

**YOUNG VETERANS, NOT ALWAYS SOCIAL MISFITS:
A SOCIOLOGICAL DISCOURSE OF LIBERIAN
TRANSMOGRIFICATION EXPERIENCES**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the phenomenon of child-soldiering from a different perspective. It seeks to challenge, using a novel approach, earlier studies on the roles of former child-soldiers in post-war societies. It focuses on the subjectivity of young veterans, that is war veterans formerly associated with armed forces and groups as children during the 14-year gruesome civil war which bedevilled Liberia between 1989 and 2003. This civil war claimed roughly 250,000 lives, and saw the active participation of approximately 21,000 child-soldiers. This thesis departs from previous works which mostly painted an apocalyptic picture of young veterans, and explores the nexus between their self-agency, Foucauldian technologies of the self and their transformation in the post-war society.

The majority of previous scholarly works which have dominated the field of child-soldiering dwelt on the impact of armed conflict on the child-soldiers, the negative consequences, the causes of child-soldiering, and the rehabilitation and reintegration of the young veterans after their disarmament and demobilization.

What this thesis seeks to do however, is to establish that, rather than considering the young veterans simply as social misfits, distraught and dispirited human beings, it should be noted that young veterans through their agency, are capable of ensuring their reintegration into their war-ravaged societies. Sadly, these young former fighters' self-agency and technologies of the self in defining their civilian trajectories have often been overshadowed by vaunted humanitarian aid and multilayered war-profiteering.

This study is underpinned by interpretive constructivism, symbolic interactionism, social identity theory, sociometer theory and expectancy theory, and sheds light on how young veterans' self-agency, instrumental coalitions, and decision-making processes, synergistically shifted the negative identities foisted on them as a result of their participation in the war.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	xii
Part One	1
CHAPTER ONE Introduction: General background and statement of problem	2
1.1 Research story: From humanitarian field to research interest	2
1.2 Exploring young veterans' life-world in Liberia	4
1.3 Presentation of country of research	5
1.3.1 Topography and administrative divisions	5
1.3.2 Climate	6
1.3.3 Demography	6
1.3.4 Infrastructure	7
1.3.5 Economy	9
1.3.6 Currency and Banking	9
1.3.7 Information and Communication Technologies	10
1.3.8 Health	10
1.4 The background of the study: Liberia from history to the civil war	13
1.4.1 Liberia: History and the root causes of the civil war	13
1.4.2 Liberia from 1989 to 2003: The years of the gruesome civil war	15
1.4.3 The birth of ECOMIL and Charles Taylor's exile	17
1.4.4 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)	18
1.5 Did children really wield guns during the Liberian civil war?	19
1.5.1 Liberian children: Apparently innocent but actually killing machines	19
1.5.2 From child-soldiers to young veterans	20
1.6 Statement of the problem	32
1.7 Aims and goals of the study	35
1.8 A synoptic overview of the thesis	36
CHAPTER TWO Scholarship Review: Unpacking child-soldiering — history, geography, practice, preventive mechanisms, consequences & proffered solutions	40
2.1 Introduction	40
2.2 Is child-soldiering really a modern phenomenon?	41

2.2.1	Child-soldiering in a global context	41
2.2.2	Child-soldiering in pre-colonial Africa	43
2.2.3	Child-soldiering: A contemporary global phenomenon	44
2.2.4	Child-soldiering: A recently plural practice in Africa	46
2.3	Becoming child-soldiers: Many pathways to the same doom	54
2.3.1	Becoming pawns to satisfy tyrants' political ambitions	54
2.3.2	Governmental disregard for child rights policies stimulates child-soldiering	54
2.3.3	Cultural and religious beliefs induce child-soldiering	55
2.3.4	Poverty as a push factor into child-soldiering	58
2.3.5	Child-soldiering as a result of children's malleability and gullibility	59
2.3.6	The state collapses, criminal enterprises emerge, child fighters pullulate	60
2.3.7	Child-soldiers' recruitment induced by the magnitude and nature of the war	62
2.3.8	Between social conspiracy and social units breakdown	63
2.3.9	Playing with inexpensive toys, not weapons	65
2.3.10	Fighting for spaces or fulfilling an ideological commitment	66
2.3.11	Child-soldiering and voluntariness conundrum	66
2.4	Dehumanization and objectification of children: From decoys to fighting machines, from fighting machines to cannon fodder	67
2.4.1	Logistics supports roles	67
2.4.2	Combat functions	68
2.4.3	Intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance functions	69
2.5	Life within factions: Predators and their prey?	70
2.5.1	Making new boy and girl-recruits committed insiders through terror	70
2.5.2	Girl-soldiers as victims and perpetrators	71
2.5.3	Starvation and inhumane drills	73
2.5.4	Choosing between death punishment or accepting drug injection	74
2.5.5	Compulsory identity change	74
2.6	International legal standards for the protection of children against their involvement in armed conflict	75
2.7	Consequences of child-soldiering: Gains and Losses	77
2.7.1	Child-soldiers: "Voiceless victims of war" or "zombies"?	78
2.7.2	Young veterans between resilience and astounding prosocial behaviour	80

2.7.3	Effects of child-soldiering on families and communities	82
2.8	Child-soldiers' journey back home: Smooth and slippery pathways of the controversial DDR	84
2.8.1	Disarming adult and child-soldiers: A process entangled by mistrust and fear	85
2.8.2	Post-war demobilization of former fighters: A fuzzy and crafty undertaking?	87
2.8.3	The 'Rs' phase of DDRR: A confusing process?	87
2.8.4	Child-soldiers: Forgotten, remembered but not prioritized	88
2.9	Child-soldiers' agency	92
CHAPTER THREE Paradigm and theoretical frameworks		94
3.1	Introduction	94
3.2	Interpretive-constructivism paradigm and qualitative research	95
3.3	Symbolic interactionism	96
3.3.1	Introduction	96
3.3.2	Forerunners' pertinent contributions	97
3.3.3	Symbolic interactionism: A synoptic overview	100
3.3.4	Nexus between symbolic interactionism and research methods	103
3.3.5	Why an emphasis on Blumerian symbolic interactionism is pivotal in the study	103
3.3.6	The nexus between symbolic interactionism, human action and the stream of action	105
3.4	Identity and Social Identity Theory	108
3.5	Expectancy Theory, young veterans' instrumental coalitions and participation in community activities	111
3.6	Sociometer Theory, self-esteem, social inclusion and social exclusion	113
3.7	Concept of self-agency	114
3.8	The Foucauldian technologies of the self	116
3.9	Concept of self	117
3.10	Instrumental coalitions, in-groups, out-groups and reference groups	118
3.11	The nexus between the concept of 'life-world', phenomenological sociology and symbolic interactionism	119
3.12	Conclusion	121
CHAPTER FOUR Methodology		122
4.1	Introduction	122

4.2	Qualitative approach: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)	122
4.2.1	What is the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)?	125
4.2.2	The theoretical underpinnings of IPA	126
4.3	Sampling strategies	130
4.3.1	The selection of the geographical location	130
4.3.2	The selection of host organizations	132
4.3.3	In search of an appropriate host organization: The Lutheran Church Liberia-Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Program (LCL-THRP)	132
4.3.4	The selection of research respondents	135
4.4	Methods of data collection	136
4.4.1	The historic 2010 South African FIFA World Cup's continental euphoria: Pathway to the young veterans' world	136
4.4.2	Qualitative interviewing	139
4.5	Data analysis techniques: Constructing first cycle codes and second cycle codes	143
4.6	Ethical considerations: Doing research in a post-war setting, a conundrum?	144
4.7	Rigor in qualitative research: Trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry as equivalent of validity and reliability in quantitative research	147
4.7.1	Reflexivity	148
4.7.2	Audit trail	149
4.7.3	Peer debriefing	149
4.7.4	Member checking	150
4.7.5	Theoretical validity	150
4.8	Conclusion	151
Part Two		153
CHAPTER FIVE Researching in a war-torn zone: A walk in a minefield alongside war-profiteers?		154
5.1	Introduction	154
5.2	Is war-profiteering a new phenomenon?	155
5.3	War-profiteering: A hindrance to research?	155
5.4	Access negotiation for data collection in war-torn zones: A multi-layered endeavour	161
5.5	Ethics and research in war-torn zones	164
5.5.1	Protecting the researcher and researched	164

5.5.2	Promises during data collection: A risk or an advantage for subsequent researchers?	165
5.6	Conclusion	166
CHAPTER SIX Shifting from military identity to civilian identity: The role of the technologies of the self, self-agency and instrumental coalitions		168
6.1	Introduction	168
6.2	Fragile states armies caught between sociability and existential crisis	169
6.3	Contemporary guerrilla armies: Freedom fighters or predators?	173
6.4	Gaining back our civilian identity, not to us but through and by us: The role of the technologies of the self, instrumental coalitions and self-agency	176
6.4.1	Building civilian identity through storytelling	176
6.4.2	Building new identities through instrumental coalitions	178
6.4.3	Prosocial behaviour, technologies of the self and identity change	182
6.4.4	Conclusion	183
CHAPTER SEVEN From cantonment sites to Santos Street: Not our fault but theirs		184
7.1	Introduction	184
7.2	From cantonment sites to Santos Street: They took our weapons but we were still mentally armed	185
7.3	Turning in the guns is losing power, creating power	189
7.4	The DDRR programme: The beautiful and ugly stories we know about it	192
7.4.1	DDRR process: Not an unceremonious undertaking	192
7.4.2	Why leave cantonment sites for Santos Street?	195
7.5	The International Criminal Court: A deterrence machine or an impediment to peacebuilding?	198
7.6	The vocational training or education for all: Against or for young veterans	204
7.7	Conclusion	209
CHAPTER EIGHT From jungle ties to post-conflict social ties: Not for 'chicken missions' but for self-reliance and mutual help		213
8.1	Introduction	213
8.2	Was the web of relationships among young veterans a reality?	214
8.3	Staying in touch with comrades, not a mere choice but a necessity and a safeguard	216
8.3.1	Our camaraderie beyond wartime for mutual help and prosocial behaviour	217

8.3.2	Ties for counselling purposes	218
8.3.3	Ties even for unglamorous jobs	220
8.3.4	Together we lecture, but deep within we know we are different	223
8.3.5	The guns were taken, not our jungle camaraderie and brotherhood	224
8.3.6	Ties on the basis of roles played after the war	225
8.3.7	The forgotten community of young veterans: An underworld?	226
8.4	Conclusion	227
CHAPTER NINE Boys and girls in the bush, bosses in the post-war society: When self-agency alters power relations among war veterans		229
9.1	Introduction	229
9.2	From decoys to effective counsellors, opinion leaders, researchers and NGO managers	230
9.3	From jungle bosses to post-war mendicants: The fallen demigods?	241
9.4	From jungle leadership to post-war leadership	243
9.5	Conclusion	247
CHAPTER TEN Individual hope amidst collective hopelessness		249
10.1	Introduction	249
10.2	Lessons learned from the war	250
10.3	Hoping within a hopeless society	253
10.4	Conclusion	255
CHAPTER ELEVEN Conclusion: Not all young veterans are still social anomalies		256
LIST OF REFERENCES		264
Appendix 1: Glossary		305
Appendix 2: Some socio-economic indicators of Liberia		312
Appendix 3: Cursory description of research respondents		313
Appendix 4: Interview schedule		315
Appendix 5: Letter of introduction of researcher from supervisor (Rhodes)		317
Appendix 6: Letter of invitation from host organization (LCL-THRP)		318

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Map of Africa showing Liberia	11
Figure 2: Map of Liberia partially showing neighbouring Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire	12
Figure 3: Map of Monrovia, the capital of Liberia	13
Figure 4: Interconnectedness between the three categories of war-profiteers	160
Figure 5: Interrelationship between researcher and war-profiteers	166
Figure 6: LCL-THRP Programme Officer	319
Figure 7: Scene of horror on 6th April 1996 when competing gangs took Monrovia leaving 3000 dead by UN estimates	319
Figure 8: Former MODEL child and youth fighters	319
Figure 9: NEPI staff members	320
Figure 10: Compound of LCL-THRP where most of the interviews with young veterans were conducted	320
Figure 11: Mass grave where 600 civilians massacred in Saint Andrew Lutheran Church during the war were buried	320

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACE	Africa Coast to Europe
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AHP	African Humanities Program
AI	Amnesty International
APOE	Air Point of Entry
AU	African Union
BIGSSS	Bremen Graduate School of Social Sciences
CBOs	Community-Based Organizations
CDF	Civil Defence Forces
CHAL	Christian Health Association of Liberia
CNDP	Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple National Congress for People's Defence
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DDRR	Disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation & reintegration
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOMIL	ECOWAS Mission in Liberia
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FARDC	Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (DRC Armed Forces)

FAFN	Forces Armées des Forces Nouvelles
FBOs	Faith-Based Organizations
FDLR	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
GoL	Government of Liberia
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus /Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICCs	Interim Care Centres
ICGL	International Contact Group on Liberia
IDDR	Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IMC	Implementation Monitoring Committee
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
IPGC	Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Conference
IPKF	India Peacekeeping Force
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
JIU	Joint Implementation Unit
JMC	Joint Monitoring Committee
JMP	Joint Monitoring Program
JROTC	Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps

LCL	Lutheran Church Liberia
LCL-THRP	Lutheran Church Liberia–Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Programme
LCP	Liberia Crusaders for Peace
LD	Liberian Dollar
LDF	Lofa Defence Force
LECIA	Legon Centre for International Affairs
LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services
LPC	Liberian Peace Council
LPOE	Land Port of Entry
LRA	The Lord’s Resistance Army
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
LWF-WS	Lutheran World Federation-World Service
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
MONUC	United Nations Mission in Congo
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MRU	Mano River Union
NCDDR	National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reunification and Reintegration
NCDDRR	National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration
NEPI	Network of Ex-combatants Peace Initiative
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia

NPFL-CRC	NPFL-Central Revolutionary Council
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NSNPB	National Security Network for Peacebuilding
NTC	National Transitional Council
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
PARECO	Coalition of Congolese Resistant Patriots
PDF	Popular Defence Forces
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
POW	Prisoners of War
RENAMO	Resistência Nacional Moçambicana - Mozambique National Resistance
RIA	Roberts International Airport
RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SASA	South African Sociological Association
SC	Security Council
SIT	Social Identity Theory
SLA	South Lebanon Army
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPOE	Sea Port of Entry
STD	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
THRP	Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Programme
TOT	Training of Trainers
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission

ULIMO	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy
ULIMO-J	ULIMO-Johnson
ULIMO-K	ULIMO-Kromah
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Funds
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNMISS	United Nations Mission of South Sudan
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNOL	United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Liberia
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USA	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar
WANEP	West African Network for Peace Building

Part One

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: General background and statement of problem

1.1 Research story: From humanitarian field to research interest

I worked within the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as a protection and field officer in the war-torn Greater North Kivu in the north-eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (hereinafter referred to as DRC) in the second half of the year 2008. I was coordinating and reporting on protection-related issues in the Beni and Lubero territories, within the Protection Cluster.¹ This assignment gave me the opportunity to organize protection assessment and security monitoring field missions to volatile rebel-held zones of the above-mentioned two territories. I conducted such field missions with colleagues from other agencies of the humanitarian community namely the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Save the Children, and the Civil Affairs and Child Protection sections of the United Nations Mission in Congo (MONUC).

In the towns, villages and hamlets we often visited, clashes between pockets of rebels and the troops of the Congolese National Army (FARDC)² were commonplace despite a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2006 between the government and the armed groups. It happened that during some of our field missions, a series of events involving children formerly associated with warring factions caught my attention. The first one was an encounter with a

¹ The 'Protection Cluster' was an outcome of the new humanitarian approach used in some war-torn countries where agencies, NGOs and the United Nations Peacekeeping and Stabilization missions are requested to work in teams to tackle some problems which cannot be dealt with by one single agency. The Protection Cluster was concerned with the physical and legal protection of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) including children and women. Its mission was to conduct fieldtrips to rebel-held zones, assess the protection situation, report and advocate. It equally takes preventive, corrective and punitive actions or measures to abate violations of human rights and dignity.

² FARDC (Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo) was the French acronym for the DRC Armed Forces.

former child-soldier in a locality called Kamandi Gîte³ in Lubero territory. This former young rebel, in a discussion with the protection team, blatantly disclosed that if he could get an AK-47 he was going to ‘wreak more havoc than he did before when he first served within warring factions’. The second incident occurred in a town near Kamandi Gîte called Kirumba where some former young combatants took a colleague of our team hostage after throwing stones at him. The hostage gained freedom after serious negotiations with the former young rebels. The third incident also occurred in Kirumba when about twenty child-soldiers who were released from different factions, by MONUC Child Protection Section, and handed over to an International Non Governmental Organization (INGO) for rehabilitation, became engaged in a fierce brawl. The fourth was not an incident but a personal astonishing discovery. A group of former child-soldiers, whom a particular agency failed to cater for, after they had been released to the agency for reintegration and rehabilitation, decided to organize themselves and were staying in a non-completed building close to my abode in Beni.⁴

My interest in doing research on the post-war lives of the young veterans was born out of these evocative encounters. An attempt to craft a research problem woven around these encounters led me to develop a fuzzy research problem initially to be further explored within the field of sociology.

Although the interest to undertake a study of the behaviour and agency of the demobilized youth occurred to me in the North Kivu, I could not conduct systematic field research in the region before leaving owing to the volatility of the region and the brevity of my work contract. I however became more observant during subsequent field trips prior to my departure.

³The residents of this locality were coming to the village during the day and sleeping in the bush during the night to avoid being killed at night. This village was caught between two warring factions: the FARDC and a rebel group called Mai Mai PARECO.

⁴ Beni was the capital of Beni Territory in the Greater North Kivu (DRC).

Whenever we went to the field, I especially focused on these young veterans to notice how they were behaving towards their peers and community members. I also had the opportunity to glean vital information from colleagues who had been in contact with these young veterans for many years, especially those who were local staff members in humanitarian organizations and were conversant with many issues in this field. Our discussions provided me with a spectrum of ideas from which the current study on ex-fighters formerly associated with armed groups as children, evolved. I later decided to conduct research towards a PhD degree in sociology at Rhodes University, on Liberian young veterans (former child-soldiers).

The overarching aim of my research was to prove that there is an alternative to the societal and scholarly apocalyptic view of young veterans. The study aimed to demonstrate, based on the young veterans' own stories, how through agency, jungle ties and instrumental coalitions in the post-conflict damaged society, these veterans were able to negotiate their civilian identity, social acceptance and create comfortable and conformable spaces for themselves, in the midst of stigmatization and marginalization.

1.2 Exploring young veterans' life-world in Liberia

In Liberia, I interviewed 12 youths formerly associated with at least one of the three warring factions which signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on 18 June 2003 in Accra (Ghana), namely the Government of Liberia (GoL), the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), and underwent the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process. The aim of these interviews was to develop a cursory description of their participation in the war, and then focus on their social ties, relationships between former comrades and commanders in the post-war context, how they negotiate their identity hurdles, and their perspectives on the future based on the lessons learned from the war.

I also interviewed some experts dealing with youths formerly involved in war in order to develop a more sociologically accurate definition of what a child or a youth is in the Liberian context on the one hand, and to briefly find out how they appraised the rehabilitation process on the other hand. These expert-focused interviews became necessary due to criticisms I faced during the presentation of my proposal in which my initial definition of a child was that of the United Nations as ‘any human being under the age 18 years’. This was a definition which academics and fellow students deemed too legal and untenable in the field of sociology. Consequently, I crafted specific definitions for concepts such as ‘child-soldier’ and ‘young veteran’ (see glossary in Appendix 1).

1.3 Presentation of country of research

1.3.1 Topography and administrative divisions

Liberia has a total land area of 111,370 km². The coastline extends 580 km from the Mano River in the west to the Cavalla River in the east. From a narrow, flat coastal belt, the country rises in a series of plateaux to a higher interior. The interior is heavily forested with mountains reaching elevations of about 900 to 1,200 m with Mount Nimba (1,752 m)⁵ as the highest point. The country’s major rivers include the Mano River in the northwest and the Cavalla River in the southeast. Other important rivers are the Lofa, St. Paul, St. John and Cestos Rivers, all of which flow into the Atlantic. The Cavalla River (515 km) is the nation’s longest river. There are many small rivers which traverse the country. Due to sandbanks inland rivers are not usable for barges. The coastal strip, extending about 80 km inland, is virtually the only developed region.

Liberia has a total maritime boundary of 579 km, and shares its borders with Guinea (563 km), Côte d’Ivoire (716 km) and Sierra Leone (306 km). Liberia is divided into 15 counties namely Bomi, Bong, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount,

⁵ <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/africa/lr.htm>

Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Lofa, Margibi, Maryland, Montserrado, River Cess, Sinoe, River Gee, Gbarpolu and Nimba (LISGIS, 2008).

1.3.2 Climate

The climate of Liberia is equatorial and humid, particularly during the two rainy seasons: June to July and October to November respectively. Annual rainfall varies from 2,240 mm in the interior to 5,210 mm along the coast. The average temperature in Monrovia is about 26 °C in January and 24 °C in July. The weather is usually hot and humid. Winters are dry with hot days and cool nights; summers are wet, cloudy with frequent showers. The wet season runs from May to October while the dry season runs from November to April.

1.3.3 Demography

Recent estimations revealed that Liberia has a population of 3,489,072, an annual population growth rate of 2.1 and a population density per square mile of 93. Montserrado County has a population of 1,144,806, an annual growth of 3.5, and a population density per square mile of 1,553. It must be noted that Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia where data collection for this study was done is located in Montserrado County (LISGIS, 2008). About 53.34 percent of the Liberian inhabitants are between 15-64 years of age and the literacy rate is 38.3 percent. The average life expectancy is 63 years for women and 58 years for men; the infant mortality rate is 98 deaths per 1,000 live births (United Nations-DPKO, 2004).

There are three major ethnic groups in the country: the indigenous African tribes representing 95 percent of the population include Kpelle, Bassa, Gio, Kru, Grebo, Mano, Krahn, Gola, Gbandi, Loma, Kissi, Vai and Bella; the Americo-Liberians and the Congo people⁶ each represent 2.5 percent of the total population. English,

⁶ “When slavery was abolished, all the Africans who were captured and en route to slavery on the high seas were shipped to Liberia. These people, many of whom were thought to come from the Congo River region of Africa, were classified as Congo” (Smith, n.d.).

the official language, is spoken by 20 percent of the population. There are local dialects of which few can be used in written correspondence. There is relative harmony among the various religious groups. The population is divided according to the following religious groups: 40 percent indigenous believers, 40 percent Christians and 20 percent Muslims (United Nations-DPKO, 2004).

1.3.4 Infrastructure

The 14-year civil war has left the infrastructure in and around Monrovia and through the country in a state of disrepair. Liberia still faces critical infrastructural challenges despite immense post-conflict reconstruction.

1.3.4.1 Road

The war damaged the Liberian national road network. Liberia has about 10,600 km of highways. Of these, 657 km are paved and 9,943 km are unpaved (United Nations-DPKO, 2004). In general, the country has just fewer than 40 percent of its primary road network paved, and the average traffic flow on the paved network is around 570 vehicles per day. Moreover, there is major deterioration on all highways due to heavy rains and lack of maintenance. During the wet season, most of the roads are inaccessible (Foster & Pushak, 2010).

1.3.4.2 Rail

Before the civil war, there was a total of 490 km of railways tracks. During the war these railways were destroyed and have not functioned for several years (United Nations-DPKO, 2004). None of the three private mineral railways in Liberia including Bong, LAMCO and NIOC are fully operational at present (Foster & Pushak, 2010).

1.3.4.3 Ports

The main access points to the country are through the Air Point of Entry (APOE) at Roberts International Airport (RIA), the Sea Port of Entry (SPOE) at Freeport,

Monrovia and the Land Port of Entry (LPOE) at Bo Waterside on the Sierra Leone border.

Liberia has five usable ports including Robertsport, Buchanan, Greenville, Harper and Monrovia ports. Liberia has the second largest shipping registry in the world with 1,734 registered vessels including 859 foreign-owned. While Greenville port is used mostly for timber exports, Monrovia handles the majority of Liberia's traffic. The harbour in Monrovia is usable for commercial ships. Although there are plans to rehabilitate the ports, Monrovia port performance indicators point to the fact that Monrovia (the port) may, to a great extent, outperform other neighbouring West African ports (United Nations-DPKO, 2004; Foster & Pushak, 2010).

1.3.4.4 Air transport

Two airports namely Roberts International Airport (3,047 m) and Spriggs Payne Airport (2,000 m) have paved runways, while others have unpaved runways with lengths varying between 914 m to 2437 m. Only Roberts International Airport is usable for wide body aircrafts. All county capitals have landing strips for small fixed wing aircrafts. The demise of a number of important regional airlines affected the Liberian air transport figures which saw a decline between 2001 and 2004. But air traffic had improved by 2007 (United Nations-DPKO, 2004; Foster & Pushak, 2010).

1.3.4.5 Water supply and Sanitation

The lack of basic social services such as electricity and piped water remains a problem for the Liberian people. According to the standardized Demographic and Health Surveys conducted across Africa, access to private taps and public stand posts in Liberia is respectively just under 3 and 7 percent of the population. Wells and boreholes serve 76 percent of the population, and less than 15 percent of Liberians depend on surface water. According to the 2010 Joint Monitoring Program (JMP), there has been an improvement in access to water sources which increased from 58 percent in 1990 to 68 percent in 2008, but paradoxically access

to piped water fell from 11 percent to 2 percent during the same period (Foster & Pushak, 2010).

1.3.4.6 Power

Hydroelectric power plants have been constructed on several rivers, including the St. Paul River. The electrical standards are officially based on the 110 volts system. The war affected key power generation, transmission, and distribution assets. Prior to the war, power generation capacity in Liberia was relatively high at 67 megawatts per million inhabitants, but as of 2010, Liberia runs on a small diesel plant of 9.6 megawatts. Power generated per million inhabitants amounts to less than 3 megawatts. In Monrovia for instance, only 0.1 percent of households have access to electricity; and 3 percent of households have access to electricity through the use of household generators. At a rate of USD 0.43 per kilowatt-hour, power tariffs in Liberia appear to be the highest in Africa (Foster & Pushak, 2010:1 & 17-18).

1.3.5 Economy

According to the Central Emergency Response Fund (2008) report, Liberia was among the world's poorest countries, with about 80 percent of the population living on less than one USD a day. Liberia has a primarily agricultural economy, but also relies on other key resources such as diamonds, gold and timber products. The production of iron ore, wood, and rubber are of major importance to the Liberian economy. Liberia earns a significant percentage of its foreign revenue from exporting tropical hardwood timber. In addition, Liberia earns revenue from its shipping registry business. Liberia was richly endowed with natural resources, but the civil war greatly affected its economy (United Nations-DPKO, 2004).

1.3.6 Currency and Banking

The monetary unit of Liberia is the Liberian dollar (LD), but the US dollar (USD) is also a legal tender, and is usually preferred in transactions. At the beginning of

the civil war, different notes were in use in government and rebel-held territories. The National Bank of Liberia, established in 1974, is the country's central bank.

1.3.7 Information and Communication Technologies

War affected Liberia's fixed-line telephone network, and as of 2010, the fixed-line telephone penetration is estimated to be less than 0.1 percent. But the technological development took over with a modern wireless telecommunications system, characterized by a dynamic and competitive mobile sector. Four mobile operators have been licensed amidst a competitive market; and 'Lonestar', the first licensee, holds 40 percent of the market (United Nations-DPKO, 2004). Liberia's mobile footprint, that is, "the percentage of the population living within range of a mobile signal and hence able to subscribe to service" grew from 18 to 32 percent between 2003 and 2009. The findings of the 2007 Demographic and Health Survey revealed that 29 percent of households had a mobile telephone (Foster & Pushak, 2010). The Africa Coast to Europe (ACE) submarine cable which recently landed in Monrovia, will improve the country's connectivity to telecommunications networks in Europe, America, and Asia.⁷

1.3.8 Health

Following the war, most health professionals left the country or lost their lives, leaving the Liberian healthcare system in a state of devastation. In 1997, there were around 39,536 people per doctor (United Nations-DPKO, 2004). Prior to the war, in 1988, about 3,526 persons were employed in the public health sector. By 1998, this number was reduced to 1,396 including only 89 physicians and 329 nurses. But by 2010, the clinical workforce had increased to reach a total of 4,653 health workers. It is worth mentioning that by 2003, Liberia had 420 health facilities (12 public hospitals, 32 public health centres, 189 public clinics, 10 private hospitals, 10 private health centres, and 167 private clinics), 45 percent of

⁷ This information was released by the Cable Consortium of Liberia (CCL). For details visit <http://allafrica.com/stories/201111040405.html>

which were being managed by NGOs and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) (Varpilah, Safer, Frenkel, Baba, Massaquoi & Barrow, 2011)⁸.



Figure 1: Map of Africa showing Liberia in black⁹

⁸ See Appendix 2 for other socio-economic indicators of Liberia.

