Designing Gender-Sensitive Demobilisation Exercises

The Liberian Case

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Abstract

This study seeks to describe female participation in the Liberian Disarmament and Demobilisation exercises and to explain the level of entry of Women Associated with Fighting Forces. The empirical material – interviews, statistical data and written documents – is analysed using Anne Phillips' theory on presence versus representation, Erving Goffman's theory on stigma, and a model illustrating the three dimensions in which gender aspects of the DD affects society. An overweight of men in the DD Planning Forum did not prevent quantitatively good participation of female ex-combatants in the process, with policies such as United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security efficiently utilised. However, when it came to qualitative aspects and gender sensitive details, a stronger presence of women in planning would have been required. Information and sensitisation of combatants and communities decreased the problem of stigmatisation, which in combination with the financial incentive of 300 USD for all participants made the Liberian DD process attractive for women. The number of female participants was 20 times the initial estimates, while that of male participants was not even three times the initial estimate.

1 Introduction 1

1.1 Purpose of the Study 3
1.2 Methods, Material and Criticism of the Sources 3
1.2.1 Numerical Data 4
1.2.2 Interviews 4
1.2.3 Documents 6
1.3 Theoretical Framework 6

2 Background 11

2.1 Defining Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration and Rehabilitation (DDRR) 11
2.2 The Comprehensive Peace Agreement 12
2.3 The Security Council Resolution 1509 12
2.4 The Institutional Organisation of the Liberian DDRR process 13

3 Planning, Execution and Programme Outcome 16

3.1 Planning for Disarmament and Demobilisation 16
3.2 Phase One – Camp Schieffelin 19
3.3 Planning for Phase Two 21
3.3.1 Security Council Resolution 1325 and Gender Considerations in Planning 23
3.4 Phase Two - Disarmament and Demobilisation Procedures 25
3.5 Eligibility Criteria 28
3.6 Disarmament and Demobilisation Results 30

4 Analysis: Participation of Women in the Disarmament and Demobilisation Process 32

4.1 Quantitative Aspects 32
4.1.1 Overall Participation in the Disarmament and Demobilisation Process 32
4.1.2 Female Participation 34
4.2 Short-Term Qualitative Aspects 36

5 Conclusion 39

Bibliography **41**

Interview Partners **46**

Abbreviations **47**

1 Introduction

After 14 years of protracted civil war in the West African country of Liberia, a peace agreement was reached between the warring factions in Accra, Ghana, 18 August 2003. As a means of creating sustainable peace, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) called for the establishment of a process of Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR). One month later, 19 September, The United Nations Security Council passed resolution 1509 on the establishment of a peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Included in the UNMIL mandate was the undertaking of developing an DDRR Action Plan for Liberia in cooperation with other relevant agencies and organisations, as well as the execution of voluntary disarmament of combatants (S/RES/1509).

Throughout time, war has been considered a masculine phenomenon: men cause wars, men fight wars and men negotiate to end wars. Historically, victims of violent conflict consisted mainly of the very soldiers fighting it, and women constituted a relatively small fraction of the total amount of deaths. In modern wars, however, the situation is reverse. With civilian death tolls making up about 80 percent of the total (Kaldor 1999:115-116), women are affected to a different extent. Yet, women should not be considered solely victims, but must rather be recognised as actors of war and peace. In contemporary conflicts, the demography of fighters has undertaken dramatic changes. Women take up guns and join fighting forces as soldiers or as cooks, spies, sex slaves or other supporting roles; women loot, kill and molest; women run their families and communities in the absence of men during the war, economically and physically; and women engage in dialogues and networks for peace. In recent years, the international community has become increasingly aware of the versatile roles played by women in times of war, resulting in a growing set of policy documents, conventions and resolutions addressing the issue.

On 31 October 2000, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Resolution 1325 marks the first time the Security Council addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women; recognised the under valued and under utilised contributions women make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace building; and stressed the importance of their equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security

(Mazurana et al. 2005:15-17). Of certain importance in the context of this study is the fact that the resolution encourages those involved in planning DDRR operations to consider female and male ex-combatants' differing needs, as well as the needs of their dependants (S/RES/1325).

Establishing DDRR programs has become an integral standard procedure of UN missions in post-war societies. In various parts of the world, and with various results, combatants have been presented with the opportunity of undertaking voluntary disarmament and demobilisation, making Liberia no exception. However, Resolution 1509 that established the UN Mission in Liberia marked a significant progress compared to other missions by including a call for a DDRR process that pays particular attention to the special needs of women, as well as mentioning the importance of Security Council Resolution 1325.

Unique features of the Liberian DDRR program can be found in the policy documents establishing the operation, recognising the prevalence and relevance of women in the fighting forces. The Liberian program is, moreover, one of few of its kind to be executed after the adoption of Resolution 1325. By acknowledging the importance of Resolution 1325 in the CPA and other key documents, the need for female participation in all stages of the peace building process, including in the planning of key elements such as DDRR, is reaffirmed. Based on the above, a few questions arise regarding the impact of these new perspectives on gender in post-conflict situations on the Liberian DDRR process: Were gender sensitive aspects included as a result of effective use of policies such as Resolution 1325, or was this the result of other factors, i.e. a strong female presence in planning processes? No matter which: what impact did this have on the implementation of the process and the participation of women and men in it?

Solid research on the Liberian DDRR process is lacking – substituted only by a few publications, evaluations and reports compiled mainly by NGO's involved in the program. A problematic aspect of this is, while many important findings could benefit from being analysed in the light of broader perspectives, these largely remain overshadowed by more pragmatic and short-sighted reasoning. Yet a more fundamental problem is the fact that no thoroughly written stage-by-stage description of the process, prerequisite for conducting a well-founded analysis, is generally available – outlining the documents founding it, the actors behind, and the implementing agencies.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

In order to make the above problem more comprehensive, the dual purpose of this study is:

- To describe the participation of women and men respectively in the Disarmament and Demobilisation (DD) phases of the Liberian DDRR process.
- To explain why the participation is distributed as it is regarding gender.

Attempting to realise this purpose, the following set of questions will be used as a framework for the thesis:

1. What is DDRR?
2. How was the Liberian DD process constructed?
   - Who took the decision to form a DD?
   - Who planned the DD?
   - What were the eligibility criteria for the DD?
3. How was the Liberian DD process executed?
   - Who executed the DD?
   - Of those who wished to participate, who got to?
4. What can explain female and male participation in DD?

1.2 Methods, Material and Criticism of the Sources

Based on a field study undertaken in Liberia between October and December 2005, this thesis examines the DD phases of the Liberian DDRR process through a gender lens. A general lack of academic research on this particular topic – as on the concept of DDRR as a whole – called for new empirical material to be collected from primary sources. The purpose of the study is dual, with a first part interested in finding a descriptive answer to the question "how?" and a latter part attempting to explain "why?". The descriptive part of the study is based on aggregated statistical data on participation in the DD process and qualitative informant interviews with relevant actors at different levels of the DDRR process in Liberia. All interviews have been conducted in a semi-structured manner in order to generate new ideas and open up for interviewees' analysis of the matters studied as a way to identify possible explanations. Methodologically, both quantitative and qualitative

approaches are employed to answer the research questions. Numerical data is used to analyze disarmament and demobilisation in particular, while the open interviews provided additional qualitative information on several aspects.

1.2.1 Numerical Data

The statistics on disarmed persons and collected weapons used for the study have been provided upon request by the statistics team responsible for the database of the Joint Implementation Unit (JIU) of the Liberian DDRR programme. The data in the database is a result of compiling the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration forms from all the combatants who have entered the process. When using data collected by third parties, keeping a critical attitude towards the reliability of such material is of utmost importance, both because the source might have an interest in distorting data, and because there may well be flaws in the data collecting process that undermine the validity of figures. The data used has been processed in MS Excel into easily comprehensible tables and diagrams.

1.2.2 Interviews

Based on our intention of describing and explaining participation in the Liberian DD process, and in order to answer the questions posed above, the interviews aimed at gathering tangible facts concerning the DD programme on the one hand, and creating space for interviewees' to reflect on the process and generate new ideas for our own analysis on the other. In the literature on methodology, these two different purposes are commonly referred to as informant and respondent interviews respectively. It is, however, not uncommon for one single interview to share characteristics of the both (Esaiasson et al. 2004:253-254, 284), which has been the case with the interviews carried out for this study. Further, all interviews have followed a semi structured pattern, attempting to leave the floor as open as possible for the interviewees, with the intention to "gaining descriptions of the interviewee's life world, attempting to interpret the meaning of described phenomena" (Kvale 1997:13). A data matrix was constructed to outline the core variables in the information collected, rendering an overall more effective management of the interview material (Esaiasson 2004:45-46).

As a means of keeping track of important facts needed and getting information on comparable subjects from all interviewees (Trost 2005:50-51) an interview guide was created prior to commencing on the field study. Based on recommendations made by e.g. Kylèn (2004:20-21), our guide consisted of five headlines, with additional subheadings to properly cover the area of interest; a setting which was continuously modified as information gathered gave rise to further inquiries. Ten interviewees have been selected partly as representatives of various agencies relevant to the study; and partly through so called snow ball selection, where one interviewee points out others (Esaiasson 2004:286).

