


2016

# Phenomenological Study of the Educational Component of the Formal Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Program of Ex- militants in Liberia

John Tamba Wollie  
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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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John Wollie

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2016

Abstract

Phenomenological Study on the Educational Component of the Formal Disarmament,  
Demobilization, and Reintegration of Ex-Militants in Liberia

by

John Tamba Wollie

MA, American Military University, 2010

BS, Park University, 2008

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy & Administration

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## Abstract

A significant number of Liberian ex-militants are unemployed and underemployed despite the job skills, formal education, and entrepreneurial training they received as participants in the Formal Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program that was established to reintegrate combatants into civilian society at the end of the two civil wars in Liberia in 2003. The purpose of this study was to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the vocational training offered by the DDR program. Informed by the theories of Human Capital, Peace Building, and Bronfenbrenner, the research questions for this study assessed the benefits of the educational component of DDR. A phenomenological study design was employed with a purposeful sample of ex-militant participants that included 12 ex-militants and a focus group of 6-ex-militants drawn from the 12 who completed vocational training at the Monrovia Vocational Training Center in Monrovia (MVTC). All data were inductively coded and analyzed using a constant comparative method. Data analysis uncovered five textural themes: motivation for disarmament, hope to rebuild lives through vocational training, dissatisfaction with reintegration, perception of reintegration, and perception of future combat participation. Findings support human capital, peace building, and ecological systems theories in that ex-militants perceived the benefit of education in their transition to peacetime endeavor, but consider themselves only partially reintegrated since all consider themselves unemployed with no means to survive economically. This study is significant because it provides recommendations to policymakers on how such a program can improve the vocational training offered and provide follow-up life-skills counseling.

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## Dedication

To God be the glory; through him, all things are possible. This work is dedicated to the Almighty for giving me strength and wisdom to achieve my dream. It is also dedicated to my wife Georgina and daughters Chelsea and Joye, who provided me with the love and motivation to work aggressively towards achieving this monumental task.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

This study is focused on the educational component of the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Program in Liberia of ex-militants who have completed the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program. Since the end of the two civil wars in Liberia in 2003 and the end of the DDR program in 2006, youth unemployment and underemployment have presented great challenges for the population. The United Nations (UN) use DDR programs to help ex-militants transition to peacetime activities; however, it is not clear whether DDR programs in Liberia are sufficiently effective in helping ex-militants find employment. In the study, I employed the phenomenological approach, which is most appropriate when developing listening and observational abilities in order to familiarize oneself with and better understand the situation (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). This study is socially significant because it may offer ex-militants a path to economic and social integration and improve DDR implementation around the world. Chapter 1 contains the background of the problem, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, theoretic framework, conceptual framework, and nature of the study. The chapter also comprises the terms/definitions, assumptions and limitations of the study, significance of the study, and the summary.

Youth unemployment and underemployment represent a major cost to Liberia in economic, political, and social terms (International Labor Organization, 2013). According to a 2013 International Labor Office report (ILO), 64.7% of youth in Liberia are unemployed. Two-thirds of young persons in the labor force are unemployed in the

country (International Labor Organization, 2013). The high share of labor underutilization means a loss of investment in education and training, a reduced potential tax base, high costs for social assistance and bottleneck in fueling the economic transformation of the country (International Labor Organization, 2013). To help resolve Liberia's problem, the UN used the DDR program; its goal was to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate militants into peacetime activities.

Liberia experienced two civil wars: the first one took place in 1989-1997, and the second occurred from 1999 to 2003. Since the end of the second civil war, youth unemployment and underemployment have made life difficult for a significant number of the country's youth population.

Many young Liberians still face a precarious existence in the present and future: they are constantly struggling to find employment, earning money through occasional informal employment, and being left behind as the country and its growing middle class harvest the benefits of economic development (International labor Organization, 2013). When civil wars end through negotiated settlements, post-conflict reconstruction often shifts to how best to prevent a return to conflict (HazEN, 2011).

In the aftermath of the Liberian civil war, almost 100,000 former combatants were demobilized through the Liberian DDR program (Boas & Bjørkhaug, 2010). Currently, a significant number of the youth population, including a large number of ex-militants, is either unemployed or underemployed (citation). Half of the youth population in Liberia (64.7%) is currently employed, and among the employed, self-employment represents

76.9%, comprising 46.5% young own-account workers, 25.9% young contributing family workers, and 45.5% young employers (International Labor Organization, 2013).

The 2013 International Labor Organization (ILO) report revealed that Liberian self-employed face a high level of job insecurity and do not have access to safety nets to support them during the periods they are unable to work due to sickness or disability. Unemployment among youth is a major concern in Liberia, but it is also important to consider the type of work made available to the young population (ILO, 2013). Furthermore, in Liberia, a young person may be unemployed for a very long time. The share of unemployed with duration of unemployment greater than 1 year is 61.3% for young men and 60.0% for young women (ILO, 2013).

This study highlights the Liberian ex-militants' socioeconomic, security challenges, DDR implementation and the youth population. The UN secretary-general highlighted youth as one of the five generational imperatives to be addressed through the mobilization of all the human, financial, and political resources available to the United Nations (ILO, 2013). Add summarizing sentence to fully synthesize and conclude the paragraph.

Findings from this study shed light on the lived experiences of ex-militants interviewed in the study; based on them, the researcher provides recommendations on how the DDR program can better assist them transition to peacetime activity. High levels of unemployment and underemployment among young people can be a source of social instability (ILO, 2013). Therefore, providing job skills, formal education, and entrepreneurial training opportunities for young people is vital to peace and stability.



Educational opportunities for Liberia's youth are vital to nation building. A 2010 ILO report showed that of the different types of vocational training, the ones students undertook more frequently in the study were computer training (accounting for 13% of all coursework done), tailoring (11%), auto mechanics (9%), and carpentry (8%). In urban areas, 18.2% (170,000) youth completed vocational training, compared to the 9.8% (86,000) youth living in rural areas (Labor Force Survey, 2010).

Despite the training the ex-militants have received through the DDR program, the unemployment levels still remain high. The 2010 International Labor Organization (ILO) report demonstrated that ex-militants have been trained for skilled jobs, and yet, there is a lack of skilled workers among Liberians. According to the report, there would be future employment opportunities for skilled laborers with practical experience and knowledge of the latest technologies and principles in their respective field. However, job growth may be confined to unskilled work unless action is taken to improve the levels of education and training attained by new labor market entrants" (ILO, 2013). A later 2013 ILO report also showed that employers have identified hard-to-fill vacancies for higher skilled professionals, including secondary education teachers, business service providers, administrative managers, and managing directors, but the report's authors warned that the inability to meet the demand in the local market would result in employers having to import foreign labor.

The goal of this study was to understand whether the DDR program successfully reintegrated the ex-militants by providing them with the job skills to give them entry into the workforce. While unemployment and underemployment are high among a significant

number of the country's youth population, Liberia continues to make steady economic progress (citation). According to a 2010 ILO report, the Liberian mining sector is expected to offer extensive employment opportunities as operations move to the production stage. Future recruitment is expected to amount to at least 13,515 among the six Multinational Enterprise (MNEs) surveys, with over 90% of the jobs likely to be filled by young persons below the age of 35 (ILO, 2010). More specifically, the data provided by the MNEs survey suggests that each mining company starting operations has the potential to generate between 2,000 and 4,000 jobs, depending on the size of the operation (ILO, 2010). MNEs generate a significant number of jobs, but those positions are limited to unskilled and semiskilled position for Liberian nationals. While foreign employees tend to occupy senior management and technical positions requiring skills difficult to find in the local market, the company expressed a preference for recruitment from the local workforce if MNE can find candidates with adequate education and skills (International Labor Office, 2010).

In the interviews with ex-militants who have completed DDR training and with others involved in the program, I assessed their job/entrepreneurial situations.

### **Background of the Study**

After the second civil war, the UN implemented the DDR program in Liberia to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate militants to peacetime activities (Hanson, 2007) Since the program ended in 2006, some continue to argue that the DDR program, as it was carried out in Liberia, was not properly implemented. Hanson (2007) noted that during the recent DDR program, the number of demobilized persons grew to 112,000

because women and children were considered under the same disarmament criteria as ex-combatants. The UN's administrator of Liberia's DDR argued that different criteria should be applied to special groups, so that resources can be allocated to individuals who really needed it (Hanson, 2007). The reliability of data on ex-militants also presented a challenge. According to Jaye (2009), the unexpectedly high number of participants could be explained by a number of possible factors, including the lack of reliable data from armed groups about the number of fighters and the fact that many people who were not ex-militants registered to be in the program for benefits.

Ex-combatants who do not successfully transition to civilian life may take up arms again or form criminal gangs, challenging newly created security institutions and forces that may lack sufficient capacity to control such threats (McFate, 2010). While Liberia has made steady progress in recent years, youth unemployment, underemployment, and crime remain high. In fact, the Ministry of Labor put the unemployment rate at 95% in its 2010 Annual Report to the National Legislature. Ginifer, Bourne, and Greene (2004) noted that although reliable statistics are generally scarce, criminality has often appeared to increase in the aftermath of DDR because ostensibly reintegrated ex-combatants released into communities failed to find livelihood and employment—sometimes due to poorly constructed reintegration programs.

In this study, education and training refer to obtaining a formal education, vocational/technical skills, training, and entrepreneurial skills. In this study, I made an assessment as to whether the job skills the ex-militants obtained have successfully helped them enter the workforce. In a 2009 special report on Liberia, progress on achieving

specific benchmarks showed that country was far from attaining stability and security (UN Special Report, 2009). While United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has produced some security and stability, crime in the country is widespread. Organized crime can prolong or exacerbate the conflict by funding or resourcing armed groups while simultaneously providing economic incentives for the continuation of conflict and the undermining of peace agreements (Hansen, 2014).

In other parts of the country, on average 8.1% of respondents reported a crime, while almost one-quarter of all Monrovia residents (20.3%) reported that a member of their household had been victimized (Armed Violence Assessment, 2011). Weighted by population, this number includes more than half (58.4%) of all reported incidents (Armed Violence Assessment, 2011). The high crime rate has led to a number of initiatives from the international community, including a joint United Nations and government of Liberia national strategy for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Government of Liberia 2009), the creation of a ministry for gender issues, and a number of campaigns aimed at engendering awareness of the problem (De Carvalho & Schia, 2011).

While there has been relative stability in Liberia, the crime rate remains problematic. Liberian society remains one of the most traumatized and violent in the West Africa (Yacob-Haliso, 2012). Liberian government and other local and international actors have taken steps to address criminality in its totality; however, the increase in crime has become a concern to Liberians, and it remains one of the prevalent challenges to security in the country (Yacob-Haliso, 2012). Several studies have highlighted the

urgency of security in Liberia. In a 2006 and 2009 Hotspots Assessment conducted by the United Nations Military Mission in Liberia, ex-combatant chains of command were revealed to be still intact in Liberia, which could pose a threat to state security (McMullen, 2013).

One of the ways Liberia can address crime is through education and employment of the country's large youth population. The DDR program is used as a postconflict socioeconomic and security mechanism in many conflict regions around the globe (Gilligan, Mvukiyehe, & Samii, 2010). However, there is a legitimate and urgent concern in the region about formal DDR program capacity to transition ex-militants into the Liberian society. There are also concerns among a significant number of Liberians that the educational, vocational, and entrepreneurship skills which were meant to empower ex-militants to be productive members of society were not sufficient.

Education is a vital part of economic prosperity and personal fulfillment because people feel more accomplished and become more successful when they are educated. Van den Berg (2008) argued that there is a high probability that educated people are more likely to get sustainable jobs, be more productive, and have a fulfilling life experience. Therefore, providing sustainable vocational training is vital to peace and stability and socioeconomic development in Liberia and the West African Subregion. Therefore, the study of DDR is imperative to provide a comprehensive review and understanding of the program implementation and sustainability in post conflict Liberia and other countries around the world. Since DDR has been used in many conflict regions around the world, this chapter contains a review of the program implementation and enforcement in

countries such as Northern Ireland and Nigeria (Niger Delta) and a description of the educational component of the formal DDR implementation and enforcement strategy in Liberia. It also includes the problem statement, purpose of conducting the study, research questions, the theoretic framework, challenges of the study, limitations and assumptions, and the significance of the study. There is not much literature on the topic; however, in the literature review for this study, the researcher examines several scholarly DDR articles on the educational component of DDR and ex-militants who have completed the program. These articles are the scholarship on which this study is build upon.

In 2009, the United Nations Secretary-General Moon elaborated on the importance of peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflicts. In his speech, the secretary-general stressed the priority of education in peacebuilding in conflict regions as it pertains to transitioning of armed groups. Other scholars have also stressed the importance of education in peacebuilding and stability in post conflict environments. For instance, Sandonà (2013) provided a conceptualization of the importance of education from a humanistic and human capital theory perspective. These perspectives represent the significance of education from a humanistic, microeconomic, and human capital theory perspective, which contributes human capital to the transformation of goods and services. Van der Merwe (2010), on the other hand, examined themes of human capital theory from an educational perspective. This researcher argued “education increases product margin of individuals who are educated relatively to those with less or no education” (2010, p. 10). Hayes and McAllister (2009) further added that education can be used to resolve global conflicts. Add summary to fully conclude paragraph.

Other scholars have also emphasized the importance of education to peacebuilding in post conflict regions (Novelli & Smith, 2011). In conflict-sensitive situations, education can serve as a vital transformational mechanism for constructive dialogue, economic prosperity, and development as it reshapes behaviors and identities (FriEnt, 2013; UNICEF, 2011). Specifically, education during post conflict times should include affordable secondary education, vocational, and technical training to individuals who have dropped out of school to improve their chances of acquiring sustainable employment (Smith & Ellision, 2012). In essence, post conflict education should be a targeted approach towards ex-militants' reinsertion into society.

Education is a path to economic stability and conflict resolution and a mechanism that provides the conditions for learning and constructive dialogue to prevail. However, there are challenges if education is not planned accordingly and allowed to take shape. In some cases, educational planning can result in a conflict if participants are frustrated with intended results (Davis, 2013). According to Smith (2011), education under DDR umbrella helps conflict communities that have experienced conflict transition successfully to peacetime. Therefore, education is vital to conflict resolution.

### **Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Program**

The United Nations (UN) uses the DDR program as a peacekeeping mechanism to end wars, achieve economic stability and security in war-torn countries, and reintegrate combatants in civilian society. DDR is used to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate warring factions to peacetime activities (Ibaba, 2011). The program helps ensure the long-term success of security sector reform (SSR), as it shifts ex-combatants into the new

security forces, where they no longer threaten the state's monopoly of force (Ansorge, 2011). Over the years, several countries have depended on the UN to implement and enforce DDR operations in a peacekeeping and non peacekeeping capacity. Munive and Jakobsen (2012) asserted, "Understanding DDR programs are essential in helping to prevent war reoccurrence in post-conflict situations is at the heart of current international practice and academic literature on peacekeeping and stabilization" (p. 359). Add summary to fully synthesize and avoid ending a paragraph in a quote.

To accomplish its DDR mission over the years, the UN has partnered with other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as the International Community of the Red Cross (ICRC), local agencies, the World Bank, African Union, and Economic Community of West African States (United Nations General Assembly, 2006). The UN has widely used DDR mostly in Africa (Hanson, 2007). According to Finn, Baxter, and Onur (2014), DDR programs are implemented to contribute to security and stability in post conflict environments, so that recovery and development can begin. Out of the 24 DDR programs implemented worldwide, 18 DDR programs have been used on the African Continent to reintegrate ex-militants into civilian life. Reintegration is a process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income (Munive, 2012).

While DDR has faced some challenges, some successes can also be attributed to the program. For example, in Nigeria (Niger Delta), DDR is considered a success because the reintegration phase provided the opportunities for ex-militants to acquire the training skills and wage employment to become productive members of their communities.



According to a 2013 federal government of Nigeria report, 14,029 participants were placed in local and foreign training for various skills acquisition programs and formal education. In 2005, the UN reexamined the entire DDR program and designed a more focused policy uniquely appropriate to the region or country in which the program was to be implemented (Hanson, 2007). According to Hanson (2007), the new policies, unlike the earlier intervention program, have been successful in countries such as Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Nigeria's Niger Delta, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The proliferation of UN peacekeeping operations coincides with an increase in UN-led programs to disarm and disband warring parties, as well as reintegrate ex-combatants into civilian life (Hanson, 2007). According to Hanson (2007), DDR programs have featured in post conflict reconstruction from Afghanistan to Haiti (Hanson, 2007). The author noted that since 1992, the bulk of DDR programs (24) have occurred in Africa.

DDR can bring about socioeconomic and political stability, as well as security, in nations where it is successfully introduced (UNDP, 2013). Several countries which were beneficiaries of the program included Central-African Republic, Sudan, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan (Darfur), Somalia, Burundi, Uganda, Nigeria (Niger Delta), Ivory Coast, and Rwanda (UNDP, 2013). Peacebuilding first became part of the official discourse at the UN in 1992, when former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali utilized the term in *An Agenda for Peace* (Knight, 2010). DDR campaign's viability is also frequently shaped by preexisting conditions that are independent of the campaign's implementation or participants (Zena, 2013). In Liberia, DDR implementation was exceptionally challenging because, at the end of the civil wars, the country lacked the

economic and political apparatuses and infrastructure to facilitate reintegration efforts (Zena, 2013). According to Jennings (2007), the nation's physical infrastructure, including courts and detention center, was completely destroyed; there was no provision for public services, widespread corruption within government, virtually no lawful economy, and no government control over legitimate use of force. When the second Liberian war ended with the 2003 Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the country was a failed state (Jennings, 2007). At a glance, DDR in Liberia appears a success, but the high number of unemployed disarmed combatants is evidence of one of the program's significant failings (Jennings, 2007). The table below depicts age categories of combatants after the second Liberia Civil War.

Table 1

*The Age Categories of Combatants Demobilized After the Second Liberia Civil War in 2003*

Age category of child combatants	Number
Boys below 18 years demobilized	8771
Girls below 18 years demobilized	2511
Male adults demobilized	69,281
Female adults demobilized	22,456
Total demobilized	103,019

*Note.* Table adapted from Williamson & Carter (2005).

Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration and security sector reforms (SSR) are today acknowledged as the pillars of international community's commitment to post-conflict peace building and sustainable development (Bryden & Scherrer, 2012). SSR programs consolidate the state's monopoly of force, so that it may enforce the rule of law (McFate, 2010). In the case of Liberia, the UN, in collaboration with NGOs, implemented DDR programs to facilitate recovery and inter- and intrastate security. DDR programs play a critical role in global security and socioeconomic development (McFate, 2010).

According to Bryden and Scherrer (2012), in any post conflict setting, proponents of DDR and SSR are required to balance sensitively the expectations and interests of different stakeholders. Bryden and Scherrer (2012) further argued that local authorities, elites, former combatants, and affected communities require protracted engagement to avoid the reconstitution of old networks of power, authority, and patronage.

The UN has implemented DDR programs in conflict regions to bring about security, stability, and economic development. DDR programs have produced both positive and negative results. Despite the growing need for DDR, previous campaigns in Africa have encountered many difficulties and yielded mixed results (Zena, 2013).

DDR, if successfully implemented, can have a big impact on militants willing to disarm and reintegrate. According to Zena (2013), providing adequate opportunities to safely disarm, financial and psychological support to transition to civilian life, and sufficient training and opportunities to sustain themselves, DDR can draw such swing combatants away from militancy. The author further stated that this approach can indirectly weaken hardcore combatants by depleting the number of their supporters (Zena). The table below provides a snapshot of earlier DDR initiatives in Africa.

