sierra Leone, there were second-generation projects that were labor-intensive. There were reintegration actors sympathetic to the need to design 'maximalist' reintegration programs that delivered employment, however temporary, to communities with high ex-combatant return. There was a final evaluation that rejected the aim

of returning ex-combatants to their pre-conflict lives of poverty and marginalization. That evaluation criticized the lack of a national recovery and development plan for youth unemployment and the absence of parallel, complementary 'community-based' programs to accompany or follow DDR assistance.[110] But in spite of these factors challenging reintegration orthodoxy in Liberia, the normalization of a reintegration into poverty nevertheless prevailed conceptually and programmatically. The Ministry of Public Works did not renew or extend RRR projects. And DDR and RRR sections in subsequent UN missions have not successfully modeled UNMIL/RRR's approaches. The reasons given are that reintegration actors are skeptical of a robust DPKO role in the 'R' element of DDR and remain opposed to more 'maximalist' approaches to reintegration. The transition from targeted to community-based assistance after war, for now, remains a euphemism for a transition from assistance to no assistance.