⁹ Retrieved on 24.10.2011 from
<http://www.peacecorps.gov/www/educators/lessonplans/graphics/liberiamap.jpg>



Figure 2: Map of Liberia partially showing neighbouring Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire¹⁰

¹⁰ Retrieved on 24.10.2011 from http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/liberia_pol_2004.jpg

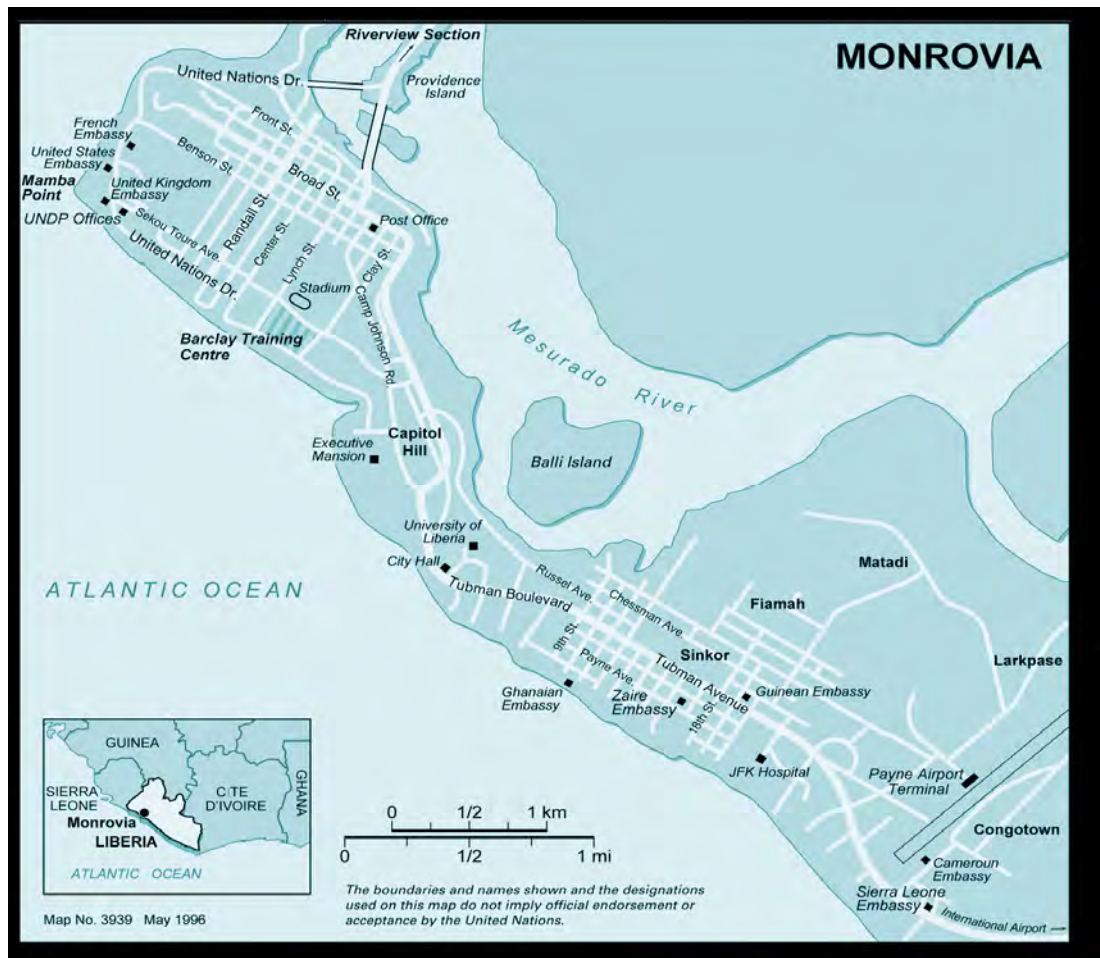


Figure 3: Map of Monrovia, the capital of Liberia¹¹

1.4 The background of the study: Liberia from history to the civil war

1.4.1 Liberia: History and the root causes of the civil war

Liberia was founded in 1822 by freed black slaves from America and the Caribbean. It was the first colony in Africa to gain independence. Liberia became a republic in 1847 with the help of a private philanthropic organization based in the United States namely the ‘American Colonization Society’ (Creative Associates International, 1997; Mekenkamp, van Tongeren & van de Veen, 1999; Dennis, 2006; Peace Direct, n.d.).

¹¹ Retrieved on 24.10.2011 from <http://mapsof.net/map/monrovia>

The Americo-Liberians, that is the descendants of the freed slaves, representing between three and five percent of the Liberian population, had full political, economic and social control over the country until 1980. The Americo-Liberians enjoyed a high standard of living while about 80 percent of the indigenous people living in rural areas relied on subsistence agriculture. The Americo-Liberians considered indigenous people as *savages* who needed to be *civilized* (Mekenkamp, et al., 1999:310). After World War II some reforms were introduced to end the unequal distribution of wealth and political power. But such reforms could not end the patronage system from which the Americo-Liberians continued to profit.

In April 1979, furious rioters demonstrating against a large increase in the price of rice (the Liberian staple food), were massacred by the police (Mekenkamp, et al., 1999). On 12 April 1980, Army Master Sergeant Samuel Doe led a group of seventeen indigenous officers from his Krahn ethnic group to successfully take up the reins of power through a coup d'état against the government of William Tolbert, thus ending the longstanding Americo-Liberian regime (Mekenkamp, et al., 1999; Dennis, 2006).

Before the coup, the Liberian society was characterized by an antagonism between Americo-Liberians and the indigenous population (Osaghae, 1996). After the coup, conflicts between indigenous groups in quest of state power surfaced and became rampant (Weissman, 1996).

The Doe regime's promise of hope to the people of Liberia never materialized. Instead, the new regime was characterized by intolerance and brutal repression of political opponents, intimidation, rigging of elections and favouritism towards his Krahn tribesmen. The Krahns were therefore the great beneficiaries of Doe's regime (Creative Associates International, 1997).

The majority of non-Krahns, including other indigenous people and the Americo-Liberians, were ill-treated. Doe filled the Armed Forces of Liberia with many of his own Krahn tribesmen. All political allies and henchmen who tried to oppose

his leadership were savagely punished. In the process Doe dismissed the director of the General Services Agency, Charles Taylor, whom Doe accused of embezzlement. Taylor fled to the United States where he was imprisoned, but broke out of prison in September 1985. In Liberia, Doe's regime became more brutal; human rights violations, nepotism and cronyism were its hallmarks.

The growing discontent of indigenous groups other than the Krahn ethnic group peaked with a coup attempt against Samuel Doe's government in 1985. A former Army Commanding General, Thomas Quiwonkpa attempted a coup d'état and nearly toppled the government of Samuel Doe. This aborted coup heightened the lingering ethnic tensions among indigenous Liberians, which began when Samuel Doe seized power in 1980 (Noble, 1990; Gershoni, 1996).

The Krahn-dominated Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) repelled Quiwonkpa's attack and executed him in Monrovia. As a result of the failed coup against Doe's government, about 3,000 Mano and Gio civilians were also slaughtered by soldiers loyal to Doe; the chief reason of such a massacre being that the officers who masterminded the coup hailed from Nimba County, populated largely by Mano and Gio people (Adebajo, as cited in Call, 2010).

The international community, especially the United States did not help Liberian people to end this cruel dictatorship of Samuel Doe. Actually, the American apathy vis-à-vis the plight of the victims of Doe's predatory regime, had a strategic undertone. Liberia was used by Americans as a base and stopover for certain military campaigns in Libya and Angola. In the meanwhile, Charles Taylor secured aid from Libya (where he was trained in guerrilla warfare), Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso to topple Doe's regime (Mekenkamp, et al., 1999).

1.4.2 Liberia from 1989 to 2003: The years of the gruesome civil war

The Liberian civil war was a 'greed and grievance' conflict, abusively used by predatory warlords for personal enrichment, and where most fighters including child-soldiers were largely pawns (Reno, 1998; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Ross, 2004; Muntschick, 2008; Hegre, Østby & Raleigh, 2009; Call, 2010).

The rebel leader Charles Taylor and a small group of 150 to 167 Libyan-trained rebels launched an incursion from neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire on 24 December 1989 under the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) (Mekenkamp, et al., 1999; Human Rights Watch, 2004; Williamson & Carter, 2005; Dennis, 2006; Hull, 2008; Fearon, Humphreys & Weinstein, 2009; Call, 2010). In the years that followed, that seemingly mere rebel attack grew into a full-blown civil war by 1995 with the active involvement of seven major warring factions including NPFL, National Patriotic Front of Liberia-Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC), Lofa Defence Force (LDF), Liberian Peace Council (LPC), Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy-Johnson (ULIMO-J) led by Roosevelt Johnson, United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy-Kromah (ULIMO-K) led by Alhaji Kromah, offshoots of an original United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO). The Economic Community of West Africa States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), though beset by internal crises, was able to temporarily stabilize Monrovia from 1990 through 1995 (Creative Associates International, 1997:6).

In September 1995, the seven factions agreed to form the Liberian Council of State following the Abuja Peace Accord. This agreement did not prevent the war from continuing and to reach its escalation stage characterized by the deadliest battles in 1996. But the warring parties' compliance with a supplement to the Abuja agreement paved the way for multiparty presidential elections in July 1997. International election observers declared that the elections were free and fair. Charles Taylor was elected as president of Liberia. In September 1997, the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) withdrew from the country. On 1 November 1997, the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Liberia (UNOL) was established to assist the Liberian Government to consolidate the hard-earned peace.

The peacebuilding efforts were seriously hindered by the inability of the government and the opposition to resolve their differences over key governance issues. The government's policy of exclusion and harassment of political

opponents, and the systematic abuses of human rights, especially by government militias and security agencies, gravely affected national reconciliation. This situation, coupled with the absence of an effective security sector reform, allowed for the resumption of the civil war in Liberia.

Two rebel groups namely the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) emerged in 1999 and 2002 respectively, and vowed to overthrow President Taylor's regime, and fighting intensified (Human Rights Watch, 2004). The LURD rebels were erstwhile adherents of the various former warring factions that participated in the first part of the civil war (1989-1997), and were excluded from the armed and security forces of Liberia when President Taylor took office.

Following several abortive attempts by civil society organizations to promote dialogue between the Government of Liberia (GoL) and the rebel movements, the King of Morocco initiated a confidence-building process. All efforts to get the international community more involved to settle the Liberian crisis in 2002 through the Mano River Union (MRU) failed. At the Heads of State summit in Rabat, a 10-member International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) established in New York under the co-chairmanship of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the European Union (EU), ended up in a stalemate. On 17 June 2003, a ceasefire agreement and cessation of hostilities was signed between GoL, LURD and MODEL in Accra.

1.4.3 The birth of ECOMIL and Charles Taylor's exile

A joint UN-AU-ECOWAS Multidisciplinary Needs Assessment Mission dispatched to Liberia by the United Nations Secretary-General from 4-9 May 2003, described the prevailing conditions in Liberia as not conducive to hold elections scheduled for October 2003 by Charles Taylor's government. On 29 July 2003, in a letter to the President of the Security Council (SC), the Secretary-General outlined a three-phased deployment of international troops to Liberia, to

include an ECOWAS vanguard force, followed by a reinforced multinational force, which in turn would be relieved by a United Nations peacekeeping operation. The deployment of the first troops of the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL) began on schedule on 4 August. On 11 August, President Taylor handed over power to the Vice-President and departed Liberia for exile in Nigeria.

1.4.4 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)

On 18 August 2003, after 16 failed peace agreements in total, at ECOWAS-led peace talks in Accra, the parties to the conflict in Liberia (GoL, LURD and MODEL) and political parties signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which led to an immediate end to the war (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, 2009). Key terms of the peace agreement pertinent to this study included:

- (a) Commitment of the parties to the implementation of a process of Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation and Reintegration (DDRR)¹²
- (b) Call for the establishment of an Implementation Monitoring Committee (IMC) to ensure effective and faithful implementation of the Agreement;
- (c) Establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

On 19 September 2003, the Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) for an initial period until 30 September 2004. The UNMIL's mandate was to support the implementation of the ceasefire agreement, develop an action plan as soon as possible, in cooperation with the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC), relevant international financial institutions, international development organizations and donor nations.. The action plan was meant for the implementation of a disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) programme for fighters of all armed parties to the conflict, with particular attention to the special needs of 'child combatants and women'. The action plan was also designed to address issues related to non-Liberian

¹² The following acronyms: DDR, DDRR, DDRRR and IDDR refer to the transitional processes through which fighters are expected to regain their civilian status after the war. While the 'Ds' chronologically represent Disarmament and Demobilization, the 'Rs' stand for Repatriation, Reinsertion, Rehabilitation and Reintegration. See Glossary in Appendix 1 for the definitions.

combatants and to carry out voluntary disarmament by systematically collecting and destroying weapons and ammunition (United Nations-DPKO, 2004).

1.5 Did children really wield guns during the Liberian civil war?

1.5.1 Liberian children: Apparently innocent but actually killing machines

During the Liberian civil war, each of the warring factions made extensive and intensive use of child-soldiers (Mekenkamp, et al., 1999; Grinker, 2004; Singer, 2006; Fernandes, 2010). Notwithstanding the lack of fixed statistics which quite often characterizes research in armed conflict contexts (Wells, 2009), it was estimated that 21,000 child-soldiers including 8,500 girl-soldiers were actively involved in the war (Save the Children-UK, 2005; Singer, 2006). Some child-soldiers were as young as seven years old (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2004). The first part of the civil war alone saw the active participation of 6,000 to 15,000 child-soldiers (Kelly, as cited in Human Rights Watch, 2004). Failed attempts to disarm, demobilize, rehabilitate and reintegrate the fighters paved the way for cases of re-enlistment and re-recruitment of former child-soldiers (Human Rights Watch, as cited in Human Rights Watch, 2004).

Child-soldiers were used as infantry shock troops, raiders, sentries, spies, sappers, sneakers, thieves, aides de camps, camp sentries or prisoners' guards, for weapon maintenance, and on the battlefields (David, 1998; Singer, 2006). As Jaye (2009:7) pointed out, child-soldiers were "the primary fighters in the first phase of the Liberian conflict." They were also used to commit egregious crimes such as rape and murder (Mugaga, 2010). But child-soldiers' ghastly and overt involvement in cannibalism¹³ during the war (Associated Press, 2008; Hudson, 2008; Paye-Layleh, 2008; Fernandes, 2010), was one of the grimmest realities of the Liberian conflict. A survey conducted by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, revealed that about 3.2 percent of Liberian child-soldiers were traumatized as a result of their involvement in cannibalism (Deng, 2001). Through

¹³ For details on 'cannibalism' in Liberia, see Ellis' (1999) book: *The mask of anarchy: The destruction of Liberia and the religious dimension of an African civil war*.

these macabre practices they were involved in during the war, their total identification with their commanders (Hundeide, 2003), and the fighting names they were willingly or forcefully given (Human Rights Watch, 1994; Human Rights Watch, 2004), some of these young veterans have been trapped in a web of identity hurdles clogging their post-conflict social inclusion.

After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), out of the 21,000 child-soldiers who were to be officially demobilized (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2004), only 8,771 boy-soldiers and 2,511 girl-soldiers underwent the process (Williamson & Carter, 2005:xi).

1.5.2 From child-soldiers to young veterans

The Liberian fighters, children or adults, underwent a series of DDRR programmes. Between 1994 and 1997 there were cases of spontaneous demobilization of fighters, and official attempts to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate former combatants into the society. These first peace initiatives which took place after the 1993 peace agreement in Cotonou (Republic of Benin), were hindered by contextual, organizational and financial constraints (endogenous and exogenous).

The second official DDRR took place between December 2003 and October 2004. Although this second DDRR was also marred with irregularities, there was an improvement as it seems it did not suffer the same major setbacks as the first one. Child-soldiers were amongst the fighters who underwent these processes, both the failed and the successful ones (Jaye, 2009).

1.5.2.1 The first Liberian DDRR: A humanitarian imbroglio

The first disarmament and demobilization began with spontaneous demobilization of a few combatants between 1994 and 1996. But the first official demobilization which lasted from November 1996 to February 1997, saw the participation of 21,315 fighters, including 4,306 child-soldiers (Peters & Law, 2003; Adebajo, as cited in Jaye, 2009). But about 1,000 ‘demobilized child-soldiers’ were thought to

be ‘fake child-soldiers’ (street children) “attracted by the demobilization package” and another 300 demobilized children were believed to have gone through the process twice. From the foregoing numerical inconsistencies, it can be concluded that about 3,000 child-soldiers actually went through this first official DDRR process (Peters & Law, 2003:21).

The first DDRR process was impeded by ongoing fighting among the factions. The prevailing climate of insecurity allowed for the looting and destruction of the DDRR program offices (UNOSSA, as cited in Jaye, 2009). The program was also cramped by “severe logistic, financial and manpower constraints” (Jaye, 2009:6). But further to the Abuja II Agreement of 1996, the program resumed. It was implemented in three stages:

- The first stage comprised the disarmament, registration, interview and counselling of former combatants.
- The second stage focused on absorbing the disarmed fighters into work and training programmes called “bridging activities” (Jaye, 2009:6).
- The third stage of the DDRR programme involved the “longer-term and more complex process” of reintegration (UNSC, as cited in Jaye, 2009:6). During this first exercise, both adult and child fighters were demobilized in the same sites.

Referring to child-soldiers, Jaye (2009:7) pointed out that:

After handing in the weapons, they [child-soldiers] were registered and asked to provide their names and ages and to identify the armed faction with which they fought. A photograph was taken and an ID card [Identity Card] provided. Due to misinformation and fear about the process, some children gave false information about themselves ... and most never entered the process [programme] at all.

According to Jaye (2009:7), three interrelated factors militated against child-soldiers’ effective participation in the first DDRR. First, some child-soldiers voluntarily and independently decided to return to their communities of origin. This is self-demobilization. Secondly, ECOMOG troops conducting the registration operations were perceived by child-soldiers as the enemies they had fought; and indeed evidence is available that ECOMOG soldiers engaged in

combat with child-soldiers in Liberia (Cohn, as cited in Malan, 2000). Child-soldiers were therefore reluctant to participate in the operations. Thirdly, there was a general belief among some child-soldiers (probably those who had combat fatigue) that registering could mean returning to the battlefield. Although the demobilization of both the child-soldiers and adult-fighters took place in the same place, the fate of demobilized child-soldiers was to a certain extent technically different from that of the adults afterwards.

Child-soldiers who went through the DDRR process could choose to work on plantations, mining areas or company camps; live with friends or on their own; stay in transit centres while their families were being traced for reunification; or stay with their parents or families (Peters, as cited in Jaye, 2009).

Child-soldiers who stayed “at the transit centres benefited from the UNICEF-organized program for war-affected youth, which included vocational and literacy training and trauma counselling” (UNSC, as cited in Jaye, 2009:7). Agencies and NGOs including Don Bosco, Calvary Chapel and Save the Children were the main actors in transit centres. But as Jaye (2009:8) clearly observed:

Although these centers were supposed to help children go through the transition from military to civilian life, there is little evidence to indicate whether those who spent time at the transit centers did or did not return to fighting during the next phase of war, which started in 1999.

Peters (in Jaye, 2009:8), disclosed some hindrances to reintegration in the first phase of the DDRR programme. He pointed out that both child and adult ex-fighters encountered similar societal acceptance obstacles:

- “Conflicting perceptions between ex-fighters (seeking gratitude for their heroic deeds) and civilians (seeking apologies and repentance);
- Emotional and psychological scarring of civilians and ex-combatants due to the extreme violence of the fighting and the high level of atrocities that occurred;
- Inability of families to support ex-combatants due to health problems, lack of shelter and high unemployment of their own; and,

- Legacies of ethnic tensions.”

The acceptance of young veterans into their communities of origin, which is fundamental in any post-conflict reconciliation project, was not restricted to parental or family circles. It involved community elders, chiefs and faith communities, for example secret societies and churches (Peters, as cited in Jaye, 2009). The comatose economy, the fragile state of receiving communities into which ex-fighters were to be reintegrated, and the lack of professional qualification, were other external factors hindering the smooth return of young veterans to their communities of origin in this first phase of DDRR (Jaye, 2009).

1.5.2.2 The second DDRR programme: Not a full success story

The second and more major DDRR programme took place between December 2003 and October 2004. It was implemented by the Joint Implementation Unit (JIU), including the DDRR unit of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL). The National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR), representing the transitional government, coordinated the programme activities in accordance with the terms of the CPA.

While disarmament and demobilization aimed at making former fighters turn in their weapons and go through a disengagement process, the rehabilitation and reintegration components, which revolved around “formal education, vocational training and social reintegration”, sought to enable former fighters to “become useful citizens in the larger society” (UNDP Liberia, as cited in Jaye, 2009:12).

1.5.2.2.1 Disarmament and Demobilization

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1509 (2003)¹⁴ legally established the DDRR programme in Liberia. The aim was to disarm and

¹⁴ For a full copy of the resolution, visit http://www.dgvn.de/fileadmin/user_upload/DOKUMENTE/UN-Dokumente_zB_Resolutionen/Liberia_SRes1509.pdf, accessed on 15.05. 2012.

demobilize fighters of the various warring factions including, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), Government of Liberia (GoL), LURD, MODEL, militias and paramilitary forces. Another key role of this programme was “the preparation of sustainable social and economic reintegration of former combatants in support of long-term peace and security in the country” (Alusula, 2008:6).

A first round of disarmament and demobilization started on 7 December 2003 but was quickly marred by grave irregularities including violence and looting at the cantonments sites. The violence that took place at ‘Camp Schieffelin’ typifies these irregularities:

Government fighters, angry at not being paid immediately for turning in their weapons, beat people and fired guns into the air at the disarmament camp. When UNMIL began disarmament, hundreds of fighters armed with AK-47’s, rocket-propelled grenades and mortars gathered at Camp Schieffelin, 35 miles east of Monrovia, to turn in their weapons and receive US \$300 [USD300]. The riots began when they found out they would receive only US \$150 [USD150] and the other US \$ 150 [USD150] at the end of a three-week demobilization program (New York Times, as cited in Alusula, 2008:8).

The incident at Camp Schieffelin was blamed on UNMIL. The mission’s haste and carelessness when trying “to prove to the international community that they possessed the capacity to undertake such a task [disarmament]” accounted for this violence (Alusula, 2008:9).

These irregularities were also as a result of the sudden high turnout of former fighters, the lack of preparation and sensitization, the inadequate security measures, the disregard for local perspective and knowledge, and most importantly, the initial attempt of the United Nations to use a “one size fits all” approach, by trying to use in Liberia, the DDRR model followed in the neighbouring Sierra Leone (Jaye, 2009:12-13).

The disarmament process was characterized by statistical discrepancies, and as Alusula (2008:10) pointed out, “Liberian disarmament process exposed a complex

interrelationship between expected outcomes and the real outcome.”¹⁵ The demobilization was also inadequate. The reintegration and reintegration phase, was more defective than the ‘DD’ phase; it is no surprise he described the former as rehabilitation and reintegration “hurdles” (Alusula, 2008:13)

Actually a successful disarmament and demobilization process must hinge upon “adequate in-house expertise, preparation and consultation with national, UN and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners, and the commitment of the parties to the peace agreement” (United Nations-DPKO, as cited in Jaye, 2009:13).

Besides, the United Nations disregarded the policy guidelines which stipulated that fighters from the three armed factions, signatories to the CPA, namely MODEL, LURD and GoL should concomitantly go through the process. The violence and the pandemonium which broke out in the cantonment sites stemmed from the United Nations’ decision to start the programme activities with only pro-government fighters. The marginalization of armed factions’ political and military leaders at the planning and execution stages of the activities also contributed to the chaotic beginning of the process. Although considered as an aborted disarmament and demobilization, about 13,490 fighters were disarmed (Jaye, 2009).

But the active involvement of commanders who were charged to get the information to their followers, coupled with a UNMIL public information campaign (International Alert, as cited in Jaye, 2009), paved the way for another more successful disarmament and demobilization operation which began on 15 April 2004. Paradoxically, from a projected figure of 38,000 combatants to be disarmed and demobilized, at the end of March 2005, approximately 101,495 demobilized fighters were registered. Such numerical discrepancies according to Jaye (2009:13) resulted from “the lack of reliable data from armed groups about the number of fighters and the fact that many people who were not ex-combatants

¹⁵ For details see the JIU statistics and Alusula’s (2008:10-12) analysis.

registered to be in the program for the benefits”. This is a perfect example of grassroots war-profiteering as described in Chapter Five of this thesis.

1.5.2.2.2 Rehabilitation and Reintegration

Rehabilitation comprised psychosocial and trauma counselling, vocational and formal training. There were three categories of rehabilitation training opportunities including:

Formal education at primary, secondary and university levels; vocational training; and apprenticeship. The vocational skills training included, but was not limited to, agriculture, auto mechanics, pastry, tailoring and tie-dye. The ex-fighters were given an opportunity to choose or identify their training preferences. About 40 percent chose formal education, and the remaining 60 percent chose training programs, such as auto mechanics, tailoring, agriculture and masonry (UNMIL, as cited in Jaye, 2009:16).

By August 2007, approximately 66,000 demobilized of the total 101,874 completed or were still undergoing vocational training or educational programmes (Jaye, 2009). But, one cardinal component of the rehabilitation process, which is psychosocial counselling, was ignored in the programme, even during pre-discharge orientation (Jarbo, as cited in Jaye, 2009). “Even though there was evidence that ex-fighters, including child-soldiers, were forced to use marijuana and other drugs during the war years, very little was done to address this as part of the rehabilitation process” (Jaye, 2009:17). Some officials of the United Nations echoed this laxity vis-à-vis psychosocial counselling by pointing out that “there was not enough money in the US\$681[USD681] million budget for UNMIL for the year 2005 to offer drug screening for the ex-fighters” (Gelfand, as cited in Jaye, 2009:17).

The result of such disregard for former jungle drug addicts in post-conflict communities was recurrent crime and its attendant consequences. Actually, most ex-fighters were released into urban areas where they thoughtlessly and extravagantly squandered the money they were given during demobilization, thus

plunging themselves into a financial crunch which hindered those who might have been willing, from returning home (Jaye, 2009).

Besides, while some former combatants felt they were “forced into unskilled labor market,” and needed to become mendicants in order to survive, others, who felt “stigmatized and marginalized” organized themselves into “self-help groups,” such as the National Ex-Combatants Peacebuilding Initiatives (NEPI) actively involved in psychosocial and post-war peacebuilding programmes (Jaye, 2009:17-18).

The DDRR process as carried out in Liberia was fundamentally and monumentally flawed, and both beneficiaries and implementing partners reckoned with this fact. The following illuminating account attests to this:

While the DD process was relatively successful with regard to the incentives that were immediately made available to those who willingly surrendered their arms, this seems not to have been the case with the RR process that is equally a crucial element for the long-term human security of the country ... Unlike in the DD phase where ex-combatants were paid US \$ 300 [USD300] in a relatively short timeframe, in the RR phase they were paid US \$ 30 [USD30] per month, besides being fed and housed by training institutions. This resulted in many ex-combatants opting to earn their own living as an alternative to RR. “After all during the 6 – 8 months training in the RR phases one is only paid US\$ 30 [USD30] while out here I am able to earn the same amount in only a week or two, by tapping rubber.” This was a response from one of the dropouts of the DDRR programme, who had given up after the DD phase ... Even so, not all those who undertake the entire DDRR process to the end, get to do meaningful trade. A number of them sell their reinsertion kits for meagre sums of money, to those already with established business, and go about doing nothing. ... one member of the Joint Implementation Unit (JIU) remarked that it is in fact better that some of the ex-combatants quickly found alternatives rather than DDRR, and are able to survive on their own, as it helps in severing their dependence on JIU... part of the ex-combatants’ high failure in reintegration is insufficient psychosocial timeframe due to very short demobilisation timeframe ... it is impossible to demobilize in five days, someone who has fought for fourteen years, as this has consequences on the capacity of participants to adapt to their new environment during reintegration (Alusula, 2008:13-14).

1.5.2.2.3 Second Liberian child-soldiers' disarmament and demobilization

As pointed out earlier, this phase of disarmament and demobilisation was also characterized by conflicting figures. For instance, while according to UNICEF (in Jaye, 2009), of the 11,780 child-soldiers who were disarmed and demobilized, only 36 were reunited with their families, UNMIL (in Jaye, 2009) reported that 10,972 child-soldiers, including 8,532 boy-soldiers and 2,440 girl-soldiers were disarmed and demobilized.

Such a difference in figures is not peculiar to Liberia but is typical of most numerical estimations in war-torn countries (Wells, 2009). During this disarmament and demobilization exercise, child-soldiers were separated from other ex-combatants (SECE, as cited in Jaye, 2009). The demobilized child-soldiers were directly given cash payments by UNMIL, that is, part of the "expected US\$300 [USD300] total payment to all combatants" (Martin & Lumeya, as cited in Jaye, 2009:15).

1.5.2.2.3.1 Practicalities and technicalities of child-soldiers' disarmament and demobilization

At the end of the civil war in Liberia in 2003, about 21,000 child-soldiers needed to be demobilized (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2004:76). Prior to the official disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programme, precisely between October and November 2003, there were child-soldiers who spontaneously expressed their desire to be demobilized. Consequently, child protection agencies such as UNICEF and Save the Children swung into action by supporting those child-soldiers. But the actual official DDRR commenced in December 2003 with the formal release of children from armed groups and forces.

UNICEF coordinated the DDRR programme while the 'access budget' and the 'Trust Fund' for the programme were managed by UNMIL and UNDP respectively (Landry, 2006:10). A Liberian company, the 'Liberia Crusaders for Peace' (LCP), was hired and trained by UNICEF to conduct preparatory field

visits across the country with the aim of informing communities of the terms and conditions of the DDRR on the one hand, and encouraging child-soldiers' participation in the programme on the other hand. In the designated disarmament and demobilization centres, a child protection agency (e.g. Save the Children), was appointed to lead field operations (Landry, 2006).

- **Stage one: Disarmament**

Ex-combatants, both former adult and child-soldiers were asked to gather at designated pick-up points from where they were conveyed to disarmament centres. At the disarmament centres, weapons were collected from all of them (those having weapons at the time of disarmament). At that juncture, disarmed child-soldiers were separated from adult ex-combatants, identified and led to specific transit centres. The disarmament operation was carried out in the presence of a child protection officer whose duty consisted of observing and ensuring that the Cape Town Principles¹⁶ were adequately applied (Landry, 2006).

- **Stage two: Demobilization**

The demobilization of disarmed child-soldiers comprised activities in transit centres (cantonment sites), Interim Care Centres (ICCs), drop-in centres in lieu of ICCs, and mop-up centres.

- **Transit centres**

At the transit centres, disarmed child-soldiers were registered, photographed and issued identity cards. Girls and boys had separate facilities. Reported activities performed in the transit centres included initial counseling, medical screening and recreational activities. After former child-soldiers had been briefed on the DDRR

¹⁶ As part of the effort to deal with the growing problem of children serving in armed forces, UNICEF convoked a symposium in April 1997 called the "Cape Town Principles and Best Practices on the Recruitment of Children into the Armed Forces and on Demobilization and Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Africa." The Cape Town Principles emerged from this symposium (http://www.hrea.org/index.php?doc_id=251). For details see [http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/Cape_Town_Principles_\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/emerg/files/Cape_Town_Principles_(1).pdf)

procedures, each of them received a certificate. A child protection officer was present in each transit centre on a 24-hour-a-day basis to perform the same duty as during the disarmament stage (Landry, 2006).

- **From transit centres to Interim Care Centres**

From the transit centres, former child-soldiers were taken to one of the 28 Interim Care Centres (ICCs) and one drop-in centre spread across the country and located in eight regions including Monrovia (8), Bomi (4), Voinjama (4), Buchanan (4), Bong (4), Zwedru (2), Ganta (2) and Harper (1 drop-in centre).

During their 12-week stay in the ICCs, former child-soldiers' families were traced. Former child-soldiers were provided with psychosocial support, healthcare, food, water, shelter, services for special needs, career guidance, life-skills training, and educational and recreational activities.