Table 2

*Snapshot of DDR Initiatives in Africa since 1990*

Country	Duration	Estimated Combatants	Number Demobilized	Number Reintegration	Budget (Million of US dollars)
Mozambique	1992 -1994	100,000	92,000	Unavailable	Unavailable
Chad	1992 - 1996 (Phase I) 1996 -1997 (Phase II) 1999 (Reintegration pilot program) 2005 -2010	27,179  9,000	27,179  Never started	Discontinued  Never started	12  10
Namibia	1989 - 1999	Unavailable	57,000	11,950	Unavailable
South Africa	1995 - 2001	22, 000	7,081	4,758	50
<i>(Table Continues)</i>					
Sierra Leone	1998 (Phase I) 1999 - 2000 (Phase II) 2002 - 2004 (Phase III)	84,000	71,043	54,000	45
Ethiopia	2000 - 2003	148,000	148,000	148,000	174
Uganda	2000-	50,000	26,288	5,335	8
Guinea Bissau	2008-	3,120	Delay	Delay	Unavailable
Angola	2002 - 2008	105,000	97,390	92,297	246
Somalia	2003 -2007	53,000	1,500	505	3
Liberia	2003 - 2008	103,019	101,495	59,831	110
Cote d'Ivoire	2003 -2007 (Phase I) 2007 - 2010 (Phase II) 2011-	48,000 100,000	17,601 Yet to start	0 Yet to start	40 Unavailable
Central African Rep.	2009-	19,100	6,431	Yet to start	Unavailable
Burundi	2004 - 2008	35,000	26,283	21,012	84
DRC	2004 - 2010	240,000	159,670	77,780	275
Republic of Congo	2005 -2008	30,000	Unavailable	15,179	25
Niger	2006 - 2007	3,160	3,160	3,160	2
Sudan (Darfur)	2008 -	4,700	5,363	303	Unavailable
South Sudan	2009 -2011 (Phase I) 2012 - 2017 (Phase II)	150,000	12,523	8,307	165

*Note.* Adapted from National Defense University, Africa Center for Strategic Studies as of January 2013, "Snapshot of DDR Initiatives in Africa Since 1990 based on various estimates from multiple United Nations and World Bank documents, commissioned studies, and news reports."

## **The Liberia Conflict**

For more than a century, Liberia was portrayed and acclaimed as an island of stability and prosperity in both the African region and the West African Region that were plagued by military *coups d'état* and wars (Kieh, 2008). Americo-Liberian elite controlled Liberia, politically and economically, until 1980 (McMullen, 2013). Under President Tolbert, the elite discriminated against and violently repressed those who opposed the system of authoritarian governance and economic marginalization of the majority irrespective of the individuals' ethnic background (Kieh, 2008). In 1980, Doe overthrew President Tolbert to become Liberia's first indigenous president. However, he was captured during a visit to Economic Community of Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) headquarters at the Freeport of Monrovia and subsequently tortured and killed in 1989 by Prince Johnson, leader of the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL).

The rebellion quickly turned into a tribal conflict between individuals from the Gio and Mano tribal groups from Nimba County who were fighting alongside Taylor's National Patriotic Front (NPF), on the one hand, and the government of Doe and members of the president's Krahn ethnic group from Grand Gedeh County and Prince Johnson, on the other. After a decade of instability in Liberia, Taylor was elected president, only to face another rebellion in 1999 (second civil war) from a rebel group consisting of members of the Krahn and Mandingo groups. The rebels called themselves Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and were led by Conneh. Both civil wars resulted in appalling violence, mass executions at sites throughout the

country, and the destruction of the country's socioeconomic and political infrastructure (Huband, 2013).

It is estimated that the two civil wars left approximately 200,000 people dead, over a million displaced, and the country in a socioeconomic and political collapse (Ackerman, 2009). Since the end of the second Liberian civil war in 2003, the lack of post conflict economic growth, and education, compounded by unemployment and lawlessness in Liberia have made post conflict stability and economic growth difficult. During a visit to Brussels, the president of Liberia Johnson Sirleaf highlighted the unemployment challenges that Liberia faced as a result of high unemployment and underemployment of the country's large youth population. According to Raddatz (2011), reintegration and rehabilitation of adult former belligerents remain problematic due to a chronic lack of employment opportunities and active militias in the regions that lure many back to battle in neighboring Guinea, Sierra Leone, and the Ivory Coast, or into the illegal exploitation of natural resources. According to a 2013 ILO report, more than three in four (86.7%) young workers in Liberia are engaged in informal employment. Informal employment consists of two categories of work: workers in the informal (unregistered) sector and paid employees holding informal jobs in the formal sector (ILO, 2013). The term youth in this study generally refers to ages 15 to 24.

In Liberia, youth between the ages of 15 and 24 make up 35% of the population and 53% of the workforce; yet they constitute 58% of the unemployed (ILO, 2010). President Sirleaf noted that youth unemployment was a major threat to peace and security in

Liberia, which, unless addressed, could result in the return of conflict to the West African region following a decade of relative peace. A Labor Force Assessment conducted by the ILO in 2010 found that formal employment remains extremely low, with 68% of the general population involved in the informal economy and 77.9% in *vulnerable* employment (International Labor Organization, 2010). The 2010 ILO report also shows that more than half of the employed have no formal education; they are self-employed and live in rural areas. The 2010 ILO report also shows that 16.5% of people are in wage employment while 83.5% are in non wage employment. A population pyramid in Figure 1 illustrates the age and sex structure of a country's population and may provide insights into political and social stability, as well as economic development. The population is distributed along the horizontal axis, with males shown on the left and females on the right.

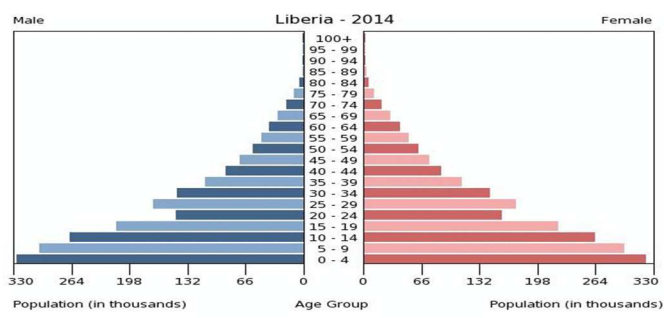


Figure 1: Liberia population pyramid by age group. Retrieved from: CIA World factbook on March 23, 2015

### **The Amnesty Program/DDR in Liberia**

In 1993, Liberia underwent its first DDR process after the signing of the Cotonou Agreement, which provided a blanket amnesty for all fighters (Jay, 2009). According to Jay (2009), combatants were demobilized in various stages between the years of 1994 and 1997, but the program was aborted because of violence between Taylor's NPF fighters and the fighters of Taylor's former ally, Johnson (p. 6). Boas and Bjorkhaug (2010) averred that the programs also worked under the assumption that wartime experiences, networks, and command structures had to be broken down as they were counterproductive to peace and reconciliation. Although the origins of DDR in Liberia date back to 1993, in this study, the researcher sought to examine specifically the Abuja II Agreement of 1996, which allowed for the restoration of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration in Liberia.

The 1996 Liberian DDR program was implemented in three stages with specific objectives of facilitating the transition of ex-militants into civilian life (Jay (2009). According to Jay (2009), the first stage of the program consisted of disarming, registering, interviewing, and counseling fighters. Stage 2 involved the absorption of disarmed combatants into bridging *activities* (work and training programs) to help them gain employment skills, and the final stage was reintegration, a long-term and more complex process (p. 6). According to the ILO (as cited by Finn, Baxter, and Onur, 2014), the post conflict context in which DDR programs operate is characterized by weak political, societal, and economic structures; competition for power; insecurity; reduced productive capacities and livelihoods; destroyed infrastructure and other community



services; collapsed markets and high inflation; unemployment and underemployment; and weakened social fabric with little social cohesion remaining.

Although a significant number of fighters showed signs of battle fatigue, disarmament in several parts of Liberia, including Zwedru, Voinjama, and Bo Waterside, was delayed because of security concerns (Jay, 2009). By the end of the process in February 1997, about 24,500 of the estimated 33,000 fighters (74%) had been disarmed and demobilized (Jay, 2009). According to a UNMIL systematic survey, ex-militants were no longer considered a serious threat to peace and stability in Liberia (Tamagnini and Krafft, 2010). However, Tamagnini and Krafft warned that the relative peace and stability do not imply that the problem of integration is completely resolved (p. 13).

### **Problem Statement**

Understanding the efficacy of the formal disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs in war-torn countries is critical to addressing post conflict stability, security, and economic development. The United Nations (UN) uses DDR program as the peacekeeping mechanism to end wars, secure economic stability and security in war-torn countries, and disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate warring factions to peacetime activities (Ibaba, 2011). A 2009 UN report stated that over 90,000 ex-militants had completed DDR, but a significant number of ex-militants have not experienced the intended education benefits of DDR.

In Monrovia, 64% of ex-combatants are less than 26 years of age, and only 9% are above 34 years of age (Boas & Bjorkhaug, 2010). According to Boas and Bjorkhaug (2010), 44% of ex-combatants in Monrovia are unemployed. Although a modest body of

scholarly literature exists on the DDR program in Liberia, there is still a need to examine the lived experiences of ex-militants who completed the DDR program.

This qualitative study gave voice to the ex-militants' experience, providing them with a means to frankly discuss different sides of their transition to peacetime: The motivation to transitioning, the perception of the DDR program, how the program can be improved, and their ability (or inability) to find a job. The researcher conducted interviews to gauge the thoughts and lived experiences of ex-militants in order to allow all DDR stakeholders to see the efficiency of DDR through the lens of its intended beneficiaries—the ex-militants who completed the educational component of the program. The aim of the study was to take into account the voices of ex-militants and program implementers.

The interview technique is one of the vital means of collecting qualitative data. The popularity of the interview stems from its effectiveness in giving a human face to a research problem (Mack et al., 2005). Janesick (2011) defined interviewing as an act of communication and “a meeting of two persons to exchange information and ideas through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic” (p. 99-138). Add summary to fully synthesize paragraph and section.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand whether the educational component of the DDR program in Liberia benefitted its key participants, the ex-militants in Liberia who had participated in the DDR program. The overall objective

of this study was to identify whether the training and educational component of DDR provided the ex-militants with the necessary vocational, entrepreneurial, educational skills, and the possibility of acquiring wage employment.

Job skill trainings, education, and entrepreneurial skills are a gateway to socioeconomic, security, stability, and human fulfillment. One of the challenges Liberia faces is high unemployment among the general population (Tamagnini, 2010). The problem of high unemployment has resulted in the creation of localized networks of ex-militants. Tamagnini (2010) asserted that these networks often continue to exist for economic reasons, as combatants' groups engage in a variety of legal and illegal economic activities and other criminal behavior (p. 13).

The UN implements DDR programs in conflict regions to achieve peace and stability through economic development and human investment. The focus of the educational component of DDR is to reintegrate ex-militants to peacetime activities. The program also helps ex-militants acquire jobs through education and training to prevent them from engaging in future militancy activities. Education is a path to stability and economic development. According to Finn, Baxter, and Onur (2014), empirical evidence shows that chances of successful reintegration are higher if ex-combatants undertake formal vocational training.

Despite the abundance of literature on the Liberian civil war, the educational component of DDR has been grossly understudied. Very few studies have focused on the education, vocational, and entrepreneurial training in-depth. Although it is widely believed that ex-militants have received counseling, training, and career advice, the

livelihood opportunities among ex-militants are scarce (Tamagnini, 2010). According to 2009 ILO report on Liberia, 85% of ex-combatants do not earn enough money to lift themselves and their families over the one-dollar-a-day poverty line.

In a 2009 report, the UN Secretary-General Ki-Moon stressed the importance of education as an essential peacebuilding mechanism. Therefore, examining the DDR program through the lens of the ex-militants who completed the program can help us understand how it can be used to transition ex-militants to peacetime activities and keep them from peace spoiling activities. Since the end of the program in 2006, peace and security have remained fragile; this indicates that there is a need to further examine whether the ex-militants who completed the program have benefited from it, and whether it has helped to achieve peace and stability in Liberia.

### **Research Question**

Ex-militants who have completed the educational component of the DDR program and the training that they received as a result of the program were the focus of the study. The study examined whether the program was positive, negative, had a mixed impact or no impact on the ex-militants who completed the program. The central research question that guided this study was:

**Research Question 1:** Did the ex-militants interviewed use their job skill training to transition to peacetime and nation-building activities that include acquiring sustainable employment, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frameworks for this study included Schultz (1961) and Becker's (1964) Human Capital Theory (HCT), Lederach's (1997) Peace building (PBT) theory and Bronfrenbrenner's (1998) Ecological System Theory (EST). Schultz's (1961) critical analysis of HCT emphasizes the fundamental role that education plays in economic development. Becker (1964) examines education and training as two essential components of human investment capital. Becker (1964) highlights the importance of HCT in improving productivity, wages, and marketability due to acquired knowledge and analytical competence (Becker, 1964). On the other hand, Lederach's (1997) peacebuilding (PBT) focuses on achieving peace and societal structures that contribute to conflict (UN Peacebuilding Commission, 2005). These approaches provide details on the contributions to national development that human beings can make as a result of education. Further, the subsequent study and application of Schultz's (1961), Becker's (1964), and Lederach's (1997) theories offers guidance on ways to effectively use human capital, thus allowing for insight into the exploration challenge of the study.

Bronfrenbrenner's (1998) ecological system theory emphasizes the role of social contexts in human development and is comprised of five environmental systems, ranging from direct interaction with social agents to the overall general influence of culture. In the context of ex-combatants in Liberia, Bronfrenbrenner's ecological theory provides a framework to understand how five environmental systems (microsystem, ecosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronos system) can influence ex-combatants' development and ultimately facilitate their reintegration.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Historically, successful reintegration of child soldiers has been considered a difficult and primary challenge (Hill, Taylor, & Temin, 2008; Mapp, 2008; Shiner, 1996). More recently, it has been described as the weakest link in the Liberian DDR program (Podder, 2012). Given the Liberian government's limited resources, non governmental organizations (NGOs) have attempted to help fill the gaps where the government is unable to meet the needs of vulnerable groups, including ex-child combatants.

By definition, NGOs are private organizations based on values independent from governments and corporations; they depend on donors and volunteers to provide basic social services, promote social justice, and protect the environment (World Bank, 1999). Besides descriptive literature on the national DDR program, launched by the UN and other international organizations, the literature on the role NGOs play in ex-combatants' reintegration is limited to one article that features a Liberian NGO. I could find no scholarly studies on the topic. According to Tonpo (2006), the Foundation for African Development is a local NGO that de-traumatizes and assists ex-combatants in becoming useful citizens through formal education and agricultural skills training. Although there is a scarcity of literature on the role of NGOs in ex-combatants' reintegration, findings from a recent study based on focus groups made of 88 ex-combatants revealed that NGOs play an integral role in ex-combatants' political participation (Söderström, 2009).

My scholarship review also turned up a lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the majority of the reintegration programs due to the recent nature of their development, the inconsistencies in intervention methods, and the limited research

that has been conducted to evaluate them (Fegley, 2008). The lack of professional and analytic literature on ex-combatants' reintegration can also be attributed to the 14-year civil war, a period during which very few studies were conducted and published. In one study, Pugel (2006) assessed the impact of the national DRR program in Liberia and found that former combatants who registered and completed a course of reintegration training with the national DDR program reintegrated more successfully as compared to those who decided to reintegrate on their own and did not participate in the DDR program.

Only one study examined the challenges social workers faced while working with ex-child fighters involved in DDR programs in African nations (Zack & Williams, 2006). In Liberia, the primary methods of reintegration support that child soldiers received included educational support, skills acquisition, and family reunification (Awodola, 2012). Similarly, Druba (2002) found that pedagogical interventions aimed at reducing child soldiering typically involve primary education, vocational training, social services, and concepts of education for reconstruction and reconciliation. In a post conflict setting such as Liberia, effective peace education plays an integral role in the reintegration of former child soldiers (Wessells, 2005).

Wessells (2005) argued that peace education stimulates empathy, cooperation, reconciliation, and community processes for handling conflict in a nonviolent manner, all of which are important factors in preventing former child soldiers in reengaging in violence and terrorism. Sam-Peal (2008) suggested that a simple process of listening to child soldiers' life stories and dreams could be a constructive and meaningful interaction

that affirms ex-child soldiers' individual value as they reintegrate into their communities. Jennings (2007) argued that reintegration programs can be strengthened by allocating resources to the development and implementation of open-access job programs, particularly for vulnerable groups such as ex-child soldiers.

Mapp (2008) identified bio-psychosocial assessment as a tool that can be used to examine the barriers to reintegration with which ex-child soldiers' are faced. On the biological level, child soldiers may endure combat wounds, malnourishment, and limited access to healthcare, all of which negatively impact their overall physical health (Mapp, 2008). Meanwhile, their experiences of losing loved ones, being forced to murder and witness murders are traumatic situations that are often sources of psychological discomfort (Mapp, 2008). Lastly, on the social level, ex-child soldiers are challenged with rebuilding relationships with hostile family and community members, and pursuing education in environments that may be unsuitable for their current age and past violent experiences (Mapp, 2008).

### **Nature of the Study**

In this study, I employed the qualitative phenomenological approach. Qualitative research is a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research is the most appropriate method for understanding the ex-militants' actual and perceived lived experience as a result of the educational component of DDR, which is the primary focus of this study. This methodology was selected because it allowed me to examine, through descriptive means, the shared experiences of ex-militants who completed the educational



component of DDR. Focusing on how ex-militants benefited from the program was also consistent with Shultz (1961) and Becker's (1964) HCT, Lederach's (1997) peacebuilding PBT, and Bronfenbrenner's (1998) EST. In the study, I undertook a comprehensive examination of ex-militants' lived experiences pre civil wars and post conflict transition in order to properly analyze their lived experiences. This qualitative analysis allowed me to examine if the DDR program successfully reintegrated the ex-militants by providing them with the skills that gave them entry to the workforce.

In fulfillment of this research, a descriptive Husserlian phenomenological approach was used to examine the benefits of the educational component of DDR on the ex-militants in Liberia. Husserl, a German scholar/philosopher, employed the term phenomenology to refer to this kind of fundamental epistemological inquiry, which looked at the very structure of the acts of thinking and knowing as well as at the objects of knowledge in terms of essential meanings (Husserl, 2012).

The descriptive orientation of Husserlian phenomenology makes this approach most fitting for this study. Husserlian philosophy posits that experience as perceived by human consciousness has value and should be an object of scientific research (Lopez & Willis, 2004). An important component of Husserlian phenomenology is the belief that it is essential for the researcher to shed all prior personal knowledge to grasp the essential lived experiences of those being studied (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

According to Creswell (2009), a qualitative inquiry examines the life experiences of individuals or groups as they experience social and human problems. A phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their

lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Two research assistants from Monrovia Vocational Training Center (MVTC) provided a tour of the school. Rudestam and Newton (2007) indicated that the phenomenological approach is most appropriate when developing listening and observational abilities in order to familiarize oneself with and better understand the situation (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Using the interviews and a post interview focus group, I examined the lived experiences of the ex-militants who completed the educational component of DDR to see whether the program enhanced the transition to peacetime activities, which include an examination of the job skills the ex-militants acquired to help them successfully enter the workforce.

Data was collected through semi structured in-depth interviews and the post interview focus group, where open-ended questions were used to examine ex-militants' personal experiences, their perspective on the program, their histories as they pertain to how they benefitted from the educational component of DDR. As recommended by Rudestam and Newton (2007), the phenomena that grounds extended dialogue to extract data and take field notes were identified and defined. Through the collection of field notes, I observed participants' demeanors, body language, and reaction during the post-interview focus group. Several DDR documents archived at DDR office and MVTC in Monrovia were requested and reviewed for triangulation. Triangulation is the combination of at least two or more theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, data sources, investigators, or data analysis methods (Thurmond, 2001). The intent of using triangulation is to decrease, negate, or counterbalance the deficiency of a single strategy, thereby increasing the ability to interpret the findings (Thurmond, 2001).