As the interviews analysed and accounted for in this thesis have been held with persons from various organisations with widely diverse relations to the disarmament and demobilisation program, it is likely that the same question can be conceived in different ways by different persons, and the answers more or less biased depending on whether the truthful answer portrays the interviewee or her/his organisation in a bad light. E.g. a question designed to determine whether the DD program has been successful in including women during the planning process is more likely to receive a biased answer from a person responsible for the program, than from someone without any immediate ties to the parties concerned.

The interviewees can be divided into rough groups depending on their relationship to the process. When reviewing the answer received from personnel attached to the Joint Implementation Unit, it is important to keep in mind that they are the ones responsible for the results and structure of the program up to this date. However, they do have first hand information on several, for this thesis, highly important matters. In an effort to get the maximum possible reliability for the answers received, interviews have been made with representatives from three major organisations within the JIU. Given the different roles of the various organisations within the JIU, such a method may result in answers supporting or refuting each other, thus increasing the overall reliability of the results. The interviews conducted with personnel from the Office of the Gender Advisor (OGA) at UNMIL, does not run the same risk of being biased, since the OGA does not have the same direct responsibility for the outcome. It is still important to remember that they do have a role in the programme, especially when it comes to female participation on different levels within the process. In the same way, the answers received from representatives of various women's organisations are hardly likely to commend the program excessively. Rather, it is

more likely they have a sceptical attitude towards the process, given their typical role of fighting from below. Important to remember while interviewing personnel from the OGA and to a greater extent from the women's organisations is that in some of the key questions they may not have first hand information. This is especially so when it comes to questions of a technical character, such as specific details of the eligibility criteria, or who was responsible for what at the actual cantonment sites.

1.2.3 Documents

In addition to interviews and statistical data, various documents concerning the DD have been used. Some of these papers are officially available to the general public, while others have been provided by military personnel within UNMIL. These documents include things such as internal memos and various Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the military units responsible for executing the DD program. The text materials made available by UNMIL have been used to include a military point of view on events during the program. As the documents provided were numerous while of mixed interest to us and in no apparent order whatsoever, they have been rather difficult to utilise fully. In order to maintain the reliability and validity of the data, scrutinising the material before using it is important.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Profound lack of academic research on gender and DDRR processes steers the theoretical perspectives of this study towards theories on factors affecting different groups' social and political participation in general. These are employed to analyze participation in the Liberian disarmament and demobilisation operation from a gender perspective. In times when gender mainstreaming and equality are the catchphrases of the day, causes for and incentives to increased female participation are vividly discussed in the literature. Issues of representation and presence are usually included in these discussions.

Participation in a DD process may be affected by a variety of reasons, one of which may be that of presence. A fair gender division among those present in the decision making process that led to the Liberian DD process could enhance participation of female ex-combatants when implementing the operation, as it is reasonable to assume that women would be more prone to emphasise aspects that make a DD process attractive to female ex-combatants who

otherwise tend to shy away from such processes. Using the term gender while mainly analyzing the participation of women may seem inconsistent. Yet this is done for the reason that masculinity is the norm from which femininity diverges, and men thus are naturally included.

Anne Phillips' *Politics of Presence* (2000) deals with the different outcomes of "politics of ideas" and "politics of presence" in the context of democratically elected assemblies. Her theory can nevertheless be made applicable to the studied case, as she discusses how different social groups' representation in decision making bodies determines whether and how their interest are respected. By 'politics of ideas', Phillips suggests the focus is on what is represented, while the 'politics of presence' is about who represents. Conventional understanding of liberal democracy has portrayed differences primarily as a matter of ideas, and the quality of representation has thus depended on how well it reflects people's opinions, preferences, or beliefs. This view is challenged by an alternative understanding of political representation that stresses proportionate presence according to characteristics such as gender or ethnicity. "Men can very well replace women when the problem is a representation of policies, programmes or ideals agreed on.", Phillips writes, yet holds it difficult to defend a homogeneous group as representatives of a heterogeneous society (Phillips 2000:11-15). To sum up, the central thesis proposed in *The Politics of Presence* is that while a politics of ideas is an inadequate tool for dealing with political exclusion, simply changing to a politics of presence is of little significance. It is in the relationship between ideas and equal presence that a just system of representation is to be found, rather than in a forged state of opposition between the one or the other (ibid. 38). While repeatedly touching upon it, what Phillips does not fully explore is the problem of an essentialist understanding of group identity. Paulina de los Reyes and Diana Mulinari scrutinise the issue, pointing out the complexity of identities and roles lying behind categories as female/male, and the need for intersecting concepts when talking about representation and political presence (de los Reyes/Mulinari 2005:90, 127).

Writings on gender and DDRR, e.g. UNIFEM's *Getting it Right, Doing it Right: Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration* (Douglas/Hill 2004), are prone to emphasise the necessity of female presence during planning as a prerequisite for female participation in implementation.

> "The utility and relevance of women's analysis, information and insight on peace and security issues in general, and on DDR in particular, are underestimated. Therefore, women do not participate in sufficient numbers, or in sufficiently influential positions, at forums where the terms of DDR processes are decided. Because women's presence, opinions and experiences are routinely overlooked, vital opportunities to develop more accurate gender- and age-disaggregated pictures of conflict and postconflict zones have been lost."

Vanessa Farr supports this by maintaining "… it is recognised that women have a great deal to contribute to the planning and execution of weapons collection and reintegration programmes… … such initiatives do not work unless the participation of women is accepted and their knowledge drawn from" (Farr 2003:27). She also highlights the importance of female presence in decision making at this stage, as it sets the standards for gender sensitive conversion of society (Farr 2002:9,18). Publications in this range further hold the general notion of females being invisible and excluded from demilitarising operations such as DDRR (e.g. Secretary General 2002:9).

Another explanatory factor to female participation can be found in theories about stigmatisation. When a woman challenges what is commonly regarded as "womanly" behaviour by joining a fighting force, she is regarded as deviant and unnatural, according to Farr. Female ex-combatants are stigmatised to a greater extent than their male counterparts, as they pose a threat to traditional perceptions of acceptable female behaviour (Farr 2002:8,23). Erwin Goffman identifies a stigma as a discrepancy between stereotypes and attributes: when a person possesses attributes of a less desirable kind, making her or him different from the others in the social category where he or she is expected to belong, there is a stigma present (Goffman 1963:12). If the reasons for a stigma are of a physical character, or otherwise obvious, the stigmatised can only pretend as if he or she corresponds to the stereotype, while when the gap between the attributes of a person and the stereotype is not apparent, such as in the case of female ex-combatants, Goffman sees a new possibility arising: one can choose whether "To display or not to display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when, and where" (Goffman 1963:57). This could complicate the matter of female participation in the DDRR process, as by entering the program, the women ex-combatants reveal their inconformity with the stereotype.

Furthermore, explanations for the female participation in the Liberian DD process could be found in a variety of other theories. Implementation theory and policy analysis deals with the relation between wording in documents and policies and the outcome when these policies are put into practice (Parsons 1995). In the case of gender perspectives in the Liberian DD, the success of implementing UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security, as well as the UNIFEM Standard Operating Procedures on Gender and DDR are of interest. Douglas North introduces theories on path dependency in an economic context (North 1990); yet, this concept can be applied to the Liberian DD case. Path dependency in decision making bodies might have led their members to act according to prevailing norms by being reluctant to introduce new ideas and by maintaining practices that might fall short. The result may be gender insensitive planning that fails to create space for female ex-combatants. Finally, psychological theories on fear and power could give rise to reasons that exclude women from participating, as women with a history of sexual violence during war might feel threatened by male military personnel and be unwilling to join the DD. "If female peacekeepers and police are present at the DDR identification and cantonment sites, women are more likely to come forward to participate in programmes and access services." (Douglas/Hill 2004:6).

In order to structure the material according to the purpose of the study, a model illustrating the three dimensions in which gender aspects of the DD affect society has been created:

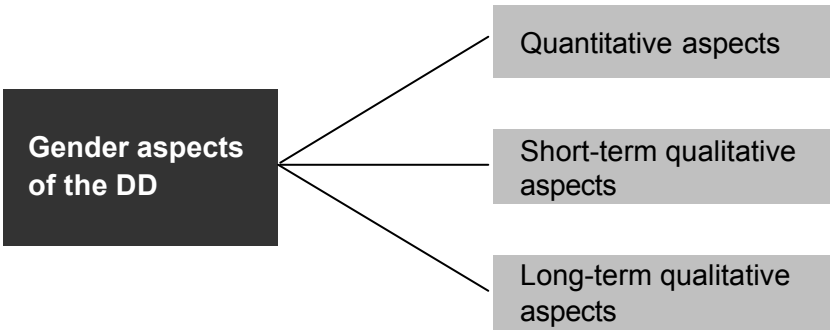

Figure 1

The quantitative dimension of the figure includes numerical data, i.e. the actual numbers of women and men who participated in the Liberian DD process. The focus is put on finding explanations for this distribution in factors preceding the DD. The short term qualitative dimension deals with whether there was a gendered thinking in the organisation of the

disarmament and demobilisation sites: who received, screened and disarmed the combatants; who worked, and with what, in the demobilisation cantonment; how were the cantonments constructed etc. The long term qualitative dimension, finally, is about the way the DD operation, from planning to implementation, sets the standard for a gender sensitive transformation of societal norms. The third dimension, however, will be excluded from the study, as it deals with long term societal changes not directly relating to the purpose of describing and explaining participation in the DD.