By December 2004 when activities in all ICCs ended, it was reported that 90 percent of the disarmed and demobilized child-soldiers had been reunited with their families, while the remaining 10 percent were placed with host families (Landry, 2006:10).

I contend that the disarmament and demobilization process as described above is a 'humanitarian embellishment' at least for some young veterans for a few reasons. The length of time spent in the centres and the activities carried out therein raise two crucial questions. To what extent have the above-mentioned activities in cantonment sites and ICCs transformed former child-soldiers within a space of 12 weeks, at least the lucky ones who passed through the process? Why was it that some child-soldiers who took part in the process became embittered and regretted having done so? Another confusing aspect of the process is the actual number of demobilized child-soldiers who were reunited with their families. UNICEF (in Jaye, 2009:14) mentioned that only 36 former child-soldiers were reunited with their families; Landry (2006:10) indicated that 90 percent of former child-soldiers were reunited with their families. Considering the number of child-soldiers that

were demobilized, 90 percent cannot be equal to 36 demobilized child-soldiers. Even without taking into consideration such numerical differences, the aftermath of this life in Interim Care Centres has yet to be properly explored.

- Drop-in centres in lieu of ICCs

The lack of resources, infrastructure insufficiency, and the fact that most child-soldiers to be demobilized were already living with their families, led to the creation of drop-in centres in Lofa, Nimba, Maryland, Sinoe, River Gee, Grand Kru, and Gbarpolu counties. The drop-in centres provided accommodation for former child-soldiers who were living with commanders and needed to be separated, or those whose families were to be traced. In the drop-in centres, former child-soldiers were also provided with psychosocial care and recreational activities (Landry, 2006:10).

- Mop-up centres for Disarmament and Demobilization

Mop-up centres were temporary structures created by UNMIL for instant disarmament and demobilization process in Sinoe and Grand Kru counties, and some parts of Lofa County. These centres were created because of long distances and poor roads leading to the designated areas. The disarmament and demobilization exercise was conducted for a maximum period of two weeks in each area. Disarmed child-soldiers were not provided with psychosocial counselling and medical screening at these centres (Landry, 2006:11).

Each demobilized child-soldier was given a transitional allowance of USD 300 paid in two instalments after he/she has been reunited with his/her family. Without the psychosocial care and medical screening, one may wonder what these former child-soldiers would actually become in their respective communities with USD 300, an amount of money which in some cases constituted a source of tension between former child-soldiers and family members (Dallaire, 2010).

1.6 Statement of the problem

As demonstrated in the literature (see Chapters One and Two), the DDRR process which represented the official transition of child-soldiers from the military to civilian life, was fraught with defects, and therefore could not fully achieve its goals. Such a situation indubitably set the stage for the misery of demobilized child-soldiers and their respective communities. The process was vitiated by many factors including war-profiteering. For instance, Jaye (2009:15) revealed that:

Because of lax criteria for entry into the DDRR program and a strong command structure still enforced in many areas, it was soon apparent that former commanders were sending not only former child combatants but their own children and other children in their communities to the cantonment sites just to collect payment for the commanders' own gain.

Dallaire (2010), in an illuminating observation, blatantly exposed the bad faith and the obscurantism which characterize the intervention of the majority of humanitarian organizations and agencies involved in post-conflict recovery. With particular focus on the United Nations, Dallaire (2010:154) stated that:

Generally speaking, the people running the show on all sides—both the strategic bodies, such as the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Security Council, which produce the peacekeeping mandates, and the field missions that attempt to enforce them and are always hard-pressed by and resources to produce tangible near-term results—regard child soldiers as an annoyance, a pain in the side, a social-adjustment meriting a minimum of effort. The UN can only push an agenda if it has buy-in from its member nations, and if child soldiers are not a priority for those nation states, funding and resources for DDR programmes can be hard to maintain. In case that seems inexplicable to you, remember that child soldiers may have better access to food and medicine inside their armed groups than they will have after they've been repatriated to their home communities, and both the children and the people who attempt to demobilize them know that.

Dallaire (2010), a former insider of the United Nations system, and a General who commanded the United Missions in Rwanda, before becoming a researcher and author, has a wealth of experience in the field of peacekeeping. His revealing position on the long-standing flaws which obstruct the smooth demobilization and

reintegration of child-soldiers, in his book *They Fight Like Soldiers, They Die Like Children*, ought not to be treated with levity. His sagacious analyses which stem from experiences drawn from both the field and his leadership position, constitute an early warning about child-soldiers' fate in post-war communities.

Lessons learned from the evaluation of post-war reconstruction programmes in Liberia revealed that many organizations intervening in the country evaluate programmes by mostly focusing on the process and not on essential outcomes. It is imperative to find out how impactful projects are on beneficiaries and not only on how fast they have been implemented. It is important to try to reconcile efficiency and effectiveness during the implementation of such projects, especially by focussing on individual beneficiaries. Unfortunately the competition among humanitarian organizations and NGOs (Aldashev & Verdier, 2008; Nunnenkamp & Öhler, 2010) at times undermines true changes which should actually take place almost on the individual level. As Fearon, Humphreys and Weinstein (2009:52) argued:

We need to focus on substantive outcomes, not just process. Most evaluation still focuses on how well programs are implemented and not on whether they have an effect. This needs to change ... Researchers and practitioners will need to further innovate in the measurement of outcomes such as social conflict, social cohesion, and political values and beliefs. While attitudinal surveys remain standard, our results suggest that they may fail to pick up underlying behavioural change.

Literature on child-soldiering does not focus on the young veterans' agency to create conditions for their acceptance into the society. The available body of writing which has been vastly dominated by the description of young veterans as social misfits makes people have an apocalyptic view of these former young combatants. It can be argued that, to a certain degree, owing to the gruesome and barbarous roles child-soldiers played during the war, and what their economic and social reintegration "in an environment of collapsed infrastructure, insufficient public institutions ... lack of professional skills as well as weak capacity of local

implementing partners” (Alusula, 2008:16) requires, such a description is not erroneous. But leaving such positions unchallenged would be.

However there has been a gradual shift from such victimhood-centred description of child-soldiers to more agency-centred literature whereby child-soldiers are perceived not only as victims but also as perpetrators. Child-soldiers’ agency so far examined tends to focus more on ‘tactical agency’ and ‘strategic agency’. Both forms of agency are expressed within the military environment, and encompass child-soldiers’ coping and survival mechanisms. These are types of agency which mostly focus on child-soldiers’ active involvement in war.

Despite this scholarly work on aspects of child-soldiers’ agency, it seems there is a paucity of writing on child-soldiers’ agency during their transition from military to civilian life and their reintegration into the post-conflict communities, especially a mid-term insight into their self-perceived agency. Although some aspects of this latter agency of child-soldiers have been researched, its other dimensions and their impact on the transformation of former child-soldiers need some research.

Without radically departing from previous agency-centred lines of thought, it is the premise of this research to attempt a mid-term insight into former child-soldiers’ agency towards their reintegration into the post-conflict Liberia, precisely the relationship between their agency and self-perceived transformation.

This will help initiate a new agency-centred scholarly debate on child-soldiering. I contend that the overemphasis of the literature on the vulnerability of former child-soldiers, instead of redeeming the latter from their real predicaments, has rather paved the way for war-profiteering and an unjust disregard for young veterans’ agency.

Taking the young veterans’ own stories as the point of departure, this research tries not to totally disprove previous knowledge through which negative labels were foisted on young veterans, but to show through empirical evidence that there is an alternative to such knowledge. A shift in the discourse pertaining to child-

soldiering is needed. Young veterans' self-agency in negotiating their social inclusion should be considered as a topical area of research.

1.7 Aims and goals of the study

This study does not seek to completely chide, excoriate or exculpate humanitarian agencies and organizations and Liberian parastatals and authorities for the roles they played at various levels, during the planning and the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of former fighters including child-soldiers. Rather, it aims to pinpoint some of the defects and flaws that marred the process, thereby situating responsibilities, and most importantly, justifying this study.

The overarching aim of this research is to prove that there is an alternative to the societal and scholarly apocalyptic view of young veterans. Far from uncritically corroborating previous works done in the field of child-soldiering, which always tried to consider young veterans as incapable of positively exercising their agency in post-conflict society, this research seeks to unearth some of the young veterans' hidden self-agency traits.

Drawing on the Liberian case, this study aims to demonstrate, based on the young veterans' own stories, how through agency, jungle ties and instrumental coalitions in the post-conflict damaged society, they were able to negotiate their civilian identity, social acceptance and create comfortable and conformable spaces for themselves, in the midst of stigmatization and marginalization. It equally seeks to bring out the relationships between young veterans' jungle camaraderie and their post-conflict social ties, and the new power dynamics embedded in such relationships.

What are the relational links young veterans have had with their former comrades and commanders of the jungle and on what grounds? What identities have they been building in their post-war communities? What are their perspectives on the

future based on previous experiences? Answers to this pool of questions are specific goals of this study.

In a more schematic form, the overall aim of this study is to grasp the interconnectedness between young veterans' experiential perceptions of their transition from military to civilian life; social ties (coalitions and alliances); and perspectives on their future; their self-agency, and decision making in post-conflict societies. The following are the specific objectives:

- (a) To document young veterans' experiences and related meanings of the transition from military to civilian life;
- (b) To identify their existing or newly built social ties in the post-conflict community, the rationale behind such ties and the power dynamics embedded in these ties;
- (c) To unearth the link between young veterans' agency, the formation of coalitions and alliances, and identity shift;
- (d) To unpack the lessons learned by young veterans from their war and post-war experiences, including the DDRR process, and how these lessons orient their perspectives on the future and decision making;
- (e) To show the existence of a multilayered phenomenon of war-profiteering, and its unavoidable influence on research practice in war-torn zones.

1.8 A synoptic overview of the thesis

This thesis is made up of eleven chapters divided into two major parts. The first part comprises chapters one to four and focuses on theoretical and methodological aspects of the thesis. The second part comprises chapters five to eleven, and deals with analytical issues.

Chapter One presents a cursory research story, a historical and geographical overview of the country of study, that is Liberia, the civil war that ravaged the country from 1989 to 2003, children's involvement in the war and the route to the hard-earned Comprehensive Peace Agreement. This chapter also contains the

statement of research problem, the overall aim and the specific goals pursued in this study.

Chapter Two explores the available body of writing on child-soldiering in its spatial and temporal dimensions. It also highlights the root causes of the phenomenon of child-soldiering, the roles of child-soldiers within armed groups and forces, the impacts of child-soldiering on individual child-soldiers and their communities, the process of disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of child-soldiers.

Chapter Three focuses on the paradigmatic and theoretical frameworks within which the research is undertaken. It examines the worldview from which knowledge is produced through this research, which is interpretive constructivism. Knowledge in this study is viewed as a product of the interaction between the researcher and research participants. The chapter also highlights some micro-sociological theories considered as useful tools to think with and to explain the phenomenon under study. Emphasis is placed on symbolic interactionism, Social Identity Theory, Expectancy Theory, and the Sociometer Theory. The chapter finally examines key concepts which serve also as explanatory instruments, including the Foucauldian technologies of the self, self-agency, identity, self, instrumental coalition and life-world.

Chapter Four highlights the qualitative approach used, that is the Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA), methods, sampling strategies and data analysis procedures utilized.

Chapter Five examines some peculiar aspects of conducting qualitative research in war-affected countries. It captures factors on macro and micro levels which may impinge on the research process, including but not limited to war-profiteering. It presents the influence of war-profiteering on research relationship negotiation in war-torn countries. The chapter ends with a discussion of ethical issues including researcher and researched protection on the one hand, and

possible impacts and risks of promises made to research participants during data collection, on subsequent studies whether these promises are fulfilled or not.

Chapter Six presents the nexus between self-agency, the technologies of the self and the construction of active identities. This chapter also unveils the sociability and existential crisis threatening African state and guerrilla armies, as well as how the resultant identity crisis affected the identity of child-soldiers associated with them, with gruesome war practices such as cannibalism. The chapter equally captures how, despite this bleak description, former child-soldiers through their self-agency emerged and exhibited prosocial behaviour.

Chapter Seven examines the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration processes particularly with regard to their strength and weaknesses, as revealed through former child-soldiers' own stories. It equally uncovers the negative influence of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the implementation of such processes. The chapter also presents the symbolic meaning former child-soldiers had of the disarmament, and how they negotiated new forms of power after losing the one previously derived from their jungle guns.

Chapter Eight highlights issues related to ties among former child-soldiers on the one hand, and among former child-soldiers and their former commanders on the other hand, and how these ties were used in improving their living conditions. The chapter also shows whether the destruction of command structures envisaged by DDRR officials has always been effective or not in the post-conflict society.

Chapter Nine focuses on power relations among former child-soldiers and their peers and commanders. The chapter also highlights the role played by individual or collective agency to make new power differentials possible, and how these power differentials were actively negotiated.

Chapter Ten sheds light on how, in the midst of the post-war chaos, young veterans built hope for themselves and developed a sense of patriotism.

Chapter Eleven, which is the conclusion, presents salient points of the analytical chapters of the research and suggests areas which need to be studied by researchers interested in the child-soldiering phenomenon.

CHAPTER TWO

Scholarship Review: Unpacking child-soldiering — history, geography, practice, preventive mechanisms, consequences and proffered solutions

2.1 Introduction

Although child-soldiering appears to be a recent global phenomenon, its topical nature has made it the subject of a growing number of debates, studies, fora, and conferences over the last two decades (Machel, 2001; Wessells, 2002; Singer, 2006; Honwana, 2006; Cahn, 2006; Wells, 2009; Dallaire, 2010).¹⁷ This global interest in the topic of child-soldiering from a wide range of academics including peace and humanitarian scholars, sociologists, psychologists and medical practitioners to mention a few, has produced a great deal of literature woven around various aspects of the phenomenon.

In the first section of this chapter, I attempt a temporal and spatial presentation of child-soldiering across the globe, depicting its extent and intensity. In the second section, drawing chiefly from the various conflict theatres across Africa, Latin America and Asia, I examine the root causes of child-soldiering; its effects on individual child-soldiers, families and communities; the roles and treatment of child-soldiers within the ranks of armed forces and groups with a particular focus on girl-soldiers; the international legal standards protecting children against unlawful recruitment into the military during peace and wartime; child-soldiers' agency; and the official or formal processes of unmaking child-soldiers, that is, the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration processes.

¹⁷See also Cohn & Goodwin-Gill, 1994; Human Rights Watch, 1994; Furley, 1995; Peters, Richards & Vlassenroot, 2003; Amnesty International, 2004.

2.2 Is child-soldiering really a modern phenomenon?

A synopsis of the active involvement of children in warfare is needed to answer the foregoing question. It is not an exhaustive description but a moderate presentation of the phenomenon in time and space. The aim is to capture the fervour of academic debates revolving around child-soldiering as to whether the latter is an old or a new phenomenon. In the first part of this discussion, I present a global overview of the phenomenon and in the second part, I try to exemplify the phenomenon using examples from African and Asian countries affected by war.

2.2.1 Child-soldiering in a global context

Human rights activists tend to suggest that the use of child-soldiers is only characteristic of modern and post-colonial conflict, but actually such an assertion is not correct. History is littered with evidence of the “use of children in military” or “child-soldier crisis” (Rosen, 2007:304) dating back to ancient times, and that this use of children “in active combat was generally viewed as abominable” (Dallaire, 2010:105). Child-soldiering therefore is patently not a new phenomenon (Rosen, 2007; Happold, as cited in Karanja, 2008; Kuwert, Spitzer, Rosenthal & Freyberger, 2008; Schofield, 2010).

Children have played bloody roles in war theatres (Schofield, 2010) for centuries, and “when militarized societies have plunged into war, children have participated as belligerents” (Denov & Maclure, 2007:244). For instance, the American Civil War (1861-1865) (Singer, 2006; Rosen, as cited in Wells, 2009), the American War of Independence (1775-1783) and the Boer War, all saw the participation of children as combatants (Furley, 1995; Wessells, 2002).

Abiding by legislation from Czar Nicholas I in 1827, close to 50,000 boys, some as young as eight years old, were recruited between 1827 and 1854 to serve in the Russian Army (Ofek, as cited in Cutchin & Rivas, 2009). In the United States, over 100,000 boys under 15 years of age enlisted in the Union Army before the

age was raised to 16 years (Voltz, as cited in Cutchin & Rivas, 2009). Underage boys, namely cadets from the Virginia Military Institute, served in the Confederacy during the May 1864 Battle of New Market (Singer, as cited in Cutchin & Rivas, 2009); and this led to the service of an estimated 250,000 underage boys in the British armed forces during that very war (Emden, as cited in Cutchin & Rivas, 2009). In other countries such as Belgium, France, Russia, Germany, the United States, Australia, and Serbia, to name a few, children were used in the military during World War I (Ruggenberg, as cited in Cutchin & Rivas, 2009).

During World War II, roughly 200,000 German children (Nicolaisen, as cited in Kuwert, et al., 2008) fought passionately alongside the Nazis, and the underground movements against the latter (Maher, as cited in Cutchin & Rivas, 2009).

Literature also makes mention of biblical evidence of children's involvement in warfare. The famous fight between David (boy novice in warfare) and Goliath (adult experienced warrior) that led to the latter's defeat (Wander, 1973; Gunn, 1974; Wander, 1975; Sheaves, 1999; Arts, 2002; Claeys, as cited in Erk, 2005; Schofield, 2010)¹⁸ is a typical example.

Children served in various capacities with the Greeks and Romans in the pre-industrial battlefield. The Native American Cheyenne children's involvement in conflict, in the tribal societies as a way to mark their transition into adulthood; the unemphatic involvement of the 'fighting girls' from Dahomey (current 'Republic of Benin' in West Africa); the 10th-century Irish king Brian Boru who reputedly hammered the Danish hordes at the age of 12; and Olaf II of Viking Norway whose legend counts nine naval victories before age 17 (Schofield, 2010), are other conspicuous instances of children's involvement in warfare.

¹⁸See the full story of this battle in the Bible, in the first book of Samuel chapter 17 from verse 1 to verse 51.

From the above it is obvious that, contrary to children's active involvement in the European and American military campaigns, the only example of child-soldiers' involvement in fighting during the pre-colonial period in Africa is the case of the Dahomey *fighting girls*. Does this imply a total absence of the *African Child* in war theatres before independence?

2.2.2 Child-soldiering in pre-colonial Africa

It seems there is no scholarly work providing evidence of the use of children during pre-colonial wars that opposed kingdoms and even during the 1960s independence wars in the majority of African countries. For instance, in virtually all the pre-colonial West African countries, children were absent from war theatres because warfare was meant for "all free adult males capable of bearing arms," and not children (Smith, 1977:42). Diallo's (1976) ground-breaking study on African traditions and humanitarian law in West Africa distinctly pointed out that during wars, children were considered "non-belligerents" or part of the "category of protected people" (Diallo, as cited in Nwolise, 2001:19). During wars, among the Ashantis of Ghana for instance, children were "protected and inviolable;" in Senegal, "children and old people were put aboard canoes and taken out to the sea" while in Niger, to attack a village where there were only women and children was not war but theft (Diallo, 1976:9). Bennet (in Wells, 2009:151) put this into perspective by maintaining that "in pre-colonial Africa boys did not fight until three or four years after puberty".

How does one explain this absence of children from African pre-colonial war theatres? Nwolise (2001:12) argued that, according to the traditional Africa's "Code of Honour" squarely based on the social values of the people, children were considered as "blessings from God, hope of the family, insurance against old age, and source of lineage and group continuity" and therefore deserved "proper training and up-bringing" which would make them "responsible and good members of society;" as a result, children were kept aloof from warfare (Diallo, as cited in Nwolise, 2001:19). But how do we explain the sudden and recent surge in

the use in war theatres of minors such as seven-year-old General Baraka,¹⁹ commander in charge of the rebel group Mai-Mai Vurondo (Mai-Mai of the Baraka group) in the North Kivu province of DRC.

2.2.3 Child-soldiering: A contemporary global phenomenon

The involvement of children in armed conflicts is “now global in scope and massive in number” (Singer, 2006:16), and children are being increasingly victimized as targets and perpetrators (United Nations, 2000:1).²⁰ Recent or current wars are guerrilla wars where approximately 90 percent of the victims are civilians, with a huge proportion of women and children bearing the brunt with frequent major abuses of their rights (Legrand, 1999; Stohl, et al., as cited in Freedson, 2002; Honwana, 2006; Singer, 2006; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008).

Whether called *Baby Brigade* or *Leopard Brigade* in Sri Lanka (Hogg, 2006a, Hogg, 2006b), *Small Boys Unit* in Liberia (Human Rights Watch, 2004), *Red Army* in Sudan (Singer, 2006:25), *Kadogos*²¹ (Reyntjens, 2001:314; Singer, 2006:21; Prunier, 2009:xxxvii) in DRC, *little bells*, *little bees* or *little carts* in Colombia (Singer, 2006:16), worldwide and mostly in Latin America, the Middle East, Central and South Asia, and overwhelmingly in sub-Saharan Africa, between 250,000 to 300,000 child-soldiers are involved in armed conflicts, in military units such as governments armies, paramilitary forces or armed groups (Coalition to stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2004; Singer, 2005; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008; Cutchin & Rivas, 2009; Dallaire, 2010;

¹⁹ Baraka is reportedly the leader of the armed group ‘Mai-Mai of the Baraka group’ in Vurondo (North Kivu - DRC). He is the son of the deceased Mayi-Mayi chief Lolwako from whom he inherited this movement. The child Baraka is the centre of the group and gives it its identity but he is not the one who makes the decisions (Spittaels & Hilgert, 2008). The author confirmed this information during his fieldwork in DRC in 2008.

²⁰ This information is drawn from the United Nations Secretary-General’s report on children and armed conflict (A/55/163-S/2000/712), presented to the General Assembly during its Fifty-fifth session of 19 July 2000. See www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/55/a55163.pdf for details.

²¹ *Kadogos* which means the “Little Ones,” is the common Swahili appellation for child-soldiers in both Uganda and the DRC.

Schofield, 2010).²² And up to 40 percent of these child-soldiers are girls, also known as the “shadow army” or “invisible soldiers” (Save the Children-UK, 2005:vi-1; Dallaire, 2010:129). Such a percentage was “near zero just a few decades ago” (Singer, 2006:30).

One third of these child-soldiers are in Africa (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2004) and are “as young as five years” (Rupesinghe & Anderlini, 1998:24). By 2002, of the ongoing or previously ended conflicts, 68 percent (that is 37 of the 55) had children serving as fighters (Barnen, as cited in Singer, 2006). More than 40 percent of the armed organizations around the world (that is 157 of 366) use child-soldiers who “are not just children on the borderline of adulthood, but include those considered underage by any cultural standard” (Singer, 2006:29).

A survey carried out in East Asia and the Pacific revealed that the average age of recruitment of child-soldiers was thirteen and that 34 percent were recruited at twelve or younger (UNICEF, 2003). In a similar study carried out in four Central African countries including Burundi, DRC, Rwanda and the Republic of Congo, researchers found that 60 percent of child fighters were less than 15 years and 10 percent less than 12 years at the time of recruitment (ILO, 2003). During the El Salvadoran civil war, approximately 48,000, that is 80 percent of the troops were less than eighteen years of age (CSC & Human Rights Watch, as cited in Singer, 2006).

The United States of America (USA) in its “war on terror,” denominated a number of children, some as young as 13, as “enemy combatants,” a status that is unrecognized in international law. Several Afghan child-soldiers were transferred from the American custody in Afghanistan to indefinite military detention in the American Naval Base in Guantánamo Bay in Cuba (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008). Children between the ages of 13 and 16 years were among

²²See also Brett & McCallin, 1996; Human Rights Watch, 1999; Druba, 2002; Derluyn, Broekaert, Schuyten, De Temmerman, 2004; Hick, 2001; Park, 2006; PTI, 2011 and AAP, 2011.

some 660 prisoners, virtually foot soldiers of the Taliban transferred at Camp Delta at Guantanamo Bay (Amnesty International, as cited in Steyn, 2004).

Although the use of girl-soldiers within armed groups has been frequent in Colombia, East Timor, Pakistan, Uganda and the Philippines, the three regions of the world notorious for this practice are West Africa (especially Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire), the DRC and Sri Lanka (Save the Children-UK, 2005).

2.2.4 Child-soldiering: A recently plural practice in Africa

Although the debate on children's involvement in war as fighters is highly ideological, and the statistics authors use to establish the number of child-soldiers, are often deemed unreliable or simply speculative (Agborsangaya, 2000; Save the Children-UK, 2005; Wells, 2009), there is sufficient evidence to show that Africa is "at the epicentre of the child-soldier phenomenon" (Singer, 2006:19), with "over half of the world's child-soldiers" (Dallaire, 2010:105). From a number of war-torn countries in Africa, it is obvious that, contrary to the pre-colonial wars, where children were kept aloof from wars (Diallo, 1976), children have become significant actors in armed conflicts (Cohn & Goodwin-Gill, 1994; Brett & McCallin, 1996; Wessells, 1998).

2.2.4.1 Child-soldiering in West Africa

During recent internecine wars in West Africa, predatory warlords particularly in Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia recruited child-soldiers, and "due to the nature and the common causes of cross-border conflicts in the region, some children have fought in more than one country" (Save the Children-UK, 2005:7).

West Africa is one of the regions in the world that has been seriously affected by the use of minors in battlefields. Estimates reveal that by 2005, over 8,000 children were still fighting in the West African region, while more than 20,000 were undergoing or about to go through the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs (Landry, 2006).

During the civil war in Sierra Leone (1991-2002), about 48,216 children were associated with armed groups (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004).²³ However, estimates of actual numbers of children who at some point actively participated in the war range between 10,000 and 30,000 (Amnesty International, as cited in Restoy, 2006).²⁴ Conservative estimates revealed that “between 5,000 and 7,000 children” were frontline fighters (Zack-Williams, 2001:73). Half of all combatants in the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) alone were between the ages of 8 and 14 years (Peters & Richards, as cited in Zack-Williams, 2001). Official figures released by the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (NCDDR) revealed that 5,400 children were officially demobilized from the armed forces and armed groups at the end of the war in 2002 (UNICEF, as cited in Restoy, 2006). At the closure of the initial reintegration programme in December 2003, around 7,000 children had been demobilized (Shepler, 2005:198). Girl-soldiers are estimated to comprise approximately between one-tenth and one-third of all child-soldiers (Mazurana & McKay, as cited in Fox, 2004).

At the height of the civil war in Côte d’Ivoire (2002-2004), approximately 8,000 children²⁵ fought along with armed forces and groups. Former child-soldiers from the Liberian conflict were recruited and used in pro-government militias and the armed opposition group Forces Armées des Forces Nouvelles (FAFN) in Côte d’Ivoire. By late 2007, children reportedly continued to serve within the ranks of both militias and the FAFN (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008).

²³http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/NGO/PartPPGIssueDisp_CombatToCommunity_WomenWagePeace_2004.pdf

²⁴Amnesty International, Sierra Leone: Childhood—a casualty of conflict (AI Index: AFR 51/69/00), 31 August 2000, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/engindex>.

²⁵From an ‘Assessment of the Situation of Children Associated with Armed Forces in Western Côte d’Ivoire’ jointly carried out by Save the Children-UK and Save the Children-Sweden in September 2003 (unpublished).

2.2.4.2 Child-soldiering in the Great Lakes, Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa

In DRC, child-soldiers have been widely used during the country's "Africa's World War" (Reyntjens, 1999; Prunier, 2009:xxxviii). At the outset of the war in 1996, about 10,000 child-soldiers between the ages of 7 and 16 years fought within the ranks of Laurent Desiré Kabila's army (ILO, as cited in Singer, 2006). But as of 2003, estimates showed that between 30,000 to 50,000 child-soldiers were recruited, abducted and used by the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) and other armed groups.

Child-soldiers represented approximately a third of the total population of combatants (Bell, 2006; Leopold, as cited in Singer, 2006; Honwana, as cited in Wells, 2009), with 40 per cent being girl-soldiers (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008; Save the Children-UK, 2005). Particularly in the dreadful Ituri district, child-soldiers made up 60 to 75 percent of the militias, with 8,000 to 10,000 in Bunia town alone (Wax & Edgerton, as cited in Singer, 2006).

A unique feature in the DRC is that "the likely assassin" of the head of State, who used child-soldiers during his military campaigns, was "one of the kadogo[s]" (child-soldiers) (Reyntjens, 2001:314).²⁶ According to the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the DRC, there have been recent cases of recruitment of children by armed groups including the Coalition of Congolese Resistant Patriots (PARECO) (29 percent), Maï-Maï factions (32 percent), National Congress for People's Defence (CNDP) (24 percent) and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) (13 percent) (Dallaire, 2010). More recently, and on *Child Soldier Day* (12 February 2011), the UNICEF Protection Officer in DRC disclosed that between 2009 and February 2011, about 7,000 child-soldiers were demobilized and reintegrated (Radio Okapi, 2011a). And more

²⁶ In the early afternoon of 16 January 2001, President Laurent Désiré Kabila of DRC was shot and fatally wounded by one of his bodyguards, Rachidi Kasereka, a child-soldier who accompanied Kabila from the east to Kinshasa during the 1996-1997 Congolese liberation campaign.

recently, there is evidence that General Bosco Ntaganda²⁷ “forcibly recruited at least 149 boys and young men into his forces” (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

During the Mozambican civil war (1970-1992), between 8,000 and 10,000 children were used as soldiers, most fighting with the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Mozambique National Resistance) (RENAMO) (Honwana, 2006). In Zimbabwe, between April 2004 and October 2007, thousands of children received training in paramilitary skills in youth militias (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008).

For the past 20 years, roughly 40,000 children have been abducted and made soldiers (Seck, 2010) in Uganda. Specifically, between 1986 and 2006, estimates reveal that 24,000 to 38,000 children have been abducted (Pham, Vinck & Stover, 2007). One major armed group, the ‘Lord’s Resistance Army’ (LRA) (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999), notorious for having within its ranks the world’s youngest reported child-soldier, *aged five*, had more than 14,000 child-soldiers (Singer, 2006).

During the two decades-long second Sudanese civil war (1983-2002), about 100,000 children served in the military. The Sudanese Northern Islamic government conscripted boys into the army and the paramilitary Popular Defence Forces (PDF), while the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) relying “greatly on child fighters” (Singer, 2006:24), used about 10,000 child-soldiers (Stohl, as cited in Singer, 2006). Even in South Sudan,²⁸ the newest African country, minors are currently used as combatants according to the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) (UN News Centre, 2011b).