To ensure that the best information is collected, only participants who had completed all phases of the DDR programs in Liberia could participate in the study. According to Rudestam and Newton (2007), it is important to identify and locate participants who have experienced or are experiencing the phenomenon of the study. Therefore, to get a comprehensive understanding of the program success, I interviewed 12 ex-militants who have completed the educational component of the formal DDR program and two program administrators or policymakers to find out whether the program provided the ex-militants with the job skills to join the workforce. The data collection process took 2 weeks. The length of the interviews was between 15-20 minutes per participant. The interview focus group session was 10 minutes. After the focus group session, participants were thanked for their participation and contribution.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Amnesty*: According to Maximalist definition, amnesty means “achieving positive peace by employing such activities as disarming warring parties, training indigenous security personnel, facilitating elections, strengthening institutions, providing humanitarian aid, repatriating refugees, and supporting the reconciliation process between parties to the former conflict” (Balas, Owsiak, and Diehl, 2012, p. 198). Amnesty also entails the granting of pardon or clemency to combatants.

*Demobilization*: According to the *Operational guide to the integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration standards* (2006) (as cited by Dyck, 2011), demobilization “is the disarming of armed forces and or armed groups, and

involves discharge of combatants, often with a support package to assist in reinserting them into community life” (p. 398).

*Disarmament*: “The collection, documentation, control, and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives, and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population” (United Nations General Assembly, 2006, p. 8).

*Ex-militant/combatant*: A person who served in an irregular army or rebel group.

*Peace building*: “A wide range of measures targeted at mitigating or eliminating the risk of starting conflict or ending conflict through the use of strengthening national capacity at all levels of the conflict in order to sustain peace and economic development (UNICEF, 2011, p. 14). Peacebuilding consists of cultural, economic, political, religious, security, and social interventions.

*Reinsertion*: “The immediate assistance provided to ex-combatants during demobilization but before the long-term process of reintegration. It is also a form of transitional assistance such as basic provisions like food, clothing, money, temporary shelter, medical service, water, short-term education, employment, training and tools” (United Nations General Assembly, 2006, p. 8).

*Reintegration*: “Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants attain civilian status in order to acquire sustainable wage employment” (United Nations General Assembly, 2006, p. 8).

*Vocational Training*: A planned program of courses and learning experiences that involves career exploration options, supports basic academic and life skills, and enables

achievement of high academic standards, leadership, preparation for industry-defined work, and advance and continuing education (Maclean & Wilson, 2009).

*Youth:* Youth here refers to persons between the ages of 15 to 24 years old (CIA Factbook, n.d.).

### **Assumptions**

This study is guided by a descriptive Husserlian phenomenological strategy to identify the makeup of the participants in the study. Husserl, a German philosopher, uncovered and described the fundamental structure of the world emphasizing the description of a person's lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). As a process and a method, phenomenology consists of studying a small sample of participants through rigorous and prolonged interaction to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Creswell, 2013). In this process, the researcher set aside his or her own experiences in order to understand those of participants in the study (Creswell, 2009). Participants' lived experiences were examined through unstructured interviews. Participants were selected because of their experience and unique knowledge of the DDR program as it pertains to the educational component.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The study sample consisted of a total of 12 adult participants who have completed the educational component of the DDR program and two program administrators. The study was limited to those adult participants who completed vocational training at MVTC and have graduated. The time allotted for interview was 15-20 minutes per participants. Due to the small sample of participants, only participants who have experienced and have

knowledge of the DDR program as it pertains to the educational component were selected for the study. Those who did not participate in the educational component of the DDR program were excluded from the study.

### **Limitations**

This study was limited to a sample of 12 ex-militants in Liberia who completed the educational component of the DDR program. Because I only sampled 12 ex-militants, the result is not generalizable. Other sources associated with the program and some supplementary information to develop the research were used. The study's conclusions were then compared to other DDR programs' efficacy in other African countries. Furthermore, the fact that I am an indigene of Liberia and have knowledge and experience of the civil wars could have a *Hawthorne* effect on the participants, and on how data are collected and codified (organized, group, and catalog). Therefore, to ensure that ethical guidelines and interview and post interview focus group protocols are followed, I remain impartial and objective, and I triangulated data to assure its validity. Since biases are extremely difficult to eliminate in research, I addressed these biases and the steps taken to mitigate them in Chapter 3 of the study.

### **Significance of the Study**

The United Nations uses disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs to facilitate and enhance peacebuilding and economic development in post-conflict environments around the world (The UN Office of Special Advisor on Africa-OSAA, 2005). DDR can resolve post conflict economic, developmental, security, stability, and social challenges in post conflict environments. This study evaluated the

importance of the educational component and its benefits to the ex-militants who had completed the program. Findings from the study may aid in future UN implementation of DDR in conflict areas around the world and help the Liberian government craft policies that continue to support the transition of ex-militants into society. The study also provides recommendation to improve vocational/entrepreneurial training and security in Liberia and future DDR programs around the world.

### **Implications for Positive Social Change**

The findings of this study could benefit DDR implementation in two ways: firstly, they could help address DDR programs' shortcomings and provide recommendations to policymakers on how the programs can be utilized to achieve a positive outcome for participants and future DDR implementation around the world. Secondly, findings from the study shed light on the post war challenges that ex-militants have faced since the end of the civil war in 2003 and the end of the DDR program in 2006; help them acquire sustainable wage employment, where they will become productive members of their community and economy.

Since DDR provides an opportunity to reach out to vulnerable groups, contribute to the effective recovery, and strengthen long-term development (Marwah, 2010), the program could also help ex-militants refrain from activities endangering peace.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 1, I examined the background of the study with the focus on the educational component of the DDR programs in Liberia. The Chapter included sub sections on the statement of the problem, the purpose of undertaking the study, the

research question, the focus of the research, the theoretical framework, and the nature of the study. In this chapter, I also highlighted the assumptions and limitations of the study and the significance of the study to Liberia with some global implications.

In Chapter 2, I review existing literature on DDR program in different regions of Africa, particularly Liberia, and identify research gaps that necessitate future research on the topic. This chapter also concerns the efficacy of the education and its peacebuilding implications in post-conflict settings.

Chapter 3 of this study includes sections on the research methodology, the sampling method, the process and methods of data collection, and the analysis of the collected data. Chapter 4 contains the findings while in Chapter 5 I provide the interpretation and description of the study's findings.

The final analysis was based solely on the results obtained through the research. Findings and recommendations were made to the Liberia government, DDR office in Monrovia, MVTC, NGOs, and the United Nations for action.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Since the end of the second civil war in Liberia and the end of the DDR program, a significant number of ex-militants remain unemployed and underemployed. Youth between the ages of 15 and 24 make up 35% of the population and 53% of the workforce; yet, they constitute 58% of the unemployed (International Labor Organization, 2010). A Labor Force Assessment conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2010 found that formal employment remains extremely low, with 68% involved in the informal economy and 77.9% in vulnerable employment.

Chapter 2 contains an examination of literature on whether the educational component of the formal DDR program in Liberia helps ex-militants acquire jobs or entrepreneurial skills to join the work force, which is vital to peace and security. A 2011 World Development Report highlighted youth unemployment as a main driver of conflict and the most frequently given reason for youth to join rebel movements and criminal gangs.

The UN implemented DDR programs in Liberia to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate militants to peacetime activities (The UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, 2005). DDR programs provide skills training, credit schemes, and other support to ex-combatants, giving them the ability to search for new income earning opportunities. The UN uses education to provide ex-militants with job skills to help them join the work force successfully. However, if the broader economic recovery is sluggish and opportunities few, DDR alone cannot change the situation sustainably (Zena, 2013).

The UN implemented DDR in Liberia with the goals of bringing about peace and stability (The UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, 2005). However, whereas disarmament and demobilization were implemented quite effectively, the processes of reintegration and rehabilitation take more time and their implementation is more complex (Boas & Bjørkhaug, 2010). According Boas and Bjørkhaug (2010), most ex-militants are unemployed or underemployed.

Although youth unemployment is often considered a social problem, it is also an industrial sociology issue, especially as it relates to the supply of and the demand for labor (Okafor, 2011). According to Okafor (2011), industrial sociology is not only concerned with what occurs in an industrial setting, but also with how the external socioeconomic and political environment shapes and reshapes the behavior and conduct of workers both within and outside their places of work. It is also concerned with how industries evaluate and react to external environment, either to continue operating in such an environment or to relocate to a more favorable one (Okafor, 2011). Okafor (2011) stressed that, regardless of the relative economic benefits an individual may gain or enjoy at his or her place of work, if the labor market is saturated, the resulting youth unemployment makes the socioeconomic and political environment hostile, unstable, insecure, unsafe, and rancorous, and such benefits or gains enjoyed by the workers will be eroded.

The fact that a significant number of youth remain underemployed and unemployed may threaten the fragile peace and stability in Liberia. In countries where a high share of informal employment forms a major barrier to upward mobility and

economic progress, policies should be designed to create more enterprises in the formal sector, which offers formal jobs (Biavaschi et al., 2012). One way in which Liberia can overcome the challenges of high youth unemployment is by strengthening the country's vocational institutions, for example, providing job/entrepreneurial training that prepares them for the current labor market and allows the country's youths an opportunity to acquire jobs when they complete training.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

Focusing my attention on perceived benefits of the educational component of the DDR program for the Liberian ex-militants, I conducted a comprehensive review of scholarship on the topic. I electronically researched peer-reviewed journals and articles, mostly from the SAGE Walden Library, Google Scholar, and United Nations library. I also used the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the United States Department of State databases to locate scholarly literature to support this study.

With the Walden University Library as the main resource, the multidisciplinary EBSCO databases, ProQuest Central, and Public Policy helped me locate appropriate literature for the study. I located relevant peer-reviewed and journal articles using the following keywords for the search: *Liberia DDR, Liberia civil war, human capital theory, peacebuilding theory, Bronfrenbrenner theory, Liberian conflict, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Africa, Charles Taylor, and history of Liberia, educational benefits, vocational training, crime in Liberia, land disputes in Liberia, and education in Liberia*. The search for these topics turned up over 250 articles and related articles, of which I selected only appropriate peer-reviewed literature for the study.

In Chapter 2, I provide a comprehensive review of Liberia's history from a political, social, and economic perspective as it pertains to the country's global standing. I also discuss the DDR program as well as the theoretic framework of the study. To synthesize the benefits of the educational component of DDR, I examine the demobilization process and the training and entrepreneurial skills programs provide to help ex-militants acquire wage employment. I also address the principal role of education in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and human development.

### **Theoretical Foundation Human Capital, Peace Building, and Bronfrenbrenner Theory**

In qualitative research, theory plays a critical role in how researchers obtain findings and how they support them. The three theories used in this study included Shultz's (1961) and Becker's (1964) Human Capital Theory (HCT), Lederach's (1997) Peacebuilding Theory (PBT), and Bronfrenbrenner's (1998) Ecological System Theory (EST).

#### **Human Capital Theory (HCT)**

Schultz (1961) and Becker (1964) provided a conceptualization of HCT from a humanistic investment perspective. Becker (1964) examined education and training as two critical components of human investment capital. The authors underscored the importance of HCT in improving productivity, wage increase, and marketability due to acquired knowledge and analytical competence (Becker, 1964). Schultz's (1961) critical analysis of HCT accentuated the critical role that education plays in economic development.

HCT also perceives the immense contribution of human beings to economic development as a result of education; for that reason, education is one of the fundamental themes of HCT because it makes people more productive and increases the profit margins for people who are more educated (van der Merwe, 2010). Education and training from the HCT perspective are vital to economic development. HCT can transform human activities into resources, goods, and services (Sandona 2013). HCT highlights the economic benefits of investing in people (Sweetland, 1996). HCT also discusses the wage employment, assets, and employment skills that can be acquired as a result of training and education. The fact that individuals can acquire these skills benefits not only them, but also their employer's productivity and solvency.

Becker (1960), one of the first proponents of HCT, emphasized education and training as the two foremost ingredients of human capital. In a study of college graduates, Becker mathematically determined a rate of return in acquiring a college degree and the investment in college education. Becker also claimed that college education can have a direct and indirect impact on an individual and organization.

Another champion of HCT is Schultz, the Noble Peace Prize recipient for work in economics. Schultz (1960) highlighted the importance of education as an investment and an integral part of a person and claimed that its consequences should be treated as a form of capital. Schultz stated that education can be pure consumption or pure investment, or it can serve both of these purposes. However, he also noted that capital information by means of education is neither a small nor a neat constant in relation to the formation of non-human capital. Schultz (1960) also recognized other programs such as on-the-job

trainings, study programs, and formal education as forms of human capital investments. With respect to the topic of my study, research has shown that human capital in Liberia is enormously low. Youth in Liberia make up nearly 65% of the population of 4.1 million, but a significant number of them (58%) are unemployed or underemployed and lack the necessary education to invest in Liberia's economic development (ILO, 2010).

### **Peacebuilding Theory (PBT)**

The second theory used in the study in addition to Becker (1964) and Schultz's (1960) HCT is Lederach's (1997) Theory of Peacebuilding. Lederach's (1997) Peacebuilding Theory is appropriate for this qualitative study. Several scholars have embraced the PBT over the years. Adam (2008) stated that peacebuilding involves mitigating or eliminating factors that cause tension between conflicting parties by examining the core cause of the violence. Paffenholtz (2009) viewed peacebuilding as peace attaining measures.

The UN uses DDR programs to transition militants to peacebuilding activities. Peacebuilding theory dates back to the 1880, to the Hague peace conference and the subsequent establishment of the United Nations after the Second World War to help maintain peace within and among nations (Paffenholtz, 2009). Although the concept of peacebuilding dates back to the late 1800s, its use is central to the 21<sup>st</sup> century peacebuilding efforts (Paffenholtz, 2009). Lederach's (1997) concept of sustainable peacebuilding centers on instituting structures and frameworks that encourage reforms and conditions for sustaining peace (Lederach, 1997; Paffenholtz, 2009).

The core purpose of Lederach's (1997) peacebuilding theory is to provide training and educational opportunities to youths to prepare them for political participation and nation-building and prevent them from engaging in violence. The formal DDR program in Liberia was implemented as a peacebuilding mechanism to reintegrate ex-militants to peacetime activities and prevent future civil conflict. Educating and providing training to at risk population can contribute immensely to socioeconomic development and stability because, when people are provided a path to succeed and become productive members of their community, they will have a positive perspective of themselves and their environment. The UN used the formal DDR programs in Liberia to motivate and provide socioeconomic opportunities to ex-militants through the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

### **Bronfrenbrenner's Ecological Systems (EST) Theory**

Soldiers' environments have a significant influence on their overall development and subsequent reintegration experiences. An important concept of the EST is the role and the usual behaviors displayed by individuals occupying particular social positions. For example, in Erickson's theory of Psychological development, child soldiers experienced abnormal since they are not given the opportunity to socially develop (Erickson, 1968).

Bronfrenbrenner's (1998) EST emphasizes the role of social contexts in human development; his construct comprises five environmental systems, ranging from direct interaction with social agents to the overall general influence of culture (Bronfrenbrenner, 1998). In the context of soldiers in Liberia, Bronfrenbrenner's Ecological Theory

provides a framework for understanding how five environmental systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem) can influence soldiers' development and, ultimately, their reintegration.

The microsystem in this environment refers to the ex-soldiers' immediate setting that involves direct face-to-face contact between members. Examples of microsystems in life include their families, school peers, and church groups; however, for ex-soldiers, their primary microsystem is the military group with which they were involved. Next, the mesosystem consists of networks of microsystems and relationships between them. In the case of a soldier, a mesosystem includes the interaction between microsystems: between family and school, family and military group, peers and family, and so on. The third system, exosystem, includes individuals' experiences in social settings where they do not have active roles: for ex-soldiers, this could be reintegration programs, the Liberian social welfare service, as well as legal services. The fourth system, macrosystem, involves the culture, attitudes, and ideologies that contribute to a particular culture while the chronosystem is characterized by the patterning of environmental and sociohistorical conditions and transitions experienced over an individual's life-span (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

When assessing the development of this population's members from this perspective, we need to examine the socio historical context such as the civil war and take into considerations major life events and role transitions members of this population experience during this period of their lives. Using the EST lens to examine the soldiers' experiences, Strang, Wessells, and Boothby (2006) found that the family and



communities are systems which provide support and protection; however, during armed conflicts, they transform into systems which also pose risks and developmental damage, especially when individuals are not adequately protected from involuntary recruitment as a consequence of abduction and/or pressure from caretakers.

Research has shown a connection between recruitment experiences and reintegration outcomes, particularly, for soldiers whose voluntary nature of participation in armed conflicts was largely influenced by the role of identity, ideology, family, and community (Ozerdem, Podder, & Quitoriano, 2010). EST of child development has also been used as a framework for exploring the development of African children (Uys, 2009). Drawing upon Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Development, Kimmel, and Roby (2007) suggested a conceptual model for understanding how the interactions between macro and micro factors contribute to child soldiering.

Based on the Ecological Theory, they argued that three macro factors (politics, policy, and culture and beliefs) interact with each other and have gradual influences on three micro level factors (community, family, and individual psychosocial factors) that also interact with each other, and, as a result, have negative psychosocial effects on children (Kimmel & Roby, 2007). The implication of Ecological Theory with respect to this population is that the unique needs of ex-fighters are socially mediated; therefore, interventions should be based on a holistic approach, rallying support from children's environments that contribute to their development and well-being.

The Ecological Theory assists researchers and practitioners working with this population in identifying available resources and interventions within their micro and

mezzo levels (family, peers, or community) as well as resources from macro systems (NGOs and government health agencies). In a similar study on war experiences of soldiers in Northern Uganda, researchers cautioned that in order to address potential indirect consequences of soldiering, support needs to be allocated for the network, based on a socioecological approach (Vindevoegel et al., 2011). The Ecological Theory provides a framework that explains the influence that systems have on physical and mental health and also assists in recognizing the impact community and policies have on individuals at the micro levels (McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, & Glanz, 1988).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Historically, successful reintegration of child soldiers has been considered a difficult and primary challenge (Hill et al., 2008; Mapp, 2008; Shiner, 1996). More recently, it has been described as the weakest link in the Liberian DDR program (Podder, 2012). Given the Liberian government's limited resources, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have attempted to help fill the gaps where the government is unable to meet the needs of vulnerable groups, including ex-child combatants.

By definition, NGOs are private organizations that are based on values independent from governments and corporations and depend on donors and volunteers to provide basic social services, promote social justice, and protect the environment (World Bank, 1999). Besides descriptive literature on the national DDR program, launched by the UN and other international organizations, the literature on the role NGOs play in ex-combatants' reintegration is limited to one article that features a Liberian NGO. According to Tonpo (2006), the Foundation for African Development is a local NGO that

de-traumatizes and assists ex-combatants in becoming useful citizens through formal education and agricultural skills training. Although there is a scarcity of literature on the role of NGOs in ex-combatants' reintegration, findings from another recent study based on focus groups involving 88 ex-combatants revealed that NGOs play an integral role in ex-combatants' political participation (Söderström, 2009).

My scholarship review also turned up a lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the majority of the reintegration programs due to the recent nature of their development, the inconsistencies in intervention methods, and the limited research that has been conducted to evaluate them (Fegley, 2008). The lack of professional and analytic literature on ex-combatants' reintegration can also be attributed to the 14-year civil war, a period during which very few studies were conducted and published. One study assessed the impact of the national DRR program in Liberia and found that former combatants who registered and completed a course of reintegration training with the national DDR program reintegrated more successfully as compared to those ex-combatants who decided to reintegrate on their own and did not participate in the DDR program (Pugel, 2006).

Only one study examined the challenges social workers faced while working with ex-child fighters involved in DDR programs in African nations (Zack-Williams, 2006). In Liberia, the primary methods of reintegration support that child soldiers received included educational support, skills acquisition, and family reunification (Awodola, 2012). Similarly, Druba (2002) found that pedagogical interventions aimed at reducing child soldiering typically involve primary education, vocational training, social services,

and concepts of education for reconstruction and reconciliation. In a post-conflict setting such as Liberia, effective peace education plays an integral role in the reintegration of former child soldiers (Wessells, 2005).