For reasons of parsimony Phillips' theory on politics of presence and representation, Goffman's concept of stigma and our own model constitute the theoretical framework of the study. While Phillips contributes explanations why groups would participate, Goffman's theory explains their decisions not to do so. Our model will be used as a means of structuring the analysis of the empirical material, while Phillips' and Goffman's theories provide propositions for the outcome of the Liberian DD process that can be tested.

As the reintegration and rehabilitation phases of the DDRR process were still ongoing during the time of research, we chose to exclude the Reintegration and Rehabilitation components from our study. Therefore, the abbreviation DD will hereafter be used, due to our sole focus on the disarmament and demobilisation phases of the Liberian DDRR program.

Although highly relevant and interesting, the overall participation of child soldiers, female and male alike, in the Liberian civil war and the subsequent DD process will not be touched upon in this study. To be satisfyingly covered, the width and complexity of the issue of child combatants would require far more attention than can be given to it within the context of our thesis. By excluding child soldiers from the study, we also wish to draw a line between the concepts of women and children: two categories often treated inseparably in the aftermath of violent conflict, yet profoundly different in their characteristics, experiences of war and needs in the demilitarisation process.

We express thanks to the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) for making this study possible by providing financial support.

2 Background

2.1 Defining Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration and Rehabilitation (DDRR)

In the aftermath of armed conflict, diminishing the immediate risk of a relapse into war is of paramount importance. In order to prevent violence from reoccurring, armed factions must agree on laying down their guns, military structures must be disbanded and a demilitarised civil normality must be restored in the post-war society. The concept of voluntarily undertaken DDR has become an integral part of UN peacekeeping missions and is considered an important first step in the long-term transformation process required to move a war-torn society back on a peaceful track. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan defined the different phases of DDR as follows (Secretary-General 2000):

Disarmament is the collection of small arms and light and heavy weapons within a conflict zone. It frequently includes the assembly and cantonment of combatants; it should also comprise the development of arms management programs, including the safe storage and final disposition of weapons, which may entail their destruction. De-mining may also be part of this process.

Demobilization refers to the process by which parties to a conflict begin to disband their military structures and combatants begin the transformation into civilian life. It generally entails registration of former combatants; some kind of assistance to enable them to meet their immediate basic needs; discharge; and transportation to their home communities. It may be followed by recruitment into a new, unified military force.

Reintegration refers to the process which allows ex-combatants and their families to adapt, economically and socially, to productive civilian life. It generally entails the provision of a package of cash or in-kind compensation, training and job- or income-generating projects. These measures frequently depend for their effectiveness upon other, broader undertakings, such as assistance to returning refugees and internally displaced persons; economic development at the community and national level; infrastructure rehabilitation; truth and reconciliation efforts; and institutional reform. Enhancement of local capacity is often crucial for the long-term success of reintegration.

The Liberian process had another R added to the concept: **rehabilitation**, which is closely intertwined with the reintegration phase, as above definition indicates. Public works and infrastructure development such as reconstruction of roads and bridges, agricultural projects and school restoration are key elements to the rehabilitation phase (UNDP 2005b).

2.2 The Comprehensive Peace Agreement

Validating the Ceasefire and Cessation of Hostilities Agreement from 17 June 2003, the CPA was signed in Accra, Ghana on 18 August 2003. It marked the end of a protracted civil war that had plagued the country since Charles Taylor's attempt at overthrowing the Samuel Doe regime on Christmas Eve of 1989.[1] According to Article VI of the CPA "the Parties commit themselves to ensuring the prompt and efficient implementation of a national process of cantonment, disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration" (CPA, part 3, art VI, item 1), under the lead of an UN-headed International Stabilisation Force tasked with disarming the former factions and surveillance of all arms and ammunitions collected (ibid. item 2 & 4). Article VI further calls for the establishment of a National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration to coordinate DDRR activities (ibid. item 8). In his Eighth progress report on the UNMIL, the UN Secretary-General emphasizes the progress in implementing the CPA, pointing out that "preparations for the elections to be held on 11 October remained on track and [were] largely free of violence…" and applauding the successes in "consolidating security and stability in Liberia" (Secretary General 2005). Since the writing of the Secretary-General's report, Liberia has held its first post-war democratic elections. These have been assessed as free and fair by international observers and resulted in Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf taking on the presidency on 16 January 2006.

2.3 The Security Council Resolution 1509

The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was established by Security Council resolution 1509 of 19 September 2003 (S/RES/1509). The mission's mandate includes support for implementation of the ceasefire agreement and the peace process; protection of

[1] A solid portray of the Liberian civil war can be found in Levitt, Jeremy I (2005), *The Evolution of Deadly Conflict in Liberia. From 'Paternaltarianism' to State Collapse*, Durham: Carolina Academic Press

UN staff and civilians; support for humanitarian and human rights assistance and support for security reform. Regarding demilitarisation, the resolution dictates UNMIL to:

> "…develop, as soon as possible, preferably within 30 days of the adoption of this resolution, in cooperation with the JMC *(Joint Monitoring Committee)*, relevant international financial institutions, international development organizations, and donor nations, an action plan for the overall implementation of a disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and repatriation (DDRR) programme for all armed parties; with particular attention to the special needs of child combatants and women; and addressing the inclusion of non-Liberian combatants [… and to] carry out voluntary disarmament and to collect and destroy weapons and ammunition as part of an organized DDRR programme."

With a troop strength of 14,519 plus 1,088 civilian police officers, 538 international and 764 local civil staff as well as 264 UN Volunteers, UNMIL constituted the largest UN mission in the world (Secretary General 2005). The mandate has been extended several times since, and was still in force at the time of publication.

2.4 The Institutional Organisation of the Liberian DDRR process

The institutional framework, policy guidelines and operational strategy for the Liberian DD process is defined in the DDRR Action Plan which was developed after the signing of the CPA in October 2003, by a team comprised of the United Nations, various NGOs and donors. In accordance with the Action Plan, a *Joint Implementation Unit* (JIU), which takes policy guidance from the *National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration* (NCDDRR), was formed to take the primary responsibility for the implementation of the DDRR programme (UNDP 2004).

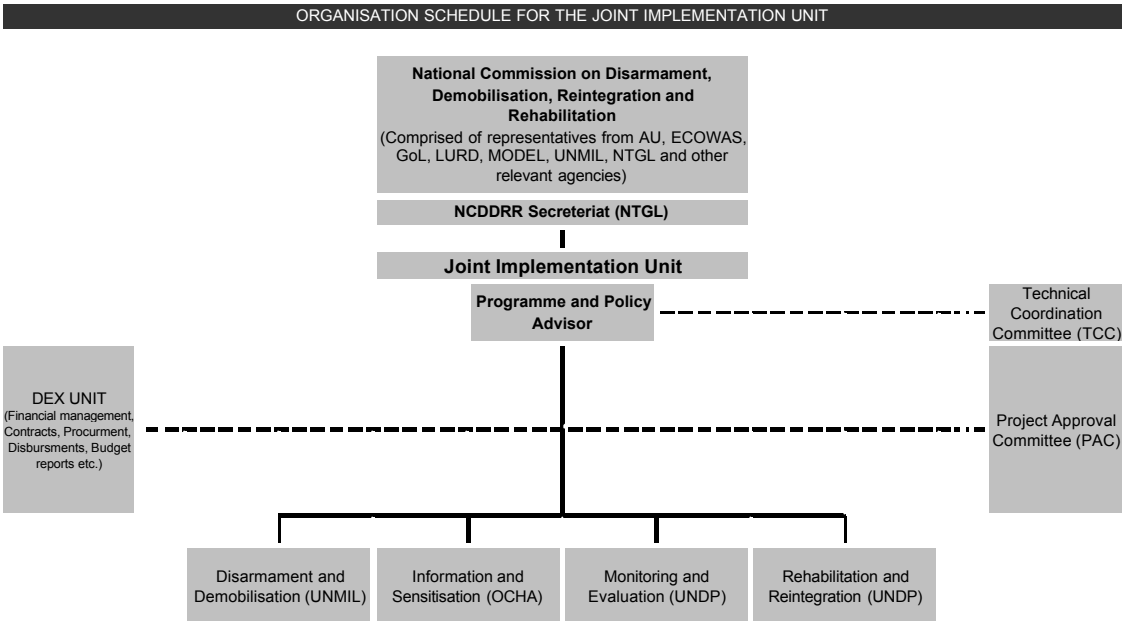

Figure 2.

Note: The figure shows an organisational chart for the JIU, and its relevant sub-departments and committees. Source: UNDP 2004

The NCDDRR is a national institution comprised of representatives from various *National Transitional Government of Liberia* (NTGL) agencies, the former fighting factions, the UN, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Commission, and the US. The role of the NCDDRR is to supervise and provide policy guidance to the implementing institutions within the DDRR programme (ibid.). The day to day activities of the NCDDRR are conducted by the NCDDRR coordination Secretariat, headed by an Executive Director. The Secretariat – charged with coordinating the activities within the JIU – functions as a link between the JIU and the NCDDRR.[2]

The JIU is a coalition entity comprised of four units; Disarmament & Demobilisation – staffed by UNMIL; Rehabilitation & Reintegration and Monitoring & Evaluation – both staffed by UNDP; and Information and Sensitisation staffed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and UNMIL. The daily operations and planning of the programme are managed by the JIU which itself is headed by a Programme and Policy Advisor. The JIU is – as the main implementing entity for the DDRR process – responsible for solving all practical matters, from creating procedures for registering ex-combatants to ensuring that the cantonment sites are properly managed and staffed (UNDP

[2]Interview with Charles Achodo

2004). When uncertainty arises on which course of action to take, the JIU requests guidance from the NCDDRR and acts in accordance with the policy framework provided.[3]

Most of the non-military components of the Liberian DDRR process, i.e. camp management, registration of combatants, medical screening, and counselling and civic education, are financed from a Trust Fund (UNDP 2004). The DDRR Trust Fund, managed and administered by UNDP, was established in accordance with the CPA to direct and coordinate voluntary contributions from various donor nations and organisations.