²⁷ General Bosco Ntaganda, who mutinied against the DRC in early April 2012, is a former rebel leader turned army general. He is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on charges of war crimes for previous recruitment and use of child soldiers. For details visit <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/05/15/dr-congo-bosco-ntaganda-recruits-children-force>

²⁸ On 9 July 2011 South Sudan became the newest country in the world. The birth of the Republic of South Sudan is the culmination of a six-year peace process which began with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. For details visit <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmiss>

In Chad, between 2001 and 2002 an unknown number of children of the Zaghawa²⁹ ethnic group were reported to have been forcibly conscripted into the armed forces in northern Chad and deployed on the frontline³⁰; and by 2004, it was reported that at least 600 children were still serving in the Chadian armed forces and groups (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2004). In 2007 between 7,000 and 10,000 children were still serving within the ranks of various armed groups according to UNICEF (in IRIN, 2011).

In Somalia, an estimated 200,000 children have been associated with militias since the 1991 collapse of the central government (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2004). Boys between 14 and 18 years of age, fight regularly in warlord militias (Singer, 2006:20). Somali child-soldiers are often recruited and trained in camps in southern Somalia by al-Shabab³¹ and some are paid USD50 per month for fighting (BBC News, 2009).

By the end of the Angolan civil war (1975-2002), about 36 percent of all Angolan children had served as soldiers (Reid, as cited in Singer, 2006). Between 8,500 and 10,000 child-soldiers were used³² by both the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and government forces (Honwana, 2006).

²⁹“The Zaghawa is a transnational ethnic group comprising subgroups across eastern and northern Chad and its border with Sudan. Although a minority in both Sudan’s Darfur region and in Chad, it is highly mobilised in Darfur and forms the majority of rebel activity—especially in the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). In Chad, even though it constitutes less than two percent of the population of nine million, it controls the presidency and dominates government and high echelons of the army.” Zaghawa Chadian president, Idriss Déby relies on the support of the Zaghawa people in Chad and Sudan to maintain power. (Massey & May, as cited in Sany & Desai, 2008:27).

³⁰ For details see “US Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2002, March 2003”. Also available at

http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,CSCOAL,,TCD,,4988066b8,0.html#_ftnref10

³¹The Shabab, whose name means ‘youth’ in Arabic, are a mostly under-40 militia who espouse the strict Wahhabi version of Islam and are guided, according to American diplomats, by another, better-known Wahhabi group: Al Qaeda. For more details see

http://www.sjsu.edu/people/quincy.mccrary/courses/Anth146/s0/No_Winner_Seen_in_Somalia.pdf

³² These figures were provided in the 1997 UNDP Report on Human Development in Angola.

Thousands of Rwandan children took part in the 1994 mass killings as child ‘genocidaires’³³ in Rwanda (Singer, 2006; Dallaire, 2010). During the civil war in Burundi (1993-2005), thousands of children fought along various warring factions (Singer, 2006; Dilworth, 2006). During the border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia³⁴ (1998-2000) which claimed about 100,000 lives, scores of Ethiopian children fought (International Crisis Group, 2003; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2004).

The use of child-soldiers in Libya was one recent example. During the Liberation War which started in February 2011 and ended with the official declaration of the National Transitional Council (NTC) of the liberation of the country on 23 October 2011 (Cutler, 2011), there was evidence that child-soldiers as young as seven years took part in hostilities (Daily Mail Reporter, 2011; PTI, 2011). Thirteen-year-old Naseem, who headed daily to the frontline in Sirte, stated the following: “I am not scared ... I get inspired when I come to the battlefield with my father and brother [the brother was 17 years old]” (Agence France-Presse, 2011b).

2.2.4.3 The use of child-soldiers in the Middle East, Central and South Asia

The use of children as fighters during armed conflicts has been prevalent in Asian countries namely Cambodia, East Timor, India, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and the Solomon Islands.

In India alone, some seventeen different rebel groups were “suspected of using child-soldiers” (CSC, as cited in Singer, 2006:27). In Myanmar, more than 75,000 fighters were child-soldiers, with the peculiarity that a rebel faction, namely the

³³ ‘Child genocidaires’ are children who took part in hostilities during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

³⁴ The two-year border war broke out in May 1998 as a result of a dispute about the exact location of their border. A peace agreement was signed on December 12, 2000 between Ethiopia and Eritrea. For more details about Ethiopia/Eritrea war visit <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/eritrea.htm>

Christian Karen militia (God's Army) was led by twelve-year-old twin brothers Luther and Johnny Htoo (Singer, 2006).

Children have been actively involved in fighting in Palestine, making up approximately 70 percent of the participants in the intifada³⁵ (Hunter, 2006a; Singer, 2006). Survey data from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip revealed that during the intifada, 80 percent of male children, 85 percent of male adolescents, 50 percent of female children and 65 percent of female adolescents were involved in the demonstrations against the occupation (Barber, 1997; Barber, 1999; Barber, 2001). Furthermore, more than 20 percent of those killed in the intifada were children and adolescents (Los Angeles Times, as cited in Singer, 2006).

The South Lebanon Army (SLA) used children in combat and support roles during the civil war. Boys and girls as young as 13 years of age performed logistic duties such as ferrying food and equipment to soldiers on the frontlines. Children were generally treated in the same way as adult recruits, and were often related to adult SLA members (Hunter, 2006b).

The Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) claimed the lives of 100,000 boy-soldiers from Iran through the "child-led human wave attacks" (Singer, 2006:22). In Iraq, children fought through *Ashbal Saddam*³⁶ and in Bagdad alone, more than 8,000 young Iraqis were members of this group (Singer, 2006). During the second Gulf war which ended Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, American forces fought against Iraqi child-soldiers in at least three cities (Cox, as cited in Singer, 2006).

In the war against terrorism in Afghanistan, the first American combat casualty was killed by a 14-year-old Afghan sniper. A few months later, another Special

³⁵ 'Intifada' from the Arabic verb 'to shake loose'. Persons sympathetic to the uprising have seen it as the functional equivalence of a civil war relative to the whole of Palestine (Israel, the West Bank and Gaza), or alternatively, as a war of national liberation against a colonial oppressor which began on 9 December, 1987, leading to the birth of a new Palestinian state. For more details see Falk & Weston, 1991:129-157.

³⁶ 'Ashbal Saddam' was also called 'Saddam's Lion Cubs'. It was a paramilitary force of boys between the ages of ten and fifteen that was formed after the first Gulf War and received training in small arms and light infantry tactics in the 1990s.

Forces trooper was killed by a 15-year-old al Qaeda member (Schofield, 2010). In addition, research findings revealed that roughly 30 percent of all Afghan children were involved in military activities in their childhood (CSC, as cited in Singer, 2006).

In Sri Lanka about 50,000 children were associated with armed groups, with more than 43 percent being girl-soldiers (Save the Children-UK, 2005). Throughout the period of the Sri Lankan civil war, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), recruited and used children as young as nine years old as soldiers. Roughly 60 percent of LTTE fighters were children. The LTTE began the recruitment of women and children in October 1987 to wage war against the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) (Hogg, 2006b).

In Pakistan, between 1998 and 1999, the *madrasahs*, that is the “Islamic schools and incubator of the Taliban movement” (Fergusson, 2010:44), provided the Taliban with thousands of new Afghan and Pakistani child recruits. As a result, an estimated 5,000 students joined the Taliban forces (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, as cited in Machel, 2001).

The use of children in warfare is not solely a new phenomenon but also a context-bound one. Its intensity and extent vary from one region to another for numerous reasons which I shall discuss in subsequent sections of this chapter. There are inconsistencies noticed in the statistics pertaining to the use of child-soldiers. It is true that getting accurate figures in the war-torn areas has always been problematic especially in countries where demographic data are not regularly updated or are quasi-inexistent. While the practice of child-soldiering continues to ruin children’s lives and enrich war-profiteers, its magnitude in recent times creates a growing scientific curiosity. But what exactly constitute the root causes of this dreadful phenomenon?

2.3 Becoming child-soldiers: Many pathways to the same doom

Scholars who have attempted an explanation of children's active and excessive presence in war theatres in recent times whether at a macro or micro-level, categorized the determinants woven around child-soldiering into 'push and pull factors' which I review thematically (Mouton, 2001).

2.3.1 Becoming pawns to satisfy tyrants' political ambitions

The interaction between "macro-level contributing factors", including politics, policy, culture and beliefs, and "micro-level contributing dimensions", including community, family and psychosocial factors, facilitates the institutionalization of child-soldiering (Kimmel & Roby, 2007:741), and even makes it a norm from which warlords profit immensely (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

Government forces, militias and armed groups recruit child-soldiers to implicitly further political agendas (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, as cited in Kimmel & Roby, 2007). Child-soldiers therefore become "pawns to support political power struggles" (Singer, as cited in Kimmel & Roby, 2007:741) as was the case during the Liberian civil war, where minors fought to satisfy the political ambitions of warlords aspiring to reach the corridors of power through armed struggle (Berkeley, as cited in Kimmel & Roby, 2007).

2.3.2 Governmental disregard for child rights policies stimulates child-soldiering

The use of ill-conceived child protection-based policies, or the flawed implementation of well designed child policies by the government to prevent or solve problems related to children's welfare (Kimmel & Roby, 2007), the failure of leaders to comply with the various child protection conventions and treaties they ratified (Amnesty International, 2004; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child-soldiers, 2004; Human Rights Watch, as cited in Kimmel & Roby, 2007), contribute to the grim use of children as fighters during wars. Among other countries, Uganda and Liberia were typical examples of governmental

nonchalance and remissness vis-à-vis child rights policies implementation (IRIN, 2003a; Kimmel & Roby, 2007).

2.3.3 Cultural and religious beliefs induce child-soldiering

Cultural and religious beliefs have been identified as key contributing factors to child-soldiering (Kimmel & Roby, 2007; Wells, 2009). For instance, Glucklich's (2009:225) theory of "paradise paradox" accurately explains the use of children as fighters in Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and Pakistan from a purely religious perspective. After excoriating the Christian and Islamic "afterlife" in heaven through which many religious adepts imbued with fanaticism have replaced a "purpose-driven life" with a "future-driven life" (Glucklich, 2009:230-231), Glucklich argued that the individual's faith in heavenly rewards reduces his/her happiness on earth, and this is due to the "deferred gratification fallacy" and the "addiction to heaven syndrome" (Glucklich, 2009:242).

A palpable illustration Glucklich used is Islam and heaven, especially in the context of *martyrdom*³⁷ and the seventy-two virgins the *shahid*³⁸ is entitled to in heaven (Glucklich, 2009:234). This addiction to heaven syndrome easily creates conditions for a cult of martyrdom. For naive children, joining militias therefore becomes a noble undertaking. They are ready to die expecting a glorious and blessed life in heaven.

For instance during the war between Iraq and Iran, many Iranian children were "indoctrinated in the glory of martyrdom, and sent to the frontlines ... wearing keys around their necks (to signify their pending entrance into heaven)" (Singer, 2006:22).

³⁷ Osama Bin Laden echoed this in his "Declaration of War Against the Americans" and also said: "The best of the martyrs are those who do not turn their faces away from the battle till they are killed. They are in the high level of Jannah [paradise]. Their Lord laughs to them (in pleasure) and when your Lord laughs to a slave of His, He will not hold him to an account" (Glucklich, 2009:226).

³⁸ 'Shahid' stands for martyr.

Similarly, Ayatollah Khomeini, the then Supreme Leader of Iran, cleverly made children and their families believe that “sending children to their deaths would speed up the coming of the 12th Imam (an Islamic Messiah figure)”. He successfully motivated more than 100,000 children to volunteer as martyrs (Kimmel & Roby, 2007:743).

In Liberia, like in other war-affected countries, joining the armed forces often was perceived as the initiation route into adulthood (Utas, as cited in Kimmel & Roby, 2007). The promotion by the Americo-Liberians of *modernity* as the ideal means to success, quickly paved the way for a “gang culture” (Berkeley, as cited in Kimmel & Roby, 2007:743), where guns symbolized modern status (Richards, as cited in Kimmel & Roby, 2007) and the culture of “obedience to higher authority” transformed Liberia into a fertile ground for recruiting child-soldiers (Olukoju, as cited in Kimmel & Roby, 2007:744).

There are “socio-cultural factors” that contribute to child-soldiering (Somasundaram, 2002:1269). For instance, in the Tamil Hindu society in Sri Lanka, lower castes were suppressed by the higher castes. Youth from lower castes joined armed groups to escape the “oppressive system” (Somasundaram, 2002:1269). Sri Lankan younger women who wanted to be freed from socio-cultural oppression, joined warring factions (Trawick, 1999).

According to Korbin (2003:441), “violence and childhood are culturally constructed,” and Africa is a typical example. Literature reveals that children’s active involvement in warfare upon the African continent stems from a “culture of youthful militarism” (Wells, 2009:150).

Drawing on the Sierra Leonean civil war, Wells (2009) argued that there has been a strong relationship between secret societies, private defence forces and rebel groups on the one hand, and the initiations of the youth by hunter societies on the other hand. Similarly, other scholars pointed out that, in West Africa, it is difficult to draw clear lines of demarcation between the roles of hunters and warriors (Wells, 2009). During the civil war in Sierra Leone, one of these secret societies

called “Kamajo”³⁹ (Peters & Richards, 1998:584; Shepler, 2005:197) metamorphosed into Civil Defence Forces (CDFs).⁴⁰ This transformation engendered “a modern guerrilla force trained and armed for modern warfare” (Ferme, 2001:27). Despite the transformation of the *Kamajo* into CDFs, members needed to be initiated through what Wells (2009:150) described as “a very truncated form of traditional initiation rites retaining the connection between African secret societies, youth and militarism”. One essential component of the initiation process was the withdrawal of children to be initiated “from the village and their immersion into the bush” (Wells, 2009:150).

The RUF craftily used this avenue as a facade to fulfil its deadly and shameful agenda of recruiting children into its ranks (Richards, 1996). A similar cultural guile was used in New Guinea where initiation rites have the capacity to “transform gentle boys into warriors capable of killing, rage, stealth, murder and bravery” (Keesing, 1982:3). Indeed, as Wells (2009:150) pointed out, “initiation into warrior or hunter societies is now and was historically a route by which young men came to be fighters”.

But such an initiation-centred explanation of youth militarism may not be generalized to the entire African continent. There is a caveat to it, as there certainly are societies in Africa with similar initiation rites which may not necessarily lead to the recruitment of children to become fighters. Although they paved the way for youth militarism in Sierra Leone, it is worth mentioning that other factors and conditions favoured this.

³⁹ ‘Kamajo’ means hunter in Mende language in Sierra Leone.

⁴⁰ During the civil war in Sierra Leone, the Sierra Leonean Army soldiers committed gross human rights violations, including rape, mutilations, looting, property destruction, and murder. By the mid-1990s, citizens directly associated the problem of the war with the army itself. With the rebellion spreading virtually unchecked in the South and East, villagers organized militias to supplement or replace the efforts of the army. The local militias became known as Civil Defence Forces (CDFs) (Mazurana & McKay, 2003:11), available at http://unddr.org/docs/Girls_in_Fighting_Forces.pdf

The revenge growing out of “survivor’s guilt” (CDI, as cited in Singer, 2006:64) which takes place within “shame culture”⁴¹ societies (Creative Associates International, 1997:40; Richards, as cited in Peters, Richards & Vlassenroot 2003:15; Singer, 2006:65), pushes children to enrol as fighters.

Afghan boys consider such revenge as a paramount condition to becoming a “man” (Singer, 2006:65). The ‘Kosovar Albanians’ typify shame culture societies; right from birth children are taught some societal credos which they must respect — acquiring and preserving honour, and avoiding shame should be considered as the overriding principles governing people’s life, and should motivate their behaviour. Consequently, children in such societies voluntarily enrol as soldiers in order to revenge their massacred family members (Allsebrook & Swift, 1989; Ressler, as cited in Yoong, 2004; Hundeide, 2003; Korbin, 2003; Wells, 2009). Also, children become soldiers when they live in an environment where culturally machismo tends to influence militarism (McCallin, 1998; Wessells, as cited in Yoong, 2004).

Commanders of armed groups abduct children and make them soldiers perceiving them as “ideal guards,” because they believe that “children have mystical powers of protection ... ideal to prepare and administer magic potions and tattoos to protect the adult soldiers without sullyng the magical properties of these rituals” (Dallaire, 2010:118).

The Maï-Maï factions in DRC are notorious for this practice. In Uganda, child-soldiers were made “bulletproof” and girls especially, were believed “to share these protective traits through sex, a belief that has dire implications for female abductees or recruits” (Dallaire, 2010:118-119).

2.3.4 Poverty as a push factor into child-soldiering

Economic crisis and social conditions in war-affected regions coerce children to join armed forces and groups (Palacios & UNICEF, as cited in Quesada, 1998;

⁴¹ Also referred to as “shame societies” (Singer, 2006:122).

Dallaire, 2010). Children living in poverty-stricken communities are especially vulnerable to child-soldiering (Keairns, 2003a; Brett, 2003; Korbin, 2003; Singer, 2006; Kimmel & Roby, 2007; Dallaire, 2010), as in DRC where “almost 60 percent of the demobilized child-soldiers” rejoined warring factions (Singer, 2006:62). As Singer (2006:43) put it, “a weakened social structure” is “generally unable to steer their children away from war”.

The economic status of a family or class can influence children’s recruitment (Kimmel & Roby, 2007). During the civil war in Sierra Leone, children from rich families were sent away to safe locations by their parents, while their counterparts from wretched families became vulnerable to recruitment (Zack-Williams, 2001).

Because of the state of deprivation in which they find themselves, some families fecklessly encourage their children to join armed forces or groups in order to become breadwinners, thus abating the misery often prevalent in war-ravaged zones (Peters & Richards, 1998; Murphy, 2003).

Some parents voluntarily offer their children for combat service to earn “minor soldier’s wages” (Singer, 2006:63). In a war context where freedom, food and affection are scarce commodities, to survive, children have to “make Manichean choices between picking up arms or running away, resisting or giving in” (Quesada, 1998:57). Girls are sometimes forced by parents to join fighting forces if their “marriage prospects” are poor (Cohn & Goodwin-Gill, 1994:68; Singer, 2006:63).

2.3.5 Child-soldiering as a result of children’s malleability and gullibility

Because of their immaturity, gullibility and pliability, many children are easily manipulated by warlords to join armed groups. Some children also fall prey to these unscrupulous warlords, because of their earnest desire to become legendary warriors (Dallaire, 2010). As Rosenblatt (in Singer, 2006:66) noted, “War allows boys to look like men. This seems a shallow benefit, but it is no small thing for a

teenage boy to have something that yanks him out of his social floundering and places him unlaughed [*sic*] at, in the company of heroes”.

In Sri Lanka, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) promised child-soldiers to “teach them how to drive tractors or motorcycles” (Singer, 2006:66). The LTTE rebel group used such tactics to recruit children whom they easily moulded into commandos for suicide missions. As Somasundaram (2002:1270) illustratively pointed out:

Public displays of war paraphernalia, funerals and posters of fallen heroes, speeches and videos, particularly in schools; and heroic, melodious songs and stories all serve to draw out feelings of patriotism and create a compelling milieu — indeed, a martyr cult.

Similarly, during the war in Liberia, some children kept faith in Charles Taylor who made false, ridiculous and incongruous promises to them such as offering them computers if he won the war, while other children easily believed the commanders’ promise of “USD5 and a pair of Levi’s blue jeans” (David, 1998:13). In the neighbouring Sierra Leone, the RUF promised children personal houses and vehicles (Singer, 2006).

2.3.6 The state collapses, criminal enterprises emerge, child fighters pullulate

State collapse characterized by an “unstructured political, economic and social environment” (Dallaire, 2010:114) promotes a “youth clientalism” (Murphy, 2003:65) through which child-soldiers become “clients to the patronage of military commanders” (Murphy, 2003:78). According to Murphy (2003:68), the “crisis of the patrimonial state” (Richards, 1996:xvii; Berry, as cited in Murphy, 2003) allows for a shift from the patrimonial state to “patronage politics” (Reno, as cited in Murphy, 2003). This shift creates fertile ground for warlord politics characterized by the predatory military, which consists in dominating and plundering human and natural resources (Murphy, 2003). Consequently brigands take “full advantage of failing states ... to run criminal enterprises” (Dallaire, 2010:115). The Weberian model of patrimonialism describes a traditional form of

domination based on the uncritical loyalty to the master, and the master's outright authority over his household (Murphy, 2003). According to this model, child-soldiers' dependency and agency interact within an institutional structure of "repressive patrimonialism" (Murphy, 2003:65). Children therefore seek economic assistance and physical protection from patrons, while the latter's demands on the former are risky (Lande, as cited in Murphy, 2003). The shift from patrimonial state to patronage politics or predatory politics, produces three major categories of youth including, "coerced youth," "revolutionary youth," and "delinquent youth" (Murphy, 2003:64).

Child-soldiers viciously forced into armed groups (Hundeide, 2003:114) are the "coerced youth" (Murphy, 2003:64). The "revolutionary youth" are youth who are fed up with blatant corruption in government and therefore decide to rebel against the "socioeconomic marginalization" (Lefebvre, 1991:50), thus "looking for a war to fight" (Brett, 2003:859). In sharp contrast to the "coerced youth," this second typology highlights "the socially creative agency of youths responding to the harsh conditions of failed state infrastructures as well as the economic opportunities of the revolutionary conflict" (Murphy, 2003:64). It represents a form of "generational resentment," whereby the youths want to depose the "corrupt gerontocracy" (Wells, 2009:153). In order to address the existing social injustices, the youth congregate to form a militarised "juvenile underworld" (Bayart, as cited in Wells, 2009:153).

Delinquent youths are "alienated opportunists exploiting the economic spoils of social turmoil" (Creative Associates International, 1997:40; Murphy, 2003:64). Referring to this gradual shift from the revolutionary perspective to opportunistic involvement of children in warfare, and drawing on the Liberian case, Cohn and Goodwin-Gill (1994:36) pointed out that those street children joined warring factions because they "felt it would be more interesting than street life". In a similar argument, but with reference to Sierra Leone, Peters and Richards (1998:191) pointed out that scores of young women [girls] followed rebels

because the latter are caring, and some parents even encouraged their children to join warring factions for “protection and survival” (Murphy, 2003:74).

In Sierra Leone, children who were “illicit diamond miners” and “socially disconnected rural village youth” (Murphy, 2003:65) joined warring factions as an “opportunity to settle local scores” (Abdullah, et al., as cited in Murphy, 2003:65), or as a way of gaining “instant adult respect” (Peters & Richards, 1998:82).

2.3.7 Child-soldiers’ recruitment induced by the magnitude and nature of the war

Some children join warring factions because “war comes to them” in their hamlet, village, town or school (Brett, 2003:861). The context and the magnitude of the war also determine children’s involvement (Somasundaram, 2002). For instance, in Sri Lanka, the “shelling, helicopter strafing, roundups, cordon and search operations, deaths, injury, destruction, mass arrests, detention, shootings, grenade explosions, and landmine” instilled fear in children thus compelling them to enlist (Somasundaram, 2002:1268).

The brutalization stemming from military checking, cordon and search operations, detention, interrogation, torture, execution, and even rape (Somasundaram, 2002), the continual threat of rape, assault, sexual exploitation, trafficking, sexual humiliation, and mutilation (Hick, 2001:116), in a nutshell, the institutionalized violence (McCallin, 1998; Machel, 2001; Somasundaram, 2002) forces children to enrol as soldiers. For example, during the 1987 “Operation Liberation” in Sri Lanka, some youths were summarily executed to instil fear in others (Hoole, Thiranagamma, Sritharan & Somasundaram, 1988).

Warlords consider the use of children as soldiers inexpensive and expedient — capable of providing warring factions with more troops (Singer, 2006; Dallaire, 2010). As Dallaire (2010:117) put it, child-soldiers are “viewed as expendable, replaceable ... disposable tools — cheap weapon systems that can be discarded when broken, and replaced ... the perfect low-technology”.

There is a “new doctrine of war,” one that encourages the use of children during warfare, a “deliberate choice made by the leaders of local armed organizations” (Singer, 2006:52). The protracted nature of an armed conflict also determines children’s involvement as soldiers. In a configurationist perspective, children absorb whichever culture they are born into by the simple experience of living in it (Mead, 1928; Benedict, 1934; Mead, 1935), therefore “children in aggressive cultures become aggressive” (Korbin, 2003:432), and children “inhabiting a combat zone” easily become child-soldiers (Keairns, 2003a:17; Keairns, 2003b:16). The likelihood is that children living in protracted-war-torn zones will become combatants. For instance, in Croatia, young children play games of war, mimicking and elaborating on what they have seen and experienced, and by doing so the culture of war is gradually ingrained in them (Korbin, 2003). Likewise, children, being born to parents in the warring factions automatically become child-soldiers (McKay & Mazurana, as cited in Peters, Richards & Vlassenroot, 2003).

Because of the lack of identification documents as a result of the lack of formal registration or the destruction of the registry during armed conflicts, warlords usually present some children to human rights advocates as adults who could be used during hostilities in accordance with the international law (UNICEF, 1996). During protracted high intensity armed conflicts, children become soldiers as victims of “a cycle of vulnerability to both recruitment and displacement” (Alfredson, 2002:19). This occurred during wars in Sierra Leone, Angola, DRC, Uganda, Sudan, Burundi, Somalia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Colombia and Iraq, where the numbers of both Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and child-soldiers increased exponentially (Alfredson, 2002).

2.3.8 Between social conspiracy and social units breakdown

Children’s move to join armed forces and groups can be an expression of their animus against an “oppressive family situation” or “humiliation at school,” or their desire to “emulate military role models” and thus fulfil their ambition to

become heroes in battle (Brett, 2003:861), pushes them to join armed forces and groups. Some girls join armed groups to “escape from domestic exploitation and abuse” (McKay & Mazurana, 2004:87-88). In war-affected societies, the dispersal and destruction of families (Brett, 2003), and the disintegration of communities, also account for youth’s enrolment as soldiers. In order to ensure their survival, youth join armed groups and gangs (Honwana, 2006). In some cases, families encourage children to enlist as soldiers out of pride; as Singer (2006:63) pointed out, the “remarked joy of seeing their ten-year-old dressed in brand-new military attire carrying an AK-47”.⁴²

Family fecklessness and conspiracy encourage child-soldiering in that perceived “posthumous benefits” of parents push the latter to encourage their children’s enlistment as soldiers. Sri Lanka was a perfect example. Families residing within LTTE-controlled zones that lost children they offered were treated as “great hero families” therefore escaping any form of subservience. Such families were exempted from taxes, entitled to jobs, and occupied “special seats at all public events” (Singer, 2006:63-64). By sacrificing children as suicide bombers (Lata, as cited in Yoong, 2004), or providing a ‘volunteer’, not only do child-soldiers’ families ensure the protection for the rest of the members and the village (Dallaire, 2010:128), but they are also entitled to child-soldiers’ wages (Keairns, 2003a). At times, in wartime, children remain the only commodity uneducated, impoverished and frightened families may use as merchandise in order to survive (Plunkett & Southall, 1998), and rapacious warmongers and warlords hastily seize such opportunities to increase the number of fighters within their factions.

Some children with disrupted families who are in quest of surrogate families (Hick, 2001; Barnitz, as cited in Yoong, 2004:6; Keairns, 2003a; Addae-Mensah, 2008) easily fall prey to warlords. It is not surprising that some children as young as seven years of age, were seen in the Liberian civil war in 1990 believing that “those with guns could survive” (Hick, 2001:115). Family breakdown strengthens

⁴² ‘AK-47’ is a light weapon used in most of the recent civil wars and which children can easily dismantle, reassemble and fire.

peer pressure through which children easily become soldiers (Creative Associates International, 1997).

“Society’s complicity” through the failure of socio-cultural and religious institutions to protest against child-soldiering (Somasundaram, 2002:1270; Wells, 2009:152) strengthens the use of children as soldiers. This abdication of social institutions has set the stage for “pull factors,” and warlords easily “attract children through propaganda” and exert “psychological pressure in the vacuum left” (Somasundaram, 2002:1970). The “colonial and post-colonial integration in the world system” had a disruptive effect on “traditional social systems” which consolidated “the power of kleptocratic governing elite” (Denov & Maclure, 2007:245). The consequence is corrupt governance with militarized structures which allow for the recruitment of children as soldiers.

Other contributing factors to child-soldiering include: the non-prioritisation of youth welfare including healthcare, education and livelihood (Richards, 1996; Brett, 2003; Addae-Mensah, 2008); the “lack of social spaces,” that is the absence of opportunities for youth to discover their individual and collective identities, strengths and weaknesses; the “lack of political spaces,” that is, the absence of channels for redressing grievances, arms proliferation, alcohol and drug abuse, “power imbalance,” “identity crises”, lack of “capacity to cope with the dependency syndrome leading to insecurity, fear, shame, blame, emotional instability, internalised oppression” (Addae-Mensah, 2008:9-10).

2.3.9 Playing with inexpensive toys, not weapons

The “technologic simplification of weaponry” (Singer, 2006:52) in “small arms” or “light weapons” (Hick, 2001:114; Singer, 2006:45; Dallaire, 2010:110) allows for children’s active participation in warfare. These include rifles, light machine guns, the Soviet-made AK-47, the American M-16, light mortar, land mines and other portable weapons; and children’s ability to easily shoot off a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) (Machel, 2001; Singer, 2006) at times weighing less than seven pounds and costing about US\$6 [USD6] (United Nations Research

Institute for Social Development, as cited in Hick, 2001). Illiterate children of even ten could strip, reassemble, load and fire most of these light weapons (Machel, 2001; Maxted, 2003; Thompson, as cited in Yoong, 2004). AK-47 rifles and other arms were so prevalent during the Angolan civil war that they were reportedly exchanged for radios, meals and food stuff (Freedson, 2002).

2.3.10 Fighting for spaces or fulfilling an ideological commitment

Some children fight because they believe in the cause or ideology (Boyden, 1994; David, 1998; Archibald & Richards, as cited in Peters, Richards & Vlassenroot, 2003; Dallaire, 2010). During the liberation struggle of the guerrilla army of FRELIMO for Mozambican independence from the Portuguese colonial rule (1964-1974), the “Girls with Guns” participated in the war because they believed in the ideology that the war would result in the “emancipation of women” (West, 2000:191). In former Rhodesia,⁴³ “patriotism” was the motivating factor for children’s involvement during the liberation war, where children fought to avoid being ill-treated in their “mother land” (Reynolds, 1990:5).