Wessells (2005) argued that peace education stimulates empathy, cooperation, reconciliation, and community processes for handling conflict in a nonviolent manner, all of which are important factors in preventing former child soldiers in re-engaging in violence and terrorism. Sam-Peal (2008) suggested that the simple process of listening to child soldiers' life stories and dreams is a constructive and meaningful interaction that affirms ex-child soldiers' individual value as they reintegrate into their communities. Jennings (2007) argued that reintegration programs can be strengthened by allocating resources to the development and implementation of open-access job programs, particularly for vulnerable groups such as ex-child soldiers.

Mapp (2008) identified bio-psychosocial assessment as a tool that can be used to examine the barriers to reintegration with which ex-child soldiers' are faced. On the biological level, child soldiers may endure combat wounds, malnourishment, and limited access to healthcare, all of which negatively impact their overall physical health. Meanwhile, their experiences of losing loved ones, being forced to murder and witness murders are traumatic situations that are often sources of psychological discomfort. Lastly, on the social level, ex-child soldiers are challenged with rebuilding relationships with hostile family and community members, and pursuing education in environments that may be unsuitable for their current age and past violent experiences (Mapp, 2008).

## Literature Review

Several years of civil wars deeply rooted in socio-economic failures and poor governance are only some of the problems identified as the main causes for the instability and abject poverty in Liberia. In fact, Liberia experienced two civil wars. The first war (1989-1997) includes Charles Taylor's insurgency, which led to the surrounding of Monrovia, the capture and subsequent killing of Samuel Doe by the Prince Johnson-led Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) during a visit to the Economic Community Monitoring Observer Group (ECOMOG) commander at the Freeport of Monrovia and the electoral process that made Taylor president in 1997 (Hegre, Østby, & Raleigh, 2009). During a brief interlude, Taylor continued the legacy of the authoritarian rule, thus setting the stage for the second civil war, which lasted from 1999 until Taylor's resignation in 2003. At that point, an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) brokered a deal which granted Taylor asylum in Nigeria. In 2006, Taylor was arrested by the Nigerian government and turned over to the Liberian government. In turn, the Liberian government handed Taylor to the Special Court of Sierra Leone to face war crime charges for the atrocities committed in Sierra Leone.

The civil wars in Liberia brought a new dimension to widespread poverty and high unemployment among a significant number of the Liberian youth population. According to a 2013 ILO report, more than three in four (86.7%) young workers in Liberia are engaged in informal employment. The 2013 ILO report revealed that the self-employed face a high level of job insecurity and do not have access to safety nets to support them during the periods they are unable to work due to sickness or disability. In

Liberia, unemployment among a significant number of the youth population has become a post-conflict challenge that the government has to address. One of the ways the country can address this issue is by adopting a revitalization program across a broader spectrum of the country's economy.

In a 2010 ILO report, the Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf introduced several revitalization recommendations to achieve higher living standards for the population. Her recommendations included reviewing current and future concession agreements to ensure a fair distribution of profits between investors and the country; rebuilding infrastructure, particularly, roads; reviewing the tax and investment code; reducing unnecessary business costs and streamlining administrative procedures to encourage the diversification of the economy over the medium to long-term into the production of labor-intensive downstream products, manufacturing goods and services; creating Special Economic Zones and facilitating trade; and fostering development of credit markets and improving access to finance for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (International Labor Organization Report, 2010). While the government of Liberia works towards implementing some or all of these strategies, unemployment remains significantly high; large parts of the country's infrastructures are in disrepair; and the country's economic revitalization is still weak. In Liberia, 85% of ex-combatants do not earn enough money to lift themselves and their families over the one-dollar-a-day poverty line (International Labor Report, 2009). According to a 2010 ILO report, 64.7% of youth are unemployed.

Due to the severity of unemployment in a post-conflict environment, the government of Liberia has launched several initiatives to address the issue. In 2006, the government implemented the Liberia Emergency Employment Program (LEEP) and the Liberia Employment Action Program (LEAP). The purpose of these programs is to boost employment through private sector contracts for labor-intensive rural road projects linked to agricultural production and marketing, solid waste management program in urban areas, and other essential public works (International Labor Organization Report, 2010).

In Liberia, post-conflict challenges have also given birth to widespread crime and poverty among the country's youth population. According to a 2013 United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime report, 13% of homicides are committed with firearms, and the rate of homicides per 100,000 population is 17. Violence against women is also on the rise. According a 2012 World Health Organization (WHO) report, 33% of married women in Liberia reported experiencing domestic violence, and up to 68% of women are victim of sexual violence. The report also shows that of this number, 55% of survivors who reported rape were less than 15 years old. Despite a decade of UNMIL presence in Liberia and the formation of a Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS), crimes perpetrated against women and children are at an all time high. Petty crime is also a grave problem in Liberia. According to 2015 United States Department of State Crime and Safety report, petty crime and safety issues involving robbery, burglary, and mob violence at traffic accidents are most common.

The continued post-conflict challenges that Liberia continues to face have caused intra-state and inter-state concerns. High unemployment among a significant number of

the youth population and the increase in criminal activities could undermine peace and stability in Liberia and subsequently threaten the West African sub-region because civil war can be pandemic. Previously, in 1991, members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) with support from then Liberia President Charles began a campaign in Sierra Leone to topple the government of President Joseph Momoh. The conflict in Sierra Leone and Liberia quickly spread to other border towns in neighboring Guinea and Ivory Coast. The civil war caused hundreds of thousands of deaths and injuries, the displacement of millions of people, and the collapse of social and economic infrastructures.

### **Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) as a Post-conflict Peacebuilding Process**

DDR programs are a vital part of the UN efforts to solve short and long-term peacebuilding and security efforts in conflict regions around the world. According to Marwah, Delargy, and Tabac (2010), DDR provides an opportunity to reach out to vulnerable groups, contribute to the effective recovery, and strengthen long-term development. The leading focus of DDR programs is to help ex-militants/combatants transition to civilian life and to keep them from participating in future conflicts. The UN and other international organizations frequently stress that unemployed youth can cause instability and conflict (Lindberg, 2014).

DDR programs can facilitate and enhance peacebuilding and economic development in a post-conflict environment around the world (The UN Office of Special Advisor on Africa-OSAA, 2005). In the past five years alone, DDR has been included in the mandates for multidimensional peacekeeping operations in Burundi, the Ivory Coast,



the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Haiti (Bamidele, 2012). DDR is the process that helps reduce the will and ability of ex-combatants to return to armed conflict (Cornwell, 2005).

While DDR is not a “magic wand” to end all global conflicts, it plays a pivotal role in helping war-torn countries rebuild and prevent ex-militants from engaging in peace-spoiling activities. According to Levely (2013), DDR programs typically take a holistic approach and concentrate on decreasing the likelihood that ex-militants will return to violence or engage in peace-spoiling activities by facilitating economic, social, and political reintegration. The UN has used DDR programs since the early 1990s. According to Allen (2010), DDR programs’ implementation can be tracked to the UN Security Council Resolution 650 in 1990, which expanded the mandate of UN Observer Group in Central America to include the demobilization of anti-government elements in Nicaragua.

The UN has been using DDR programs in Africa in conjunction with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other aid groups for several decades (Hanson, 2007). The UN has collaborated with NGOs such as the World Bank, United Nations Emergency Children Fund (UNICEF), Medicine San Frontier, World Health Organization (WHO), World Food Program (WFP), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the United Nations Development Program (Hanson, 2007). DDR is premised upon the need to create firm economic and social foundations while at the same time providing opportunities for former combatants to

contribute to and participate in post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction (Dwyer, 2012).

In recent years, DDR initiatives have been undertaken in several war-torn countries around the world. The UN has employed DDR programs in South Sudan, Sudan (Darfur), Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Nigeria, and Rwanda (Zena, 2010). With a significant increase in DDR programs in recent years, it has become evident that more flexible approaches are necessary when designing and implementing various components of the programs; it is especially important to take into account the type of conflict that occurred and the socioeconomic and political conditions prevailing in the post-conflict environment.

In Liberia, as elsewhere, the DDR program was built on the assumption that there is something particularly dangerous and marginalized about the group of people who constitute the rank-and-file of the factions involved in the war (Boas & Bjørkhaug, 2010). DDR programs are used as a peacebuilding mechanism to help with nation-building and conflict resolution by successfully transitioning militants to peacetime activities.

### **The DDR Process**

The DDR comprises three specific phases of facilitating the transition of ex-militants into civilian life:

- The Disarmament Phase: Marwah (2010) stated that disarmament includes the collection and disposal of arms, ammunitions, explosives, and light and heavy weapons. In order to fulfill the first objective/stage, program administrators collected personal data and verified the ex-militants'

certification and eligibility prior to transporting them to temporary demobilization sites set up in different regions of the country. This phase can prove challenging for program administrators because of the tremendous risk of confiscating weapons. In this phase, administrators differentiate between combatants and individuals posing as combatants in exchange for cash and weapons.

- The Demobilization Phase: Marwah (2010) explained that this phase involves the formal and controlled discharge of armed forces and groups. Militants are provided with counseling and relocation to temporary living quarters, where ex-militants are given some basic provisions. Ex-militants are re-inserted into their communities and provided with some cash payments, other short-term assistance, and vocational training. Hanson (2007) asserted that one challenge of this phase is ensuring sufficient funding.
- The Reintegration Phase: Marwah (2010) presented this phase as a socio-economic process through which ex-combatants gain sustainable wage employment, training, formal education, and entrepreneurial skills to help them transition to their communities. Reintegration is the most complicated and complex component of the DDR process (The UN Office of Special Advisor on Africa, 2007). Fusato (2003) noted that in the short term, ex-combatants who do not find peaceful ways of making a living are likely to return to conflict. Properly implementing demobilization and reintegration is

vital to short and long-term peacebuilding efforts. Reintegration assistance consists of short-term relief interventions, which provide a safety net for demobilized ex-combatants (Fusato, 2003).

While there are challenges associated with DDR implementation and sustainability, for the most part, DDR programs play a pivotal role in disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating ex-militants to peacetime activities, by providing them jobs and entrepreneurial skills to join the work force. Some challenges to DDR programs occur as a result of premature disarmament and reintegration. For example, in Liberia, it has been documented that a significant number of ex-militants disarmed and were reintegrated multiple times under different names, thus complicating the record-keeping process. The reintegration phase of DDR is by far the most challenging and important of all three.

### **DDR intervention on the African Continent**

The African Continent is the biggest consumer of DDR programs for the past several decades. A significant number of DDR programs were implemented in war-torn countries. The UN has adopted a leading role in most single country DDR programs in Africa, but various NGOs and aid groups are typically involved (Hanson, 2007). There are approximately 500,000 individuals in a variety of non-state militias, national armies, and paramilitary groups slated to undergo DDR programs (Zena, 2013). According to Zena (2013), between 2008 and 2013, four DDR programs have been introduced (Sudan/Darfur – 2008, South Sudan – Phases I & II, 2009, Nigeria – 2009, Libya – 2011).

While some of these programs have been successful, others have failed as a result of vague mandates and lack of clear focus (Hanson, 2007). However, in 2005, the UN implemented more focused DDR programs in Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Sierra Leone, using a new set of guidelines to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate ex-militants to civilian life. As such, newer DDR interventions in Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and the Democratic Republic of Congo proved to be more successful than earlier interventions in Somalia and Liberia (the UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, 2007). For example, in Sierra Leone, 75% of DDR participants claimed that the training they received adequately prepared them for employment opportunities. On the other hand, according to Hanson (2007), the ex-militants in Congo did not think that the training they received was useful to them and demanded that the government return their weapons for them to fend for themselves after going through the program.

While most of the UN DDR programs have been implemented in Africa, several programs have also been introduced outside the African Continent. In 2011, the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) began DDR programs in Afghanistan, Chad, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Somalia, and Sri-Lanka. The programs provided technical, political, military, humanitarian, security, and socio-economic implications in the countries where they were introduced (UNDP, 2013).

DDR programs have the capacity to transition militants from war to peacebuilding. However, without a viable developmental strategy to advance post-conflict economic recovery, even the best managed DDR campaigns struggle to reintegrate ex-combatants into productive civilian life (Zena, 2013). Nevertheless, DDR

programs have been hailed a success in countries like Uganda, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Angola. While the UN has played a pivotal role in introducing DDR programs around the globe, the program success can also be attributed to the assistance of NGOs.

The UN has effectively done this in collaboration with the national governments, donor partners, the World Bank, regional organizations, and non-governmental organizations (United Nations General Assembly, 2006). In Liberia, the US Forest Service at the request of USAID/Liberia conducted a gap analysis of four key domestic natural resources in Liberia: timber, charcoal, bush meat, and other non-timber forest products, in order to provide the Liberian government with an accurate estimate of the value of these associated resources (Welti, Fay, Triepke, & Hann, 2015).

The overview of some of the successful and the not-so-successful DDR interventions in Africa is presented below:

Uganda: The conflict in Northern Uganda dates back to the mid-1980s. The country's civil war, involving primarily the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony and the Ugandan military force, has devastated the country and left many thousands of Ugandans dead, injured, and displaced. In 2000, the Ugandan government initiated an amnesty program which granted amnesty to anti-government militants who wanted to stop fighting and return to civilian life without fearing the repercussions and government prosecution (The UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, 2007). Based on the 2007 OSAA report, at the end of 2006, an estimated 21,000 *reporters* were granted amnesty, and 19,000 of those received basic reinsertion and resettlement support.

“Reporters” are ex-militants who sought amnesty and have returned to civilian life. While there is still fear of LRA reprisals among the local population in the north of the country, the amnesty program, for the most part, did bring about the end of conflict in the country.

Sierra Leone: In 2001, militants from the RUF and militants of the former Liberian President Charles Taylor launched an incursion into Sierra Leone to topple the government of Joseph Momoh. The conflict resulted in the deaths and injuries of thousands of Sierra Leoneans and the displacement of a significant part of the population, prompting the UN and the British government to intervene militarily. In 2000, the UN initiated the DDR/amnesty program to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate militants to civilian life. During the disarmament phase, over 32,000 weapons were collected (The UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, 2007). Out of an estimated 84, 200 combatants, 71,043 were demobilized, and 54,000 were reintegrated (Zena, 2013). The reintegration phase provided ex-militants with job skills training such as masonry, carpentry, agriculture, latter education, tailoring, and job placement to help them enter the work force. The program also provided cash incentives for those ex-militants who could not participate in the training (The UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, 2007).

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): DDR programs in the DRC have been some of the most challenging and multi-faceted on the African Continent. The programs included the disarmament and repatriation of foreign fighters and dependents to their home countries, national programs, and the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of local militia groups (The UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, 2007).

The DDR program in the DRC was facilitated mainly by the UN and the World Bank in conjunction with the DRC government (The UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, 2007). DRC's DDR program lasted from 2004 to 2010. It is estimated that out of 240,000 combatants, a total of 159,000 ex-combatants were demobilized, and 77,780 were reintegrated (Zena, 2013). Based on the report of the United Nation's Office of Special Advisor on Africa's (OSSA) in 2007, over 13,000 foreign combatants and their dependents were repatriated, while about 10,000 of such foreign combatants still remained in the country (The UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, 2007).

Angola: Civil war in Angola dates back to the days of the cold war. During the cold war, the United States and the former Soviet Union used Angola to wage their proxy-war (The UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, 2007). Long after the end of the cold war, the country has been devastated by civil war. The war has left many dead, injured, and displaced, prompting the UN to act. After the death of Jonas Savimbi, leader of one of the country's main armed movements the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), a peace treaty was signed in 2002, followed by a DDR intervention (The UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, 2007). In both UN and World Bank documents, it is estimated that between 2002 and 2008, out of 105,000 estimated combatants, a total of 97,390 ex-combatants were demobilized, and 92,297 ex-combatants were reintegrated (Zena, 2013). Since the early 2000s, many senior militant commanders of UNITAS and Forces Armadas de Angola (FAA), the other rebel group in Angola, have retired and have moved to the booming petroleum industry (Zena, 2013).



## **Review of the DDR Program in Liberia**

While DDR has made a positive impact in Liberia, the program has faced tremendous challenges. Boas and Bjorkhaug (2010) addressed the challenges of implementing amnesty/DDR programs, such as high unemployment and underemployment, which persisted because the programs prepared the ex-militants for jobs that did not exist. The fact that ex-militants could not use their acquired job skills to help them transition is problematic. According to Boas and Bjorkhaug (2010), reintegration and enhanced social cohesion and security can be achieved more effectively through peaceful remobilization of command structure than through first signposting a certain group (young rank and file ex-combatants) as particularly problematic for peace and stability and reconstituting their position as marginal by actively attempting to destroy the skills and other sources of empowerment they may have gained during the war.

Ex-militants can successfully transition to peacetime activities when they are provided with a path to economic fulfillment. Lively (2012) argued that since economic reintegration is a vital part of DDR, the success of the programs can be ensured by reaching the immediate goal of improving the economic situation of participants (usually through job training programs). Job training is necessary in determining the overall effectiveness of these programs in post-conflict reintegration. According to Lively (2012), the DDR training did have a significant impact in Lofa County. Sany (2012) also emphasized that the experiences of DDR reveal an important international focus on

resources for and commitment to disarmament and demobilization; however, fewer resources were devoted specifically to reintegration.

Reintegration is thus reduced to addressing gaps left by demobilization and the reinsertion of ex-combatants into civilian life, leaving policymakers and implementers to deal with the narrow array of choices and complex dilemmas (Sany, 2012). Therefore, the DDR programs should not entirely focus on whether combatants were successfully disarmed and reintegrated, but rather on exploring the unfolding processes and the field of force within which DDR programs are implemented (Munive & Jakobson, 2012).

On the other hand, in post-war settings, governance and power tend to operate through informal structures and networks (Utas, Thenner, & Lindberg, 2014). Utas, Thenner, and Lindberg (2014) argued that assessment of the program, rebuilding institutions, and fostering democracy takes years, and international intervention and postwar reconstruction, therefore, coexist with these formal systems.

DDR programs continue to play a vital role in conflict resolution. For example, Knight (2010) asserted that peacebuilding has emerged as one of the most critically important, albeit vexing aspects of international involvement in conflict and post-conflict environment. Primarily, the challenge for these peacebuilding intervention measures is to find a way to dismantle conflict-nurturing institutions and replace them with institutions that are capable of sustaining peace (Knight, 2010).

There is genuine understanding among a large number of the Liberian population and international partners that stability and security remain fragile in the country. Armed robbery and rape remain persistent, and security forces are incapable of preventing crime

(Gberie, 2010). Since the end of the second civil war 12 years ago, ex-militants have also experienced post-conflict resettlement challenges. These challenges have resulted in confrontations between landowners and ex-militants. The fact that these “land grab” conflicts exist is an indication of some of the challenges of reintegrating ex-militants. Rincon (2010) revealed that in post-conflict transition phase, when refugees and internally displaced return to their abandoned properties, they find them occupied by others, generating a latent risk for rising tensions and outbreaks of violence.

In terms of state policy, I examined policies that provided funding and action plans for additional reintegration assistance following the conclusion of the national DDR program. Therefore, there is an urgent need for policies geared toward providing reintegration assistance to ex-militants as well as a structural basis for adequate implementation of reintegration programs. Such reintegration programs should be based on findings presented in this study, which can help policy makers understand the reintegration experiences of ex-militants in the context of post war Liberia.

Policymakers also need to focus on policies that will ensure that ex-militants and their families are safe from discrimination and physical abuse. Such policies would reduce the fear that ex-militants have of their families being retaliated against (Qiushi, 2010). Taking into account Liberia’s current economic conditions and the funding allocated for reintegration services, policy makers and practitioners should be encouraged to develop and implement reintegration interventions goals that are realistic, can assist ex-militants acquire marketable employment skills, and also create economic opportunities which would empower ex-combatants to meet their basic needs.

According to Greiff (2012), all DDR programs face a challenge in defining beneficiaries in a way that avoids both the exclusions that predictably occur as a result of narrow definitions and procedures, and the over-inclusiveness that results from loose definitions and procedures. The purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding of their experiences since completing job training through interviews and the post-interview focus group.