The military component of the Liberian DDRR process is handled by the UNMIL under the directions of the JIU. UNMIL is responsible for providing all military personnel necessary for carrying out the DDRR in a safe and efficient manner. In practice, this involves activities such as manning the disarmament sites with *Military Observers* (MILOBs) for collecting weapons and ammunitions from ex-combatants, and providing armed security teams ready to deploy and pacify any violent situations that may arise. All military-related outlay is financed with UNMIL funds, which are directly contributed from the United Nations budget. This includes - but is not limited to - construction of the cantonment sites, military security at the sites, collection and destruction of the arms and ammunitions, and payment of the Transitional Safety Net Allowance (TSA) (ibid.).

Much of the actual civilian workload of the DD was taken care of by local and international NGOs as implementing partners contracted by the JIU. Every cantonment site had implementing partners responsible for the different areas of camp management; food management; pre-discharge orientation; medical screening; and reproductive health and gender issues. Various UN agencies were responsible for supervising the implementing partners. Camp management activities were handled to a large extent by the Lutheran World Federation-World Service (LWF-WS), as was much of the pre-discharge orientation. Medical Emergency & Relief Cooperative International (MERCI) were one of the major organisations dealing with medical screening, while Premier Urgence (PU) had the responsibility for almost all food management. Reproductive health and gender issues were dealt with by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Pentecostal Mission Unlimited (PMU).

[3]Interview with Charles Achodo

3 Planning, Execution and Programme Outcome

3.1 Planning for Disarmament and Demobilisation

Establishing voluntary disarmament and demobilisation programmes has become a standard element of modern UN peace keeping missions wherever possible, as a means of increasing stability in a post-war country through eradicating arms from circulation and disbanding military structures in favour of ex-combatants' return to civilian life (Hill 2004:11-12). As previously stated, the establishment of a DDRR programme in Liberia was called for in the CPA, as well as in a report on Liberia of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (Secretary General 2004).

Based on this, the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Liberia together with UNDP initiated a process of elaborating and designing a programme strategy for DDRR. Furthermore, a task force drawn from key stakeholders in the country as well as local organisations and special interest groups was assembled. Coordinated by UNDP, a Draft Interim Secretariat composed of UNMIL, UNOCHA, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), UNICEF and World Vision was constituted to formulate the DDRR programme. Work commenced in September 2003 in close cooperation with various parties and members of the task force. Within a month a draft document outlining the Strategy and Implementation Framework of the Liberian DDRR process was produced (Draft Interim Secretariat 2003). Simultaneously, as called for in UNSCR 1509, the UNMIL together with donors and NGOs developed an Action Plan for the overall implementation of DDRR (UNMIL 2003). Under this plan, the local ownership of the process was secured through the NTGL forming a National Commission for DDRR, co-chaired by the NTGL Chairman and the SRSG, tasked with providing policy guidance to JIU. With the Deputy SRSG responsible for the overall management of the agency, complemented by a Programme and Planning Manager in charge of day-to-day activities, the JIU held the prime responsibility of planning and coordinating the implementation of DDRR activities. The JIU further relied on the mechanism of a Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) to promote knowledgeable and detailed technical input in support of planning and implementing operations.

According to Sari Nurro, UNMIL DDRR Officer at the JIU, the planning process at large constituted a common project between several UN agencies, the NTGL and quite a number of NGO's, while the key planning group – the DDRR Forum – consisted of no more than ten UN agencies, NGO's and the NCDDRR representing the Liberian Government. Throughout the DD phase, weekly meetings of the DDRR Forum were held in order to coordinate planning and implementation activities.[4]

On a policy level, lessons learned from previous DDRR programmes were taken into consideration during planning, not least regarding gender issues. Nurro talks about gender aspects of the Liberian DDRR:

> "The concept was broadly based on the process that had been and was ongoing in Sierra Leone, but from the experience there stemmed the will of […] recognising the role of so-called women and children associated with the fighting forces more than was done there, since the DDRR process in Sierra Leone was widely criticised for not taking these vulnerable groups into consideration."[5]

The two main policy documents founding the DD process, the DDRR Action Plan for Liberia (UNMIL 2003) and the Liberian Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programme Draft Strategy and Implementation Framework (Draft Interim Secretariat 2003) both hold notions of the importance of inclusion of female ex-fighters and Women Associated with Fighting Forces (WAFF) in the process, as well as the use of local gender sensitive networks and agencies for identifying these women. The Action Plan outlines special assistance programmes for vulnerable target groups – including women – as well as points out the need for separate processing of women and men at the disarmament and demobilisation sites, and stipulates certain eligibility criteria for women to enter without handing in a weapon (UNMIL 2003).

> "Although relatively few in number, women ex-combatants often face different reintegration challenges than men and their role is usually not recognised in most DDR processes. The critical constraint is that women ex-combatants tend to melt into the communities for fear of stigmatisation."
> "The DDRR programme will therefore make a special effort to tailor reintegration assistance to meet the specific needs women ex-combatants – as

[4]Interview with Sari Nurro
[5]ibid. Writer's translation

> well as to encourage their participation in the programme" (Draft Interim Secretariat 2003).

While not making straight references to policy documents such as the UNIFEM Standard Operating Procedures on Gender and DDR (UNIFEM 2004), the Gender Checklist for Liberia (UNOGA 2003) or UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security, the Action Plan as well as the Framework both acknowledge the contents of these documents.

Yet, some inconsistency prevails concerning the perception of gender balance in the planning process, especially the DDRR Forum. Sari Nurro claimed that the process was male dominated, with a maximum of 5-10 percent women involved in planning – more of these representing civil society than UN agencies.[6] This view was supported by JIU Program and Policy Advisor Charles Achodo, who held that there was female representation, but "like in any other environment, men are more dominant." Achodo added that there had been a conscious effort of bringing in women, yet not to dilute the quality of work just to meet a gender balance.[7] Dr Moses Jargbo, Executive Director of the NCDDRR, also underlined the aspect of quality: "I'm not going to say I'm a champion of gender balance, but I can tell you that we worked very hard here in this office; we worked very hard within the commission, to literally seek out, not just the portion of females, but females that we felt were highly qualified, so we have a gender balance here…"[8] Joana Foster and Isha Dyfan, of the UN Office of the Gender Advisor (UNOGA), both estimated the female participation to be 1/3 or more. As said Dyfan, "It was fair. There wasn't an equal gender balance but there were women represented on that forum."[9] Representatives of women's organisations, however, maintained that there was no real gender balance, or as Etweda Cooper, Secretary-General of Liberian Women's Initiative (LWI) put it: "They really didn't involve us until things started getting hot, because when we came in they were like 'we are the experts'. They were the experts, and we tried to tell them that we had experience. But of course they didn't think we were… well, they were the experts."[10]

[6]Interview with Sari Nurro
[7]Interview with Charles Achodo
[8]Interview with Dr Moses Jargbo
[9]Interview with Isha Dyfan
[10]Interview with Etweda Cooper

The initial UN estimate, setting the basis for all DDRR planning, was a number of 38,000 combatants to be disarmed and demobilised – made up of 10,000 Government troops, 8,000 LURD, 5,000 MODEL, 5,000 other militias, 8,000 child combatants, 1,000 disabled, and 1,000 women (Draft Interim Secretariat 2003). The DDRR Action Plan suggested that "DDRR activities will commence in early December 2003 in three cantonment sites established in Tubmanburg (LURD), Buchanan (MODEL), and Careysburg (GoL) respectively" (UNMIL 2003). The DD was intended to take place starting mid-January 2004, in order to "…enable the NCDDRR JIU to develop a detailed disarmament and demobilisation plan taking into account limitations imposed by other factors such as camp preparation" (Draft Interim Secretariat 2003). However, the DD phases of the DDRR process were jumpstarted on 7 December 2003, at one sole cantonment site.

3.2 Phase One – Camp Schieffelin

The plan was to disarm 1,000 combatants from each of the three factions at different cantonment sites during the initial phase of the process. On 7 December disarmament of GoL fighters started at Camp Schieffelin, a short distance outside the Liberian capital Monrovia. The idea was to admit the combatants in four batches of 250 soldiers apiece (Secretary General 2003).

The interest for disarming turned out to be much higher than anyone had planned for. During the first week of operation for Camp Schieffelin more than 7,000 combatants turned up expecting to be admitted into the process and congesting the site (Sector Report on DDRR 2004). The cantonment site was poorly prepared, and lacked the most basic commodities, such as water and latrines for the combatants. There was no proper coordination of the activities at the site, and suggestions from civil society actors that might have improved the situation went unheeded.[11] The combatants were also under the impression that they should be paid a sum of money when surrendering their weapons (United Nations/World Bank 2004). As early as the first day of the Camp Schieffelin disarmament, some 1,800 combatants demonstrated and rioted because they expected to receive money immediately in exchange for their weapons (UNOCHA 2003). When the riots started that evening, women from various women's organisations were there,

[11] Interview with Etweda Cooper

attempting to calm the situation by talking to the combatants and asking them to be peaceful.[12] This was at least partly done at UNMIL's request .[13] The rioting and looting continued however, until 10 December, when UNMIL peacekeepers managed to put the lid on it(UNOCHA 2003). The situation remained volatile until a group comprised of UNMIL representatives, the Minister of Defence and former faction leaders decided to give the combatants an initial stipend after disarming. On 17 December it was decided that the DDRR process was to be suspended until sufficient preparations had been made (Secretary General 2004).