2.3.11 Child-soldiering and voluntariness conundrum

If some researchers have proved that children join armed groups under compulsion, others hold a contrary viewpoint (Brett & Specht, as cited in Wells, 2009:153). According to Singer (2006:61), two out of three children join armies “voluntarily”. However, Plunkett and Southall (1998) reject this claim. They argue that “this was never a free choice. Adolescents, who, having lost all else, are developing a sense of identity may join up to protect themselves from the social chaos” (Plunkett & Southall, 1998:73). Hunger and the desire to be protected, not necessarily the inclination to fight, push children to join warring factions. (Brett, et al., as cited in Hick, 2001; Dallaire, 2010). Joining warring factions here is “an extremely practical survival mechanism” (Boyden, 1994:263). As one Congolese child-soldier put it “I heard that the rebels at least were eating. So I joined them” (Salopek, as cited in Singer, 2006:63).

⁴³Former Rhodesia is the current Zimbabwe.

Although the majority of the children get involved in armed conflicts for a plethora of complexly interwoven reasons, ranging from physiological to ideological, the active presence of the former in the typical Sub-Saharan war theatres is explained through an interaction between push and pull factors blatantly articulated in Kourouma's (in Singer, 2006:vii) assertion:

When one has no one left on the earth, neither father nor mother, neither brother nor sister, and when one is small, a little boy in a damned and barbaric country where everyone slashes each other's throats, what does one do? Of course, one becomes a child soldier, a small soldier, to get one's fair share of eating and butchering as well. Only that remains.

2.4 Dehumanization and objectification of children: From decoys to fighting machines, from fighting machines to cannon fodder

Whether abducted or voluntarily enlisted in the military, child-soldiers' "fate within the ranks of armed forces or armed groups remains the same" (Honwana, 2006:57), and both boy and girl-soldiers perform almost similar functions as adults (Machel, 2001). The roles performed by child-soldiers could fall under three categories namely the logistics support roles; the combat roles, and the intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance roles.

2.4.1 Logistics supports roles

Empirical findings reveal that, in their function of logistics support, child-soldiers are used to loot shops and convoys as was the case during the civil war in Mozambique (Honwana, 2006), to perform household chores including errand running, laundering, cleaning, cooking, drawing water, latrine duties, fetching of firewood and nursing of the wounded. Girl-soldiers ('AK47 wives') were particularly subjected to compulsory and barbaric sexual services. Child-soldiers were also used as standing guards, messengers, hunters, and porters carrying loads weighing up to 60 kilograms including anything from ammunition to wounded soldiers (McCallin, 1998; Machel, 2001; Maxted, 2003; Honwana, 2006; Dallaire, 2010), and all this under a "harsh disciplinary code" (Wells, 2009:147). For instance, within LRA in Uganda, child-soldiers were forced "to carry heavy

loads” and those incapable of carrying loads “were executed by the other children as a means of further separating them from their past connections, and hardening and familiarizing them with killing” (Dallaire, 2010:132-133). Child-soldiers were also used to perform ancillary roles such as “drummer boys”⁴⁴ and “powder monkeys”⁴⁵ (Singer, 2006:11), infantry shock troops, raiders, sentries, spies, sappers, sneakers, thieves, aides de camps (David, 1998; Cohn & Goodwin-Gill, as cited in Singer, 2006), weapon maintenance, camp sentries or prisoners’ guards (ILO, as cited in Singer, 2006).

2.4.2 Combat functions

Child-soldiers’ combat duties consist in frontline fighting during hostilities where they draw fire or lead assaults (Honwana, 2006; Rosen, as cited in Wells, 2009; Dallaire, 2010). This is a role which forms the basis for their nickname “fighting machines” (Radio Netherlands, as cited in Singer, 2006:75). Statistics confirm that 91 percent of child-soldiers partake in hostilities (UNICEF, as cited in Singer, 2006). In African armed conflicts alone, 87 percent of child-soldiers are thought to have served as fighters (ILO, as cited in Singer, 2006) and in Liberia, 80 percent of child-soldiers fought (Human Rights Watch, 1994; IRIN, as cited in Singer, 2006). Child-soldiers also lay ambushes (Galloway, as cited in Singer, 2006) and grimly serve as executioners of suspected enemies (Human Rights Watch, 1994; David, 1998). Child-soldiers, often lightly trained, are hurriedly sent to the battlefield (Singer, 2006), simply because rebel commanders consider child-soldiers as temerarious fighters (Farkhar, as cited in Singer, 2006), good fighters, who perceive war as a game (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, as cited

⁴⁴Drummer boys were recruited during the American Civil War [Armies would regularly recruit young boys for service as drummers, well into the nineteenth century. This wasn’t only to provide music, as the drums performed an important role in the battlefield communications system, with various rolls signalling different commands. Recruiting boys for the work freed men for combat duty, and as the boys got older they could be regularly enlisted in the ranks. Officially there were age restrictions, but these were often ignored, and boys as young as ten were occasionally found beating the “long roll” which called the men into action] (Information accessed on <http://www.genealogyforum.com/gfaol/resource/Military/Drummer.htm> on 03.03.2011).

⁴⁵‘Powder monkeys’ were small boys who ran ammunition to cannon crews in the European military in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Singer, 2006:11).

in Singer, 2006), and are mindless of the fact that war is fraught with dangers (Radio Netherlands, as cited in Singer, 2006). In Colombia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and DRC, child-soldiers spearhead assault (Singer, 2006). Some child-soldiers are used as “psychological weapons” where they serve as “suicide bombers or walking improvised devices (IEDs),” a practice which is nothing other than terrorism (Nwolise, 2005; Dallaire, 2010). Child-soldiers were called “mine detectors” like in Guatemala (United Nations, as cited in Singer, 2006:107), simply because as part of a military strategy, they were sent in as “first waves of attack, to help clear paths through minefields [containing booby traps] with their bodies” (Armstrong, as cited in Singer, 2006:22; Dallaire, 2010:143). Child-soldiers were also used as human shields during the fighting in Iraq by Saddam loyalists (Bentham, as cited in Singer, 2006), as “bait” in supposedly abandoned villages (Singer, 2006:87) and at the frontline as “cannon fodder” (Singer, 2006:107) simply because “their lives are considered to be of less value than fully trained adult soldiers” (Singer, 2006:106) therefore they can be “spent” during hostilities (Singer, 2006:107). They are also used in “human wave” attacks with the aim of overwhelming the enemy “through sheer weight of numbers” (Singer, 2006:107). In DRC unarmed child-soldiers were “ordered to advance on their enemies beating trees with the sole objective to distract the enemy” (Singer, 2006:107).

2.4.3 Intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance functions

In their intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance functions, child-soldiers are involved in “information collection or intelligence” (Dallaire, 2010:119), reconnaissance missions (Dallaire, 2010), patrolling, surveillance (ILO, as cited in Singer, 2006), and are used as spies (Machel, 2001; Honwana, 2006; Rosen, as cited in Wells, 2009).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ See also Singer, 2006:15; McCallin, 1998: 67–9; Machel, 2001: 12–13; Maxted, 2003: 62; Save the Children-UK, 2005:1; David, 1998:15.

2.5 Life within factions: Predators and their prey?

2.5.1 Making new boy and girl-recruits committed insiders through terror

Within the jungle, child-soldiers are subjected to gruesome induction ceremonies that consist in immersing children “in the norms, identity, culture, values and beliefs of the military institution” in a cruel and degrading manner (Dallaire, 2010:131). These ceremonies are conducted to acquaint child-soldiers with the “military terror” thus making them “committed insiders” (Hundeide, 2003:115). Child-soldiers therefore go through the stage of “separation and anxiety,” where they experience “terror,” “anxiety” and “extreme emotional pains”. For instance, in Burundi “captured child-soldiers were reportedly severely beaten in detention, some with metal bars and hammers” (Dallaire, 2010:124). Child-soldiers are also ordered “to kill, mutilate, and torture” (Human Rights Watch, as cited in Dallaire, 2010:131), and quite often compelled to witness the execution of their friends and family members and applaud afterwards (Human Rights Watch, 1994). Movies are used as a method of desensitization of child-soldiers (Dallaire, 2010). Child-soldiers are “psychologically manipulated” through “starvation, thirst, fatigue, voodoo, indoctrination, beatings, the use of drugs or alcohol, and even sexual abuse to render them compliant to the new norms of child-soldiering” (Dallaire, 2010:118).

Child-soldiers are severely punished for any offence committed (Hundeide, 2003). For instance, in Liberia child-soldiers who violated the rules within warring factions were beaten with a “cartridge belt” (Human Rights Watch, 1994:35). Child-soldiers were also frequently forced to commit egregious crimes such as execution, rape, throwing someone down a well or into a river as a pathway to bravery. In Liberia, many child-soldiers were beaten not only by faction commanders but also by the West African Peacekeeping Mission troops (ECOMOG). Child-soldiers were also tortured through “tabay”⁴⁷ (Human Rights Watch, 1994:35-36).

⁴⁷ ‘Tabay’ is a form of torture in which a person’s elbows are tied together behind his/her back, and the rope is pulled tighter and tighter until his/her rib cage separates.

Rebel commanders often bedevil child-soldiers through fear, brutality, and psychological manipulation “to achieve high levels of obedience” (Singer, 2006:71). Through the stage of “identification with the aggressor” child-soldiers “become strongly attached to their commander” and *ipso facto* develop the “identification with the aggressor syndrome” (Hundeide, 2003:116). They also go through the stage of “terror and the breaking of previous emotional ties,” which suppresses previous family attachments including “values” and “moralities” (Hundeide, 2003:117). With regard to this latter commitment stage, Liberian child-soldiers under compulsion openly had sex with ‘higher class women’ at checkpoints (Human Rights Watch, 1994:36). Similarly, in Sierra Leone, Uganda and Mozambique, new recruits were often forced to commit heinous acts against their own families and communities in order to enhance their loyalty to the armed group (Furley, 1995; Thompson, 1999; Maxted, 2003). Child-soldiers are also subjected to “isolation and indoctrination of new values” (Hundeide, 2003:118), and develop a “deep commitment,” a complete reorientation towards new values and goals (Hundeide, 2003:119).

2.5.2 Girl-soldiers as victims and perpetrators

Although it was generally believed that child-soldiers were boys, evidence is available that girls are also actively involved in wars as soldiers (Fox, 2004). Girl soldiers were not considered “real soldiers” (UNICEF, as cited in Park, 2006:323) and were therefore often neglected during the DDRR processes (Machel, 2001; UNICEF, as cited in Park, 2006).

But statistics show that between 1990 and 2003, girls were believed to be members of warring factions in 55 countries and actively involved in armed conflict in 38 countries (McKay & Mazurana, 2004). During the civil war in Liberia, girl soldiers served within the GoL Forces, LURD and MODEL although in imprecise numbers (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

Apart from duties such as fighting, diamond mining and spying, performed by both boy and girl soldiers, the latter often suffer from lack of care during

undesired pregnancies and easily commit “abortions on their own, reject their babies, and in some cases, commit infanticide” (Park, 2006:322).

Girl-soldiers are treated as sex objects, thus frequently raped within warring factions (McKay & Mazurana, as cited in Wells, 2009). In Sierra Leone, sexual assault served as an “indoctrinating weapon” and rape was sometimes used as “reward” to boy-soldiers. The RUF in this regard carried out “Operation Fine Girl” with the specific purpose of abducting “pretty girls, especially virgins, the younger the better” (Singer, 2006:104). During the civil war in Sierra Leone, “rape was so widespread that it was no longer stigmatized” (Human Rights Watch, as cited in Wells, 2009:157). Virtually all abducted girls (90 percent) were sexually assaulted (McKay & Mazurana, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2004), and often in the process of sexual abuse, most girls were forced into degrading ‘AK-47 marriages’ (Cahn, 2006:421). Contrary to commanders’ wives, who had the power to punish or reward and enjoyed various privileges, girls who did not become wives were forced into labour (Coulter, as cited in Dallaire, 2010), and even in the process became “communal sex object[s]” (Dallaire, 2010:133) as was the case in the Sierra Leonean rebel jungles. In Burundi, girl-soldiers were often taken as “bush wives” and “sex slaves” by the troops (Dallaire, 2010:129).

Stigmatization against former child-soldiers was more pronounced with girl-soldiers than boy-soldiers; as McKay and Mazurana (in Park, 2006:322) pointed out when drawing on the post-conflict reintegration in Sierra Leone: “in many cases it is easier for a boy to be accepted after amputating the hands of villagers than it is for a girl to be accepted after being the victim of rape”.

Although ‘the voluntary enlistment’ of child-soldiers remains questionable (Park, 2006), many girl soldiers in Sierra Leone were said to have volunteered and were “actors seeking to take control of their lives and not passive objects being acted upon by others” (Brett, 2004:32).

In situations of widespread rape, abductions and ill treatment, girls voluntarily join warring factions with the belief that they will “be safer if they have a gun,”

and willingly choose their sexual partners within the factions instead of waiting to be forced into such relationships through abduction (Brett, 2004:33).

Girl soldiers are often excluded from the demobilization process, and left alone to fend for themselves and their babies; some are abandoned by their husbands; others decide to stay with their ex-combatant husbands against their will, while others are rejected by their families (Brett, 2004). Even the best programmes designed for the reintegration of girl soldiers, fail to tackle the challenges such girls face particularly concerning their future (Brett, 2004).

Because of the small number of girl soldiers who accept to go through the official demobilization process, they are almost invisible and assumed not to be having any agency during wars particularly in African war theatres (Nordstrom, as cited in Brett, 2004); but actually “one-third of child-soldiers” are girl soldiers (Brett, 2004:31).

Some girl soldiers express “a strong sense of self” for survival and also perpetrate violence (Keairns, as cited in Brett, 2004:37). There were also instances whereby ‘girl’ soldiers sexually abused ‘boy’ soldiers (McKay & Mazurana, 2004). For instance, female fighters in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Peru and Sri Lanka, were regarded by civilians “as monsters, barbarians, and frequently as more cold blooded than male rebels” (Coulter, 2008:57), because of their active involvement in hostilities (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004; Park, 2006). Consequently, drawing on the Sierra Leonean example, Park (2006) argued that girl soldiers should not be solely seen as victims of war, but that their agency should be reckoned with to allow for a genuine post-conflict recovery.

2.5.3 Starvation and inhumane drills

Child-soldiers are debatably believed to be harshly treated within armed groups and even starved, contrary to their counterparts in State units (regular army units) who enjoy regular rations, uniforms and even pay (Singer, 2006). In general, forced labour is the norm for all child-soldiers (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

Child-soldiers are forced to do physical exercise such as running around camp perimeters carrying “stones on their shoulders ... Those who spill the stones or collapse are killed” (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, as cited in Singer, 2006:79). After the 1991 Iraq Gulf War, children between the ages of ten and fifteen were subjected to tough drills such as “fourteen hours per day of military training and political indoctrination” (Singer, 2006:78-79). Within armed groups or forces, child-soldiers do not have rights, maybe privileges if they are lucky (Dallaire, 2010).

2.5.4 Choosing between death punishment or accepting drug injection

Child-soldiers are often given hard drugs such as amphetamines, barbiturates, cocaine and concoctions of cane juice and gunpowder, marijuana, and alcohol by commanders in order to make them impervious to fear (Human Rights Watch, 1994; Singer, 2006).

In Liberia some commanders put drugs into child-soldiers’ eyeballs so that they could kill indiscriminately and remorselessly (Human Rights Watch, 1994). In Sierra Leone in particular, incisions were made on child-soldiers’ bodies, cocaine was packed in and the wound plastered.⁴⁸ Any opposition to such venous drug injections was described as “technical sabotage” and punished by death (Zarifis, 2002:19).

2.5.5 Compulsory identity change

Within armed groups, child-soldiers undergo identity changes for various reasons. For instance, the Sri Lankan LTTE rebels shave child-soldiers’ heads to inculcate “a break in identity” and make “escapees easier to identify” (Singer, as cited in Dallaire, 2010:135). During the Liberian war, child-soldiers were given new names which portrayed their roles within the warring factions (Human Rights

⁴⁸ To see the full interview excerpt visit http://www.amicc.org/docs/Child_Soldiers.pdf, accessed on 24.05. 2012.

Watch, 1994; Human Rights Watch, 2004). The following are examples of jungle names given to child-soldiers:

‘Laughing and Killing’ because the boy soldier would laugh as he killed enemy fighters; ‘Disgruntled’ because the child soldier was not satisfied with the fighting; ‘Captain No Mercy’ because the officer would kill if someone disobeyed orders; and ‘Walking Stick’ because this child was made to walk directly behind his commander ... Some boys and girls had names which indicated what they would do to captured civilians... like ‘Castrator’, ‘Ball Crusher’, ‘Nut Bag Mechanic’... names might describe punishment ... ‘Dirty Water’ because he was made to bathe in a hole full of waste for committing an infraction. (Human Rights Watch, 2004:26)

2.6 International legal standards for the protection of children against their involvement in armed conflict⁴⁹

Because of recent barbaric armed conflicts characterized by a cruel disregard for human lives (Downes, 2008; Clinton, as cited in AFP, 2011) that have heightened civilian casualties to as high as 80 to 90 percent with a large portion of children and women killed (Stohl, et al., as cited in Freedson, 2002), children categorized among the most vulnerable during wartime, have been given special protection under international law.

In practice, however, children are often mostly neglected by the international community, national governments and aid agencies that primarily ought to be the vanguards of the fight against child-soldiering (Freedson, 2002). Fortunately, with the emergence of an international governance of childhood, whereby new international legal instruments are framed to protect children across the globe (Wells, 2009), and “an emerging global consensus on this damaging practice” (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008:9), many nations have committed themselves to respect a body of international legal frameworks to lessen, or if possible, eradicate the use of minors as soldiers.

⁴⁹ These legal instruments for the protection of children against warfare are available at <http://www.child-soldiers.org/childsoldiers/international-standards> and http://www.unicef.org/emerg/index_childsoldiers.html

The international community's legal machinery to curb war effects on children was set in motion by Graça Machel's United Nations-commissioned ground-breaking study in 1996 entitled *The Impact of War on Children*. Whether during peace or wartime, "child abuse and neglect are not new problems" (Munro, 1999:745), and any proper understanding of the legal protection of the child at a "global scale" (Wells, 2009:18) is only possible within international law,⁵⁰ and all legal standards upon which human beings' protection generally hinges *ipso facto* apply to children.

The global campaign for the special protection of children started during and after World War I (Yoong, 2004). In 1924, the League of Nations adopted a World Child Welfare Charter (IPU & UNICEF, 2004). After World War II, NGOs urged the then newly formed United Nations to endorse the charter. As a result of this lobbying, in 1959, the United Nations General Assembly passed a new version of the Child Welfare Charter in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which established in its preamble that "mankind owes the child the best it has to give" (UNICEF, 1996:44). Other early human rights frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Duties of Man of 1948, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, recognized more generally the rights for humans including children to be free from abuse, violence and exploitation (IPU & UNICEF, 2004).

Although the protection of children is "difficult in internal armed conflict" (Machel, 2001:14), there are now over 100 instruments of international law governing the protection of children (Saulle & Kojanec, as cited in Wells, 2009; Dallaire, 2010)⁵¹, and many of them are legally binding (Wells, 2009). But the main consensual instrument for the protection of children is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. It lays out specific and special rights of children and has been ratified by 191 countries of the 193 in the world excluding Somalia and

⁵⁰ International Human Rights Law available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/>

⁵¹ For a comprehensive list of legal standards protecting children against their use as fighters, see Dallaire (2010:265-290).

the United States of America (Machel, 2001; IPU & UNICEF, 2004; Honwana, 2006). This convention thus appears to be the backbone of the legal framework tailored to the protection of children worldwide during war or peacetime.

Fortuitously, there also exists the International Humanitarian Law (IHL)⁵² or Law of Armed Conflict which is designed to govern on a global scale, the conduct of warfare with the aim of limiting the suffering of civilians, Prisoners Of War (POWs) and wounded combatants.

Liberia has no compulsory recruitment age into the army; it has a minimum voluntary recruitment age of 18 years. The government of Liberia signed the Optional Protocol to the UNCRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict, ratified the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 182, the Rome Statute, the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008).

If much has been written on the legal standards protecting children from recruitment into warring factions, it seems less has been done to produce literature critiquing the implementation of these multidimensional treaties and resolutions. The widespread, glaring and repeated violation of these instruments by signatories needs to be examined.

2.7 Consequences of child-soldiering: Gains and Losses

The use of children as soldiers in armed conflicts is not without negative or positive consequences on individual child-soldiers, families and communities. The negative impact of child-soldiering on individual child-soldiers has been vastly explored across studies, and various contributors to the existing body of writing in

⁵² The International Humanitarian Law is also called the Law of Armed Conflict. The text of the International Humanitarian Law is available at www.icrc.org/ihl

this regard range from humanitarian agencies, peace scholars, medical practitioners, psychologists and sociologists. In this section, I try to present the aftermath of child-soldiering in two layers: effects on individual child-soldiers on the one hand, and effects on families and communities on the other hand.

2.7.1 Child-soldiers: “Voiceless victims of war” or “zombies”?

Armed conflicts historically result in “a sadistic catalogue of abuse” (Plunkett & Southall, 1998:72), and guerrilla warfare-induced stress differs from that of conventional warfare (Laufer, Gallops & Frey-Wouters, 1984). Both children, “the voiceless victims of wars” (Kumar, 1997:21) and those they victimize, are all victims of situations and conditions beyond their control (Dallaire, 2010).

The available body of writing reveals that the reaction of children to war depends on their age, gender, individual and family history, cultural background, experience, the magnitude, the nature and the duration of the war (Pynoos, et al., as cited in Plunkett & Southall, 1998; Hick, 2001), the participation in hostilities (Boothby, 1986; Dodge, 1986), the exposure to bombardments and air raids (Ziv & Israel, 1973; Day & Sadek, 1982), the exposure to the torture or death of family members (Kaffman & Elizur, 1984), and displacement (Ressler, Boothby, & Steinbock, 1988).

As a result of their participation in the war, child-soldiers are often trapped in “a continuum of duress” (Quesada, 1998:64) including “sleep problems, pessimism, lack of trust, emotional detachment, and even symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD]” (Quesada, 1998:57).

Child-soldiers are usually beset by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Plunkett & Southall, 1998; Machel, 2001; Honwana, 2006; Singer, 2006). Cases of PTSD were rampant among former child-soldiers in North Uganda and Nepal (Derluyn, et al., 2004; Kohrt, et al., 2008). Former child-soldiers who show more PTSD symptoms are less open to reconciliation and are rather inclined to revenge (Bayer, Klasen & Adam, 2007).

Child-soldiers also experience “recurrent, intrusive and distressing recollections of disturbing thoughts and sensory images” (Plunkett & Southall, 1998:74); they re-experience events through storytelling, dreams and play (Jensen & Shaw, 1993); they also experience loss of appetite, nightmares, sleep disturbances, anxiety disorders, stress, fear and show withdrawn behaviour (Assal & Farrell, 1992; McCloskey & Southwick, 1996; Machel, 2001),⁵³ guilt and suicide attempt (Marsella, et al., 1994; Apfel & Simon, 1996).⁵⁴ Children’s involvement in armed conflicts also allows for personality, beliefs and attitudinal changes (Ayalon, 1982; Punamäki, 1982; Gibson, 1989). Some young veterans “suffer permanent physical damage to circuits in their heads and become fanatical soldiers” and even “zombies” [zombie-like] (Dallaire, 2010:138).

Child-soldiers, especially girl-soldiers suffer “psychological damage, physical injury, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, and childbirth complications” (Dallaire, 2010:130), and are left with an “irreparable physical damage to their immature bodies” (Dallaire, 2010:175). It is worth mentioning that child-soldiers, particularly females (Hick, 2001) easily contract sexually transmitted diseases (STD) including HIV/AIDS, and this is compounded by the fact that the rate of HIV is “three to four times higher” among combatants than local populations (Dallaire, 2010:179).

The resulting effects in children’s lives are numerous. Children exhibit aggressive and depressive behaviour patterns (Punamäki, 1982; Macksoud & Aber, 1996); they suffer from emotional trauma and moral and physical developmental impairment (Fields, 1980; Quesada, 1998). For instance, research findings revealed that Salvadoran teenagers who were more exposed to the death of family members, and violence in general, became more aggressive than their counterparts who were less exposed to the same incidents; similar findings about children exposed to different levels of community and political violence were obtained in

⁵³ See also Chimienti, Nasr & Khalifeh, 1989; Marsella, Bornemann, Ekblad & Orley, 1994; Apfel & Simon, 1996.

⁵⁴ See also Machel (2001) and Human Rights Watch (1994).

South Africa, Mexico and the United States (Schwartz & Proctor, as cited in Kerestes, 2006).

A comparative study of the reactions of children in Israeli settlements subjected to frequent bombardments in the post-1967 Arab-Israeli War period, and the children never subjected to bombardments, revealed that the former manifested an “increase in aggressive attitudes, expressed through increased patriotic feelings” (Plunkett & Southall, 1998:74).

Whatever the nature of the reactions of child-soldiers as a result of their exposure to armed conflict, this exposure has the capability to significantly impede children’s psychological development, and negate the harmonious development of children’s personality and growth in the family environment (Macksoud & Aber, 1996; Plunkett & Southall, 1998).

2.7.2 Young veterans between resilience and astounding prosocial behaviour

Relief programmes tend to focus on “spectacular” groups of children including child-soldiers and orphans whom they pathologize, thus undermining children’s agency, and are usually overshadowed by an apocalypse model of conflict (Boyden, 1994).

Child-soldiers are not only hapless victims of warfare as many humanitarian agencies tend to depict them. War experiences, astoundingly, “under supported, protected conditions, seem to affect children positively” (Garbarino, Kostelny, & Dubrow, as cited in Macksoud & Aber, 1996:70).

The findings of a study conducted on Lebanese teenagers revealed that children who were separated from their parents and teenagers who were exposed to the killing of family or community members “showed an increase in prosocial behaviour”, became altruistic, by protecting those deemed vulnerable, and condemned injustice (Macksoud & Aber, 1996:84).

Other studies either observed no impact of war on children's aggression or found it only under certain conditions. For instance, Ziv, Kruglanski and Shulman (1974) found that, despite their exposure to the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, teenagers did not manifest any "overt aggression toward the enemy" (Kerestes, 2006:228).

A study of Croatian preschools revealed that the pre-war and war levels of aggression did not differ (Raboteg-Saric', Zuzul, & Kerestes, as cited in Kerestes, 2006). Similarly, Raundalen, et al. (in Kerestes, 2006) noticed prosocial behaviour among Ugandan school children. Henríquez and Méndez (in Walton, Nuttall & Nuttall, 1997) found that Salvadoran children diversely affected by war, showed no differences in prosocial behaviour. Farver and Frosch (1996) discovered that preschool children who were exposed to the Los Angeles riots in 1992, showed less prosocial behaviour than the children who were not directly exposed to the riot, while some displayed "extraordinary resilience" (Dallaire, 2010:181). Others develop a sense of responsibility and independence and challenge traditional roles especially gender roles, and coping mechanisms (Addae-Mensah, 2008). Because of the inconsistency of research results, it is difficult to theoretically expect "the negative effects of war on children's aggressive and prosocial behaviour" (Kerestes, 2006:228).

Psychosocial support has been the most used war trauma healing technique. Many scholars use a spectrum of concepts such as psychosocial support, psychosocial assistance, psychosocial responses, psychosocial wellness or wellbeing and psychosocial healing, to refer to this technique (Bracken, Giller & Summerfield, 1995; Wessells, 1999; Ahearn, 2000; Hick, 2001; Wessells & Monteiro, 2006; Wessells & Jonah, n.d). This technique seeks to address emotional insecurities through trauma healing sessions and workshops, counseling and guidance sessions, recreational activities, informal peace education activities, all aimed at developing important life skills (Addae-Mensah, 2008).

However, the use of Western diagnoses of PTSD and subsequent approaches to psychosocial support in non-Western contexts (Macksoud, Dyregrov & Raundalen, as cited in Macksoud & Aber, 1996; Malakpa, as cited in Peters, Richards & Vlassenroot, 2003) did not remain unquestioned. Using ‘talk therapy’ as an example, Summerfield (in Kamra, 2002) argued that such therapy required for those suffering from PTSD, cannot be applied in the ‘Third World’ countries simply because many suffering from trauma in those countries recover without using these methods. He further pointed out that “many non-Western cultures have little place for the revelation of intimate and personal material outside the close family circle”, and that the fundamental role played by the social recovery is non-existent in the western conception of trauma healing (Summerfield, as cited in Kamra, 2002:167). Earlier, in a similar vein, Bracken, Giller and Summerfield (1995:1073) suggested that the use of the concept PTSD in Third World countries should be tentative because of the “Western ontology and value system” it endorses.

2.7.3 Effects of child-soldiering on families and communities

The impact of child-soldiering, whether on the individual child-soldiers, their families or immediate communities, is to a great extent inimical to the development of the larger society entangled by a “cultural trauma” (Alexander, as cited in Saito, 2006:356). The word “psychosocial” for instance, highlights the “dialectic relationship between psychological and social elements” (Hick, 2001:117). While the psychological dimension of this technique is concerned with people’s ability to learn, their perceptions, behaviour patterns, emotions, memory and thoughts,

... social elements include altered relationships due to death, separation, estrangement, and other losses; family and community breakdown; damage to social values and customary practices; and the destruction of social facilities and services. Social effects also extend to economic aspects as people become impoverished (Hick, 2001:117).

Besides the “painful psychosocial damage” child-soldiering inflicts upon children, it “erodes” the pre-war good relationships between children and adults (Hick,

2001:117) and the protective roles of the family and society (Plunkett & Southall, 1998). This allows for a social crisis of confidence which percolates through the various layers of the society; consequently, children's perspective of life, their attitudes towards neighbours and the larger society, are hugely altered (Macksoud & Aber, 1996).

Even children who survive armed conflicts immensely suffer from social maladjustment; such children "have a myriad of social, physical and emotional problems to deal with," and are therefore physically and socially handicapped (Dallaire, 2010:150). This, without doubt, makes the adaption of child-soldiers to "life within a family and society" impossible (Plunkett & Southall, 1998:73); especially when post-war family and society members refuse to reckon with the jungle inherited independence and assertiveness (Southall, McMaster, Muhiudeen, 1995). Children's participation in warfare distorts their values and attitudes (Plunkett & Southall, 1998). Child-soldiering also leads to a loss of reference systems, impedes the socialization process of children, and allows for a shift in social roles, with children compelled to assume the roles of parents (Addae-Mensah, 2008).