Furthermore, the study explored participants' hopes and expectations about their reintegration, contributing factors and obstacles to reintegration, perceptions of the extent of their reintegration, and perceptions of future combat participation within the context of Liberia. No other studies of this nature have been identified in the literature. Hence, this study should be replicated with a group of ex-militants outside of Monrovia for comparative purposes.

Also, this study can also provide information for those seeking to create more objective measures or to survey programs for specific outcomes. Furthermore, members of the general population could also benefit from a comparative study of ex-militants in Liberia and those in other countries, such as Sierra Leone and Northern Uganda. Such a study could provide a basis for comparing reintegration interventions and some evidence and learning opportunities for the countries involved in the reintegration as well as countries that may need reintegration interventions in the future.

### **Liberia Post-conflict Challenges**

Addressing post-conflict problems is a vital step of post conflict stability. Since the end of the civil war in Liberia, the country has continued to face significant security

and economic challenges. Munive (2013) identified some post conflict issues, associated with post-conflict stability; he referred to land disputes between Liberian returnees and ex-combatants as one of the most significant challenges threatening the country's national security. The author noted that the dispute and social struggles over land in post-conflict Liberia are not only about land *per se*, but about authority and legitimacy more generally. According to Munive (2013), Liberian returnees ground their claims in the state of affairs prior to the war while ex-combatant squatters base their claims on their physical presence and de facto occupation of the land, threat of violence, and moral claims to the land as a "reward" for heroism and for defending it during the war.

While land disputes in Liberia are not a new phenomenon, in post-conflict environment they can pose a significant threat to peace and stability when state security is too weak to deal with the problem. According to Sola-Martin (2011), since the United Nations Military in Liberia (UNMIL) was established, land disputes have triggered riots and disturbances, which have triggered ethnic and religious conflicts and have been exploited by disgruntled ex-combatants awaiting reintegration benefits.

While land disputes continue to add to post conflict challenges, corruption at all levels, crime, and lawlessness in Liberia present another post conflict challenge. According to a 2013 United States Human Rights report, United States Secretary of State John Kerry cited a number of major impediments to post war corruption development. The report revealed that officials in the government engage in corruption practices with impunity. A 2014 Transparency International's Perception of Corruption Index ranked Liberia 94 out of 179 countries in the study and awarded it the score of 37% out of 100%.

According to a 2012 World Health Organization report, 77% of Liberian women reported that they have been the victims of sexual violence.

The Liberian people are tired of corruption and corrupt leaders. They face this dilemma on a daily basis, as the culture of patrimonial exchange affects all aspects of life in Liberia (Boas, 2009). Corruption or the misuse of public office for private gain is an overreaching concern in many countries, especially developing ones (Beekman, Bulte, & Nilleson, 2014). However, Davies and Dessy (2014) stated that, between 2005 and 2010, the country moved from the rank of 137 out of 158 countries to 87 out of 178 countries on Transparency International's Corruption Perception. Liberia faces the daunting challenge of resuscitating collapsed government revenues to help finance the peacebuilding and reconstruction process (Davies & Dessy, 2014).

Liberia has made steady progress towards rebuilding despite the prevalent challenges of weak global economic environment, widespread unemployment, illiteracy, corruption, and pervasive land disputes (United States Department of State OSAC Bureau of Diplomatic Security, 2013). These challenges have made post conflict reconstruction and security difficult. Liberia faces significant challenges in dealing with persistent violence incidents, continued deficiencies in judiciary and criminal justice sectors, and failure to prosecute civil servants implicated in large-scale embezzlement. All these factors resulted in increased domestic and, to a lesser extent, international criticism of the government of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (Human Right Watch World Report, 2011).

Liberia also struggles to provide sustainable wage employment for the large youth population. International partners have expressed concerns over the high unemployment

of youth in the country as a risk to post-conflict stability. The increase in crime and lawlessness in many parts of the country have proven counterproductive to economic development and security stability. The Liberian state, the UN, and other international organizations frequently stress that unemployed youth can cause instability and conflict (Lindberg, 2014). Youth between the ages of 15 and 24 make up 35% of the population (National Population Census and Housing, 2008) and 53% of the workforce; yet, they constitute 58% of the unemployed (Arai et al., 2010).

In Liberia, the International Labor Organization (ILO) supports the government and social partners in designing and implementing integrated employment policy responses with the goal of enhancing the capacity of national and local level institutions to undertake evidence-based analysis which would feed social dialogue and the policy making process (de Mel, Elder, & Vansteenkiste, 2010). According to a 2011 World Development Report on conflict security and development, the risk of violent conflict in a country or region stems from a combination of internal and external stresses with which the country lacks effective institutional capacity to cope.

The lack of socioeconomic and political institutions makes development and security a monumental challenge. With its focus on post conflict participatory institution-building rather than military protection, the post-interventionist approach to human security highlights local resilience as a key to sustainable peacebuilding (Chandler, 2012). DDR programs are comprehensive and should be implemented as such.

The current socioeconomic and political situation in Liberia has a high probability of provoking another civil conflict. It has been 13 years since the end of the civil wars;

yet, economic development is sluggish, and unemployment among the country's youth is high. If Liberia is to prevent another civil war, it should work aggressively towards economic development and provide sustainable wage employment for the country's large youth population. According to World Bank estimates, about 40% of conflict-affected and post conflict countries relapse into conflict within 10 years (Pheiffer, 2013).

### **Demobilization and Reintegration in DDR Intervention**

According to Soderstrom (2011), DDR programs are a large component of contemporary peacebuilding efforts that target ex-combatants populations. The next step in the DDR process is the demobilization and reintegration of ex-militants to peacebuilding activities. Due to the complexities associated with demobilization and reintegration, these programs should be implemented with care. Demobilization and reintegration are considered the two most critical components of the DDR process (Humphries & Weinstein, 2007).

### **Demobilization**

The demobilization phase of DDR is one of the components the UN uses in post-conflict peacebuilding environments to transition ex-militants to their communities. During demobilization, armed groups are formally disbanded, separated from their commanders, and transported to containments or temporary quarters, where they receive basic necessities and counseling (Hanson, 2007). There are approximately 500,000 individuals in a variety of non-state militias, national armies, and paramilitary groups slated to undergo DDR programs across Africa (Zena, 2013).



Africa is the leading user of DDR programs. According to Zena (2013), a decade-long DDR program in Africa's Great Lakes region cost nearly \$500 million and disarmed and demobilized 300,000 combatants in seven African countries. Zena's (2013) study also revealed that in the Ivory Coast, the UN mission projected that up to 100,000 combatants still need to be demobilized from among formal regime military units. Davidheiser and Kiale (2010) argued "DDR is typically adopted in post-conflict societies, where peace agreements have been forged among ex-combatants who have signified a willingness to return to civil life" (p. 1). However, Zena (2013) pointed out that despite the demobilization of roughly 25,000 combatants from other militant groups in the DRC Ituri region, which had been the focal point of conflict from the mid-1990s until 2003, some militias remained active and resistant to DDR (Zena, 2013).

To achieve successful integration, a full and unconditional demobilization should take place. Critics have raised concerns about the lack of negotiations between ex-combatants and the Liberian government. The conceptualization of amnesty underlies the structure of pre-amnesty peace negotiations and ultimately defines the strategy of disarmament and the design of post-amnesty demobilization.

Post-amnesty demobilization shows that the conception of amnesty as a "gift handed down to militants perceived primarily as criminals" is a major challenge to the amnesty initiative, which is evident in the non-inclusion of a specific strategy for addressing the roots of militancy in the Amnesty Program. DDR initiative does not differ markedly from the state's preferred peace strategy of win or lose, which has underscored constant agitations and the evolving dynamics of complex insurgency in the region. In

Nigeria, Niger Delta, the foremost aim of the amnesty was implemented to end youth militancy in the Niger Delta region.

The UN adopts a lead role in most single-country DDR programs in Africa, but various nongovernmental groups are also typically involved (Hanson, 2007). In Liberia, for example, the United Nations Children and Education Fund (UNICEF) implemented the children's DDR (for combatants aged seventeen and younger) while the World Food Program (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), ActionAid, and the UN Development Program (UNDP), administered the adults' DDR (Hanson, 2007). The use of NGOs in post-conflict reconstruction is vital to the overall success of DDR implementation. The UN uses NGOs to expand the implementation of its policies across a wide spectrum of the geographic landscape and population. The UN has used NGOs in areas such as food distribution sites; they provide medical services, education, cloths distribution, business, and repatriation of refugees. One of the primary focuses of demobilization is the provision of assistance to aid transition.

Collier (1994) noted the importance of demobilization in the transition from war to peace in most civil wars in Africa, especially in Ethiopia and Uganda. In Ethiopia, about 400,000 soldiers of the former Ethiopian government were demobilized in late 1991 and early 1992 (Collier, 1994). Collier (1994) also stated that in Uganda, at least in the short-term, demobilization has reduced crime but failed to provide land to demobilized combatants. One of the challenges militants experience is transitioning from demobilization to reintegration. After ex-combatants have been demobilized, their

effectiveness and sustainable reintegration into civilian life are necessary to prevent a new escalation of the conflict (Fusato, 2003).

### **Reintegration**

While other components of DDR are vital, reintegration is the most critical and complex component to implement and sustain. According to Zena (2013), reintegration is far more complex and lengthy than the other parts of the program. The author also noted that reintegration is the stage at which backsliding is most common because reintegration involves skill training, loans, job placement, and assistance to return ex-combatants and facilitate their relocation to permanent home. In essence, reintegration presents a tremendous logistical challenge.

The goal of economic reintegration efforts is to provide ex-combatants with financial independence through employment (Fusato, 2003). In Liberia, a significant number of youth who comprise a significant number of ex-militants who completed DDR are either unemployed or underemployed. A Labor Force Assessment conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2010 found that formal employment remains extremely low, with 68% involved in the informal economy and 77.9% in “vulnerable employment.”

After six years of reintegration and transitioning to civilian living, participants’ perceptions about the degree to which they had been reintegrated in their communities fell into two major categories: no reintegration and partial reintegration. Fusato (2003) noted that in the short term, ex-combatants who do not find peaceful ways of making a

living are likely to return to conflict. For that reason, properly implementing demobilization and reintegration is vital to short and long-term peacebuilding efforts.

Reintegration assistance consists of short-term relief interventions, which provide a safety net for demobilized ex-combatants (Fusato, 2003). Participants' perceptions of the extent of their reintegration are heavily influenced by their views of their economic sustainability. A measurable number of ex-militants have voiced their conviction on the actual and perceived experience of ex-militants, as it pertains to their the economic condition, unemployment, homelessness, and lack of community acceptance. The responses of participants in this study could be consistent with a general finding that ex-militants reconnect with and are accepted by their communities when they do productive and valued work such as farming or attending school and also when they avoid talking about the past military experiences (Corbin, 2008).

### **Coping during Reintegration**

Some research demonstrates that throughout their combat experience, militants fight for survival by exhibiting bravery, strength, and resilience in the face of adversities (Veale & Stavrou, 2008; Qiushi, 2010). Examining posttraumatic resilience in former Ugandan soldiers, Klasen, Oettingen, Daniels, Post, Hoyer, and Adam (2010) found that despite severe trauma exposure, 27.6% of soldiers showed posttraumatic resilience as indicated by the absence of posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and clinically significant behavioral and emotional problems. The study also showed an association between posttraumatic resilience and lower exposure to domestic violence, lower guilt

cognitions, less motivation to seek revenge, better socioeconomic situation in the family, and more perceived spiritual support (Klasen et al., 2010).

A study by Cortes and Buchanan (2007) revealed six narrative themes in the lived experiences and mechanisms that soldiers used to overcome the effects of war trauma: (a) a sense of agency; (b) social intelligence, empathy, and affect regulation; (c) shared experience, caregiving figures, and community connection; (d) a sense of future, hope, and growth; (e) connection to spirituality; and (vf) morality. Walsh (2006) argued that social workers and other helping professionals working with this population should avoid pathologizing and labeling ex-soldiers as they struggle to reintegrate. Rather, they are encouraged to help ex-combatants identify strengths and resources within their social and cultural contexts (Walsh, 2006).

According to Boas and Bjørkhaug (2010), in the aftermath of the Liberian civil war, almost 100,000 formal combatants were demobilized through the Liberian Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration program. While the United Nations Mission in Liberia and other international stakeholders hailed the program as a success, the efficacy of the reintegration and rehabilitation components of the program is debatable. Most ex-combatants remain unemployed or underemployed as the program not only prepared them for inexistent jobs, but also worked under the assumption that wartime experiences, networks, and command structures had to be broken down, as they were seen as counterproductive to peace and reconciliation (Boas & Bjørkhaug, 2010).

## Summary and Conclusion

Maintaining post conflict stability has proven to be an extremely difficult task for many African countries coming out of civil wars (McDonough, 2008). The United Nations (UN) uses the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate militants to peacetime activities. After 12 years of relative peace, evidence suggests that the program is a complete failure. The unemployment rates in Liberia were 85% and 83.7% in 2006 and 2011 respectively. 83.7% of the population lived below the international poverty line of \$1.25 per day (Human Development Report, 2011).

Although Liberia has made some efforts toward maintaining peace, improving governance, and economic growth, to date, it remains one of the poorest countries in the world (Wodon, 2012). Unsuccessful reintegration and poverty are two major contributors to soldiers' recidivism that must be addressed to improve their socio-economic conditions and end the cycle of war crimes and the use of children in armed conflicts (Human Rights Watch, 2008; Tamagnini & Krafft, 2010).

Literature on the Liberian civil and socioeconomic challenges has focused mainly on the underlying causes of the conflict in the region and the several responses (violent and non-violent) of the government to the conflict. Literature on the Amnesty Program with its merits and demerits especially in its implementation has also been highlighted in numerous studies (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2010; Joab-Peterside, Porter, & Watts, 2012).

Understanding the lived experience of the ex-militants interviewed is vital to the study. Hill, Taylor, and Temin (2008) examined the lived experience of ex-combatants

who were previously employed and are currently unemployed and their difficulty in gaining family and community acceptance. However, scholars have not researched the benefits of the educational component of DDR on the militants who completed job and entrepreneurial skill training as described by ex-militants. It is also very important to emphasize that my review of literature is not exhaustive and the gap in the literature I have considered acceptable to explore is limited to my review of available literature.

Chapter 3 in this study concerns the methodology. The methodology used in this study is qualitative with a phenomenological approach to describe the phenomenon of the interviewed participants. The next chapter also contains an overview of the sampling strategy and size used for the study, the data collection method, the researcher's role, and the data management and analysis.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to determine whether the educational component of the DDR program in Liberia has benefitted its key participants, the ex-militants in Liberia who participated in the DDR program. The overall objective of this study is to identify whether the job training and educational component of DDR provided ex-militants with the necessary vocational, entrepreneurial, educational skills, and empowerment to acquire wage employment.

For the purpose of this study, educational component pertains to vocational training, formal education, and other empowerment opportunities. In this study, I employed a purposeful sampling of 12 adult ex-militants who completed the educational component of the DDR program. To assess the effectiveness of this component, I conducted an evaluation to identify whether educational component of DDR provided ex-militants with the necessary job skills to acquire wage employment. This is very important because the premise of the DDR program is that the job skills acquired will help ex-militants join the workforce and prevent them from returning to militancy.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The data collection process is crucial in qualitative research studies due to concerns of reliability, validity, and ethical considerations that could compromise the results. This section focuses on the methodology, data collection, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical consideration. I used in-depth interviews and two focus groups to initiate the primary data collection, after a thorough literature search through



various Internet libraries and databases to collect secondary data for literature review and data analysis. Moreover, I also attempted to provide an understanding and newer levels of knowledge in an environment or setting that is natural. The aim of this qualitative research is to understand the behaviors, attitude, and personal experiences of the ex-militants.. The approaches I used to achieve the research goal included interviews, participation, observation, reviews, and finally the analysis of the data collected.

The popularity of the interview method stems from its effectiveness in giving a human face to a research problem (Mack, Woodson, Macqueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). Janesick (2011) defined interviewing as an act of communication and “a meeting of two persons to exchange information and ideas through questions and responses, resulting in communication and joint construction of meaning about a particular topic” (p. 99-138). Janesick (2011) also highlighted different types of interview such as basic, description, big picture, follow-up, clarification, comparison, contrast, and structural questions.

For this study, I used the in-depth interview data collection method to interview 12 ex-militants who completed the educational component of the DDR program. I conducted one-on-one interviews with the participants, using open-ended questions to encourage participants to provide extensive responses or answers (Fink, 2000). I also interviewed one MVTC administrator and one DDR administrator to get their perspective on the educational component of the program. This puts the total number of participants at 14. The duration of data collection was a minimum of 1 month. All participants were selected based on their expertise and willingness to participate in the study.

## **Research Setting**

The study was conducted at MVTC in Monrovia. MVTC was used at the end of the DDR program to provide a wide range of vocational training for ex-militants and the population at large. In recent years, the Chinese government has built a newer facility and provided vocational training materials to improve the vocational training experience for the general public. The DDR officer used MVTC as the focus point to provide ex-militants with vocational training.

## **Role of the Researcher**

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) described the qualitative researcher as an instrument of data collection. In qualitative research, data is mediated through researchers, thus, making them active learners and participants as they seek a more profound understanding of a particular phenomenon usually driven by personal interest (Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative researchers are responsible for helping qualitative research consumers understand the role of researchers in the research process. This involves researchers clarifying whether their role is considered *emic* (inside) or *etic* (outside) (Punch, 2005).

As an instrument, qualitative researchers should provide some information about their experience, training, and perspectives about qualitative research and, if applicable, details about the funders of the study as well as personal connections with the participants involved in the study (Patton, 2002). In this study, I took an *etic* or outsider perspective as opposed to an *emic* or insider perspective because the study is based on primary data that explores the lived experiences of ex-militants during reintegration, an experience I do not share with the participants. As an outsider, I used my worldview to interpret and

construct knowledge from the data, so it is very important to provide readers with some insight about my personal experiences, perceptions, and beliefs associated with the phenomenon examined in this study (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

### **Methodology**

The term phenomenology is used both as a philosophy and as a research method (Patton, 2002). As a philosophy, phenomenology seeks to understand a social phenomenon from the actor's own perspective (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). The implication of the phenomenological philosophy is that object of study is what people experience and how they interpret the world (Patton, 2002). As a method, phenomenology describes a phenomenon based on the perceptions of individuals who experience it instead of explaining or analyzing it from the outsiders' point of view (Merleau-Ponty, 1974).

Researchers who use phenomenological methods do not rely on scientific theories to describe a phenomenon; instead, they rely on subjective truths and understandings of the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon first-hand (Merleau-Ponty, 1974; Patton, 2002). Merleau-Ponty (1974) argued that, as compared to scientific methods, phenomenological inquiry provides a more accurate estimation of the truth when it comes to understanding a particular phenomenon as it is experienced, understood, and perceived by individuals who experience it. In studies using phenomenological inquiry methods, participants are individuals who share a particular life experience (Padgett, 2008).

Moustakas (1994) emphasized the commitment of phenomenology to the description of experiences as opposed to explanations or analysis. Moustakas further

highlighted that phenomenology is founded upon questions that give direction and focus to meaning and that it is an approach rooted in themes that sustains an inquiry.

For triangulation, I also interviewed several DDR administrators. I also reviewed pertinent documents associated with the program for analysis. While there are four other approaches (ethnography, narrative, case study, and grounded theory) that could be used in qualitative study, phenomenological approach provides the most detailed procedure for data analysis (Creswell, 2012).

Ethnography approach focuses on setting individuals' stories within the context of their culture and cultural sharing group; in case studies, a single case is typically selected to illustrate an issue, and the researcher compiles a detailed description of the setting for the case (Creswell, 2013). In narrative research, the inquirer focuses on the story told by the individual, and the story is arranged in chronological order (Creswell, 2013).

Grounded theory, on the other hand, is used in studies when no theory is available (Creswell, 2013).