In retrospect everyone seemed to agree that the JIU and UNMIL were not ready to start the DDRR process when they did. According to Etweda Cooper, then-UNMIL Force Commander Daniel Opande had expressed concern over not being sufficiently prepared for a disarmament process. Despite these concerns being raised, SRSG Jacques Klein insisted on commencing the process as soon as possible. She also maintains that there were no proper procedures set up for how the disarmament was to take place: the actual steps of the process were developed ongoing, after the disarmament had started. This caused difficulties to inform the combatants on the steps they were to go through in the process, which resulted in a feeling of insecurity and fear among the combatants.[14] Joana Foster, Senior Gender Advisor for UNMIL, in retrospect deemed the start of the process on 7 December 2003 as too early, and that the premature disarmament attempt showed a lack of essential preparation and planning.[15]

Charles Achodo agreed that they were not operationally ready to start the disarmament on 7 December and explained that the reason why the process was jumpstarted anyway was a need to move the peace process forward:

> "Camp Schieffelin was a response to a political problem around that time. Because there was fear that if we don't start up the process, we might go back to Accra I, Accra II, Accra III, and nobody wanted to go back renegotiating the peace process all over again. So, there was pressure to start the process." [16]

[12]Interview with Etweda Cooper
[13]Interview with Leymah Gbowee
[14]Interview with Etweda Cooper
[15]Interview with Joana Foster
[16]Interview with Charles Achodo

Achodo explained that there was also a lot of pressure from some of the NGO's in the country to get the disarmament going – in particular child protection agencies that wanted to get the child soldiers disarmed as fast as possible in order to get them back into school. Among these NGO's there was a lack of understanding of the need for careful planning and extensive preparations in order for a DDRR process to succeed. Because of this, Achodo argued, the Camp Schieffelin incident should be perceived as something of a testing experience and a reality check for the organisations never involved in a DDRR before.[17]

3.3 Planning for Phase Two

A general perception among the interviewees seemed to be the importance of the Camp Schieffelin incident as a facilitator for succeeding with the second phase of the process commenced in April 2004. Sari Nurro, while not personally present in Liberia during the days of Camp Schieffelin, expressed surprise that the process was started at such an early stage, commenting that even with the extra months of planning until the process recommenced in April, the JIU had to work very hard to keep the process running, even at the lowest acceptable level. Nurro believed that the management for the DD process got something of a wake-up call when the Camp Schieffelin disarmament resulted in riots and demonstrations. They realised that it is not possible to control a DD process with that kind of improvised arrangements, thus the recommencement of the DD was better planned and better prepared.[18]

The representatives of the women's organisations interviewed agreed that the Camp Schieffelin incident was important for a more successful second phase of the process, but point out other changes as vital than does Nurro. Leymah Gbowee, Coordinator of the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), emphasised how Camp Schieffelin made clear the importance of local engagement in the process. She stresses how effective the local women were in calming the combatants, and how this resulted in UN requesting assistance from local women's groups to support the sensitisation campaign for the recommencement of the disarmament in April.[19] Etweda Cooper agreed that information of

[17] ibid.
[18] Second interview with Sari Nurro
[19] Interview with Leymah Gbowee

the combatants improved after the Camp Schieffelin disarmaments, and that WIPNET got a larger role in the sensitisation campaign post Camp Schieffelin.

Improved information and sensitisation indeed became an area of focus during resumption of the second phase of DD. Issuing a Joint Operational Plan of February 2004, the Deputy SRSG gave all involved agencies an instructional instrument for recommencing the process, e.g. pointing out that the "importance of an appropriate, targeted and co-ordinated information & sensitization campaign cannot be overstated" (UNMIL 2004). An extensive nation wide campaign to inform commanders, combatants and communities about the DD programme was launched on 20 January 2004, coordinated and organised by UNMIL in collaboration with the NCDDRR, UN agencies, former faction leaders, and civil society groups.

> "Initially we started going along with the UNMIL team, but then we realised, one: the time that they were giving to sensitise combatants, giving them information, was too short; two: the language they were using was not something that these young people were familiar with, because you had expatriates like yourself… and most of these children did not understand that kind of English; and three: the women who went along with the UN were given limited time, so we said to them 'we can't work this way, we need autonomy if we have to do this work. Give us our resources, and we will go out in the field. We don't have to be a part of your team' "

sayid Leymah Gbowee, explaining how WIPNET decided to go to the communities, stay overnight, interact with people and encourage them to participate in the DD programme, thereby streamlining the sensitisation.[20] Sari Nurro called attention to the usefulness of UNMIL's own public information machinery, where daily radio announcements were made before and during the process, and pointed out the collaboration NCDDRR had with "about 48 former commanders as DD facilitators, working as sub contractors […] being our source of information and channel towards the combatants […]."[21] Informative cartoons were printed and distributed, in order to reach out to a largely illiterate clientele.

Planning for the DD resumed in January 2004, with new insights gained. The Joint Operations Centre (JOC) of JIU wrote in a memorandum:

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[20] ibid.
[21] Interview with Sari Nurro

> "The DDRR process can only be effective and successful if sufficient time and proper resource allocation is done followed by meticulous planning at all levels. A haste may jeopardize UNMIL's mandate which could put Liberia on the road to war again, as nearly was the case during the last DDRR exercise at Camp Scheffelin…" (Fitzgerald 2004).

Clearly outlining the structure among all parties and the need for communication between these in order to improve the work, according to the Join Operational Plan the DDRR was comprised of several levels: the Policy Level at which the DDRR continuum was maintained and directed on its planned course, managed by the NCDDRR; the Programme Level where centralised planning to support decentralised execution occurred, handled by the JIU with the Program and Policy Advisor overall responsible; and finally the Project/Intervention Level where individual projects were implemented and interventions occurred in support of the above levels. Managed by the JIU, coordinated by NCDDRR Field Officers and monitored by subject matter expertise, this level was defined by service delivery (UNMIL 2004). The JOC memorandum notes the necessity of planning and working out essential details for facilitating resumed execution of disarmament, underlining that "experiences at Camp Scheffelin must be reviewed and the strengths and weaknesses be properly analyzed before the finalization of plans." The memo also points to the needed improvement in coordination between the political wing of UNMIL and faction leaders on DDRR matters (Fitzgerald 2004), a fact that Dr Jargbo confirmed: "The heads of the three warring factions somehow felt that they were not part of the process and even felt that the number of 38,000 that was estimated did not reflect the reality of the situation."[22]

3.3.1 Security Council Resolution 1325 and Gender Considerations in Planning

Strengthening the gender perspective on DDRR, in accordance with UNSCR 1325 and 1509 the Office of the Gender Advisor (OGA) was established in November 2003. It was, however, only staffed with two UN Volunteers. Senior Gender Advisor Joana Foster assumed office in early March 2004. One of the overall goals of the OGA has been integrating gender in all policies, processes and activities relating to the DDRR programme, as well as attending to a general gender mainstreaming throughout UNMIL. As Foster stated, when she arrived, a lot of the policy development had already been made, and her

[22] Interview with Dr Moses Jargbo

prime advice for best practices was that the OGA must be involved from the onset of planning to make a real impact. Throughout the DD process, UNFPA was the agency in charge of gender related issues but was not represented in the planning process – a matter that forced a lot of input to be made at later stages, consuming valuable time but certainly also resulting in large changes in the operational plans. "So in that respect, we did end up with a really good gender perspective for the DDRR,"[23] Foster concluded.

Effective advocacy by the OGA during the planning of the DD resulted in adoption of the term Women Associated with Fighting Forces (WAFF) instead of the commonly used Camp Followers – an effort aiming at broadening the understanding of the roles played by women in conflict.[24]

UNSCR 1325, with regards to DDRR "Encourages all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants" (S/RES/1325, para 13). Opinions vary, however, on the extent to which gender issues and the resolution were taken into account in the planning, e.g. in the DDRR Forum. Isha Dyfan claimed that "there were a lot of allies among the participants in the Forum who understood what gender perspectives were in terms of DDRR… so you felt you had somebody there who knew what you were talking about."[25] Nurro in contrast argued that it was not always easy to get different actors to understand each others views and find a balance between the military, security oriented perspective and the emphasis on gender.[26] Foster concluded: "In terms of policy, I don't think that gender mainstreaming was that strong but in terms of implementation of that same policy it was very, very effective."[27] When talking about 1325,

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[23]Interview with Joana Foster
[24]There is a prevailing conceptual confusion among the interviewees regarding the term WAFF; while some includes female fighters as well as women with supportive roles in the term, others makes a distinction between WAFFs and actual fighters. UNIFEM provides the following definition of WAFFs, embraced in this thesis: "*…are women and girls who participated in armed conflicts in supportive roles, coercedly or voluntarily. Rather than being members of a civilian community, they are economically and socially dependent on the armed force or group for their income and social support. (e.g. administrator, camp leader/coordinator, cook, health care provider/nurse, informant, messenger, mine worker, mobilizer of public support, porter, radio operator, sex worker, translator/interpreter)* ." (UNIFEM 2006 http://www.womenwarpeace.org/issues/ddr/ddr.htm). Furthermore, in this thesis the term female combatant has been used to include women associated with the fighting forces who have a supportive role, as well as the actual female fighters.
[25]Interview with Isha Dyfan
[26]Interview with Sari Nurro
[27]Interview with Joana Foster

Nurro ascribed some significance to it regarding increased gender awareness in the Liberian peace process in general, but less so when it came to the DD process. "Our first Director was very aware of gender issues in general, which means he considered it most important that gender related aspects were regarded in the process." She credited the management rather than the resolution for bringing in gender perspectives.[28] According to Dr Jargbo, the Security Council resolution played a significant part in the decision making of NCDDRR, and emphasized the necessity of adequate representation when planning the process. Among the OGA personnel, the usefulness of Resolution 1325 is conceived yet more positively:

> "I think it helped enormously, because we could always just wave it. If the soldiers didn't want to listen to you, you could just tell the Security Council, couldn't you. You know, you would come there with your 1325: 'This is *not* me; it's your bosses in New York who pay you'. It worked, it worked."