Some former girl-soldiers are rejected outright by their society, particularly those who were sexually assaulted and became pregnant during their military service in the jungle. They suffer pronounced stigmatization, that is, a "cultural vulnerability of rejection by their society" where a "code of silence, guilt and shame" becomes their daily experience (Dallaire, 2010:175); it is no surprise therefore when they are called "forgotten casualties of war" (Save the Children Fund-UK, 2005:i).

Former girl-soldiers are subjected to a broad range of difficulties in post-conflict society. They are denied many privileges during peacetime (McKay, as cited in Dallaire, 2010). And because they are "mothers of unwanted babies", former girl fighters are on a collision course with the society, and cannot easily rebuild "life within the normal social structure", and as a result they are "often ostracized" (Dallaire, 2010:176). They have to survive and nurture their "rebel babies",

considered “non-persons” by society, and who they themselves “struggle to love” (Dallaire, 2010:111-177). After a protracted and gruesome armed conflict, it takes a long time to rebuild “a stable citizenry”, and it becomes an uphill struggle for former child-soldiers to negotiate their social acceptance, and some may have recourse to their former jungle way of living (Dallaire, 2010:165). As Wessells (in Dallaire, 2010:165-166) argued:

Children who spend their formative years in combat take on values and identities that are shaped by the military groups to which they belonged. Even at the end of conflict, children who can’t see a future for themselves in their communities and country, may cross borders to fight in neighbouring conflicts.

2.8 Child-soldiers’ journey back home: Smooth and slippery pathways of the controversial DDR

The ‘Brahimi Report’⁵⁵ of 2000 deemed the synergy between the Funds, Agencies and Programmes of the United Nations, as a fundamental condition for the world organization’s efficiency, particularly with regard to peace operations. Such an ‘integrated approach’ is especially of great significance for successful DDR programmes — simply because these programmes which constitute a key component of peacebuilding processes, are multi-dimensional and draw on the expertise of various sectors essential for field operations (United Nations, 2000). This new integrated approach of peace operations gave birth to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (IDDR) which is “people-centred, flexible, accountable and transparent, nationally owned, integrated and well-planned” (UN DPKO, 2006:8). But if theoretically DDR metamorphosed into IDDR, practically, its activities have remained almost intact. This is why many continue to refer to the programme as DDR or DDDR and rarely as IDDR.

The acronym ‘DDR’ or ‘DDRR’ is a confusing one and its definition is never unique partly because of what the ‘R’ or ‘RR’ stands for. For instance, while Landry (2006:9) defined DDDR as “Demobilization, Disarmament, Reunification and Reintegration,” Dallaire (2010:152) observed that:

⁵⁵ See the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly report [A/55/305—S/2000/809] for full report.

...the UN, peacekeeping and humanitarian communities have labelled DDR, for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. That final R stretches to cover many other *r* words — reinsertion, rehabilitation, reconciliation, reconstruction, repatriation — all of them so difficult to achieve.

The DDR was gender biased from the outset and too many girls — the “missing girls” (Williamson, 2006:190) — were often neglected and denied the DDR benefits (UNICEF, as cited in Williamson, 2006).

The planning and the implementation of DDR programmes have bearing on the reintegration of ex-fighters on the one hand, and on the peacebuilding process (World Bank, as cited in Knight & Özerdem, 2004). The “one-gun-per-person-demobilization” and the “guns–camps–cash” approaches have been majorly used by DDR initiatives (Knight & Özerdem, 2004:499-500). Although Dallaire (2010) suggested local or national ownership of the DDR programmes, it is worth mentioning that in most cases, the United Nations played and continue to play leading roles during DDR processes in post-war countries. As the former Secretary-General pointedly put it:

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants associated with armed groups is a prerequisite for post-conflict stability and recovery. Of course, there can be no substitute for national leadership and the political commitment of warring parties to disarm and demobilize. But in a peacekeeping environment, a successful DDR programme depends heavily on the ability of the United Nations system to plan, manage and implement a coherent and effective DDR strategy.⁵⁶

2.8.1 Disarming adult and child-soldiers: A process entangled by mistrust and fear

In post-war countries, disarmament is the first stage of the DDRR process, where former fighters are made to peacefully turn in their ‘guns’ (Creative Associates International, 1997; Alusula, 2008). Literature reveals that disarmament

⁵⁶ This is a quote from the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Kofi Annan’s foreword to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) in December 2006.

operations vary contextually. Operation “cash for guns” has been the frequent way of making ex-combatants including children, turn in their weapons. But recently, disarmament has been done through newer operations such as “bikes for guns” or “goats for guns” as practised for the Mai Mai militia in the DRC (Dallaire, 2010:161). As the Liberian experience revealed, ‘cash for guns’ disarmament may have negative implications for child-soldiers, as it was difficult to constantly ensure the payment of the money as a result of their participation in the process (Dallaire, 2010). Similarly, in Burundi, “older siblings or parents tended to appropriate the bicycles” former child-soldiers were provided with during the disarmament (Dallaire, 2010:161).

Dallaire (2010) argued that such incidents can only be prevented if the DDRR programmes take into consideration the revitalization of the communities child-soldiers hail from (or post-conflict receiving communities) on the one hand, and are adequately funded on the other hand.

As a matter of fact, disarmament in most post-war countries has never been a genuine disarmament, not necessarily because the DDRR implementing partners are not willing to carry out a successful operation, but many factors impinge on its success. For instance, during the disarmament in Sierra Leone, many weapons soldiers reportedly turned in were ‘junks’, and the serviceable rifles were hidden “just in case” (Dallaire, 2010:122). Some child-soldiers “hid their AK-47s in the bush or sold them to adults who cashed them in under DDRR programmes” (Dallaire, 2010:160). A true disarmament however, should not consist in merely collecting weapons from former fighters, but should make sure the latter are disarmed “emotionally and mentally,” in order to ensure peace in post-conflict societies, where ‘revenge’ remains a ticking bomb (Human Rights Watch, 1994:45). Regrettably, this crucial stage of the transition from war to peace, has often been seemingly downplayed, and the international community’s emphasis placed more on the ‘frivolous and hasty’ “national election agenda, than to support country pacification” (Creative Associates International, 1997:51).

2.8.2 Post-war demobilization of former fighters: A fuzzy and crafty undertaking?

Demobilization, the second component of the DDRR process aims to demilitarize a faction through severing its military command and control structure, and disbanding the “organic” composition of an armed force or group (Creative Associates International, 1997:51). Unfortunately, as in the case of Liberia’s 1997 demobilization, the command structure can remain intact (Creative Associates International, 1997:39). During the demobilization process, the ex-combatants are usually provided with money, apparatus and other non-food items, to assist them at the outset of their reintegration (Kingma, 1997).

On a macro level, the socio-economic and political context, within which the demobilization process takes place, influences its success (Kingma, 1997). Some of the factors which to a great extent may guarantee the success of the process include, the cessation of hostilities, a painstaking disarmament, a political will on the part of the authorities by respecting the terms of the peace agreement, a connectedness between the process and the national reconciliation project, and the provision of initial basic needs to the former fighters (Kingma, 1997; Kingma, as cited in Sedra, 2003).

The post-war demobilization process may easily fail when the aforementioned conditions are neglected; a viewpoint echoed by Machel (2001:17) who pointed out that “many demobilization programmes falter precisely because of flawed design, a lack of resources or a failure to monitor the process”. For instance, it is estimated that between 15,000 and 20,000 child-soldiers were actively involved in the first part of the Liberian civil war (1989-1997); but not even 5,000 child-soldiers went through the official DDR process (Peters, Richards & Vlassenroot, 2003).

2.8.3 The ‘Rs’ phase of DDRR: A confusing process?

The ‘Rs’ stage of the DDRR process has often been a perplexing one (Specker, 2008). As mentioned earlier, Dallaire (2010:152) attempted a broad definition to

the 'Rs' which stand for "reinsertion, rehabilitation, reconciliation, reconstruction, repatriation". Reintegration therefore is caught in a web of interdependencies with many other processes, usually long term, which generally are "not well supported" (Dallaire, 2010:171). Barnes (in Malan, 2000) suggested that reintegration should ideally last for a minimum duration of 24 months; this will ensure a behavioural demilitarisation of former fighters.

Reintegration is meant to "assist persons who have been associated with fighting forces to return to civilian life as valuable and productive members of society" (DPKO, as cited in Allen & Schomerus, 2006:4). A failure of reintegration means it is likely that children will be re-recruited or voluntarily enrolled in order to survive (Dallaire, 2010). It must be noted that "demobilized soldiers and guerrilla fighters have usually great difficulties re-establishing themselves in civilian life" (Kingma, 1997:151); and frustrated or dissatisfied former soldiers may jeopardize national peace and stability (Hartley, 2011).

Broken promises and the lack of long-term commitment from donors, community and nation constitute an impediment to reintegration (Dallaire, 2010). Actually, it is very "risky to create high expectations" during the DDR process (Colletta, et al., as cited in Fuhlrott, 2007:330). Drawing on the Liberian case, Jennings (2008:332) argued that "vague, platitudinal, or contradictory understandings of reintegration results into planning processes and programs that lack a clear strategy and lead to overblown expectations".

2.8.4 Child-soldiers: Forgotten, remembered but not prioritized

The routes child-soldiers follow to become civilians again vary. Some child-soldiers are self-demobilized (Peters, Richards & Vlassenroot, 2003); these are usually crafty escapees who take advantage of their taskmasters' inattention to break loose from the ranks of warring factions. Another set of child-soldiers, those Dallaire (2010:150) called "the lucky ones," are released upon series of negotiations between leading humanitarian agencies such as UNICEF and NGOs

on the one hand, and warring factions on the other hand before any ceasefire or peace agreement takes place. The third category of child-soldiers, those who “are not lucky” (Dallaire, 2010:150), undergo the official or formal DDRR process (Williamson, 2006).

Initially, most DDRR programmes did not include child-soldiers. The Mozambican DDRR programmes were a typical example. And even in DDRR programmes where child-soldiers are included, these programmes are underfunded simply because some donors do not consider child-soldiers’ DDRR as a priority (Singer, 2006; Dallaire, 2010; Gordon, 2011).

Actually, the “Sierra Leone’s 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement, though flawed, was the first such pact to recognise the needs of child soldiers and to plan for their demobilization and reintegration into community life” (Machel, 2001:14). Since the Lomé Peace Agreement, how has this recognition of child-soldiers’ official disarmament, demobilization and reintegration into community been translated into action?

DDR, the “troubling terrain” as Dallaire (2010:152) described it, “was created as a male concept” and with a focus on adult males (Dallaire, 2010:178), which unfortunately DPKO decided to uncritically adopt as a method of unmaking child-soldiers (Dallaire, 2010). This approach of making child-soldiers regain their lost childhood will without doubt suffer setbacks.

The DDRR process is to “contribute to security and stability in post-conflict environments”, thus paving the way for recovery and development (Dallaire, 2010:155). Unfortunately, this process is at times very complex and tends to underemphasize the fate of child-soldiers (Dallaire, 2010). The strategic bodies namely the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Security Council (SC), which engineer peacekeeping mandates and field missions to enforce these mandates, “are always hard-pressed by time and resources ... and regard child soldiers as an annoyance, a pain in the side, a social-

adjustment problem meriting a minimum of effort” (Dallaire, 2010:154). Since child-soldiers’ demobilization is less important to member nations, adequately funding such programmes becomes a mirage (Dallaire, 2010). However, Machel (2001:14) earlier suggested that, for ‘turning child-soldiers into civilians’ to be a feasible and viable project, “peace negotiations must include a specific commitment to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate children used in hostilities”. But it is one thing to include the noble project of unmaking child-soldiers in peace negotiations, it is another to indeed ensure the implementation of this project.

There is evidence that the DDRR devisers and implementing partners have the tendency to force formal education on child-soldiers, a suggestion some former child-soldiers are at times unhappy about (Gordon, 2011). In addition, the DDRR programmes fail to acknowledge the self-perception of former child-soldiers, particularly those who were not mentally demilitarized (Hill & Langholtz, 2003).

At times, during the implementation of child-soldiers’ DDRR programmes, frustration takes place when vulnerable youth who are also affected by war but who were not child-soldiers, are left without any proper care in the same communities where former child-soldiers’ needs are catered for by humanitarian agencies (Betancourt, 2008). And often such disregard for a broader or community approach to reintegration has been the chief reason for the misunderstanding between former fighters and other members of post-conflict communities (Dallaire, 2010).

The success of child-soldiers’ DDRR depends on various factors. For instance, in Sierra Leone, the following factors accounted for the ‘reported success’:

Community sensitization, formal disarmament and demobilization, a period of transition in an Interim Care Centre, tracing and family mediation, family reunification, traditional cleansing and healing ceremonies and religious support, school or skills training, ongoing access to health care for those in school or training, and individual supportive counselling, facilitation and encouragement (Williamson, 2006:185)

Despite the success stories of the Sierra Leonean child-soldiers' DDRR, many girl-soldiers could participate in the process for various reasons (Williamson, 2006). Specht and Attree (2006) argued that a prior understanding of the reasons why girl soldiers joined warring factions is a prerequisite to effective reintegration into the post-conflict society. This understanding will help DDRR officials come to grips with former girl-soldiers' dreams, ambitions, potentials and vulnerabilities.

The two authors further identified the following as salient factors that influenced girl-soldiers' DDRR:

... resistance to confrontation of their past as combatants, ... fear of social exclusion, ... opposition of male soldiers and commanders to the demobilization of girls, ... unwillingness to be in a camp, ... reluctance to bring children to camps, ... unwillingness to await transport to camps alongside males, ... fear of separation from partners or husbands, ... distrust in the DDR process especially in situations where such programs failed in the past. (Specht & Attree, 2006:224)

One major flaw affecting the DDRR process is the fact that child-soldiers' own perceptions and wishes regarding reintegration, are hardly taken into consideration. It is no surprise that most child-soldiers "do not see themselves as innocent victims but as perpetrators of war crimes" (Akello, Richters & Reis, 2006:240). Zack-Williams (2006) echoed this viewpoint, arguing that child-soldiers' perspective of things should be taken into consideration, partly because they can contribute to national development.

On a macro-level, ambiguities, complexities and unclear mandates which characterize some peacekeeping missions, impact on child-soldiers' participation in the DDRR process. ECOMOG is a typical example:

Volatile and dangerous circumstances, vague mandates and rules of engagement, and a lack of training have produced some lamentable encounters between peacekeepers and youth. In Liberia, for example, ECOMOG troops were engaged for a number of years in combat operations against factions comprising child soldiers — some as young as six or seven. In the process, they confronted and killed child

soldiers in combat, and detained and committed abuses against child combatants and suspected faction members. (Cohn, as cited in Malan, 2000:41-42)

2.9 Child-soldiers' agency

Although it seems difficult to explore child-soldiers' agency because of their perceived lack of moral responsibility (Gordon, 2011), the available body of writing has labelled them as 'victims' and 'perpetrators' (Baines, 2009; Morini, 2010), thus debunking the initial perception. But child-soldiers seem to be more victims than perpetrators — they are actually forced by circumstances to become perpetrators. Their agency in this case is described as a form of “complex political perpetrators,” referring to “youth who have grown up in settings of chronic crisis and, presented with a set of choiceless decisions ... develop strategies to navigate complex, violent terrains” (Baines, 2009:164-165).

Although there is evidence that former child-soldiers can be described as social misfits as a result of their active involvement in warfare and exposure to war (Machel, 2001; Singer, 2006; Honwana, 2006), their resilience which allows for their effective reintegration has been examined by many academics (Cairns, 1996; Boothby, Crawford & Halperin, 2006; Klasen, Oettingen, Daniels, Post, Hoyer, & Adam, 2010).

Various scholarly positions converge on the fact that child-soldiers are perceived as victims but also perpetrators during the war (Zarifis, 2002; McKay, 2005; Baines, 2009). For instance, in Sierra Leone child-soldiers actively took part in the war; they murdered, raped and amputated civilians' limbs (Zarifis, 2002). Using Sierra Leone and Northern Uganda as examples, McKay (2005:385) pointed out that:

Girls — both willingly and unwillingly — participate in terrorist acts within the context of contemporary wars. These acts range from targeting civilians for torture and killing to destroying community infrastructures so that people's physical and psychological health and survival are affected. Girls witness or participate in acts such as

mutilation, human sacrifice, forced cannibalism, drug use, and physical and psychological deprivation.

There are other scholarly works which deal with various forms of child-soldiers' agency (Akello, et al., 2006; Boothby, 2006; Honwana, as cited in Gordon, 2011). For instance, Boothby's (2006) longitudinal study (1988-2004) on former child-soldiers, who took part in the Mozambican war of liberation, revealed that former child-soldiers could exercise agency; they became "productive, capable and caring adults". They have reintegrated into the society although they were still prisoners of their pasts, thus suffering from psychological distress (Boothby, 2006:244).

Child-soldiers have a "tactical agency" through which they cope with the prevailing circumstances within their military environment, and a "strategic agency", concerned with the "understanding of the consequences and often an expectation of personal enrichment" (Honwana, as cited in Gordon, 2011).

As mentioned in Chapters One and Two, the DDRR processes carried out in Liberia were defective. While the first attempt which took place in 1997 was almost a complete failure, the second one was seriously flawed especially at the 'Rs' stage, and therefore impinged on the child-soldiers' transition from military to civilian life.

What has become of Liberian child-soldiers after this transitional period? What are their relational links with their former comrades and commanders of the jungle and on what grounds? What identity have they been building in their post-conflict receiving communities? What are their perspectives on the future based on all previous experiences? These are issues which will be considered in Chapters Five, Six, Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten and Eleven of this thesis, following a discussion on paradigm and theoretical frameworks in Chapter Three and methodology in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER THREE

Paradigm and theoretical frameworks

3.1 Introduction

Any attempt to scientifically explain or understand social phenomena requires a perspective running through the entire research process and highlighting how knowledge is being produced. Particularly in qualitative research, the roles of both the researcher and research participants towards this knowledge production are crucial. The choice of such a paradigm must be in congruence with other sociological theories used (Adams & Sydie, 2002). Consequently, this research is conducted within the interpretive-constructivist paradigm through which knowledge and meaning produced are the result of the contributions from the researcher and research subjects — the young veterans in this case. Besides this perspective, the research is underpinned by four theoretical frameworks relevant to micro-sociological studies, that is, micro-theories mostly concerned with interaction (Abraham, 2006). These include symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1992; Ulmer & Wilson, 2003),⁵⁷ Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, as cited in Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Huddy, 2001; Oakes, 2002), Sociometer Theory (Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2004), and Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964). It is however not my aim in this thesis to prove these theories, but use them as research pedestals and explanatory tools, to reflect with and to support analytical claims and arguments made in various segments of the discussion chapters. Theories in this research are used to establish linkages between empirical findings and to guide and enhance the meaningfulness of the study (Abraham, 2006). Referring to the use of theories in qualitative inquiry, Lawler (2008:78) argued that:

There are many theoretical perspectives with which we work within sociology (and other disciplines) that are not testable using ‘scientific’ methods. What we tend to look for in such theories are ways of

⁵⁷ See also Lewis, 1976; Esposito & Murphy, 2001; Lopata, 2003; Carrothers & Benson, 2003; Lewis & Ritchie, 2003.

understanding, appraising and interpreting the world. The point is not can we prove them? but are they useful to think with?

Concepts also play important roles in research (Blumer, 1969; Greveson & Spencer, 2005). For the purpose of this research many pertinent concepts have been highlighted and used as tools to understand various phenomena being studied. These concepts include self-agency (van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002; Young, Ofori-Boateng, Rodriguez & Plowman, 2003; Knoblich & Sebanz, 2005;), identity (Giddens, 1991; Jenkins, 1996; Lowrance, 2006; Stets & Cast, 2007; Lawler, 2008), instrumental coalition and self-esteem (Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2004), life-world (Wagner, 1973), the technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988; Lawler, 2008), the stream of action (Charon, 2001), the self (Mead 1934; Goffman 1969; Denzin, 1992), in-group, out-group and reference group (Abraham, 2006).

This chapter aims to highlight the above perspective, theoretical frameworks and concepts, to show how both the theories and concepts intersect, and most importantly, how relevant they are to this research.

3.2 Interpretive-constructivism paradigm and qualitative research

As in other studies, the current study is grounded in a paradigm. A prior discussion therefore of this perspective guides the researcher to keep focus and helps readers to appraise subsequent arguments accordingly. I chose to carry out this research within the confines of the interpretive-constructivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Mir & Watson, 2000; Morrow, 2007). What does this perspective connote? The interpretive-constructivism paradigm assumes that ‘knowledge or meaning’ emerges through ‘interaction between people’ and is therefore described as co-constructed (Haverkamp & Young, 2007:268; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Consequently in an interpretive-constructivist inquiry, the investigator’s values are assumed to influence the research process, although for trustworthiness purposes which I expatiate on in Chapter Four, the researcher is expected to critically examine how his/her personal values and beliefs influence the co-construction of that very knowledge. It therefore implies that knowledge is a product of the interaction

between the researcher and the participant, and through such a researcher-participant relationship, significant depth can be generated. Interpretive-constructivist scholars are not of the opinion that research should be conducted by value-neutral, impartial, detached “subjects” seeking “to uncover clearly discernable objects or phenomena” (Mir & Watson, 2000:941). For Mir and Watson (2000:942) researchers are to be considered as “actors rather than mere information processors or reactors.” Spivey (1995:314) buttressed this argument by comparing researchers to “craftsmen” and “toolmakers” contributing to knowledge production (Law, 1992:381). That dynamic relationship between the researcher and the respondents for knowledge creation is central to interpretive-constructivism.

3.3 Symbolic interactionism

3.3.1 Introduction

Symbolic interactionism is a perspective relevant to the field of sociology (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1969; Charon, 2001), precisely micro-sociology (Abraham, 2006). Although Herbert Blumer “coined the label symbolic interaction” (Carrothers & Benson, 2003:163), symbolic interactionism actually originates from earlier works of eminent psychologists, philosophers and sociologists, namely Charles Cooley, John Dewey, William Isaac Thomas and more importantly the work of George Herbert Mead (1934). Mead laid the foundations of symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969; Low, 2008). Accordingly, Lewis (in Low, 2008:325) called him the “philosophical progenitor” of symbolic interactionists. Many other scholars have since adopted this approach including Denzin (1989 & 1992), Holstein and Gubrium (2000), Charon (2001), and Lewis and Ritchie (2003) to mention a few.

In this work, I will first examine, although not comprehensively, the contributions of some of the leading precursors of this perspective. Secondly, I shall give a general overview of symbolic interactionism as a theory. Thirdly, I shall present the Blumerian *root images* and *premises* of symbolic interactionism (Blumer,

1969). Fourthly, I will examine the contribution of Charon (2001), a more recent devotee of symbolic interactionism. Charon's (2001) work goes beyond preceding interactionists to distinctly showcase the importance of human action in decision-making processes. But it is worth mentioning that dwelling on the influential interactionist works of Blumer (1969) and Charon (2001) does not prevent me from drawing on the works of the symbolic interactionism precursors, inasmuch as those forerunners' contributions are relevant to aspects of the discussion chapters. The works of these precursors can be considered as vehicles for ideas or seminal works that are still consistent with debates woven around social interaction. The study of young veterans' agency without doubt requires a spectrum of such micro-theoretical tools to support claims made.

3.3.2 Forerunners' pertinent contributions

Through the notions of consciousness, self and reality, James (in Denzin, 1992) argued that the relationship between an individual and a social group is basically characterized by interaction (Meltzer, Petras & Reynolds, 1975). Other scholars had a similar viewpoint. For instance, Dewey perceived social interaction to be a determinant of human behaviour. To him, all experience in human society is based on interaction (in Meltzer, et al., 1975). Human society, according to Dewey, allows the development of creativity and individuality within specific interactional settings. He further argued that the mind and the environment are in interaction, and it is this interaction which informs relationships. The behaviour of an individual can therefore only be understood through a prior understanding of the conditions of social interactions embedded in the social environment (Meltzer, et al., 1975:17-19). Dewey therefore conceived human behaviour "in terms of a circularity of interaction between the individual and the social group" (Meltzer, et al., 1975:43) and emphasized the individual's activeness to adapt to the environment in which he/she lives (Denzin, 1992). In the Liberian post-war society, young veterans were regularly in interactional situations with their comrades, former commanders and family members for those who still had families, and members of the larger community be it in-groups or out-groups.

Young veterans' behaviour patterns can be grasped through an understanding of the interactional relationships they engaged in. Other precursors of symbolic interactionism maintained that human behaviour cannot be interpreted as a mere result of interactions, but is vastly grounded on motivational bases. Cooley (in Meltzer, et al., 1975:34) in this regard considered human behaviour as stemming from "a vast web of social behaviour, mental constructions, and shared expectations." Cooley's position highlights the formation of instrumental coalitions and alliances among young veterans, and overlaps with Vroom's (1964) Theory of Expectation.

James (in Denzin, 1992) touched on the *self*. To James, the self is first considered as the knower or subject that is, the "I" which is central to the individual's state of consciousness. The second aspect of the self is the "me," that is, the self as object which interacts with the "I." This of course establishes the inner interaction which goes on in the life of an individual anytime he/she reflects over a particular issue. James therefore believes that "persons have as many selves as they have social relationships" (Denzin, 1992:4). This interaction with the self is also central to William Isaac Thomas' contribution to symbolic interactionism. Thomas (in Meltzer, et al., 1975:23) argued that although the individual behaviour is moulded by "conflicting features of the environment," such behaviour is a result of a prior personal deliberation which he called the "definition of the situation." This is important for an understanding of the self-perception of young veterans, which is how they believe others see them. Such self-perception informs their decision making.

Cooley built upon Thomas' "definition of the situation" and argued that the other exists in the imaginations we have of him/her (Cooley, as cited in Denzin, 1992). Such an argument mirrors the notion of meaning, key to Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism, and Mead's (1934) concept of role-taking. Besides, Cooley's face-to-face interaction is critical in understanding how young veterans relate with others in the society. Such interactions which take place within primary groups allow for the development of the 'we' feeling. Through such

feeling of belonging to a particular in-group the individual identifies him/herself as part of a larger group (Meltzer, et al., 1975:11). Human beings' sociality, Cooley argued, is grounded on primary groups' values "mediated by social institutions, especially the economy" (Denzin, 1992:4). Many social institutions were destroyed during the war in Liberia. After the war there has been progressive reconstruction of such institutions, and of course such reconstruction is a slow agonizing process. So young veterans' sociality, contrary to Cooley's position is not fully mediated by social institutions, simply because the latter were gravely affected by the war.

Other key concepts central to the precursors' contributions to symbolic interactionism and deemed relevant to this study, are the Meadian notions of *the generalized other* and *role-taking* (Mead, 1934: xxviii; Denzin, 1992:4). By role-taking, Mead posited that an individual takes on the role of the other person by imaginatively placing him/herself in the position of his/her interlocutor. The role-taking which informs individuals' reaction towards others in an interaction process is useful in trying to understand young veterans' reactions towards members of their alliances and coalitions, and members of the community. The role-taking may equally help in understanding young veterans' perception vis-à-vis their acceptance by community members. Mead added that the meaning of a social act is not implicit in the act "but is governed by the response of the other person" (Meltzer, et al., 1975:33). Individuals' social conduct "is mediated by the stimulations of others, which lead to responses which again affect these other forms" (Mead, as cited in Meltzer, et al., 1975:35), that is, a continual role-taking process, a process similar to Dewey's (in Meltzer, et al., 1975) notion of circularity of interaction. Cooley, in a similar vein, maintained that the individual and society should be regarded as "opposite sides of the same coin. The self of the person is a reflected appraisal of reactions of others. It is based on self-feeling and the imagined judgments of others" (Denzin, 1992:4). According to Mead, society should be regarded as the macrocosm of processes involving thoughts, perceptions, and interactions where individuals and society are regarded as "over-

lapping units” (Meltzer, et al., 1975:35-46). Mead further argued that the self is a product of communication, which is the interaction between individuals. But beyond mere communication, the interpretation of intended meanings which characterize groups is what matters (Meltzer, et al., 1975). The Meadian act is as “a stimulus and response on the basis of an inner condition which sensitizes the system to the stimulus and quickens the response” (Blumer, as cited in Meltzer, et al., 1975:32). Mead radically departed from mainstream sociology which conceives society as hinging upon institutions. For him:

The most concrete and most fully realized society is not that which is represented in institutions as such, but that which is found in the interplay of social habits and customs, in the readjustment of personal interests that have come into conflict and which take place outside of court, in the change of social attitude that is not dependent upon an act of legislation. ... Though human attitudes are far older than human institutions and seen to retain identities of structure that make us at home in the heart of every man [or woman] whose story has come down to us from the written and unwritten past, yet these attitudes take on new forms as they gather new social content. (Mead, as cited in Meltzer, et al., 1975:35)

This Meadian conception of society in my opinion is relevant to war-torn societies. In such societies, the institutions which define a society have been negatively affected by the war. The contributions of the forerunners of symbolic interactionism, although not exhaustively presented in this work, converge towards interaction. Interaction may take place within the individual or between the individual and his/her social group or environment. These contributions constitute a point of departure for the symbolic interactionist perspective which is examined in the next section.

3.3.3 Symbolic interactionism: A synoptic overview

Symbolic interactionists generally consider humans as acting towards things on the basis of the meanings which objects have for them, contrary to animals which act towards things based on instinct or conditioning (Blumer, 1969; Jacob, 1988; Denzin, 1992; Charon, 2001). According to Blumer (1969), although the symbolic meaning remains a product of social interaction, that meaning is generated

through a process. Blumer (1969:5) argued in this regard that “the actor selects, checks, suspends, regroups, and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation in which he [or she] is placed and the direction of his [or her] action.” The implication of such a position is that the life of human society consists of people’s actions (Blumer, 1969; Jacob, 1988). Clearly put, in the process of meaning construction, the individual’s agency is expressed, and such interactional construction of meaning is social in nature. The individual needs to be in a social environment to interact with others (Blumer, 1969). Accordingly, symbolic interactionists seek to delve into mutual and reciprocal role-taking among individuals, the way they learn meaning and symbols in interactional situations (Mead, 1934; Ritzer, as cited in Jacob, 1988). For symbolic interactionists, human beings “can routinely, and even habitually, manipulate symbols and orient their own actions towards other objects” (Denzin, 1969:923). They trenchantly reject any conception of human beings as passive social beings. The young veterans’ agency in the post-war societies can be understood through this perspective.