The methodology for this study is qualitative. In a qualitative study, the selection and collection of data from a sample (subset) of the population is usually commonplace (Mack, Woodson, Macqueen, et.al, 2005). The intent of qualitative research in most cases is not to generalize the information but to explain a particular or specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The phenomenological approach focuses on people's experiences and their expressions of such experiences to present them as close as possible to the experience itself (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). This research inquiry provides a description of the meaning of their lived experiences of ex-militants. Rudestam and

Newton (2007) explained that phenomenological research is centered on the experiences of people and expressing them in a language, which, insofar as possible, does justice to the experiences.

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research begins with assumptions and uses interpretive and theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems, addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social human problem (Creswell, 2013).

Qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes (Creswell, 2013). However, the application of qualitative inquiry in practice is difficult because the level of detail produced by such inquiry makes it difficult to generalize to the population; furthermore, in qualitative studies, the samples are generally small, therefore making the participants a less accurate representation of the entire populace (Walden University, n.d.). However, since in this study, I aimed to present a detailed understanding of the issue, qualitative method is the most appropriate for it. Qualitative research allows the researcher to answer the research question and empowers individuals to share their lived experience.

In qualitative research, two approaches are available to researchers: deductive or inductive. In deductive reasoning, themes are constantly checked against the data

(Creswell, 2013). Deduction has many crucial characteristics. First, it examines causal relationships between concepts and variables (Creswell, 2013). Secondly, the researcher has to develop several hypotheses (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, ideas need to be operationalized in a way that allows facts to be measured (Creswell, 2013). The last crucial characteristic of deductive approach is generalization (Creswell, 2013). For this kind of research approach, one needs to choose an appropriate sample size in order to generalize it. On the other hand, inductive approach starts with the observations and theories are formulated towards the end of the research and as a result of observations (Goddard and Melville, 2004). Inductive research “involves the search for pattern from observation and the development of explanations theories for those patterns through series of hypotheses” (Bernard, 2011, p.7). Add summary to avoid ending in a quote and to fully synthesize the paragraph.

### **Participant Selection Logic**

I recruited 12 adult ex-militants using purposeful sampling through collaboration with the Monrovia Vocational Training Center (MVTC) located in the city of Paynesville. Participants were identified base on their attendance record at MVTC. MVTC provided vocational training and educational opportunities to ex-militants during the final reintegration phase of the DDR program. After collecting completed informed consent forms, 12 adult participants were interviewed based on their status as ex-militants and the knowledge of the educational component of the DDR program.

## **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

I conducted detailed interviews of 12 adult ex-militants in Monrovia who had completed the reintegration phase of DDR. The qualitative data was collected in partnership with two other researchers at MVTC in Monrovia. I also interviewed two administrators at MVTC in Monrovia. The interview guide was based on information gathered from willing participants as well as experts who have worked with ex-militants in Liberia.

Since proper data collection is a lengthy and comprehensive process, it required 4 weeks to complete. I interviewed each participant for 30 to 45 minutes to ensure that comprehensive data is collected. I employed the purposeful sampling method to expand the scope at which data can be collected and properly analyzed. I used purposeful sampling to help me understand the problem and the research question (Creswell, 2009). Once the interviews and the preliminary data collections were completed, two focus groups of the study participants were held to disseminate the preliminary findings from the study and to gather feedback from the participants to ensure that the findings reflected their experience with physical activities (Creswell, 2010, p. 315).

I emailed the interview protocols, consent forms (Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS] Title 45, Sec 46.111 [a][4]), and research questions to the two research assistants prior to my arrival in Liberia and conducted a pre interview meeting with them to ensure that all ethical and protocol guidelines are strictly followed. All participants were selected based on their knowledge of and involvement with the DDR

program to ensure rich data is collected. In order to protect the data from compromise and the participants identity, the following measures will be implemented and followed:

- Participants were advised in writing of the voluntary nature of their participation and that participation in the study is strictly voluntary, and that they can choose to opt out of the interview at any time.
- The research objectives clearly defined in writing and articulated to the participants.
- A written consent form DHHS Title 45, Sec 46.111(a)(4) was obtained from each participant.
- The participants received in writing all data methods and activities.
- Provisions were made for monitoring the data collection to ensure participants' safety and anonymity (DHHS Title 45, Sec 111 (a)(b).
- Written transcripts and interpretations of data were provided to the participants.
- Participants' rights and safety were taken into consideration before reporting the data and publishing the final analysis of the study.
- The study did not pose any risk to the participants because the participants' participation was strictly confidential.

Participants' names and other identifiable information were codified to ensure they remain anonymous. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study/interview at anytime, if they felt uncomfortable or had any other issues with the procedure.



### **IRB Application Procedure**

Since this study consisted of interacting with human subjects, I completed an IRB application. Once the application was completed, I uploaded it along with relevant supporting documents into IRBNet to ensure compliance, which is the main basic policy of the department of health aiming to protect human subjects in research. The committee ensures that research projects guarantee voluntariness, confidentiality, and in some cases, anonymity of the individual, and minimize the physical mental, emotional, and legal risks to participants. I also considered the issues of confidentiality and ethics of the research. Confidentiality is an important aspect of the process, which requires a lot of attention. In order to maintain confidentiality, irrelevant research data and notes were destroyed; I assigned codes on data documents, limited access to all data, and password protected all study files in the field computer.

I took all necessary steps to keep the participants' personal information and identity confidential. All information collected during the interview was uploaded into my field computer and password protected. I assigned a pseudonym to each participant's actual name, and the participants only appeared in the study under the pseudonyms. Only ex-militants willing to participate in the study were recruited.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was completed and submitted to committee chair prior to submitting to IRB for final approval. The IRB approval number for this study is 01-14-16-0253587.

## **Interviewing**

The qualitative data was collected through in-depth in person interviews. The 14 interviewed participants included 12 ex-militants and two program administrators. During the in-depth interviews, I also conducted digital audio recording, using a handheld digital tape recorder. Standardized open-ended interview questions were used to solicit information to understand participants' experiences and perceptions of the DDR experience.

The style and process of interviewing (standardized open-ended) were chosen to ensure that the exact same instrument and format is used across all interviews, minimize the difference among interviewers (since two interviewers conducted the interviews), help focus the interview, use time wisely, and facilitate the data analysis process by making responses easy to locate and compare across participants (Patton, 2002). Meanwhile, the interview guide used was flexible, which allowed follow-up questions as needed. Since very little qualitative research has been published about ex-combatants' perceptions of the DDR program, the interview guide was developed to explore ex-combatants' perceptions of the program, their reintegration experiences, and their opinions of resources needed for successful reintegration into Liberian society.

## **Data Analysis**

After obtaining interviewees' responses, the primary data was coded and interpreted to analyze the results and produce some conclusions. Every frequent response was assigned a code which was then interpreted once the interview is completed. Before starting the data collection and coding process, I created a start list of pre-set codes (piori

codes) from the conceptual framework, a list of research questions, and the problem statement. As a subject matter expert, I used my knowledge to create these codes. For instance, since I interviewed ex-militants and DDR program administrators, I used the terms “economic issue,” “employment,” or “training.” At a later time, these codes were collapsed into a larger code or a theme of “barriers to policy.” I avoided using large pre-set codes to avoid mistakes or been overwhelmed.

In business and management research, there are two most prominent data quality issues: reliability and validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Reliability is concerned with consistency of measures (Bryman & Bell, 2011). I ensured reliability by having participants answer specific questions. Reliability ensures consistency across constructs (Creswell, 2012). I carefully reported the methodology used in gathering data and double-coded the data as a means of checking reliability. Furthermore, I ensured the reliability of the research by using the triangulation method. For triangulation, several sources of data and data collection methods were used together to check that findings are reliable. I interviewed one DDR program administrator and one educator with twenty years of teaching experience at MVTC to draw on multiple viewpoints to reveal a themes and holistic views of the problem.

Finally, I compared the findings of the study to those from other DDR programs in Africa. Moreover, all the sources of data used during the data collection process of the study were disclosed, because a researcher’s bias can compromise and distort a research finding. While bias is impossible to eliminate, it can be minimized. Therefore, I worked aggressively to minimize bias or influence by making sure that the data is analyzed in an

objective manner, so that credible findings can be generated. I corroborated participants' story with observable phenomena. I used qualitative analysis tool NVivo to quickly analyze data. While researchers using qualitative methods employ a naturalist approach to research philosophical phenomena, guaranteeing validity and unwavering quality for a qualitative study involves different steps from those undertaken in conventional quantitative systems of testing believability (Creswell, 2003, p. 55).

Since Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological method was employed to understand and analyze participants' transcripts, I carefully read all written transcripts several times to obtain an overall feeling (Creswell, 2009, p. 332). From each transcript, I identified significant phrases or sentences that pertained directly to the lived experience of the educational components of the formal DDR program. Methodological rigor was attained through the application of verification, validation, and validity by adhering to the standards of literature research, phenomenological methods, bracketing past experiences, taking and maintaining field notes, using an adequate sample, identification of negative cases, and interviewing until data saturation is achieved (Creswell, 2009).

Particularly with respect to validity and dependability, qualitative studies are regularly censured for not sticking to customary methodologies or having institutionalized measures to guarantee consistency of discoveries. Morgan (1997) noted that one unique ethical issue in focus groups is the fact that what participants tell the researcher is inherently shared with other group participants as well, which raises serious invasion of privacy concerns and effectively limits the kinds of topics that the researcher

can pursue. Therefore, I was mindful not to share what participants told me with others in the group.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Bias refers to the people's tendency that obstructs unprejudiced consideration of the research questions. Bias is defined as any tendency that prevents unprejudiced consideration of a question. Since research involves real people, there are greater chances that certain kinds of research bias may exist. For example, participant bias is the participants' tendency in the research activity to act in the way the participants think the researchers want them to act. Therefore, the researchers might not get the genuine reaction from the subjects. On the other hand, non-response bias may also obstruct gaining correct information. Non-response bias or volunteer effect refers to the level of interest or motivation that an individual may have who voluntarily participates in an investigation.

Some participants may exhibit a greater commitment or motivation with respect to the information requested. However, others may be half-heartedly responding to the research questions; therefore, only willing participants were used. To ensure that the research is free from bias, I was precise in the manner in which data were analyzed, which refers to checking the inferences by the researchers based on the instrument by another researcher, and the method of triangulation as applied.

I also used multiple and different sources, methods, and theories to provide corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective (Creswell, 2013). In this study, a pilot triangulation was employed in the form of survey

interview questions in order to analyze the results. The idea is that one can be confident with the outcome if various methods will lead to the same outcome.

### **Trustworthiness of the Study**

In this study, I made sure that the reliability of the research was ensured by the triangulation method. The findings of the study were compared with those from other DDR studies, where all the sources of data were disclosed during the data collection process of the study. In a case study, validity and reliability of the research were met by ensuring the following:

1. Dependability
2. Credibility
3. Conformability
4. Transferability

#### **Dependability**

The concept of dependability in case study research focuses on the need for the researcher to account for the changing context within which the research is carried out. To address the dependability of this case study, the processes within this study were reported in detail, which enables a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same outcomes. Such extensive coverage also allows the readers to determine the extent to which proper research practices have been followed.

#### **Credibility**

Credibility is achieved when the researcher, through observations and extended conversations with participants of the study, collects information and then the informants

recognize the information as a real approach to what they think and feel. The credibility of this study was achieved by adhering to the following guideline:

1. Using verbatim transcripts of the interviews to support the meanings and interpretation.
2. Using triangulation in data collection to achieve congruence between the results.

### **Conformability**

Conformability in qualitative research refers to the extent to which the study outcome can be confirmed and corroborated by others. To ensure conformability, procedures were documented for checking and rechecking the data throughout the duration of the research. This process requires keeping a record and complete documentation of decisions and ideas that the researcher had in relation to the study. I ensured that the findings are the outcome of the experience of the participants rather than my preferences. I took accurate note to avoid investigator bias.

### **Transferability**

The transferability and applicability entail the possibility of extending the findings to other populations. To do this, I undertook a detailed description of the location and characteristics of the people where the phenomenon was studied.

### **Ethical Procedures**

There are numerous ethical considerations that must be considered in any research focusing on human participants. For instance, the foremost responsibility of the researcher is the safety of the research participants. In order to protect participants, the risk and benefit ratio were taken into consideration, using all available information to

properly assess and continue monitoring the research.

Most ethical issues in research studies include the following: not obtaining protection informed consent, dishonesty, psychological harm to participants, and compromising right to privacy. I obtained a consent form from each participant and read out loud a statement of confidentiality to each participant prior to commencing interviews. To ensure that rich data were collected, only competent participants were selected for the study. Components of a valid informed consent include a) consent—the potential human subject must authorize his/her participation in the research study b) competence—the participant must be competent to give consent c) voluntariness—the participant's consent to participate in the research must be voluntary d) understanding—the participant must understand what has been explained e) disclosure—the potential participant must be informed as fully as possible of the nature and purpose of the research (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Since this research was conducted outside of the United States (Liberia), I consulted the USA Federal Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP). I provided any regulations or laws protecting human beings to all participants allowing for such research. In Liberia, the Pacific Institute for Research Evaluation (PIRE) at the University of Liberia is responsible for approving all research conducted in the country. Prior to the interview process, I first sought approval from PIRE IRB at the University of Liberia. The PIRE IRB approval number for this research is 00004982, and the Federal-wide Assurance number is FWA 00004982.



### **Summary**

The current chapter consisted of a description of the methodology to be used to answer the research questions of this study. The methodology description included the research questions, the population of interest, and the specific instruments, including evidence of their reliability and validity. The chapter also contained the data collection and data analysis procedures, as well as issues related to the human participants and ethics precautions discussed. In Chapter 4, the results of data collection are presented.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to determine whether the educational component of the DDR program in Liberia has benefitted its key participants, the ex-militants in Liberia who participated in the DDR program. This chapter includes the findings of the interviews and the analysis. I completed my analysis by developing a composite structural description along with a cognitive map based on the composite structural descriptions of all the participants. Concept maps promote analysis and understanding (Ackerman, Eden, & Cropper, 1993; Hines, 2000) because they illustrate participants' description of concepts about a particular domain as well as the relationships that exist between concepts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Together, concepts map and composite description identify the essence of shared experiences of the phenomenon of ex-militants' participation in the DDR program.

I present my results in two parts. In the first part, I provide a demographic description of the participants. The data includes information about participants' age, gender, combatant status, participation and completion of previous phases of the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs, education level, vocational skills training, employment, income, marital status and a number of militants. In the second section, following the demographic data, I present a description of the textural themes (Moustakas, 1994), which are the essences of the reintegration experiences of militants in this study. The textural themes that emerged from the data are reported in the participants' words and include the following: motivation for

disarmament, desire to rebuild lives through knowledge and skills, dissatisfaction with reintegration, perceptions of reintegration, powerlessness, and future combat participation.

### **Research Setting**

I recruited 12 adult ex- militants and two program administrators who had attended or worked at Monrovia Vocational Training Center (MVTC) in Paynesville, a city outside of the capital of Liberia. MVTC is a training institute that National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR) contracted to carry out the final reintegration phase of the DDR program.

### **Demographics**

The study included 12 adult ex-militants who were recruited using convenience sampling through MVTC. After submitting completed informed consent forms, 14 participants were interviewed based on their knowledge and participation in the program. The sample consisted of four females and eight males. The average age of the participants was 30.5, with an age range of 28 to 33 while the age of participants at the beginning of the 14-year civil war was 13.8. Approximately 100% of the participants completed previous phases of the DDR program, the disarmament and demobilization (DD) phases. Of the 12 participants, 100% reported some form of elementary level education, 60% a junior high-level education. Approximately 82% of the respondents were unmarried while 18% had a family.

Regarding education and vocational skills training, 100% of the participants were enrolled in vocational skills training in various areas, the top three being tailoring (18%),

agriculture (15%), plumbing (12), and auto mechanics (50%). Seven percent reported that they learned masonry, and 8% participants learned about electricity in the vocational skills training. However, of the 12 participants, only three reported that they were employed as apprentices.

### **Data Collection**

I interviewed 12 adult ex-militants for this study and synthesized the invariant meaning units and themes into what Moustakas (1994) calls “a description of textures of the experience” with verbatim examples (p. #). In Moustakas’ phenomenology analysis model, textural experience refers to the “what” of the appearing phenomenon (p. 78). Textural-structural descriptions bring out a clear illustration of that which was experienced and how it was experienced Moustakas, 1994). The what in this represents the themes deriving from participants’ description of their perceived experiences post vocational training contributed to the forming of the textural descriptions that were drawn from participants’ verbatim transcripts. On the other hand, the structural themes in phenomenological studies are themes derived from *imaginative variation*. Moustakas (1994) stated, “The task of imaginative variation is to seek possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, vary the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions” (p. 97). During this part of the data analysis, I uncovered the pair themes by interpretation the transcriptions of the participants’ interviews for meaning. Moustakas (1994) described texture and structure as being in a continual relationship. Moustakas (1994) further stated, “In the process of explicating intentional

experience, one moves from that which is experienced and described in concrete and full terms, the ‘what’ of the experience” (p. 79), “towards its reflexive reference in the ‘how’ of the experience” (p. 50). The basic themes uncovered in this study are synthesis of the deeper meaning of reintegration among ex- militants participants in post war Liberia.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Themes Identification**

I started the theme’s identification process by reviewing and reducing the meaning of descriptive phrases into a unit. For example, I reduced the following statement, “I thought after we completed vocational training I was going to get a job to support myself” to the phrase, “Desire for job and support self.” Next, through examination of the meaning units, I determine the relationship and similarities to clustered and overlapped the themes. I concluded by assigning each theme a given thematic or descriptive label. I initially identified six themes that were eventually reduced to five, based on data triangulation with support analyst. The five themes and associated meanings are provided below:

- Motivation for disarmament:
  - Internal motivation, for instance, desires to change and support self
  - External motivation, for example, reintegration assistance such as money and education
- Hope to rebuild lives through vocational skills:
  - Job or small petty business (informal trade conducted on a small scale with small and low-cost goods)

Rejoin with family, friends, and society

- Dissatisfaction with reintegration:

Broken reintegration promises

Challenges to reintegrate

- Perceptions of reintegration:

Not yet reintegration due to financial hardship, stigmatization (no acceptance),

Partially reintegration due to vocational training skills but unemployed and

underemployed, two negative case, that is, full reintegration

Financial hardship

Social marginalization or stigmatization

- Perception of future combat participation:

Willing not fight again due to fatigue, job skills, and maturity, two negative

cases: maybe due to financial hardship; yes due to dissatisfaction and poverty.

### **Textural Themes Uncovered**

The textural themes in this study emerged from data collected from interviews of 12 adult ex-militants participants who completed the educational component of DDR.

Although the interviews were structured around an interview guide (see Appendix B), I used follow-up questions to gather additional information as needed. To ensure

confidentiality of participants in this study, I developed a simple coding system using

letters and numbers to distinguish male from female participants. I decided to use the

letter “FP” for all the female and the letter “MP” for all male. Since the sample consisted

of four females and eight males, , female participants were given code FP1 through FP4.

Similarly, male participants were coded MP1 through MP8. The numbers used to protect the anonymity of participants do not appear in any particular order. The textural themes or the *what* of the experience (Moustakas, 1994) include the following: motivation for disarmament, hope to rebuild life through vocational skills, dissatisfaction with reintegration, perceptions of reintegration, and perception of future combat participation.

### **Theme 1: Motivation for Reintegration**

Theme 1 examines ex-militants motivation to reintegrate as a result of the vocational training they acquired. One participant stated: “We came forward to reintegrate because of what was promised, things like education, tools, building materials and money” (MP3). Participants’ responses about what contributed to their completion of vocational training are categorized into two sub themes: external and internal motivators. Participants indicated that financial incentive, job skills, and their peers were the primary external motivators that encouraged them to attend vocational training.

One participant said:

“We had gone through fourteen years war, and we wanted to get an education. I felt so happy to go to school, which is why I disarmed, especially when I was told I will be given money and job upon completion” (MP6).