Dyfan said. [29] Her view was supported by Foster who maintained that Resolution 1325 could always be used as a tool – quite difficult for opponents to question – when promoting gender ideas within the DD process.[30] WIPNET's Leymah Gbowee, on the other hand, felt that "initially it [1325] was not considered, but after a lot of advocacy people started to pay close attention to it, but initially there was nothing like that."[31] Policy documents and interagency memorandums from the planning period reflected some of the gender mainstreaming done, e.g. the Deputy SRSG's Operational Instructions for DD Phase Two included that there "shall be no mixing of male and female XCOM [ex-combatants] for any reason" (Seraydarian 2004). An UNMIL Force Commander directive outlines the order of priority for combatants to be disarmed, placing children and women first (Opande 2004), and the JOP lists gender specific interview areas to be taken into consideration while planning the disarmament site, as well as confirms gender specific eligibility criteria, further discussed below (UNMIL 2004).

3.4 Phase Two - Disarmament and Demobilisation Procedures

When recommenced, the DD phases of the DDRR process were conducted at three geographically separated sites: the Pickup Point; the Disarmament (D1) site; and the

[28] Interview with Sari Nurro
[29] Interview with Isha Dyfan
[30] Interview with Joana Foster
[31] Interview with Leymah Gbowee

Demobilisation (D2) site. The Pickup Point – controlled and managed entirely by UNMIL military staff and NCDDRR Liaison Officers – was the first point of contact with the DD program for combatants coming to disarm. Here the weapons were unloaded and examined to see whether they were functional, and ammunition and explosives were separated from the weapons because of security reasons (Alauddin 2004). This was also where child combatants were separated from adults, and male combatants from female ones. After the separation the combatants were loaded onto transports and moved to the disarmament site.[32] There was a standing recommendation to prioritise child combatants, women and disabled fighters over male adults for transport to the D1 site (Opande 2004). However, voices have been raised that in fact, male fighters were taken to the disarmament site before the women.[33]

On arrival at the D1 site – controlled by the military, with locally employed translators and NGO's present – disarmament of combatants took place: men, women and children were processed separately, formally agreeing to enter the process by filling out the disarmament form. At this stage a primary screening in order to identify vulnerable individuals in need for special assistance and a physical screening for dangerous items was conducted. "No female MILOBS were available to do the screening of female ex-combatants at the D1 sites. Female commanders were used for physical screening" (UNDP 2004). Most of the interviewees pointed to the fact that UNMIL had only one female MILOB, yet views varied on who conducted the physical screening of female ex-combatants. According to Isha Dyfan:

> "At the physical screening you had some NGOs because we didn't have women Military Observers, just the one, so that's where they utilized the NGOs in the screening process. I don't think they [male MILOBs] went as far as body searches or anything like that. They would ask the NGO to come in and do that."[34]

Joana Foster accounted for how the dependency on NGOs at the disarmament site was an obstacle, as they could not always be present because of security considerations.[35] Sari Nurro at the JIU maintained that the lack of female MILOBs had been problematic,

[32]Interview with Dayan Karbo
[33]Interview with Joana Foster
[34]Interview with Isha Dyfan
[35]Interview with Joana Foster

resulting in men conducting physical screening on women. Nurro emphasised how difficult a situation that presented, given that many of the female combatants had been sexually traumatised by men.[36] Dr Moses Jargbo, Executive Director of the NCDDRR, had a completely different view of the situation, claiming that there was no physical screening conducted at all during the DD phases, and emphasising the presence of female MILOBs.[37]

Upon completion of the steps at the D1 site, the combatants were transported to the demobilisation site, usually located in close proximity to the disarmament site. The demobilisation site was divided into three separate parts, one for the cantonment of children, men and women respectively (Seraydarian 2004). Upon arrival at the D2 site, the combatants received a briefing on the rules and regulations at the cantonment site, and what steps they were going to go through during the four to seven days they were to stay at the site. After the initial orientation, the combatants entered the site into a reception area where they went through a medical check-up and a registration phase, where an ID photo was taken, and demobilisation and reintegration forms were filled out.[38] During the following days the combatants received career counselling, trauma healing, and training in health, human rights, and civics etc. The female combatants were also offered training in reproductive health and gender issues as well as sexual trauma counselling (UNDP 2005). Upon discharge the now ex-combatants received a personal ID-card, a food package enough for two persons for one month, and their Transitional Safety Net Allowance (TSA) of 150 USD (UNMIL 2004).

When asked about the gender balance among personnel executing the DD process, the interviewees were generally not impressed. Sari Nurro maintained that the staff was male dominated: women were present as employees of organisations responsible e.g. for cooking, but overall she estimated the proportion of women among the staff to have been around 20 percent at best. She testified that she could not remember seeing a female security person even once.[39] Etweda Cooper agreed that the staff was not entirely gender balanced, but pointed out that at least an effort was made to include women.[40] Isha Dyfan painted a more positive picture: "The civilian security, not the military security, had women

[36]Interview with Sari Nurro
[37]Interview with Dr Moses Jargbo
[38]Interview with Dayan Karbo
[39]Interview with Sari Nurro
[40]Interview with Etweda Cooper

as well, and services had women. I think they were good with those things [maintaining a gender balance], it was not all men."[41] Most of the interviewees seemed to agree though that the military was male dominated, including the units disarming women combatants.

3.5 Eligibility Criteria

Gaining entry into a DDRR process is probably the best thing that could happen for a lot of people in a poor country like Liberia. As a result, when deciding to hold a DD process, one of the most important things to be done is to decide who should be eligible for admission into the process. While it is possible to set up rather pragmatic criteria, such as requiring one working weapon per combatant allowed into the process, there are problems linked to that approach. One risks missing out on lots of combatants that do not have a weapon for some reason. Furthermore, that kind of eligibility criteria efficiently excludes groups of people associated with the fighting forces with assignments other than actual fighting such as cooks, spies, carriers, sex slaves, bush wives etc. On the other hand, too slack eligibility criteria results in a lot of persons with no connection to the fighting forces admitted into the process, reducing its credibility to the donor community.

To be eligible for the Liberian DDRR process beneficiaries had to correspond to the following criteria:

1. Being identified as a member of one of the fighting factions.
2. Submitting a serviceable, or with simplified field repairs serviceable weapon, group weapon or ammunition.
3. Child combatants and women combatants, who had been confirmed to have participated in the fighting, or part of the fighting force, could be demobilised without a weapon.[42]

[41] Interview with Isha Dyfan
[42] Interview with Sari Nurro

QUALIFICATIONS FOR ENTRY INTO THE DDRR PROGRAM			
	Description	Qualifying number of people	Remarks
Approved weapons	Rifle/pistol	1	Servicable weapons only
	RPG launcher	1	
	Light/Mediun/Heavy Machinegun	2	Belt fed weapons only
	60 mm Mortar	2	Tube, base plate and stand
	81mm Mortar	3	Tube, base plate and stand
	106/120/155 mm Mortar/Howizer	6	
	Anti-aircraft gun	4	
	Description	Number of munitions required	Remarks
Approved ammunition	Grenades	2	
	RPG (rocket and grenade)	1	Together or no entry (not to be handed in as separate items)
	Mortar Bomb (60,81 and 120 mm)	1	
	Smoke grenades	4	
	Ammunition	150	Single or linked

Figure 3 Note: The figure accounts for the various eligibility criteria for the Liberian DDRR programme. Source: Force Commander Daniel Opande (10 April 2004), Directive to Sector Commanders and Contingent Commanders and MILOBs on the Clarification of Specifications to Assist the Progression of the DDRR Programme

The Liberian eligibility criteria are generally seen as rather broad: the fact that women and children could enter the programme without submitting any weapon or ammunition is notable, but has not been as widely utilised as the criterion where 150 rounds of small arms ammunition (SAA) suffices for admittance into the disarmament process. The Liberian DD process has been criticised because of this criterion, as it was much easier for non-combatants to acquire 150 rounds of small arms ammunition than an actual weapon in order to enter the process unrightfully. Charles Achodo explained the difficulties with finding well balanced eligibility criteria: "…but mind you, the same people who were criticising this process were the ones that criticised the process in Sierra Leone – where we focused on

very tight eligibility criteria. So, head on tail, you get into these problems and into these criticisms."[43]