Interactionists are interested in knowing how people’s present is informed by their past (Denzin, 1992). They also study how people produce their own “situated versions of society” through encounters, relationships and interactions (Denzin, 1992:23). In addition, for interactionists, the society is experienced “here and now” through face-to-face interactions (Denzin, 1992:22). Clearly put, any “complex sociological terms” undermining interactions among individuals are undermined by interactionists (Denzin, 1992:23). Consequently, interactionists bluntly refuse to acknowledge theories that “ignore the biographies and lived experiences of interacting individuals” (Sartre, as cited in Denzin, 1992:24). Such macro-theories according to symbolic interactionism proponents undermine individuals’ uniqueness by objectifying and quantifying human experience (Blumer, 1969:57). As Denzin (1992:24) distinctly put it, interactionists starkly stand against “sociologies which ignore the stories people tell one another about their life experiences”. This study is mostly concerned with young veterans’ experiences from war to the post-war society. The use of micro-theories to

understand their life-world (Wagner, 1973) is more than adequate. It is worth mentioning that the concept of pragmatism is “central to interactionist heritage” (Denzin, 1992:5), and James’ seminal work on this concept is a fundamental tool to understand the way of life of young veterans. For James, pragmatism is pivotal in defining human beings whom according to him, are to be perceived as “active, creative beings who could play a conscious role in the control of their own destinies” (in Meltzer, et al., 1975:6). For pragmatists, nothing is seen “in the raw ... Nothing for humans ever speaks for itself” (Charon, 2001:29). Mead supported this viewpoint by asserting that:

What is real for [us] human beings ... always depends on our own active intervention, our own interpretation or definition ... Knowledge is judged by how useful it is in defining the situations we enter. ... things in situations are defined according to the use they have for us at the time ... It is what human beings do in real situations that matters. (in Charon, 2001:29-30)

Pragmatism has a bearing on how symbolic interactionists perceive society in general and particularly people in crisis situations or oppressive systems. From an emancipatory standpoint, interactionists “side with the downtrodden little people. They believe in the contingency of self and society and conceive of social reality from the vantage point of change and transformations which produce emancipatory ideals” (Denzin, 1992:2). Pragmatism could play a crucial role in understanding young veterans’ efforts to overcome war-induced predicaments.

In essence, symbolic interactionism emphasizes social interactions, that is, actions with symbolic meanings, negotiation of definitions, and emphatic role-taking between humans (Gecas & Turner, as cited in Berg, 2007:13). For interactionists, meanings stem from interaction with others, and are shaped by self-interactions (Blumer, 1981:153). Denzin (1992:20) patently observed that interactionists:

...study the intersections of interaction, biography, and social structure in particular historical moments. Interactional experience is assumed to be organized in terms of the motives and accounts that persons give themselves for acting. These accounts are learned from others, as well as from the (*sic*) popular culture. These motives, gendered and nongendered, explain past behaviour and are used to predict future behaviour.

3.3.4 Nexus between symbolic interactionism and research methods

Research guided by the interactionist perspective warrants the use of specific methods. For data collection, symbolic interactionists use methods including participant observation, interviews, life histories, autobiographies, case studies, and letters (Meltzer, et al., 1975). As Denzin (1992:23) stated, symbolic interactionists believe in producing narratives that “take the form of small-scale ethnographies, life stories, in-depth interviews, laboratory studies, historical analyses, and textual readings of bits and pieces of popular culture as given in films, novels, and popular music”. Researchers therefore ask the question *how* in order to understand people’s lived experiences and meanings (Blumer, 1969:57). Drawing on Blumer’s (1969) emphasis on the notion of sympathetic introspection, Meltzer, et al. (1975:58) highlighted that:

The use of such observational techniques as life histories, autobiographies, case studies, diaries, letters, interviews (especially of the free, or non-directive, type), and, most importantly, participant observation. Only through intimate association with those who are being studied ... can the investigator enter their inner worlds. His [Blumer’s] basic criticism of the experimental, instrumental, and quantitative methodology, in the form of questionnaires, schedules, tests, laboratory procedures, and detached observation ‘from the outside,’ is that they completely fail to catch the ‘meanings’ that crucially mediate, and determine how individuals respond to, objects and situations.

Although the data collection methods have been expatiated on in Chapter Four (methodological chapter), it is important to mention them here since theories underpinning research ought to interact with methods used. The technicalities and practicalities of those methods have been discussed.

3.3.5 Why an emphasis on Blumerian symbolic interactionism is pivotal in the study

Although highly influenced by the work of his mentor Mead (Blumer, 1969; Low, 2008), Blumer (1969) distinctly sees symbolic interactionism as consisting of three basic premises: (a) human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them; (b) these meanings are a product of social

interaction in human society; and (c) these meanings are modified and handled through an interpretive process that is used by each individual in dealing with the signs he or she encounters (Blumer, 1969:2-6; Meltzer, et al., 1975:1). Blumer's (1969) interactionist perspective contrasts mainstream sociology through which humans are regarded as passively responding to exogenous societal forces, without exercising their own agency. Blumerian symbolic interactionism hinges on the following specific *root images*:

(a) *The nature of human society or human group life*: Blumer (1969:6) considers human groups as human beings engaged in an action;

(b) *The nature of social interaction*: for Blumer (1969:7) a society "consists of individuals interacting with one other;"

(c) *The nature of objects*: the "worlds" of human beings and groups, are made up of "objects and these objects are the product of symbolic interactionism". Blumer (1969:10) identified three categories of objects namely the physical objects (e.g. trees), the social objects (e.g. friends), and the abstract objects (e.g. philosophical doctrines). He emphasized human beings' activeness or agency. A human being according to Blumer, should be regarded "as an organism that not only responds to others on the non-symbolic level but as one that makes indications to others and interprets their indications" (Blumer, 1992:12).

(d) *The nature of human action*: Blumer argued that human beings ought to be seen as active interpreters of the world, thus he disagrees with any form of human passivity (Blumer, 1969:15).

Drawing on the various symbolic interactionist schools of thought and with particular focus on Blumer's perspective, Berg (2007:10) maintained that the core task of symbolic interactionists as researchers is to capture the essence of this process for interpreting or attaching meaning to various signs. Consequently, the entire disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process for young veterans is a platform for interactions on various levels. The experiences of young veterans and the meanings they give to activities, actions and decisions made in terms of social justice, fairness, promises and truthfulness form the basis for their

perceptions, decision making and behaviour patterns. In order to come to grips with the meanings that emerge from these interactions, researchers must focus on the various layers of the process to ensure better understanding (Berg, 2007). A prior understanding of Blumer's (1969) interactionist premises and root images is considered to be of utmost importance.

3.3.6 The nexus between symbolic interactionism, human action and the stream of action

Charon (2001:27-28) identified five core building blocks forming symbolic interactionism:

(1) *The role of social interaction*: social interaction is central to what interacting human beings do.

(2) *The role of thinking*: human action, far from being limited only to the interaction between individuals, is also caused by the "interaction within the individual". This is similar to Archer's (2003:93) concept of "internal conversation". In fact, Archer (2003:141) observed that "courses of action are produced through the reflexive deliberations of agents who subjectively determine their practical projects in relation to their objective circumstances".

(3) *The role of definition*: human beings "do not sense their environment directly; instead, they define their situation as action unfolds" (Charon, 2001:28).

(4) *The role of the present*: human beings' actions stem from that which is taking place at the present moment (Charon, 2001:28).

(5) *The role of active human beings*: human beings are conceptualized as "active participants" in whatever they do (Charon, 2001:28). Charon, echoing previous positions, placed emphasis on pragmatism, a fundamental philosophical underpinning of symbolic interactionism. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, pragmatism stresses *action*, that is, "what human beings do, rather than on what they are as individuals or simply as part of larger groups" (Charon, 2001:124).

Warriner (in Charon, 2001:124) equally argued that action should be the “focus of what we ask about human beings”.

The concept of human action viewed as a constant and lifelong process is a cardinal component of symbolic interactionism (Charon, 2001:124) and is actually best described as a *stream of action* (Warriner as cited in Charon, 2001:124). Warriner (in Charon, 2001:124) maintained that the stream of action “is complex, manifold, multiplex. It is the full reality with many aspects, characteristics, features, dimensions, and interconnection”. Charon (2001), when attempting to establish the relevance of the *stream of action* to symbolic interactionism, drew an analogy between the concept and a *stream of water*. Through this comparison, Charon indirectly unveiled the importance of self-agency in determining individuals’ behaviour (Archer, 2003; Knoblich & Sebanz, 2005). Charon (2001:125) pointed out that:

Streams of water constantly change direction; human action also is to be understood as changing direction. We act, and our stream goes one way, then another. Our lives change direction constantly, sometimes in small ways, occasionally in very significant ways. Barriers in the water change the direction of the stream; different environments do; and changes in the weather might. So too do our directions change as we encounter new situations, as new factors enter our lives. Streams of water change because smaller brooks enter and cause a change in the direction. So too do other people — individuals and groups — enter our stream of action, and as we interact with them our directions are changed too.

Beyond this analogy between the *stream of action* and the *stream of water*, Charon (2001) argued that human beings are engaged in a continuous *stream of covert action*. He therefore clearly pointed out that as human beings, “we are actively and continuously engaged in an ongoing conversation with ourselves about what we are encountering and doing in the situation” (Charon, 2001:125). Besides this inner interaction, Charon (2001) revealed that human beings are also engaged in an *overt stream of action* which describes plainly their external self-agency, that agency characterized by concrete actions, and perceived by other individuals. Human beings, according to Charon (2001:125-126):

...are active in their stream, not passive as water is. Water responds to its environment. It flows because of the environmental conditions in which it exists. Humans, however, make active decisions along their stream, deciding what to do as they go along, and therefore they have some control over their directions. We evaluate our own action, we change our minds and establish new goals and redefine objects in new ways. When we interact with others we evaluate their acts, we role take, we interpret their actions and their acts of symbolic communication.

Human action is therefore regarded as a combination of the interaction with self and the interaction with others, synergistically leading to decision making, which in turn gives direction to our stream of action (Charon, 2001). This notion of human action was earlier enunciated by Blumer (in Denzin, 1969:923), who pointedly maintained that human beings “possess the ability to self-consciously direct their own activities.” Charon (2001:179) therefore defined society as “any instance of ongoing social interaction that is characterized by cooperation among actors and that creates a shared culture”. He argued that society begins with social interaction; social interaction always involves symbolic communication and role taking; social interaction is used by individuals to cooperate in overcoming problems and achieving common or complementary goals; and over time a culture is negotiated, developed, and shared. And a culture is made up of shared perspectives and a generalized other. The individuals who continue to interact agree to use culture to guide what they believe and do. Culture, in turn, feeds into and contributes to ongoing cooperative interaction (Charon, 2001).⁵⁸ According to Blumer (1969:6) “fundamentally human groups or society exists only in terms of action”. Charon (2001:133), in a hard-hitting argument, stressed the centrality of individual agency in decision-making processes, by pointing out that:

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, the cause of an act is seen differently. Any given act along the stream of action is caused by the individual’s decisions at that point. A given decision in turn is caused by the individual’s definition of the situation at that point, including goals, plans, social objects, future consequences, relevant memories recalled and applied. The definition of the situation the individual

⁵⁸For a schematic illustration of society as conceptualized by Charon, see figure 11-1 (Charon, 2001:180).

arrives at in turn is influenced by two things: interaction with self (thinking) and interaction with others.

It is my simple claim that young veterans are to be theorized as individuals who exercise human action. Their actions, reactions and decision-making processes are to be understood as mediated by their interaction with the self and interaction with others.

3.4 Identity and Social Identity Theory⁵⁹

The question of ‘identity’ is vastly and increasingly examined by scholars (Alcoff, 2003; Brown & Capozza, 2006; Moloney & Walker, 2007; Caldas-Coulthard & Iedema, 2008; Lawler, 2008). Despite a great deal of writing available on this concept, controversial and paradoxical positions surround its definition. Such positions make it a “slippery” concept (Lawler, 2008:1). As a matter of fact Caldas-Coulthard and Iedema (2008:1) arbitrarily called such conceptual chaos “identity trouble”. But new positions have proved to be antithetical to those previous discordant perspectives. In her sociological work on the concept, Lawler (2008) ascertained that ‘identity’ originates from the Latin word *idem* which means *same* and *identical*. The implication of this etymological definition is that a person is identical to him/herself, and at the same time identical to others “as humans ... women, men, British, American, white, black.” Individuals can therefore be said to have identities and not an identity (Lawler, 2008:3).

Given that human agency is central to this research, I have decided to highlight a particular set of identities, which is ‘active identities’. Active identities are identities individuals are conscious of and which determine or form the basis for their actions and consequently inform their self-identification (Bradley, 1997). Such active identities towards which young veterans work require individual agency simply because they are not perceived as a product of external constraints but as the result of the individual’s conscious effort. To the question whether identity discourse is a domain of sociology, many authors offered an affirmative

⁵⁹The simplified form of Social Identity Theory is SIT.

answer (Giddens, 1991; Jenkins, 1996; Huddy, 2001). For instance, Jenkins (1996) trenchantly posited that society can never exist without a social identity. In a similar vein, Cerulo (1997:385) argued that the study of identities constitutes “a critical cornerstone within modern sociological thought and has mostly been the domain of micro-sociology”.

Even if identities are perceived as stemming from individuals’ effort, other schools of thought have acknowledged that social relations have a bearing on the formation of these identities. Identity, according to the proponents of such a thesis, is socially constructed, fluid and contingent (Novotny, as cited in Huddy, 2001). Being social products (Araki, 1982:65), the societal labels people bear must be understood through a careful examination of the formation process of those labels. Identities are formed between individuals making the social world (Edwards, Hadfield, Lucey & Mauthner, 2006; Lawler, 2008). But there is a caveat to such an argument. The fact that the social world according to mainstream sociological thinking chiefly controls individuals’ actions and identity construction does not negate individuals’ agency. In the process of identity formation, individuals’ perceptions and competence play a crucial role (Charon, 2001; Knox, 2009; Nahab, et al., 2011).⁶⁰

Identities can be constructed through narratives. They can also be built through complex processes of identifying ‘oneself’ with an ‘other’, or by an understanding of the nexus between identity and kinship (Lawler, 2008). As mentioned earlier in this section, the individual’s activeness is central to identity formation. Human identity is no longer given and static but actively created (Deutsch, 2008; Bauman, 2009). This active construction of one’s identity or identities, which has been noticed in the young veterans’ lives during their transition from military to civilian life, requires an understanding of Social Identity Theory.

⁶⁰See also Zahn, et al., 2009; Dumka, Stoerzinger, Jackson & Roosa, 1996; van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002; Kircher & David, as cited in Kircher & Leube, 2003.

Social Identity Theory is a theory of intergroup behaviour (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Abrams & Hogg, 1999; Oakes, 2002). It was developed to examine how individuals are transformed by social categorization, their conformity to group norms, and to explore intergroup discrimination (Huddy, 2001). It seeks to capture the minimal conditions under which an individual discriminates in favour of his or her group (in-group), and against other groups he/she does not belong to (out-groups) (Pittinsky & Welle, 2008). Social identity proponents posit that individuals tend to put themselves into in-group categories (in-group self-categorization) which they consider positive (Tajfel & Turner, as cited in Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Such social categorization enables individuals to systematically define others and themselves in their social environment (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Self-categorization makes them exhibit in-group favouritism at the expense of out-groups. This categorization also shifts individuals' self from *I* feeling to a *we* feeling [against *they* feeling] (Turner & Tajfel, 1986). In addition, Social Identity Theorists regard the *self-concept* as a combination of personal identity and social identity. While personal identity encompasses "idiosyncratic characteristics" such as bodily attributes, abilities, psychological traits, interests, social identity includes in scope "salient group classifications" (Tajfel & Turner, as cited in Ashforth & Mael, 1989:21). Owing to the fact that an individual can belong to many groups, he/she perceives him/herself as having personal *selves*, that is, as a member of various social groups, which have social identities (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002).

Social Identity Theory is pertinent to this study in that it can be used to understand young veterans' self-perception and perception of others in in-groups or out-groups in their society. And even the discrimination which takes place within the larger group of former fighters can easily be grasped through this perspective. The understanding of such perceptions highlights how young veterans negotiate their identities in post-war communities and how those negotiations orient their civilian trajectories. It also sheds some light on how these influence their relationship or engagement with the society in terms of exclusion, inclusion and power relations.

For instance, the behaviour of members of subordinated groups varies; such members in subordinated groups can act individually or collectively (Reicher, 2004):

(a) If group members realize that they can succeed by distancing themselves from the group, they follow individualistic paths, that is, “the strategy of exit” (Reicher, 2004:931).

(b) When group members recognize that no matter what they do, their fate will still be tied to group membership, they have no choice but to act collectively, that is “the strategy of voice” (Reicher, 2004:931).

(c) When group members realize that the superiority of the dominant group [out-group] is illegitimate, they will feel a sense of “insecure social identity” (Reicher, 2004:931). Consequently they can seek to change their position on those dimensions where they have previously been defined as inferior. They can reinterpret as positive those dimensions of the group that had previously been defined as negative; or create new dimensions on which they can be defined positively (Reicher, 2004). This can be a source of conflict between groups. The understanding of how the strategy of exit, the strategy of voice, and the insecure social identity play out is needed to grasp young veterans’ belongingness to social ties, coalitions and alliances in the post-conflict context. Of course the decisions made as a result of young veterans’ perceptions of groups, associations and organizations imply that they have expectations believed to be met through such groups. This latter point can, to a certain extent, be understood better through Expectancy Theory.

3.5 Expectancy Theory, young veterans’ instrumental coalitions and participation in community activities

Vroom’s (1964) Expectancy Theory hinges on the triad valence–instrumentality–expectancy. Expectancy theorists consider the force to act as “a multiplicative combination of valence (anticipated satisfaction), instrumentality (the belief that

performance will lead to rewards), and expectancy (the belief that effort will lead to the performance needed to attain the rewards)” (Locke & Latham, 2002:706).

Expectancy Theory is used in this study to understand the motive behind young veterans’ prosocial behaviour and their sense of belonging to various networks including, ties, associations and organizations such as NGOs. Drawing on Expectancy Theory, Staw (in Shamir, Zakay, Brainin, & Popper, 2000:613) pointed out that “identification with a collective increases the importance of collective outcomes for the individual, and hence the motivation to make a contribution toward the achievement of such outcomes”. There is therefore a plethora of motivational bases for participation or work in groups and organizations (Vroom, 1964). Participation in any collective action implies an expectation of participants. Although debate revolving around work and motivation is not the central focus of this study, it is however worth indicating that it can form the basis for the understanding of young veterans’ prosocial behaviour in their communities, that is, their active participation in community activities and even their dogged determination to make positive change a reality. Generally, “one indisputable source of the desire of people to work is the money they are paid for working” (Vroom, 1964:30). That drive to earn a living in a clean manner informs young veterans’ decision to do even menial jobs in the midst of widespread post-conflict misery. However, the decision of a group of young veterans for instance to run an NGO transcends financial considerations. The tendency towards self-actualization (Maslow, as cited in Vroom, 1964) also accounts for such an undertaking. Other envisaged rewards from work are social. Workers gain “respect and admiration from their fellow men [and women] ... work provides fellowship and social life” (Miller & Form, as cited in Vroom, 1964:40). Many young veterans see work as “an opportunity to contribute to the happiness and well-being of their fellow man” (Vroom, 1964:39). Work is viewed as a platform for social interaction and such interactions are needed to facilitate or enhance young veterans’ social inclusion. Referring to these social aspects (benefits) of work, Vroom (1964:39) asserted that:

Virtually all work roles require social interaction with other people. The salesman interacts with his customers, the doctor with his⁶¹ patients, the supervisor with his subordinates, and the teacher with his student. Furthermore, most workers are members of one or more work groups, with whom they may interact more frequently than with members of their immediate family.

As argued by sociologists, there is a link between individuals' social status and the status of their occupation or profession within particular societies (Vroom, 1964). Friedmann and Havighurst (in Vroom, 1964:41) aptly put this into perspective:

The job is a description or a tag which marks the person, both at his place of employment and in the world outside. The tailor is so described in his shop. But he also might be thought of as a tailor by his family, his golf partners, his insurance agent, his minister, and other persons who enter his non-work life. As the worker carries the identity of his job, so he also acquires the status which society has assigned to it. This status might be related to his particular type of employment, or it might be based merely on the fact that he holds a job. In either case job status is an important determinant of the individual's status in his family and community.

Besides the "the instrumental relationship to the attainment of money", work allows for the "attainment of acceptance and respect by others, and the opportunity to contribute something useful to society" (Vroom, 1964:44). This last segment of Vroom's (1964) argument on the relevance of work in the individual's life is pertinent to this study in that young veterans who intended to be prominently accepted in post-conflict society, used work and active participation in community activities as a stepping stone.

3.6 Sociometer Theory, self-esteem, social inclusion and social exclusion

According to Leary, et al. (in Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2004), the individual's self-esteem is central to Sociometer Theory. Self-esteem, referred to as a 'sociometer', checks individuals' adaptation capacity, which may result in their social inclusion or acceptance respectively in contrast to social exclusion or rejection (Leary, et al., as cited in Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2004). Self-esteem prevenes individuals of

⁶¹Masculine pronouns used in the above quotes are those of the authors. However it is worth mentioning that the pronouns 'he' and 'his' encompass the pronouns 'she' and 'her' respectively.

eventual threats to their survival or loss of group benefits, which depends on their social inclusion. Self-esteem therefore helps individuals to take necessary steps to adapt and be accepted socially (Leary, et al., as cited in Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2004). Young veterans' decisions to maintain ties with their comrades, or join groups for survival can be understood within this theoretical framework.

3.7 Concept of self-agency

Although the concepts of *self-agency* and *agency* are linked and occasionally used interchangeably (Young, et al., 2003), self-agency is at times considered an aspect of agency. In fact scholars have identified three major categories of *agency*. The first category termed the "other person-agency" (Young, et al., 2003:1052), is an event caused by someone else. The second category of agency is the "circumstances-agency" which is an event caused by circumstances beyond anyone's control. The third category is the "self-agency" (Young, et al., 2003:1052; Knoblich & Sebanz, 2005:259), that is an event caused *by the self* (van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002). I have decided to use self-agency in this research to place an emphasis on the young veterans' subjectivity.

Self-agency is a concept widely used in the fields of developmental psychology (Knox, 2009), medical studies (Zahn, et al., 2009; Nahab, et al., 2011) and in other fields of social science research where it "has become a prominent construct" (Dumka, et al., 1996:216). Self-agency is closely related to pragmatism central to 'symbolic interactionism' and the 'stream of action'. Self-agency in my opinion is a pivotal concept which should be given some space within the compass of sociology.

Other scholars conceptualize self-agency as "the sense of the authorship of ones [*sic*] actions (Kircher & David, as cited in Kircher & Leube, 2003:658-659), thus connoting the feeling of causing one's own actions. Such a definition starkly contrasts "self-ownership" which implies undergoing an experience (Gallagher, as cited in Asai & Tanno, 2007:162). Contrary to self-ownership, self-agency is revealed through people's choice of words and the ways in which expressions are

formulated (Young, et al., 2003). Depending on the reasons why agency is demonstrated, two types of agency can be identified. If while exercising the agency the individual's reason is a desire to avoid negative consequences, such agency is termed "weak agency". On the contrary, if the reason for exercising the agency is an active engagement with positive consequences and specific goals, the agency is called "strong agency" (Young, et al., 2003:1052-1053). The implication is that an individual can exercise a 'weak self-agency' or a 'strong self-agency'.

Although the concept of 'self-agency' is diversely examined, all available definitions uniformly revolve around the individual's activeness, authorship and spiritedness (Dumka, et al., 1996; Aarts, Custers & Marien, 2009; Kircher & Leube, 2003; Sato & Yasuda, 2005; Nahab, et al., 2011). I give three definitions to illustrate this: self-agency is defined by some as "the belief within an individual that he or she can alter and manipulate life events" (Bandura, as cited in Young, et al., 2003:1040). For Aarts, et al. (2009:967) self-agency represents "the feeling that one causes one's own actions and their outcomes". According to Gecas (in Dumka, et al., 1996:216), "self-agency refers to an individual's perceptions of his or her competence, effectiveness, and capacity to make things happen". This last definition of self-agency implies the individual's capacity to change his/her behaviour (Dumka, et al., 1996). But it must be noted that the concept of self-agency has two peculiar features — the individual 'self-agency' can be "in accordance with social values" or "counter to social values" (Zahn, et al., 2009:277).

Based on the findings of a research carried out on 'parenting self-agency', Dumka, et al. (1996:216) argued that:

Parenting self-agency refers to parents' overall confidence in their ability to act successfully in the parental role. This includes parents' perceptions of their ability to manage their child's behaviour and to resolve problems with their child.

This definition put forward by Dumka, et al. (1996) in my opinion, has a threefold fundamental implication for the definition of the concept of self-agency: (a) it

expresses an idea of totality; (b) it connotes confidence and ability in the self; (c) it is grounded on success. This definition of parenting self-agency to a great extent encompasses in essence various aspects of definitions previously mentioned. A combination of this definition and Zahn, et al.'s (2009) aforementioned self-agency social features can help craft a more sociological operational definition of self-agency, as the overall confidence in one's ability to act successfully in any situation in accordance with or counter to social values.

Turning-point experiences are made possible in the individual's life only with a level of self-agency. Strauss (in Denzin, 1992:26) maintained that such experiences "rupture routines and lives and provoke radical redefinitions of the self. In moments of epiphany, people redefine themselves". It is simply my claim that young veterans' active redefinitions of the 'self' within a war-torn society where social institutions are quasi-nonexistent can never be possible without their self-agency. I conceive self-agency to be that fundamental factor which has the potential to make individuals engage in transformative actions; and young veterans' self-agency to guarantee their soft-landing in the post-conflict society is an illustration of this.

3.8 The Foucauldian technologies of the self

According to Foucault (1988) there are four major "technologies," including the *technologies of production* through which we can "produce, transform, or manipulate things"; the *technologies of signs systems* through which we can "use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification"; the *technologies of power* through which we can exercise dominion over other individuals; and the *technologies of the self* "which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thought, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault, 1988:18). This last category of technologies is all about "how an individual acts upon himself [herself]" (Foucault, 1988:19). Through the technologies of the self, "we constantly work upon ourselves to be a certain type of subject" (Lawler,

2008:62). In other words, we create the identity we want to have. Of course such conscious work upon the self, should be understood as a combined result of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), Archer's (2003:93) concept of 'internal conversation' and the stream of action (Charon, 2001). The Foucauldian technologies of the self is a key concept which helps to understand the formation and expression of young veterans' active identities (Bradley, 1997) and prosocial behaviour, all crucial for their social inclusion (Twenge, Ciarocco, Baumeister, DeWall, & Bartels, 2007).

3.9 Concept of self

In any interactional situation, the biography of an individual is expressed through various layers of the 'self'. The implication is that an individual's behaviour is shaped by a synergy of various 'selves'. According to Denzin (in Denzin, 1992:26) an individual is a representation of six identified selves: The *phenomenological self* describes "the inner stream of consciousness of the person in the social situation"; the *interactional self* represents the self shown to other people in "a concrete sequence of action" during interactions; the *linguistic self*, that is the use of pronouns "I" and "me" with emphasis on meanings of the individual's biography and emotions; the *material self* refers to an individual's belongings, that is "all the person calls his or hers at a particular moment in time;" the *ideological self* through which the individual defines him/herself in a "particular group or social situation;" and the *self as desire* referring "to that mode of self-experience which desires its own fulfilment through the flesh, sexuality, and the bodily presence of the other".

An understanding of these diverse 'selves' is important to get to grips with how young veterans' behaviour patterns are formed, and how they perceive themselves. These layers of selves in themselves cannot be used as explanatory tools since they do not explain how the self arises, but their association with other constructs does. For instance, Mead's (2003) concept of the 'generalized other' on the one hand, and the relationship between 'the self and communication' on the

other hand, are important constructs which may help to understand the formation of the social self.

Mead (2003) argued that it is through the generalized other that individuals' behaviour can be influenced by social processes. The generalized other is regarded as "the organized community or social group which gives to the individual his [her] unity of self" (Mead, 2003:36). Young veterans' thinking and behaviour are certainly regulated by the relationship between them and the generalized other. But Goffman (1969) revealed again the individual's agency or capacity to influence the impression others have of him/her. As he put it:

He may wish them [others] to think highly of him, or to think that he thinks highly of them, or to perceive how in fact he feels toward them, or to obtain no clear-cut impression; he may wish to ensure sufficient harmony so that the interaction can be sustained, or to defraud, get rid of, confuse, mislead, antagonize, or insult them (Goffman, 1969:3).⁶²

The information others have of the individual or the information the individual has of others dictates the expectations of others from the individual or the individual from others. As Goffman (1969:1) argued, "information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him [or her]". That expectation from the other in terms of behaviour or action definitely leads to the individual's internal interaction and action upon the self. Such interplay between the self-perception and the perception of others may shape the individual's behaviour depending on the expectation he/she has in mind. In this research, young veterans who would want to be accepted in their communities might have worked upon themselves in the presence of others for acceptability.

3.10 Instrumental coalitions, in-groups, out-groups and reference groups

Categorized among micro-level groups, an instrumental coalition is "a group of two or more individuals who coordinate their effort to achieve shared, valued

⁶²Masculine pronouns used in the above quotes are those of the authors. However it is worth mentioning that the pronouns 'he' and 'him' encompass the pronouns 'she' and 'her' respectively.

objectives”; and participation in an instrumental coalition “involves interdependence and subordination of individual interests to shared goals that cannot be achieved alone” (Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2004:56). This connotes the ‘strategy of voice’ in Social Identity Theory through which group members recognize that no matter what they do, their fate will still be tied to group membership — they have no other option than to act collectively (Reicher, 2004). Instrumental coalitions are similar to in-groups and are also called ‘we’ groups. In such groups, members “have a common identity, at least some feeling of unity, certain common goals and shared norms, and fairly high levels of interaction” (Abraham, 2006:96). Ties maintained among young veterans and their comrades are to be understood through shared norms and values. Individual young veterans may want to identify with members of reference groups — groups which shape their “own values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour. ... a real group to which the individual wants to belong” (Abraham, 2006:98). Young veterans who want to express conciliatory and prosocial attitudes towards people in their community would want to relate with members of specific reference groups which may help them achieve this goal.

3.11 The nexus between the concept of ‘life-world’, phenomenological sociology and symbolic interactionism

A prior understanding of what the concept ‘life-world’ stands for and its relevance to phenomenological studies are both important in order to grasp young veterans’ individual behaviour patterns and decision-making processes. There is a quasi-uniform agreement among phenomenologists that face-to-face interaction involves the interplay between consciousness, communication and the symbolic system of meaning of those involved (Psathas & Waksler, 1973). The ‘life-world’, an important construct in the field of micro-sociology, is conceptualized by Wagner (1973:62) as:

...the world of everyday experiences, accepted as they presented themselves to the individual in his “natural stance,” that is, a world of experiencing natural objects and other persons, of handling things, and of dealing with people in a purposive and usually practical manner, and of the unquestioning acceptance of socially given “recipes” for

practical conduct and of culturally established assumptions and beliefs about the “world” of things, of things, of man, of nature, of society, of God.