Recognizing the roles his peers played in motivating him to complete the reintegration phases, another participant stated, “If my friends had not told me to continue the program, I would have left because all their promises failed” (MP8). For others, their drive to reintegrate and complete vocational training was motivated by the reintegration assistance they were promised after graduation. For instance, one participant revealed, “I

took part in the program because they said that they were going to help us, that what encouraged me to take part at that time” (MP2). Specifying monetary benefits as a major motivation to attend vocational training and complete the reintegration phase, another participant stated:

I went because of the \$30.00 that was offered monthly at MVTC. Since they told us that we were coming to vocational training to help us find jobs, some of us used that opportunity to get the vocational training while some of our peers were very disruptive. Some only came for the money, so when they did not get their share of the monthly 30 US dollars, they erased the blackboard and caused the teacher to stop teaching. So for some of us who came to learn, learning was difficult because of the frequent disruptions. (MP3)

Mainly male participants expressed the second sub theme, internal motivators. For example, one male participant stated, “This war did not make any sense whatsoever. I wanted to contribute to society, so I decided to go to MVTC learn a trade” (MP1). Similarly, another participant stated, “I stopped fighting to go back to school to become somebody. I wanted to get a job skill to survive” (MP8).

Another male participant explained what had motivated him to attend vocational training:

I wanted the education. I was tired with all the fighting. I wanted to change my life for the better. I lost too many of my colleagues in the war, so it was time for me to do something to survive. I heard that they were going to give us money so I went to vocational training to better myself (MP4).

Another male participant commented:



I put my weapon down because I wanted to go to school. I wanted to be a part of the reconstruction. I wanted to live a normal life again so my family will be proud of me. I was told that if I go back to school I was going to get money and equipment.(MP5)

Disclosing his motivation for reintegration, another male participant also said:

I was satisfied that the whole war had finished, and, therefore, I turn my arm over to help the process by going to vocational school. I did vocational training because I was tired of fighting and wanted to go to school (MP7).

Emphasizing his desire for nation building, one participant added:

I went to school because we needed peace and I wanted vocational training to be able to get a job” (MP8). Similarly, one female participant stated, “As a woman, I wanted to be proud of myself, so I decided to get vocational training to help me and my family. We wanted to change and be productive women in society (FP2).

## **Theme 2: Hope to Rebuild Lives through Vocational Training Skills**

A desire to rebuild lives through vocational skills attained is critical part of the reintegration process. One participant stated: “I expected the program to be a very good program to help us reintegrate and rebuild our lives” (MP5). Every participant mentioned something about rebuilding his or her lives through education for the purpose of obtaining employment to survive.

Clearly focused on economic assimilation, one participant stated, “I expected to learn something and get a job to support my family” (FP1). In the same way, another participant also mentioned, “I expected to learn something to help me get a job” (FP4). In

addition to gaining employment as a result of the knowledge and skills acquired, participants also discussed the desire to start a small business or petty trade in Liberia. One female participant stated, “I have the skills, but I need equipment like sewing machine and some money to start off my small business since I cannot find a job” (FP2).

Another participant reiterated the same sentiment that educational and skills training acquired during vocational training were essential for employment; however, people do not trust us to hire us. He noted that when he could not find a job after acquiring a particular set of skills, he went on to find something else to do:

Well, my hope for reintegration was to learn agriculture. I expected the MVTC to give us some agricultural equipment that what I expected the government to come in and help us with more training to help ourselves or find a job placement for us. After the training, we graduated, and there was no job placement and no follow-up was done to see how we were doing, so I had to divert from agriculture to something else. I learned agriculture through MVTC, but I had to teach myself mechanic to survive. (MP8)

In addition to becoming empowered to help their families, participants specifically mentioned how gaining new knowledge and skills for employment would also assist them in reconnecting with others. Focused on reconnecting with his family and community members, one participant commented,

I took part in the program because they said that they were going to help us with school and money, that’s what encouraged me to take part at that time. I wanted a

new start with my family, my community, and myself, and I felt school will help with that. By learning carpentry, at least, I could get a job to survive. (MP2)

Two other participants connected their acquired job skills to getting a job and becoming accepted by their communities as well as becoming a part of society, which is, capture by their remarks: “I hoped that I can use what I’ve learned at MVTC to be able to support my family and then also to be accepted by my community after everything that happened during the war” (FP2). Another participant stated:

I hoped to learn some job skills and get a job and be a part of society. I hope the government will do the right thing and have these companies hire us. We know the job but getting these companies to hire us is difficult. A lot of them just don’t trust us even though we want to reintegrate.(MP1).

Participants also talked about how gaining education and skills during reintegration enables them to learn new skills other than combat skills that are captured in this participant comment.

They told us if we complete vocational training, we would get a job. I am still looking for the job they promised us.” He continued, “Nobody at MVTC knows how we are doing since we graduated. So the people at MVTC do not know whether we were able to get job or how we are fully integrated or not. We were never given job placement upon graduation. (MP 5)

Six other participants also reiterated the same sentiment.

### **Theme 3: Dissatisfaction with Reintegration**

All of the participants discussed the dissatisfaction with reintegration. One male participant stated: “After we completed vocational training, they promised employment and means to start our business but failed to provide both.” Many of us are unemployed and struggling to survive. For me, I am extremely angry because they lied to us and do not care about our problems. Some of the money they promised us was given to some people and others did not get their share. After we completed vocational training, they simply forgot about us. Some of us decided to do things on our own. Some of our peers engage in armed robbery, petty crime, and begging just to survive. (MP1)

Reintegration is vital to ex-militants. Largely, participants unanimously expressed dissatisfaction with their reintegration and factors that led to their dissatisfaction. Two sub themes emerged: broken promises and challenges. One participant discussed broken promises during and at the end of the program:

Everything they promised was not fulfilled. They promised us money, job placement, counseling, and equipment to start our own business if we wanted to. They did not care for us. They lied to us. Nobody at MVTC follow-up with us to see how well we were doing. Whether we got job or place to live. If they had check on us they were going to see things are not working out for us. (MP6)

Another participant also echoed the same sentiment:

The money that we were promised was given to some but not others. Some of our peers who did not get their monthly allowance sometime interrupt the class,

forcing the teacher to cancel the class for the day. We were promised \$30 USD monthly but they did not even honor that promise. For the entire 6 months of training, I got money only three times. Because some of us live very far from the school, we just could not get to school on time, so we were marked as absent. That was some of the reasons why some of us did not get money. It was always given after every 3 months. Getting to school was very difficult. Many of our peers to include myself had to walk for hours just to get to the vocational center. (MP8)

Another participant also stated: “We were promised so many things to help us reintegrate but since we completed MVTC those things were not delivered. No one has check on us to see whether we have gotten job or started our own business” (MP5). Participants expressed their disappointed with the reintegration program, but, at the same time, some admitted that they did not always feel that way. One male participant stated:

Not all of us got what we were promised. They gave money to some, and did not give to others. Let me tell you, I’m not happy at all. All they did was lie to us. We are still suffering. Most of our peers are stealing just to survive. This is not right. We went to school to be able to take care of ourselves but there is no hope of finding work. (MP2).

Similarly, another participant also stated:

“I am angry and disappointed they did not help us. We were promised job placement and cash and some of us did not receive anything. Therefore, I am not fully reintegrated despite my completion of vocational school.” A large part of the

broken promises participants experienced was the irregularities in the training programs.

#### **Theme Four: Perceptions of Degree of Reintegration**

Reintegration is considered the third and critical phase of the DDR program. The UN used reintegration to help ex-militants transition to peacetime activities. In addition to the hope of rebuilding lives through vocational skills, all the participants commented about their disappointment with their reintegration.

One participant stated:

“I am still not reintegrated because of hardship, we are moving from here to there looking for way to survive. Nobody wants to trust us by giving us job. When we say we attended MVTC, people make fun of us and say we are fighters. Life is very difficult right now. They promised us job placement upon graduation but since we graduated nobody check us to see how we are doing. They just don’t care. A lot of my peers are angry. As for me, I am not going to fight again but I am not sure of my peers. ” (MP1).

In terms of participants’ perceptions of their reintegration, two sub-themes emerged: “no reintegration” and “partial reintegration.” For participants who felt no reintegration, economic hardship played a major role.

One participant said:

“Actually, I am not totally back into society yet because I do not feel a part of society yet, because I need a place to live and work to do. I am very disappointed right now. I decided to go back to school to help rebuild this country and now I

am not working. They broke their promise to us. Some of us have to beg just to get something to eat. I don't like begging people for money but I have no other way to earn money to take care of myself." I hope the government will talk on our behalf to companies so they can hire us." (FP1).

A primary concern among participants who felt they were not reintegrated was the concept of shelter, which is captured by this participant's remark: "I don't feel reintegrated to no extent. No extent. I am just the same old way struggling on my own, as you can see. I live in an unfinished building owned by people living out of the country, and my living condition is bad" (MP3).

In addition to economic hardship and homelessness, participants also indicated that lack of community acceptance was another major factor in their perception of their reintegration.

A female participant spoke of the marginalization of ex-combatants: "We are being stigmatized because nobody trusts us to give us job. When we tell people we graduated from MVTC, they will make fun of us. In terms of support, I'm not feeling fine or reintegrated. We thought we were going to get a job placement when we graduated, but we did not get any help. If we don't beg for money or find other line of petty job to do we will not eat. Begging has become some of us habit" (MP8).

Participants also connected economic sustainability with community acceptance in their responses.

Another participant commented:

“Well, I want for everyone in my community to recognize and respect me but I cannot say that is happening because presently I do not have any job. Nobody wants to give me work because they don’t trust me. I think maybe it is because I was a fighter” (FP2).

Another male echoed his concern about his community’s influence on his reintegration in terms of safety:

“I’m still not fully reintegrated even though I did vocational training. We are sitting around now trying to fend for ourselves. People are always calling us rebels. This is troubling” (MP7).

Participants also acknowledged the discontinuation of reintegration services and assistance influenced their perceptions of reintegration.

For instance, a male participant stated:

“I have not been accepted into society. My friends and I are suffering. The government did not get us into job placement when we graduated. Since we completed vocational training, nobody from MVTC or the government have ask us how we are doing or whether we got job. To me, the reintegration was never completed because I do not have a job or no money to support me. We are appealing on the government to come to our aid.” (MP6)

Similarly, another participant stated:

“We are still not fully reintegrated because we were promised jobs and tools upon graduation, but we never got the job. Nobody from the school help us get job. The government did not help us find job” (FP3).



Another male participant also expressed his concern about the lapse in reintegration assistance as it pertained to his reintegration:

I still don't feel part of society and so no reintegration for me yet. Some of us are praying that there will be no more war. It's been a long time since we were helped. We are getting frustrated. Homelessness and begging people for money is embarrassing. It was not suppose to be this way. I want to be a part of rebuilding this country. I learned auto mechanic but have no means of opening my own auto shop. Nobody cares for us. (MP 8)

Also highlighting the importance of vocational training in his overall reintegration, another participant noted:

“Besides not having a job, I have been reintegrated into society now that I have something in my head, at least I can live by. The vocational training we got was good but I don't think it was sufficient to help us. To me, the time we took training was too short. Only six months? They said the training was supposed to take 9 months. In fact, some of the classes were interrupted by some of our peers who felt they were cheated out of their allowance.” (MP6).

### **Theme Five: Perceptions of Future Combat Participation**

In terms of future combat participation, almost all of the participants commented they are tire and want to go to school in order to help with reconstruction.

One male participant stated:

“As for fighting again? No, I will not fight again. I am tired. The war caused too much damage. This senseless war did not benefit us. Just look at me. I am

suffering right now. Nobody respect me because I have to beg just to survive. I really hope there will be no more fighting because the suffering will just get worse. ” (MP2)

When asked whether they would participate in future combat given their DDR experiences, majority of the participants said, “no,” and there were two cases of uncertainty in which the two participants said, “maybe.” A majority of the participants indicated that they were no longer interested in participating in armed conflicts.

One female participant stated:

“I am not interested in fighting. What I have learned from MVTC will help me, and nobody can take it away from me. I’m not willing to fight any war because I’ve gone so far in society. As a woman, self-respect is important. I want people to respect me so I am trying hard to find so little work to do. Sometimes I help some of my friends when they have something to do to get money. ” (FP3)

Indicating their greater maturity, two participants commented:

“No, I will never fight again. I know better now and will not be fooled. When I fought in the war, I was very young and foolish. Whatever we told by the older rebel girls, we believe. They told us they were going take care of us if we join them” (FP2).

While participants shared their disinterest in returning to combat in the future, many expressed their concerns about the likelihood that their peers would fight in future armed conflicts as a result of their dissatisfaction with the level of reintegration and difficulties in acquiring jobs.

According to one male participant:

“No, I won’t fight again, but many of my fellow ex-combatants are in the streets because they are unemployed and stigmatized by other by society” (MP2).

Participants also discussed how their peers’ decision to engage in future combat will likely be influenced by the lack of education and financial hardship.

One male participant commented:

Not me, no, maybe some of my peers. We are living in poverty. Some of my peers didn’t graduate from vocational training. Though some completed vocational training, others played a role of spoiler when they did not get monthly money promised them. Many of these guys have turned to drugs and stealing to make ends meet. (MP7)

Another participant stated:

I was tired with the fighting. Many of my good friends died in the war. I expected DDR and the vocational training I received to better my life, but I am still suffering. No one trusts us to give us jobs. I have to beg or do unskilled work just to survive. I hope the government will assess our progress when we complete vocational training and not forget about us. The program did not provide job places for us, so many of us are struggling to find job. (MP5)

Another participant spoke about unemployment and financial hardship being a major reason for some of his peers returning to combat in the future:

“For me, I do not think so, but for others, will think so, they will be thinking that way. Too many ex-militants with no means of survival is a dangerous thing. Some

people have achieved skills to earn money and no job to survive? This is not acceptable” (MP4).

Similarly, one female participant mentioned that ex-combatants’ dissatisfaction without full reintegration could be a threat to the stability of Liberia.

Another female participant stated:

“No, I won’t fight again, but those involved should remember many us now are suffering and that could start trouble. The UN forces will not be here forever and anything can happen. People are scare that things could get worse if the UN force leave the country. Just imagine, with the UN force here, people are still doing bad things. When they leave, it will definitely get worse. People don’t respect each other here. ” (FP2).

Sharing the same sentiment, another female participant commented:

“No, I can’t fight again, but maybe others might because you can see people are robbing and stealing from people. Some are even armed robbing to survive. This is not good. This is happening because people are not satisfied; some people still have their arms” (FP1).

Although the majority of the participants reported that they would not fight again, there were two participants who said they were unsure. The first negative case involves a participant who admitted he was unsure if he would fight again due to his reintegration experience.

The male participant commented:

“Because too many of us can’t find job and don’t have any means to support ourselves, people will rise up. People will do whatever they can to survive. Some of my peers are committing armed robbery and other petty crimes because they are dissatisfied” (MP5).

In the second negative case, the participant’s response did not fall in the “yes” or “no” categories, but rather a “maybe” category.

The female participant commented:

To fight another war, I assure you, “no, I won’t fight again,” I am tire of this senseless war, ‘but if I am threaten, I might, because if I don’t other fighters might take advantage of me like they did before. I won’t sit by and get killed or get killed by others. I love peace, but I do anything to protect my family and myself.

(FP 3)

### **Structural Themes Uncovered**

An important step in Moustakas’ data analysis is providing a description of structural themes. In this step of the data analysis, I identified structural themes that provide some level of understanding of the reintegration experiences as well as the meaning of reintegration to the ex-militant participants going through reintegration in post-war Liberia. The term “structure” as defined by Keen and cited by Moustakas (1994) refers to “that order embedded in everyday experience which can be grasped only through reflection” (p. 78-79). The underlying or structural themes in this study surfaced through reflecting on my research experience, which included reading the transcripts and notes from the data collection and also analyzing the data. Describing the connection

between texture and structure, Moustakas (1994) noted, “the relationship of texture and structure is not that of object and subject or concrete and abstract but of the appearance and the hidden coming together to create a fullness in understanding the essences of a phenomenon or experience” (p. 79). As compared to the structural themes identified in the previous section, the underlying or structural themes that emerged in this study describe the meaning of reintegration to ex-militants participants on a different level. Based on data analysis and deep reflection on my research experience, I identified the following three structural themes of this study: administration failure at the program and government levels, limited opportunities, and social marginalization.

### **Administration Failure at Program and Government Levels, Constrained Opportunity, and Stigmatization**

The administration of DDR programs at the local or government level is crucial to DDR implantation. The educational component of the program provided ex-militants the opportunity to attain job skills to help them obtain sustainable wage employment. Participants stated the following about the experience: “The education program did not give us all the benefits we expected and ended just in six months.” (FP3). Among the study participants, the most prominent and prevalent structural theme that emerged was administrative failure at the program and government levels. Every participant mentioned that he or she experienced inefficient program implementation while enrolled in vocational training at MVTC. As a result of poor implementation and perhaps poor oversight of the educational component, ex-militants’ vocational skills training and reintegration assistance were plagued by irregularities and abrupt disruptions in services.

In their accounts of their reintegration experience, ex-militant participants pointed out discrepancies between what they were told would happen while enrolled in the DDR program and what they actually experienced. Highlighting the aforementioned discrepancy, one participant stated,

“I was thinking they were going to place us with employers but since we graduated from MVTC, no one cares to check on our progress and reintegration. They said we were going to get tools and some money to start business or get job, but they show no concern“ (MP2).

Consequently, participants described feeling abandoned, victimized, frustrated, dissatisfied, unhappy, and poor during their reintegration. An ex-militant participant recalled his completion of the vocational skills training program, “I graduated from the school but no one check to see how I was doing. They only told us that they were finished with us” (MP7).

Another participant commented:

To find job in Monrovia presently is not easy. You do not have a job when you are paying rent, finding food to eat and a place to sleeps is not easy. I thought the reintegration program and government people were going to help talk to our communities on our behalf. Then, at least, let them know we are changed and now have some skills. That way, our communities will at least accept us as civilians just like them and maybe after they see our skills, they can even give us jobs in our field. But nothing like that happened. They just left us on our own to find jobs. (MP6)

The second type of poor administration that affected participants' reintegration occurred at the government level. An important aspect of poor administration at the government level is the concept of state associated marginalization. Ex-militants in this study experienced marginalization when the government failed to advocate for their economic and social assimilation or provide reintegration assistance post-vocational training. Participants contributed social marginalization and broken promises as an obstacle to their reintegration

One male participant stated:

“We need to find jobs or be able to start our own business, but nobody cares for us. We have been totally abandoned” (MP4).

Several participants highlighted the role of the government in their reintegration.

One participant said:

“I hope the government can come to our rescue, or else we and our children will remain in poverty.” (FP4).

As a result of the poor administration at the program and government levels, participants perceived their reintegration as incomplete.

For example, one participant remarked:

“If the people don't come back and have me reintegrated, it means that I don't have hope. I pray to God that some people will come and help to carry on the process, for the process is not completed” (FP2).

Similarly, another male participant indicated that he was experiencing state associated marginalization:



“Not receiving benefits from the reintegration program, the government, and people in my area” (MP5). “We are begging them to help us get what we were told would be given to us in order to settle ourselves” (MP7).

### **Constrained opportunities**

Reintegration opportunities played a vital part in the lives experience of ex-militants’ transition to peacetime activities. Participants spoke about their experience and opportunity they got during and after the program.

One participant stated:

“Right now, I sit home and do nothing because I just can’t keep begging people for money. It is embarrassing. I hope they will start to treat us better and give us opportunity to learn and get jobs” (MP5).

The poor administrative support at all levels is in direct correlation with the limited opportunities they experience during reintegration because they have not receive reintegration assistance since completing vocational training. As a result of these limited opportunities, ex-militants described a state of stagnation wherein they admitted to be “still waiting for help” (MP3). One participant described being “hopeful” (FP2) about her outcomes after participating in vocational training.

Majority of the ex-militant participants indicated that their reintegration experience consisted of a period of “waiting” for reintegration assistance they were previously promised, including the reopening of disrupted reintegration programs, vocational skills training, and assistance in securing employment or starting a petty trade. Expressing anticipation of government assistance during this waiting period.