While criticised by some, the 150 rounds of SAA criterion was welcomed by other actors. Joana Foster of the OGA said: "I don't know how it came about. I cannot put my hand on my heart and say it was gender considerations [the reason for introducing the 150 rounds of ammunition criterion] but we used it effectively".[44] Isha Dyfan agreed that the broader eligibility criteria had a positive impact on the female participation in the process.[45] Sari Nurro at the JIU maintained that the criterion was introduced because of a political decision as an attempt to reach persons associated with the fighting forces who did not have weapons at all times; for example women and children.[46]

3.6 Disarmament and Demobilisation Results

As previously stated, the initial estimates of the number of combatants to be disarmed were 38,000, out of which women were expected to account for 1,000. When the DD phases of the process were completed and the statistics on participation compiled, however, the figures were quite different. The total outcome reached over 103,000 while the initial assessment of 1,000 female ex-combatants grew to 22,000.[47]

[43] Interview with Charles Achodo
[44] Interview with Joana Foster
[45] Interview with Isha Dyfan
[46] Interview with Sari Nurro
[47] Yet without any reliable information on numbers of women who – in one way or the other – were involved in the warring factions, and especially knowing that in previous processes, women have tended to fall through the cracks and self-demobilise rather than partake in the official programmes, it seems nonchalant to claim that the unexpectedly high number of 22,000 women processed automatically indicated that the process managed to encompass all females involved in the war, as many of the interviewees do.

DISARMAMENT REPORT BY FIGHTING FACTIONS							
		AFL	LURD	MODEL	GoL	Others	Total
Adult	F	1874	8827	3707	3864	4202	22474
	M	9464	21252	7235	9913	21705	69569
Children	F	152	1157	425	440	331	2505
	M	882	3038	1782	1378	1697	8777
Faction Total		12372	34274	13149	15595	27935	**103325**

Figure 4 Source: Joint Implementation Unit, database 2 January 2006

When asked what roles these 22,000 women had played while with the fighting forces, the various interviewees seemed to agree that the lion's share had supportive responsibilities rather than immediate fighting functions. Dr Moses Jargbo and Etweda Cooper both asserted that women were mainly brought into the fighting forces as wives, sex slaves and cooks, rather than for their fighting skills.[48] Cooper estimated the portion of actual soldiers among the Women Associated with Fighting Forces (WAFF) to be somewhere around 10 – 20 percent. Joana Foster made clear that estimating how large a part of the women actually fought with weapons is difficult at best:

> "There were times when there could be five of them in one place, with one gun. All of them could shoot, so when the shooting started, one started shooting while the others would grab the children and the pots and pans and everything and start running. So, it was very very difficult to say 'this person is a proper combatant by the definition of the military, and this one was a WAFF.'"[49]

While Isha Dyfan agreed with Cooper and Dr Jargbo that there were more women with a supportive role than actual soldiers, she emphasised that females who actually were soldiers often held high ranking positions: "And when there were female soldiers, they were high up in the ranks, and led battalions. Different groups had some very strong women who led…"[50]

[48] Interview with Dr Moses Jargbo
[49] Interview with Joana Foster
[50] Interview with Isha Dyfan

4 Analysis: Participation of Women in the Disarmament and Demobilisation Process

DD programmes serve two basic objectives: The immediate objective is to increase security by collecting arms and re-establishing civilian norms among former fighters. The overarching objective is to facilitate sustainable peace and jumpstart a transformation of the society. When explaining participation in the Liberian disarmament and demobilisation process from a gender perspective, similarly, distinctions between different dimensions of the process need to be made, according to the model in chapter 1.3.

4.1 Quantitative Aspects

Several of the interviewees, quite correctly, pointed to the quantity of women who came through the process as a sign of success: 22,000 instead of the estimated 1,000. Male participation similarly exceeded expectations – arriving at more than 69,500 rather than an estimated 29,000 – but still it is the female participation that impresses the most with a 20-fold increase, as compared to more than a doubling of the number of male participants.

4.1.1 Overall Participation in the Disarmament and Demobilisation Process

The discrepancy between estimations and actual outcome is striking, regarding totals, male and female combatants alike. In retrospect, even those involved in the core planning group for the Liberian DD process wondered about the origin of the number of 38,000: "When it comes to the initial estimates about the caseload, we have afterwards tried to get information about where those numbers came from, but I haven't seen anything clearly on paper how these numbers were conceived.", Sari Nurro confirmed, yet pointed out that in wars in which militia play an important role, distinguishing between combatants and non-combatants is difficult, causing problems even for the commanders themselves to keep track of their forces.[51] Joana Foster explained the manifold increase by noting that while initially assessing the numbers to be disarmed, only "real fighters", i.e. those carrying guns, were taken into account,[52] which can be seen as a manifestation of weak utilisation of

[51] Interview with Sari Nurro
[52] Interview with Joana Foster

gender sensitive policies such as UNSCR 1325 and UNIFEM's SOP on Gender and DDR (UNIFEM 2004). Moses Jargbo maintained that the number was based on the previous disarmament exercise that had been conducted in Liberia in 1996 and on comparisons with the Sierra Leonean process. He continued: "What they failed to realise is that our crisis had gone on for almost 15-20 years and the three warring factions that we ended up with at the end of the Liberian crisis was a reconfiguration of many other factions in the country,"[53] a view supported by Charles Achodo:

> "When you look at the conflict in this country, you find that it didn't happen for one year; it didn't happen for two years; it didn't happen for three years. It went on for almost 14 years, so what we're looking at is a cumulative recruitment process that has gone on for a period of 14 years, and what the impact has been is that by the time we now launched a formal, well structured, well organised DDR process, most of these guys showed up."

He also asserted that the number of 38,000 was the figure officially announced, while the internal calculation was 60,000 at least.[54] Jargbo underlined that his own estimates of the numbers to be disarmed were much higher, at 60,000 to 75,000, and that the former factions came in and gave their own approximations: the GoL said they had at least 75,000 fighters; LURD claimed to have at least 35,000; and MODEL estimated to have 15,000 to 25,000.[55] To sum up, the numeral inconsistency can partly be explained as a result of the estimation being weakly rooted in the local context, and instead being imposed from outside. Furthermore, the primary assessment was insensitive to how holistic contemporary internal wars are, in that they engage multiple layers of society, besides armed fighters, thereby radically increasing the numbers to be demobilised. As stated by Joana Foster in section 3.6, supporters of the various factions could have rather hazy roles, where a group of several persons would share one weapon.

Another explanation for the high outcome could be found in non-combatants entering the process: e.g. it is not unheard of that militia commanders take the weapons from real fighters and give them to relatives and friends in order for them to benefit from the disarmament processes (Human Rights Watch 2005), or as Etweda Cooper claimed: "There were also a lot of people who bought arms from these people [the former commanders] to

[53] Interview with Dr. Moses Jargbo
[54] Interview with Charles Achodo
[55] Interview with Dr Moses Jargbo

turn it in, because they were looking at the package [the TSA and the reintegration programme]."[56] Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that – especially given the eligibility criteria of 150 rounds of SAA – unauthorised persons might have gained access to the DD process. Charles Achodo was reluctant to attribute too much of the increase to illegitimate entry, but admitted that:

> "So, to a considerable extent, yes, non-combatants may have gone into the process, but I would not make it 50 percent. I would not even think it's up to 30percent that came in like that. You say 'maybe about ten percent?', I may say 'yes'. It might be possible that ten percent of the people came in [unrightfully], and those ten percent came in because of the broad eligibility criteria we used."[57]

The low number of weapons collected during the DD – 27,000 serviceable weapons by the end of the process, approximately one weapon for every four registered combatants – also points to the fact that unauthorised access to the process might have been too easily gained.

For a period of time after resumption of the DD, implementing partners could identify a Child or Woman Associated with the Fighting Forces (CAFF/WAFF), thereby making the person eligible for the process. This means of securing entry into the process for CAFF and WAFF who had neither weapons nor ammunition to turn in, however, was later eliminated as MILOBs working at the pick-up points and D1 sites noticed how some NGO implementing partners "… facilitated the process in such a way as saying 'okay, we'll add you to the list if you give me a certain amount of your substance allowance.'"[58]

4.1.2 Female Participation

While Nurro maintained that these corrupt practices were only occurring to a limited extent, they were bound to have had some effect on the proportion of female participation in the process compared to men, as they functioned as yet another loophole for entry into the process – exclusively for women and children. A prerequisite, however, for this way into

[56]Interview with Etweda Cooper
[57]Interview with Charles Achodo
[58]Interview with Sari Nurro

the program was the presence of the term WAFFs, and an eligibility criteria that allowed entry without weapons.[59]

The importance of the concept of WAFF cannot be overestimated when it comes to the female participation in the Liberian DD program. While it has been difficult to find statistical data on exactly how large a part of the females partaking in the process actually had a fighting role, it is certain that there were more women with supportive functions than with combat assignments. As the term WAFF includes women who have been associated with the fighting forces but did not actually fight, the planners of the DD program took a great step in the right direction when it comes to female inclusion by deciding to target women include in the term WAFF as well as the actual fighters.