One participant disclosed:

“I am frustrated and waiting. The day the people from the government bring anything that is satisfying, I will appreciate it. Anything the government can do to help us find jobs or start our own business will be fine” (FP3).

Another participant described how limited opportunities generally led to a period of “inactivity” during which ex-militants remain idle and unemployed despite having some vocational skills. He stated,

“What we were told was that after completing vocational training, they were going to help us start our own business and get employment. Since then, no one from the school or government checked to see how we are doing since we completed vocational training.” (MP 6) The participant also expressed his involvement with the job market and his community despite obtaining vocational skills training: “I have not found any agricultural job despite all the farming in Liberia.” (MP 6)

### **Stigmatization**

Another important structural theme that emerged from the interviews is social stigmatization.

One participant stated:

“We have not been reintegrated well. I’m not really fine. We were not treated well. People still insults us calling us names like rebels or killers. Even though I completed vocational school, I’m still jobless” (MP4).

For the most part, participants in this study described prejudice, discrimination, disconnection, and unsupported by community members who were unfriendly toward them and members of their families. An important aspect of stigmatization is the lack of social reintegration programs and advocacy for ex-militants to be recognized and treated as community members, capable of contributing to society through the labor market following successful completion of vocational training. The importance of social integration and advocacy in social marginalization is captured in this participant's comment:

We completed vocational training as part of our reintegration and were promised employment opportunities, but nobody is hiring or trusting ex-militants.

Regardless of our vocational training, we are still being insulted and called rebels.

The government didn't help in any way. The government and others do not care about us. Some of our peers wanted to keep fighting because for this very reason.

People used to respect me when I was a fighter, but these days, nobody respects me. (MP7)

Participants who experienced less or no social stigmatization appeared to have more connections with their community members that translated to employment and community acceptance. For instance, one participant indicated some type of positive relationships with members in his community by stating, "I did plumbing at MVTC and know how to install pipes in the bathroom. I have been lucky to do some plumbing work to earn money but will not pay us well. Sometimes I take my friend on some of the contract jobs" (MP4).

### Summary

The majority of the participants in this study expressed dissatisfaction with their reintegration. Their dissatisfaction centered around two sub-themes: broken promises and obstacles. Several of the participants reported that they were dissatisfied with their reintegration because they did not receive the reintegration assistance they were promised. Research indicated that in Liberia, the primary methods used to reintegrate militants included educational support, skills acquisition and family reunification (Awodola, 2012). A few of the participants in this study admitted that they initially received some of the benefits at MVTC, such as the first two stipends totaling approximately \$90.00 United States dollars and some vocational skills training; however, they gradually became disappointed after the rest of the reintegration assistance promises (shelter, tools, stipend, counseling, medical care, etc.) were unfulfilled.

Each of the participants mentioned something about the DDR program irregularities in regards to what they were promised and what they actually received. Almost all of the participants in this study expressed frustration with the lack of employment and stability in their life. Of the 12 participants in this study, only one female mentioned that she has been hired to do plumbing work; however, she is often cheated when she gets paid for her services. All of the ex militant participants in this study reported that they attended vocational skills training programs while a few of them reported being enrolled in formal academic schools. This finding is consistent with previous research which indicates that in a few other African countries during post conflict periods, only a small number of ex-militants return to formal school (Denov,

2010; McKay & Mazurana, 2004; Stavrou, 2004). Reintegration challenges also play key roles in participants' overall dissatisfaction with their reintegration. These reintegration challenges that participants believed contributed to their dissatisfaction with their reintegration are consistent with challenges uncovered in a previous study in which Qiushi (2010) identified homelessness, lack of relationships with family, poor health conditions that require specialized medical services, and abject poverty as major obstacles ex- militants are challenged with during post-armed conflict periods (Qiushi, 2010).

Participants in this study identified unemployment, homelessness, lack of government support, and sudden disruptions in the vocational program and reintegration assistance as major obstacles that contributed to their overall dissatisfaction with their reintegration process. The participants felt that these factors kept them in poverty. Pugel (2006) found that Liberian ex-combatants are challenged by their economic situation (42% live on less than US\$2/day), and 52% reported physical separation from their home communities. To overcome their major obstacle of unemployment, some participants reported that they begged, performed odd jobs for community members and also engaged in petty trade on behalf of community members. This finding is comparable to a few of the means of survival that ex-militants reported in a previous research: petty trading, agricultural labor and odd jobs (Denov, 2010). Additionally, Denov (2010) found that some participants also engaged in prostitution, petty crime, and drugs as a means of surviving in post conflict Sierra Leone; however, no participant in this study disclosed engaging in illegal activities. Interestingly, ex-militant participants did not mention their

own involvement in criminal activities; nonetheless, almost all of them discussed knowing some of their peers who have committed some petty crime.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

This phenomenological study examines the lived experience of adult ex-militants in Liberia who participated in the educational component of the DDR program at MVTC and whether ex-militants obtained the necessary vocational, entrepreneurial, educational skills, and empowerment to help them acquire wage employment.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The outcomes of this study are the textural and structural themes that resulted from the data analysis process. In this section, I present the findings for each theme as it relates to results from previous studies as well as theoretical perspectives identified in the literature review. I also provide concept maps to help demonstrate the themes that emerged in participants' responses and also the relationships between concepts.

Participants in this study attributed their decision to attend vocational training to both internal and external motivators. All of the participants in this study reported that they were influenced by external motivators to go to school. The external motivators they identified included their peers, and the reintegration assistance (counseling, money, vocational skills training, jobs, shelter through resettlement, relocation or tools) they were promised upon graduation. I could not identify any scholarly research that investigated factors that motivated ex-militants to attend vocational training. However, one qualitative study found that ex-militants' affiliation with military groups ended abruptly when they were found by United Nations troops and taken to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration camps (Denov & McClure, 2007). Another study found that of 1,830

Ugandan ex-militants, 82% reported that they escaped through their own initiative while the remaining 18% indicated that they were either released by their military commanders or rescued by members of an opposing armed group (Vindevogel et al., 2011).

Participants in this study said they were encouraged to attend school after DDR authorities promised reintegration assistance ranging from money to material goods with the intention of meeting their basic economic, financial, and employment needs.

There are similarities between the reasons participants in this study provided for agreeing to attend school and the reasons other Liberian ex-combatants stated for joining military groups in a previous study. Pugel (2006) found that Liberian ex-combatants were motivated to fight because of economic incentives such as food, money, jobs, and non economic reasons such as family protection and improving the situation in Liberia. The findings are noteworthy because there are similarities between the external motivators that influenced them to fight and the external motivators that influenced them to disarm (Pugel, 2006). One reoccurring pattern that emerged between male and female participants' responses is that in addition to identifying external motivators that influenced their decisions to attend vocational training, several male participants identified two internal motivators: desire to change and the desire to contribute to peace building in Liberia. Unlike the female ex-militant participants, the males seemed to have an internal drive to transform and contribute to the stability of the country in the process. Unlike the males, female participants attributed their willingness to disarm and reintegrate to exhaustion after having participated in the civil war for several years without receiving any major benefits in addition to the external motivators. The literature



indicates that children who become soldiers tend to live in disenfranchised sections of society (Peters, 2005), may be coerced by desperate family members who receive money or material goods in exchange for their services, or may themselves view armed conflict involvement as potential source of income (Becker, 2005; Peters, 2005).

For participants in this study, there is a need for reintegration, beginning with the economic and social integration. Clearly, before the war, the militants perceived themselves as having more social constraints and thought they could empower themselves by joining the military. Still, at the end of the civil war, participants continued to perceive themselves as socially constrained except that this time, they were adults who face the difficult task of meeting their basic needs without education, employment, and support from the government and communities. Without sustainable disarmament and reintegration assistance, ex-militants will remain poverty stricken and vulnerable to future recruitment, which is the exact situation that most ex-soldiers face prior to soldier recruitment and militarization. It is evident that participants in this study experienced a loss of education. Past research showed that ex-militants experience a loss of education, and, as a result, education is considered a crucial step in escaping poverty and marginalization (Denov, 2010). Historically, the primary goal of the reintegration process was to assist ex-fighters acquire civilian status and obtain sustainable employment and income (Nilsson, 2005). More recent definition of reintegration recognizes the social and political facets and thus, sees reintegration as a societal process which aims to assimilate ex-combatants and their families into civil society economically, politically and socially (Nilsson, 2005). Participants in this study explained that, prior to beginning the

educational component of the reintegration process, they had high expectations and hoped that the DDR program would help them rebuild their lives through the knowledge and skills acquired from vocational skills training or formal education. The participants in this study also stressed that the vocational skills training assisted them acquiring new skills.

For instance, female soldiers who performed domestic chores like cooking, cleaning, and raising children on behalf of adult military leaders (Mazurana & McKay, 2004) were likely to have developed some caregiving skills which could also be utilized in their roles as civilians and in vocational skills training or future job opportunities. Additionally, participants who were involved in combat also received the opportunity to repurpose their knowledge and skills about machinery, agriculture, wilderness survival, and to how to lead, work as a team, or follow instructions in an organization. The data revealed that after they had acquired vocational skills, all the participants hoped to secure employment or at least start a petty trade. Participants in this study considered petty trade as any trade under the amount of \$500.00 American dollars or 40,000 Liberian dollars a year. This finding is similar to the results of a previous study in which Pugel (2006) reported that 90% of 590 ex-combatants interviewed believed that the vocational training they acquired through the DDR intervention programs would guarantee future economic sustainability. Ex-militants in Liberia face tremendous income disparities. Ex-militants survive on less than US \$2.00 a day and 52% reported separation from their home and communities (Pugel, 2006). Another important finding is that the participants also viewed vocational skills training as a path for reconnecting with families and communities. The

findings in this study suggest that when combat skills are repurposed and used appropriately, ex-militants are more likely to become positive contributors to the labor market and their communities. When this happens, community members will take into account the strives that ex-militants are making and will likely be more accepting of them.

This finding is similar to those reported by researchers who found that Liberian ex-combatants who were previously employed and are currently unemployed experienced difficulties gaining family and community acceptance (Hill et al., 2008). Past research showed that for ex-militants in Mozambique, one of the most devastating legacies of soldiering was the years of lost economic opportunity that often led to difficulties in accomplishing a major life cycle tasks of choosing a wife and building a family (Boothby & Halprin, 2005). Participants in this study reported a loss of economic opportunities as a result of soldiering; but their loss of economic opportunities did not seem to prevent them from doing whatever they can to earn a living.

#### **Limitations of the Study**

- Due to the small sample size, the findings of this study are not generalizable.
- Participants' bias may have occurred since participants' recollection of events could be vague due to time and frustration.
- This study is constrained by time (longitudinal effect) since it was conducted abroad.
- Despite all efforts made to assure participants that the study is solely based on their experience with the educational component of DDR, at least half of the

participants exhibited some signs of nervousness, which might be reflected in their responses.

### **Recommendations**

There are several international and national policies that prevent militants' soldiering in Liberia (Achilihu, 2010; African Union, 2010; Human Rights Watch, 2004). If they were successfully implemented, Liberia could benefit from policies that discourage ex-militants from future militancy. Consequently, funding needs to be allocated for additional reintegration services, including, but not limited to, education (ex-soldiers and their children), employment (formal or petty trade), housing, community outreach, medical and mental health services that will allow ex-militants to have a smoother transition from soldier to civilian status.

In addition to replicating this study with ex-militants in other parts of Liberia, the study could also be replicated with a larger sample. Future studies could focus on how ex-militants in rural parts of Liberia experience and perceive reintegration and how their understanding of reintegration might influence their reintegration experience and vice versa. The findings of such a study could contribute to the knowledge base for administrators and increase the understanding of ex-militants' reintegration experiences within the cultural and environmental context of other parts of Liberia.

Not only should future qualitative research be conducted on ex-militants' reintegration, but there is also a need for studies using mixed methodology. For instance, studies could utilize guiding questions based on or derived from the ones used in this study but also incorporate instruments to measure social indicators of how effectively ex-

militants are reintegrating. Such indicators could include constructs related to stress, aggression, bio-psychosocial adjustment and economic sustainability, accounting for the current economic conditions of Liberia.

A longitudinal study of ex-militants in Liberia would provide invaluable information and help us understand the long-term experiences of ex-militants as they transition to civilian status. In addition to understanding how reintegration occurs on a long-term basis, this study would provide evidence of the life outcomes of ex-militants in Liberia. A study of this nature would also measure the effectiveness of helping efforts over a long period of time and the most efficient use of scarce community resources geared toward helping ex-militants reintegrate over a long period. Future researchers replicating this study could include questions to explore other areas of education or vocational skills training which ex-militants are interested in learning based on their strengths, available resources, and current post-war economy.

## **Implications**

### **Social Implications**

Social change is the deliberate creation and application of ideas and strategies with ensuing actions to enhance the development of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, and society (Walden University, 2014). Positive social change equates to human prosperity and societal improvement. This study contributes to positive social change by identifying the importance of education and successful integration to the restoration of peace, security, and stability in Liberia.

The implementation of peacebuilding initiatives is vital to securing peace and creating socioeconomic conditions that enable sustainable development in Liberia and the West African Region. In order to achieve economic development, peace and stability must first be achieved. The UN implemented the DDR program as one of such initiatives aimed at contributing to the security stabilization in Liberia through the educational component of the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitating of ex-militants. DDR is used to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate warring factions to peacetime activities (Ibaba, 2011). The foremost implication of this study is to ensure peace and stability in Liberia through education and socioeconomic integration of ex-militants who completed vocational training.

### **Policy Implications**

Policy wise, the findings of this study show no known national policies that provide funding and sustainable action plans for ex-militants post vocational training. Therefore, crafting and implementing policies that addresses the urgency of providing continuous reintegration assistance to ex-militants is imperative. Such policies should take into account evidence presented in this study, which would help policy makers and program facilitators better understand the role that education and full reintegration play to the reintegration of ex-militants and socioeconomic development in post war Liberia. There are several international policies against child soldering (Achilihu, 2010; African Union, 2010; Human Rights Watch, 2004); however, there are no national policies to prevent ex-militants from being recruited again for future armed conflicts in Liberia.

Accordingly, adequate funding is needed to support reintegration initiatives such as education, social integration services, mental health counseling, business creation, employment opportunities, and housing. Since ex-militants are a vulnerable group, policy makers also need to focus on sustainable policies that will ensure that ex-militants and their families are protected from stigmatization, physical abuse, and maltreatment. These policies help mitigate the socioeconomic challenges that ex-militants face on a daily basis.

The implementation and enforcement of policies of this kind will address the security and socioeconomic challenges that ex-militants face as they struggle to transition to peacetime activities (Qiushi, 2010). Taking into account Liberia's fragile economy and social structure, policy makers and program administrators should develop assessment and reassessment policies and goals to evaluate current and post vocational training for ex-militants to help them acquire sustainable employment that will help them become productive members of society and family.

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the reintegration experiences and meaning of reintegration as perceived by ex-militants who completed the educational component of the formal DDR program. Additionally, the study examines participants' aspirations, perception about vocational training, reintegration, and socioeconomic factors in Liberia. I will recommend a more comprehensive study of ex-militants be conducted with a larger sample size in rural areas and larger cities in Liberia to get a more generalized result. A comparative study should be conducted with countries in Africa that have had successful DDR programs.

## Conclusions

Since completing vocational training seven years ago, and transitioning to civilian living, participants' perceptions of their degree of reintegration are sum into two parts: no reintegration and partial reintegration. According to Ackerman, (2009) the primary goal of the reintegration phase of the DDR program was to prepare combatants for sustainable socioeconomic reintegration. Participants' view their reintegration were heavily influenced by their perception of their economic sustainability. Almost all of the 12 participants concluded that they were not fully reintegrated due to the economic hardships, unemployment, homelessness, and lack of community acceptance. The responses of participants in this study are consistent with a general finding that ex-militants reconnect with and are accepted by their communities when they do productive and valued work such as farming or attending school and also when they avoid talking about the past military experiences (Corbin, 2008). Despite aiding their reintegration to civilian life, unemployment and underemployment among ex-militants remain significantly high.

Moreover, participants who reported no reintegration mentioned the lack of socioeconomic support in reintegration assistance as a major influence on their perception of the extent of their reintegration. This finding is in correlation with previous research which indicates education and employment as universal needs of ex- militants participants who expressed the desire to continue their interrupted education and become contributing members of society either through trade school or college training (Woodward & Galvin, 2009). Participants in this study also mentioned stigmatization as



an obstacle to reintegration. The findings are similar to those reported by a previous researcher who found that ex-militants lived with the following after-effects of soldiering: feelings of guilt and shame, severe physical injuries and disabilities, loss of family, and disturbing memories of war and violence (Denov, 2010). In this study, almost all of the participants (male and females) reported disappointment with the manner in which their reintegration took place.

Nearly all of the participants in this study considered themselves partially reintegrated due to the following reasons: a) having attended vocational training but still unemployed; b) Although unemployed but feeling safe in their communities; c) unemployed but still have hope d) completed vocational skills but no means to survive. Three of the four reasons participants listed for their perception of being partially reintegrated involved being unemployed. Participants' frustration over their unemployment status is in correlation with previous studies that suggested Liberian ex-combatants' frustration with employment was associated with the formal employment sector (Pugel, 2006). Additionally, few participants articulated that despite their unemployment status, they felt somewhat safe in their communities as a result of peer acceptance.

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## Appendix A: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of participants with knowledge of the educational component of the formal disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program and ex-militants who have completed the educational component of the DDR program. The researcher is inviting willing program administrators, educators, and ex-militants who completed the program to be in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named John T. Wollie, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study will be to understand whether the educational component of the formal DDR program in Liberia has helped ex-militants who completed the program with job and entrepreneurial skills to join the workforce.

### **Procedures:**

- Handout consent form to participants
- Allow participants time to read consent form
- Sign consent form
- Collect consent form from participants
- Provide participants a copy of signed consent form
- Provide 30 to 45 minutes of your time to participate in in-depth interview.
- Interview will be audio-recorded

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

This study is voluntary. The researcher will respect your decision whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at Monrovia Vocational Training Center (MVTC) will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress, or becoming upset at some of the questions. Being in this study does not pose risk to your safety or well-being. This study will evaluate the importance of the educational component and its benefits to the ex-militants who complete the program. Findings from the study may aid in future United Nations implementation of DDR in conflict areas around the world and help the Liberian government craft policies that continue to support the transition of ex-militants into society.

**Payment:**

All participants will receive rice and vegetable cooking oil at the conclusion of the interview.

**Privacy:**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. I will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, I will not include your name or information that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept and uploaded in a password protected, codes will be assigned to replace individual identifiers, and all data will be purged when no longer needed. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. **As a professional and scholar, I am obligated to report illegal activities revealed to me to appropriate authority.**

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. Or, if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via john.wollie@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott at Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Walden University's approval number for this study is 01-14-16-0253587 and it expires on **January 13, 2017**. The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing this form, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

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## Appendix B: Confidentiality Agreement

**Name of Signer: John T. Wollie**

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: “Phenomenological Study on the Education Component of the Formal Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Ex-Militants in Liberia,” I will have access to information which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information to others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter, or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant’s name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I’m officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

### Appendix C: Interview Questions for Participants

1. How does your job skill training contribute to your reintegration?
2. What has been your personal experience in the formal Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration Program?
3. What challenges and successes have you experienced since you completed the program?
4. What has been your personal experience and observations about necessary program improvement?
5. What job or entrepreneurial opportunity have you sorted since you completed the educational component of the program?
6. What kind of job skill training did you receive while in the program?
7. How do you foresee your job and entrepreneurial training being used to keep you from taking up arms again?
8. What recommendations can you make about DDR implementation?
9. Do you have anything else to share?

Appendix D: Interview Questions for Program Administrators and Educators

1. What was your role in the implementation of the educational component of the formal DDR program?
2. What challenges do you think ex-militants faced since completing the educational component of the program?
3. What job skills or entrepreneurial training did ex-militants acquire as a result of the DDR program and how did it help them find jobs?
4. What impact would you say the program has had on ex-militants who completed the program?
5. What improvements would you say will be vital in improving future DDR program implementation?