Even though the target group was greatly enlarged by the introduction of the term WAFF, one would not have succeeded in including as many women in the process as was the case, were it not for the extensive information and sensitisation campaign preceding it. The information campaign, adjusted to suit local conditions, was important for increased participation in the process on a general level, as it tackled issues such as language barriers and cultural differences effectively by employing local networks in the sensitisation effort. For two reasons it was also vital as a means of ensuring a satisfactory female participation in the process. The first one can be derived from the introduction of the term WAFF: as this term made a lot more women eligible for the process, it became necessary to spread information on what a WAFF is. Widening the target group for the DD would not have had any effect if those expected to benefit had been unaware of the new circumstances.

The second reason as to why the information and sensitisation campaign was important was that it constituted a means of reducing the stigma experienced by female ex-combatants. Joana Foster maintained that the women ex-combatants were socially in a much worse position than their male counterparts, and that this circumstance affected the willingness of women to participate in the program:

[59] As Dr Moses Jargbo mentioned, there seemed to have been little discussion about a male counterpart to the WAFF concept. It is not unreasonable to assume that there were men who had other roles than fighting within the various factions.

> "The thing is that a woman will not come through and have herself described as an ex-combatant. It's an embarrassment. It's a shameful thing back in her community, and she wouldn't be quite sure whether the community would accept her. For a man it is easier to be accepted in the community, but a woman, even the other women won't accept you in the community."[60]

This statement seems to confirm the relevance of Goffman's stigmatisation theory, which emphasised that when the reasons for a stigma are not obvious, the stigmatised person can choose to conceal his or her perceived deficiencies. The information campaign preceding the DD program, which was partially aimed at reducing the stigma for female ex-combatants through sensitisation and public information, is likely to have made it easier for women to expose themselves as soldiers or WAFF, a view also supported by Foster. One problematic aspect of the campaign was the unfortunate design of the informative cartoons, that initially only portrayed male combatants handing in guns, conveying a false message of only men being welcome to the programme. This was, however, corrected later on.

At the end of civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone, a DDR programme was carried out between 1998 and 2003. The programme was widely considered a success (International Crisis Group 2004). In many respects the Liberian process built on the Sierra Leonean model, but some lessons were learned and details changed during planning in Liberia, out of which most of our interviewees mentioned the gender aspect. While the percentage of women processed in Sierra Leone was about 6.5 percent – the reason for which is commonly ascribed to rigid eligibility criteria (ibid.) – women in Liberia constituted around 22percent of the entire caseload. By broadening the eligibility criteria in a way that obviously promoted female participation in the Liberian DD process, the planners displayed the kind of gendered thinking called for in UNSCR 1325.

4.2 Short-Term Qualitative Aspects

When looking at the Liberian DDRR process, one can quickly conclude that the level of female participation in the DD phases of the program has surmounted everyone's expectations, but one must ask oneself whether gender considerations have been salient while planning the detailed execution of the DD program. Many of the women associated with the fighting forces have been abused sexually during the war, a factor important to

[60] Interview with Joana Foster

remember while laying out the details of the program as it is reasonable to assume that some of the females feel vulnerable when in the presence of men. In that regard an immediately notable aspect of the Liberian program is that there were separate camps for child, female and male combatants – something that was vital for the feeling of security among the females (Mazurana/Carlson 2004). Unfortunately there was still not enough consideration put into the special needs of women, manifested most clearly in the problems experienced with the physical screening of women. If more thought and effort had been put into gender issues during the actual process of disarmament and demobilisation, a smoother and more reliable method could have been devised than relying on NGO support and female commanders. Furthermore, it would have been preferable to have women disarming female combatants rather than men, since it is not unlikely that some of the women, given their potential background of rape and sexual violence, felt insecure and vulnerable disarming to strange male soldiers. The issue of sexual violence against women was given consideration, though, by offering extra counselling for women subjected to rape or other forms of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) during the conflict.

A potential obstacle for partaking in the DD, for women in particular, was the need for someone to care for the children. As the Liberian society is rather traditional when it comes to gender roles, women are much more likely than men to have dependants they cannot leave with someone else for the four to seven days the demobilisation takes place. Problems of this character were solved on site according to Sari Nurro, where the camp management could give leave for women to enter the site with children. There was, however, no standard routine for doing this, and the cases were evaluated continuously.[61] This could result in women being left out as they were unaware that problems of that kind could be solved. With issues like that unresolved, one still found time to put in order satellite TV, so the ex-combatants could watch football.[62]

Anne Phillips argues in her book *The Politics of Presence* that while persons from any given group can replace persons from other groups when it comes to representing ideas and policies agreed upon, it is still crucial to have a presence from every group involved – as common experiences are an important factor for safeguarding group specific interests (Phillips 2002:13,15,17). As mentioned in chapter 3.1, while women were present during

[61] Interview with Sari Nurro
[62] Interview with Dayan Karbo

the planning of the process, they were employed by NGOs rather than the UN agencies – who had the executive power – and were not equally represented. There was, nonetheless, an agreement on ideas and policies for including women in the process through the UNSCR 1325 and other guiding documents, and through the lessons learned from previous processes, which resulted in a genuine effort to include female combatants. Still, the lack of female participation in the planning process becomes evident when one takes into account the deficiencies concerning the special needs of women, while the high male presence crystallised in prioritising e.g. football. Another explanation for the shortcomings of the program in that aspect may be that some male key persons on the military side were more focused on getting as many weapons through the process as possible, rather than pondering women specific issues. The level of female presence as well as representation in the key planning group for the DD program improved notably as the OGA became operational in March 2004. Joana Foster concluded that while successful regarding the number of females gone through the process, the gender mainstreaming "was really done ad-hoc", and was successful only because people with high positions in the UNMIL were willing to listen.[63]

[63]Interview with Joana Foster

5 Conclusion

Generally, the picture painted of female participation in DDRR programs is quite bleak. Summed up, a plethora of obstacles indeed prevent women from participating in a DDRR process: narrow eligibility criteria designed to include only actual fighters; the social stigma attached to ex-combatant status; lack of information on the process; a sense of helplessness and fear of men, fellow ex-combatants and DD staff alike; and children or other dependents that require care. Yet looking closer at the Liberian DD a different situation presents itself. Women have gone through the process in much larger numbers than estimated. Were things done differently in Liberia, and what were the incentives for women to partake, that obviously overshadowed the obstacles? Awareness and utilisation of gender sensitive policies during planning led to broad eligibility criteria and thus enabled more women to participate; extensive information and sensitisation of combatants and communities decreased the stigma and made women aware; gender conscious construction of cantonment sites separated female from male ex-combatants; and women were allowed to bring small children with them to the DD. Yet perhaps most important was the ever-present need for money. Entering the process promised participants 300 USD cash payment – up to ten times the monthly salary most of them could ever dream of. The absence of this fundamental explanation for women joining the DDRR process in reflections of institutional actors is noteworthy. Yet we can assume that money poses as much an attraction for women as for men. Then, rationalisation rendering traditional gender roles less important, an attractive package, and easy access for women to the process are important variables that have to be taken into account to explain the participation of women.

Accordingly, when merely looking at the number of participants in the Liberian DD process – concerning women as well as men – one can feel quite content with the outcome. Disarmament and demobilisation, however, cannot and should not be treated as a numbers game, where an "add women and stir" approach is good enough. In order to be fully satisfactory from a gender perspective, as shown in section 4.2, more considerations need to be made. Returning to Phillips, it appears as if a representation of ideas promoting gender was sufficient for ensuring a high participation of female ex-combatants. Yet, considering short-term qualitative aspects, i.e. features affecting the female ex-combatants' mental wellbeing and confidence in the process, a stronger presence of women in planning would

have been preferable. In that sense, the persistent claim in publications on DDRR and gender by various civil society groups, women organisations and UNIFEM on the necessity of women being present in planning and decision making in order to get female combatants to participate in DD processes, would be more correct if these focused on qualitative rather than quantitative aspects of female participation.

The issue about presence and representation, however, inevitably leads into tricky post-modernistic deliberations, eventually resulting in the ultimate question of whether anyone can ever be said to represent anyone but himself. Too often, the problem with an overly simplistic essentialist understanding of group identity – women always care for the interest of other women since they are women – is overshadowed by a tendency of rigidly focusing on an, often superficial, dichotomy between categories such as male and female. In the Liberian DD case, it is questionable whether women from local and international NGOs or international organisations can be assumed to defend the interests of the female combatants. Answering this question, intriguing as it may be, would require a thesis of its own to do it full justice.

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Abbreviations

AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
CAFF	Children Associated with the Fighting Forces
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
D1	Disarmament
D2	Demobilisation
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration
DDRR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration and Rehabilitation
(D) SRSG	(Deputy) Special Representative of the Secretary General
GoL	Government of Liberia
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JIU	Joint Implementation Unit
JMC	Joint Monitoring Committee
JOC	Joint Operations Centre
JOP	Joint Operational Plan
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
LWI	Liberian Women's Initiative
LWF-WS	Lutheran World Federation-World Service
MERCI	Medical Emergency & Relief Cooperative International
MILOB	Military Observer
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
NCDDRR	National Commission on the DDRR
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
OGA	Office of the Gender Advisor
PMU	Pentecostal Mission Unlimited
PU	Premier Urgence
RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
SAA	Small Arms Ammunition
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TCC	Technical Coordinating Committee
TSA	Transitional Safety Net Allowance
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council resolution
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAFF	Women Associated with the Fighting Forces
WIPNET	Women in Peacebuilding Network
XCOM	Ex-Combatant

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