As described above, the individual life-world hinges upon everyday activities and experiences, an argument echoed by other proponents of this notion. For instance, the Husserlian life-world refers to the subjective view of the “world as experienced and made meaningful in consciousness” (Wagner, 1973:63). Meaning, experience and consciousness are conceptual constituents common to phenomenological and interactionist perspectives. Phenomenological sociology which revolves around the individual life-world, seeks to “unravel the progressive, temporal constitution of social life ... which is formed and continuously undergoes change” (Zaner, as cited in Wagner, 1973:69). It has the potential to study sociological problems on all levels (Wagner, 1973). Phenomenological sociology deals with the subjective problems of societies in crisis [including war-torn societies]. Not only does it study areas of social psychological concerns but it also focuses on societal changes (Wagner, 1973). Phenomenological sociologists assume that the individual is a “thinking and willing being” who goes through experiences and who is actively involved in mutual interaction with other members of the society (Wagner, 1973:64). Contrary to other mainstream sociological schools of thought which consider individual behaviour as exclusively shaped by external forces, phenomenologists argue that cultural elements making up the external forces

...are accepted, interpreted, redefined, modified by the individual who gives collective thoughts his personal note, and who subtly changes, enlarges, or reduces their meaning for him in the ongoing accumulation of experiences from situation to situation. (Wagner, 1973:64)

This phenomenological standpoint on the individual life-world intersects with elements of symbolic interactionism, pragmatism and human action. Studying young veterans’ life-worlds therefore requires a deep understanding of the interplay between external forces and individuals’ abilities to interpret cultural elements of the society to make rational choices that inform their behaviour and relationships with other community members. It must therefore be noted that

young veterans' experiences and decision-making processes cannot be easily captured without first delving into their peculiar war-setting life-world.

3.12 Conclusion

This section has outlined the theories and concepts which form the basis for the study of former child-soldiers' agency. Theories and concepts deemed appropriate to fully explore young veterans' experiences from war to the post-conflict society are the following: symbolic interactionism, Social Identity Theory, Expectancy Theory and the Sociometer Theory. But it is worth mentioning that these theoretical perspectives are not considered in isolation. The interplay between theories and some key concepts allows for a clearer and careful interpretation of phenomena under study. Consequently, and owing to considerable overlap, the concepts of self-agency, technologies of the self, instrumental coalition, in-group, out-group, reference group, stream of action and self esteem are to be regarded as complementary explanatory tools embedded in the theoretical frameworks. The understanding of young veterans' perceptions and behaviour in this study is grounded on these theoretical perspectives.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises six main sections. In the first section, I introduce the main qualitative approach used and which runs through the entire research process, that is phenomenology; but I specifically decided to focus on one of the most recent phenomenological approaches: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The second section focuses on the sampling strategies used at the various levels. In the third section, I examine the data collection methods and the procedures followed. I place emphasis on how, when, where and what data was collected. I also try to establish the importance and relevance in this research of one key Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), namely the Lutheran Church Liberia–Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Programme (LCL-THRP) on the one hand, and the 2010 Soccer World Cup continental euphoria on the other hand. In the fourth section, I describe the techniques of data analysis used. Owing to the flexibility that characterizes IPA guiding the research, and the “composite approach” recommended by Barakat, Chard, Jacoby and Lume (2002:991) for those carrying out research in the context of “war and armed conflict,” I decided to draw on other works namely those of Strauss and Corbin (1998), Charmaz (2006), and Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) especially in the data analysis section. In the fifth section, I explain what ethical measures I took given the fact that the study was conducted in a post-war community, where research subjects are generally tagged with a victimhood label. I present in the sixth section, the paths followed to establish rigor. I focus on ‘trustworthiness’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as an equivalent of validity and reliability usually observed by quantitative researchers to establish rigor.

4.2 Qualitative approach: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

In trying to select a qualitative approach which would suit this study, I first considered the congruency between the paradigmatic framework, the qualitative

approach⁶³ and the methods and procedures to be used for data collection and analysis (Tiryakian, 1965; Ambert, Adler & Adler & Detzner, 1995). According to Creswell, Hanson, Clark and Morales (2007:239), some factors which inform the selection of a qualitative research approach are:

...the researchers' training and experiences with different forms of qualitative designs, and the researchers' and departments' partiality to one approach or the other ... researchers' comfort levels with structure, writing in a more literary or scientific way and the final written 'product' that the design type produces.

Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Arora, and Mattis (2007) argue that it is the final product, the data-collection methods, and the procedures to be followed for data analysis that inform the researcher's choice of designs. The selection of a particular qualitative approach is therefore relative and depends on different interests, factors and parameters. In the case of this research, the choice of the research approach was informed by the methodological training I received at the Integrated Social Sciences (Jacobs University-Bremen) and the Bremen Graduate School of Social Sciences (BIGSSS) in Germany, in the first quarter of the year 2010 as a visiting fellow.⁶⁴ During my stay in the aforementioned institutions, I audited qualitative methodology courses and underwent methodological supervision for a rework of my knowledge in qualitative research methods. Owing to the peculiar nature of my research problem, I got permission from my supervisor at Rhodes University to embark on this methodological training and supervision.

I decided to conduct this research within the phenomenological approach (Schutz, 1972; Mir & Watson, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Creswell, et al., 2007; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007; Collingridge & Gantt, 2008; Standing, 2009). Phenomenology as a qualitative research approach has become popular in the social sciences, especially in sociology (Swingewood, 1991; Borgatta & Borgatta, 1992). Phenomenology is considered a philosophical discipline by some scholars

⁶³ Qualitative approach is used interchangeably with qualitative design.

⁶⁴ I visited the two German institutions as a PhD fellow on a 'Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst' (DAAD) short-term scholarship.

and as a research approach by others (Schutz, 1972; Geanellos, 1998; Drauker, 1999; Le Vasseur, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007) and is often considered central to the interpretive-constructivist perspective (Koch, 1995; Clark, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). In this research, I considered it as an approach. I decided to specifically use interpretive phenomenology⁶⁵ (van Manen, 1990; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). In what follows, I attempt a cursory discourse woven around phenomenology in which I delve into issues related to its general conception as a research design or approach.

Phenomenologists are concerned with studying people's experiences as they are lived every day, and consider these experiences as conscious (van Manen, 1990; Creswell, et al., 2007), and at times attempt a description of the essence of such lived experiences with a focus on what those experiences are and how they are lived (Moustakas, 1994).

An interpretive phenomenologist sees "research as oriented to lived experience" (phenomenology) and as interpreting the 'texts' of life (hermeneutics) (van Manen, 1990:4). Phenomenology therefore does not only describe how the phenomenon is experienced, but also interprets it. For interpretive phenomenologists, there is a nexus between individuals' lived experiences, their culture, social context, and historical period in which they live (Orbanic, 1999; Campbell, 2001). In a similar vein, Heidegger (in Smith, et al., 2009) earlier opined through what he termed *dasein* (the human way of being in the world) that human beings' choices and the meanings given to their lived experiences are influenced by social, political and cultural contexts (Campbell, 2001). Knowledge produced through phenomenological studies results from the blended understanding from both researchers and research participants. As Wojnar and Swanson (2007:175) argued:

Interpretive phenomenology is grounded in the belief that the researcher and the participants come to the investigation with fore-

⁶⁵ Interpretive phenomenology is also called hermeneutical phenomenology.

structures of understanding shaped by their respective backgrounds, and in the process of interaction and interpretation, they cogenerate an understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

I examined in general terms what the phenomenological approach in qualitative research is. From these generalities it is obvious that the study of lived experiences remains the common denominator to the various phenomenological designs. But for convenience and flexibility purposes, I opt for the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as an approach. I must clearly mention that any discussion revolving around IPA in this study was drawn from the work of its founders, Smith, et al. (2009).

4.2.1 What is the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)?

The interpretative phenomenological analysis is a recently developed approach in the field of qualitative research, especially in “cognate disciplines in the human, health and social sciences” (Smith, et al., 2009:5) which aims to examine “how people make sense of their life experiences” (ibid.:1). Like other phenomenologists, IPA researchers seek to delve into “the everyday flow of lived experience takes on a particular significance for people being studied” (ibid.:1). IPA is similar to the interpretative or hermeneutical phenomenology which is concerned with interpretation. IPA researchers regard human beings as “sense-making creatures” (ibid.:3), thus capable of reflecting and making sense of their lived experiences. IPA scholars usually find themselves in “a double hermeneutic” as they try “to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them” (ibid.:3). IPA is idiographic as its proponents focus more on knowing in detail individual experiences. As a result, IPA studies are “conducted on relatively small sample sizes and the aim is to find a reasonably homogeneous sample, so that, within the sample, we can examine convergence in some detail” (ibid.:3). Apart from the “theoretical generalizability,” findings generalization is not the concern of IPA researchers. Researchers using this approach are allowed to use semi-structured interviews with a flexible schedule, for data collection.

Transcripts of interviews are analyzed case by case through a systematic, qualitative analysis. This is then turned into a narrative account where the researcher's analytic interpretation is presented in detail and is supported with verbatim extracts from participants. (ibid.:4)

One key feature and strength of IPA is that it is not prescriptive and does not encourage “methodolatory” that is, the “glorification of method” (ibid.:5). It is rather a very flexible approach which allows for the researcher's creativity and innovation (ibid.). In this sub-section, I tried to present a general overview of IPA; in the next sub-section I describe the theoretical pillars upon which this approach hinges.

4.2.2 The theoretical underpinnings of IPA

In this sub-section, I examine three theoretical frameworks relevant to IPA including phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. My aim is not to provide the readership with an elaborate philosophical discourse on hermeneutics, idiography and especially phenomenology which has been examined briefly. On the contrary, I am interested in showing the linkage between IPA's methodological foundation and these perspectives.

4.2.2.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology has been prevalent in qualitative research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Many eminent scholars vastly contributed to sociology through phenomenological studies. These include Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (1966); Alfred Schutz through his work *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (1972); and Harold Garfinkel in *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967).

Generally, in qualitative inquiry, phenomenology is a concept that points to an interest in understanding social phenomena from the actor's own perspective. Consequently, phenomenologists describe the world as perceived and experienced by research subjects. As Smith, et al. (2009:11) argued, “phenomenology is a philosophical approach to the study of experience”. In what follows, I present

some salient points of the works of a few phenomenologists as mentioned in Smith, et al.'s (2009) work, and conclude with their relevance to IPA.

Husserl (in Smith, et al., 2009:12) agreed with other phenomenologists on the study of human experience. But his phenomenology was grounded on the “phenomenological attitude” which involves “stepping outside of our everyday experience, our natural attitude”, in order to properly study the everyday experience (Smith, et al., 2009:12). Husserl's phenomenology caused IPA researchers to accord great importance to the “process of reflection” when examining lived experience. Husserl's notion of bracketing is also relevant to the IPA research process. However, instead of seeking to know the essence of experience as Husserl posited, IPA scholars are concerned with capturing “particular experiences as experienced for particular people” (Smith, et al., 2009:16).

Heidegger's phenomenology differed from that of Husserl which the former considered to be too theoretical and abstract (Smith, et al., 2009). Through his concept of ‘intersubjectivity’ central to his phenomenological position, Heidegger viewed the individual as “a worldly person-in-context” (Smith, et al., 2009:17). For IPA researchers, Heidegger's phenomenology sheds light on how human beings should be perceived — human beings should be regarded as “thrown into a world of objects, relationships, and language” (Smith, et al., 2009:18). He also pointed out that “being-in-the-world is always perspectival, always temporal, and always in-relation-to something and consequently, that the interpretation of people's meaning-making activities is central to phenomenological inquiry” (Smith, et al., 2009:18).

Merleau-Ponty argued that human beings regard themselves “as different from everything else in the world”. Consequently, he perceives “the other as a piece of behaviour” (Merleau-Ponty, as cited in Smith, et al., 2009:19). Merleau-Ponty's view, that “the body shapes the fundamental character of our knowing about the

world” (Smith, et al., 2009:19) is important for IPA researchers. He pointed out that:

I am not the outcome or the meeting-point of numeral causal agencies which determine my bodily or psychological make-up. I cannot conceive myself as nothing but a bit of the world, a mere object of biological, psychological or sociological investigation. I cannot shut myself up within the realm of science. All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. (Merleau-Ponty, as cited in Smith, et al., 2009:18)

Sartre through his citation, “existence comes before essence”, argued that humans always become themselves, and self consciousness, meaning making and human action are catalysts to this process (in Smith, et al., 2009:19).

4.2.2.2 Hermeneutics

Simply put, hermeneutics is “the theory of interpretation.” Before becoming “a philosophical underpinning”, it significantly contributed to construe biblical texts (Smith, et al., 2009:19). In this sub-section, I try to briefly describe three hermeneutical perspectives.

Schleirmacher (in Smith, et al., 2009:22) identified two aspects of interpretation including the psychological interpretation and grammatical interpretation. While the former focuses “the individuality of the author or speaker,” the latter deals with the “exact and objective textual meaning”. Schleirmacher (in Smith, et al., 2009:22) pointed out that:

Every person is on the one hand a location in which a given language forms itself in an individual manner, on the other their discourse can only be understood via the totality of language. But then the person is also a spirit which continually develops, and their discourse is only one act of this spirit of connection with the other acts.

Heidegger (in Smith, et al., 2009) referring to phenomenology as hermeneutics maintained that the function of the phenomenologist is to “help make sense” of the phenomenon which occurs. Moran (in Smith, et al., 2009:24) in a corroborative and emphatic statement argued that:

Phenomenology is seeking after a meaning which is perhaps hidden by the entity's mode of appearing. In that case the proper model for seeking meaning is the interpretation of a text and for this reason Heidegger links phenomenology with hermeneutics. How things appear or are covered up must be explicitly studied. The things themselves always present themselves in a manner which is at the same time self-concealing.

Gadamer (in Smith, et al., 2009:26) elaborated upon Heidegger's standpoint on hermeneutics and placed emphasis on "the complex relationship" which exists between the interpreter and that which is to be interpreted, and regarded the interpretation process to be "multi-faceted and dynamic." Gadamer opined that:

It is necessary to keep one's gaze fixed on the things throughout all the constant distractions that originate in the interpreter himself. A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He or she projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text ... Working out this fore-projection which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there ... Every revision of the fore-projection is capable of projecting before itself a new projection of meaning; interpretation begins with fore-conceptions that are replaced by more suitable ones. This constant process of new projection constitutes the movement of understanding and interpretation. (in Smith, et al., 2009:26)

Under the hermeneutic theory lies a key analytical feature called the 'hermeneutic circle', which provides a useful and special way of thinking about 'method' for IPA researchers especially during data analysis. The idea is that "our entry into the meaning of a text can be made at a number of different levels, all of which relate to one another, and many of which will offer different perspectives on the part-whole coherence of the text" (Smith, et al., 2009:28). The 'part' and the 'whole' describe a number of relationships. For example: "the single extract and the complete text ... the interview and the research project ... the single episode and the complete life" (Smith, et al., 2009:28). Through the hermeneutic circle, the researcher may move back and forth during the interpretation process.

4.2.2.3 Idiography

Idiography focuses on the particular and this concept is relevant to IPA for two reasons. Firstly, IPA is committed “to the particular, in the sense of detail, and therefore the depth of analysis”. Secondly, IPA researchers seek to understand how experiential phenomena such as events, processes or relationships, “have been understood from the perspective of particular people, in a particular context”. Accordingly, IPA researchers utilize “small, purposively-selected and carefully-situated samples” (Smith, et al., 2009:29).

4.3 Sampling strategies

Sampling in this research was done on three levels. On a first level, I selected the geographical location of the study; on a second level, I selected one host organization and lastly on a third level, I selected the informants from whom information was directly solicited. It must be noted that on the third level the study, the population comprised ‘young veterans’. The units of analysis and the main data sources were the young veterans. Purposeful sampling strategies (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002; Hagan, 2006; Silverman, 2005; Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Boehnke, Lietz, Schreier & Wilhelm, 2011) were used on all three levels. The selected samples therefore were samples from which the most could be learned (Merriam; 2002; Polkinghorne, 2005) or “information-rich” cases in Patton’s (2002:40) words.

4.3.1 The selection of the geographical location

I used “intensity sampling” (Patton, 2002:234)⁶⁶ to select Monrovia as the geographical location where the data was collected. As a matter of fact, Monrovia is considered to be the political and economic hub of Liberia and is thus a point of attraction to residents from the twelve counties making up Liberia. Monrovia is an intensive case for a variety of reasons. A host of young veterans could be found in Monrovia, the epitome of a post-war city. During the 14-year Liberian civil war,

⁶⁶ Intensity sampling is also called intensive sampling (Boehnke, Lietz, Schreier & Wilhelm, 2011) and is a type of purposeful sampling strategy.

Monrovia was one of the cities where most of the warring factions clashed in fierce battles. A young veteran stated that there were “world war 1, world war 2 and world war 3 in this city [Monrovia] to the extent that the president had to come out to say that if you cause us to fight this battle from house to house we are going to fight it” (Author’s interview with Gracias, 2010).

After the 2003 United Nations-backed official Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process, most of the young veterans were not willing to return to their communities of origin where they were recruited into the warring factions or were compelled to stay in Monrovia for other undisclosed reasons. Evidence is available that a combination of ‘pull’ and ‘push’ factors influenced their choice to settle in Monrovia against all odds. Some of them were not willing to return to pre-war towns and villages where they had wreaked havoc during hostilities; still others had lost parents and siblings to the war and deemed it unnecessary and unsafe to go back. They therefore decided to find dwelling places in the Monrovia slums. Some opted for or were forced into vocational training or apprenticeship in Monrovia where they finally decided to settle in order to practise what they had learned and make some money. For others who could not be reunited with their parents or siblings, Monrovia automatically became their receiving community. Monrovia has therefore become the dwelling place for a pool of young veterans out of which the research subjects were selected. As Jaye (2009:17) pointed out:

A large number of ex-combatants, estimated at 44.4 percent, stayed in the county of Montserrado because they had either lived there during the transitional periods of 1997 to 1999 and 2003 to 2005 or because of some opportunity nearby for education, training and employment. Others stuck there. Cantonment sites released ex-fighters into urban settings that provided them with ample opportunities to squander their disarmament benefits. Not an insignificant number of ex-fighters spent their money immediately, and were left with no financial means of transporting themselves back to their home communities. These former combatants have been forced into the unskilled labor market or have to beg for survival.

4.3.2 The selection of host organizations

The criterion sampling strategy was used to select a key humanitarian organization namely ‘Lutheran Church Liberia-Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Program’ (LCL-THRP) which has young veterans’ rehabilitation within its mandate. Not only did this organization facilitate my entry into Liberia by providing me with an invitation letter for field research as a PhD student, but it equally helped in negotiating a research relationship (Maxwell, 1996). Other selection criteria were its capacity to facilitate access to informants on the one hand and minimize initial crises of confidence between the researcher and the researched on the other hand. The role played by this organization in the data collection process is so important that mentioning it in a few words may not be fair. In the sub-sections which follow, I therefore decided to present this organization and show how relevant it was during the fieldwork.

4.3.3 In search of an appropriate host organization: The Lutheran Church Liberia-Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Program (LCL-THRP)

At first, carrying out fieldwork in Liberia seemed a daunting task since it was my first visit to the country, coupled with the fact that it was a post-conflict setting. I therefore expected many encumbrances. But I simply decided to rely on informal channels formed during a training session in Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration I attended in 2008 at the Legon Centre for International Affairs (LECIA) at the University of Ghana in Accra. Through these relationships, I was able to establish a research contact with the Lutheran Church Liberia-Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Programme which invited me as a researcher.

The Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL) began the trauma healing and reconciliation work — a local initiative in 1991 as a result of the civil war which broke out on 24 December 1989. LCL embarked on this humanitarian work in collaboration with the Christian Health Association of Liberia (CHAL), by training its pastors, health practitioners, teachers and some lay leaders. In order to meet the enormous humanitarian needs in Liberia, the Lutheran World

Federation-World Service (LWF-WS) was invited in 1995 to support as an implementing partner of the trauma and reconciliation activities, and to provide for needy war victims in diverse capacities. This consolidation paved the way for the establishment of the LCL-LWF/WS-THRP office in Monrovia in 1998, and allowed for better coordination of programme activities. The programme has since then played key reconciliatory roles between the perpetrators and the victims of the Liberian civil war, with the aim of ensuring real peace and sustainable development in the long-run.

The overarching goal of LCL-THRP is to contribute to the peacebuilding process in Liberia by strengthening community and civic structures. In order to achieve this goal, the programme identifies and develops peacebuilding capacities of its facilitators; works through community peacebuilding structures; supports local peacebuilding initiatives whether traditional or conventional; strengthens and empowers Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in order to foster the peacebuilding and reconciliation project; contributes to the revivification of the National Security Network for Peacebuilding (NSNPB) through professional, moral, logistical and financial support; trains members of the security forces; shares experiences and resources with other peacebuilding actors; documents and profiles the activities of THRP and collaborating partners; enhances the peacebuilding skills of LCL leaders and LWF/WS staff members particularly in integrated projects; and makes resources and knowledge available to allow for early response to crises.

LCL-THRP centres on the capacity building of facilitators and team players at the community and institutional levels, with the aim of imparting new skills, techniques and knowledge for a successful reintegration and reconciliation. The programme also serves as a platform for experience sharing and discovery of novel channels of conflict resolution by community members.

LCL-THRP organizes also psychosocial and rehabilitation-centred training sessions for Liberian security personnel and law enforcement officers — to

provide them with new skills to address issues pertaining to peaceful co-existence between civil society and security apparatuses, security ethics, code of conduct and human rights. The ultimate goal is to institutionalize peacebuilding in Liberian security sectors.

In order to achieve its goals, LCL-THRP uses the following strategies: capacity building workshops for CBOs, community structures and institutions, security personnel and local government authorities; traditional healing methods and workshops for traditional and community leaders; training of trainers (TOT) workshops for community leaders and security personnel; psychological counselling and interventions; follow-ups, monitoring and evaluation.

LCL-THRP works in network with other collaborating partners including but is not limited to the West African Network for Peace Building (WANEP), the Christian Health Association of Liberia (CHAL), Peace Building Research Institute and the Lutheran World Federation-World Service (LCF-WS).

THRP activities target many categories of beneficiaries regardless of their religious, ethnic and social background. These encompass community facilitators, traditional leaders, that is chiefs and elders, religious leaders, political leaders, CBO and local NGO workers, teachers, nurses, security officers, government authorities, former combatants, rape victims, people with multiple losses, single mothers, organizations working with primary victims and ex-combatants (LCL-THRP, n.d.).⁶⁷

During the war, this organization counselled and rehabilitated many former young combatants. As a matter of fact, many former child-soldiers who are coping today in Monrovia are directly or indirectly the products of the rehabilitation activities of this organization. Some young veterans not only were counselled and rehabilitated but they were equipped through THRP workshops, and became

⁶⁷ The introductory information on LCL-THRP was compiled by the researcher from the organization's brochure and his discussion with the Program Officer.

actively involved in the peacebuilding process. In fact, the Network of Ex-combatants Peace Initiative (NEPI), another organization which indirectly assisted LCL-THRP in facilitating access to interviewees, was set up by young veterans who underwent rehabilitation and other training sessions organized by LCL-THRP. Although I did not discuss the activity profile of NEPI, I acknowledge its significant contributions to the field research.

In phenomenological studies approximately three to ten participants could make up the sample (Dukes, as cited in Suzuki et al., 2007:299). But because of the ‘flexibility’ characterizing IPA, the “considerable room for manoeuvre” (Smith, et al., 2009:80), I decided in this study to select a sample of twelve participants. The procedure followed for this selection is explained in the following sub-section.

4.3.4 The selection of research respondents

The selection of informants was done through the criterion sampling. I aimed to have a sample that was homogenous in some aspects and heterogeneous in others. The homogeneity of the sample was based on the informants’ ability and willingness to discuss the war situation, share the experiences and lessons learned from the war, particularly the transitional period from soldiers to becoming civilians, present how they negotiate their identity hurdles, talk about the post-war social ties they belong to and how the combination of all these factors shapes their future societal perspectives. In addition, the informants needed to be youths who were associated with armed groups or forces when they were still children, who also underwent a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, and were at least 18 years-old and coping⁶⁸ at the time of the data collection.

The sample’s heterogeneity was solely based on the young veterans’ residential locations within Monrovia, and the fighting forces and groups they were associated with before the disengagement process. I selected one informant

⁶⁸ Coping here is used in the strict psychological sense and refers to young veterans who do not present any serious trauma symptoms.

formerly associated with each of the three armed forces or groups which took part in the 2003 disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process namely GoL, LURD and MODEL,⁶⁹ from each of four locations within Monrovia. On the basis of four different residential locations within Monrovia and the three different warring factions considered for this study in a sampling guide with a top-down approach, a sample of twelve informants⁷⁰ was drawn. This is presented in the following sampling guide:

Residential locations within Monrovia	Warring Factions		
	GoL	LURD	MODEL
Bassa Community	1	1	1
Sinkor	1	1	1
Buzzi Quarters	1	1	1
Outland Community	1	1	1
Total per warring faction	4	4	4
Total	12		

4.4 Methods of data collection

4.4.1 The historic 2010 South African FIFA World Cup's continental euphoria: Pathway to the young veterans' world

There is no doubt that sport is one of the global events which is most appealing to the youth. Soccer,⁷¹ particularly, made and continues to make an impact on many youth across cultures, ethnic groups, regions, nations and continents. Football has the capacity to heal nations coming out of, or recovering from a war (Diallo,

⁶⁹ GoL (Liberian Armed Forces, the paramilitary Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU) and associated militias), LURD (Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy) and MODEL (Movement for Democracy in Liberia).

⁷⁰ See Appendix 3 for a cursory description of each respondent.

⁷¹ Soccer is another appellation for football.

2011). Local, national, continental or world football competitions have often instilled in many youth a general euphoria which dispels at least momentarily, the grief, the disappointment, the divisions and anger into which recent conflicts and economic hardship have plunged many African nations. It is little wonder that the United Nations clearly underlines sport, and especially football, as a peace promoter and adopted a resolution⁷² pertaining to the 2010 International Federation of Association Football⁷³ World Cup in South Africa. In its articles one to five, the resolution emphasizes the role of sport in the promotion of peace, solidarity, social cohesion and socio-economic development. Given its universal popularity, football can bring people together and play a positive role in promoting development and peace. The UN therefore welcomed the historic and unique dimension of the 2010 International Federation of Association Football World Cup, and expressed its continued support, where appropriate, to South Africa in the pursuit of ensuring the success of the tournament, encouraging all member states to support sport and its use as a tool to promote peace and development, including through the continued contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and dialogue among civilizations. Between 11 June and 11 July 2010, Africa hosted its first Football World Cup. Many football fans were engulfed in the euphoria of the historic continental event, and the youth were no exception. In a post-war country like Liberia where the threat level was not negligible (by the mere presence of UNMIL⁷⁴ troops), it was my opinion that that period was the best time for academic research⁷⁵ focusing on seemingly 'disgruntled' youth. Even in localities of Monrovia where many former brooding rebels were loitering, and where crime and robbery were frequent (Alusula, 2008), the atmosphere was enlivened.

⁷² General Assembly in its Sixty-fourth session, in its 21st plenary meeting of 19 October 2009 adopted Resolution A/RES/64/5 for the 2010 International Federation of Association Football World Cup in South Africa. It must be noted that this resolution was based on the General Assembly resolution 63/135 of 11 December 2008.

⁷³ The International Federation of Association Football's usual acronym is FIFA.

⁷⁴ UNMIL is the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

⁷⁵ It is important to mention that humanitarian organizations collected data from Liberians before for other purposes. The deal was different from what I as a student had with my respondents.

In addition, through football, Liberia produced an important and unique figure, who was a footballer, humanitarian worker, and later politician, and whom most youths wanted to emulate. George Oppong Weah was known as an ‘idol for African footballers’ (BBC News, 2005; Liberiansoccer.com, n.d; UNICEF People, 2009). Weah was named World FIFA Player of the Year in 1995, African Player of the Year in 1989, 1994 and 1995, and European Player of the Year in 1995, becoming the only African to win the award. The French Magazine named Weah as the top player in Europe for 1995 and the FIFA Fair Play Award 1996 was bestowed upon him as well. In addition to the aforementioned awards, Weah was also voted the African player of the Century by sport journalists from all around the world. This award puts Weah in the company of some of the greatest players to have ever played the game (BBC News, 2005; Liberiansoccer.com, n.d.; UNICEF People, 2009). He later became a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador on 7 April 1997 (UNICEF People, 2009), and his longstanding commitment to humanitarian activities especially in Africa, earned him “the African Pride” from the former South African President Nelson Mandela (UNICEF People, 2009).

This was also the moment when Africans in general were supporting African teams to make history by winning the cup. That moment of continental jubilation, friendliness and brotherhood, was conducive to peaceful interactions and discussions with young veterans. I therefore scheduled the data collection at the beginning of the World Cup period, more precisely from 10 to 15 June 2010. The respondents’ interest and curiosity to know and learn more about South Africa from me sustained our interactions. Our sessions usually began with a short discussion revolving around the ongoing soccer games and later shifted to the main research issues. In this sub-section, I try to present how the 2010 South African World Cup contributed to the data collection process. In the sub-section which follows, I have focused on the data collection method.

Taking cognizance of the fact that IPA encourages in-depth interviewing as a method of data collection on the one hand, and that interviewing is a data

collection approach in congruence with “phenomenological studies” (Suzuki, et al., 2007:308) on the other hand, I decided to use the “semi-standardized interview” which is a type of “phenomenological interviewing” embedded in the general “qualitative interview”.

4.4.2 Qualitative interviewing

I decided to use qualitative interviewing⁷⁶ (Patton, 2002:339; Bryman, 2008:437) as the method data collection. Qualitative interviewing, far from being a confabulation, is a “controlled interaction which uses verbal exchange as the main method”. It brings both the interviewer and the respondent into a “dynamic relationship” (Keats, 2001:21). Kvale (1996) and Polkinghorne (2005) argue that the qualitative research interview is a place where knowledge is constructed from the direct interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee. In highlighting this method of data collection, Patton (2002:348) pointed out that “the purpose of qualitative interviewing is to capture how those being interviewed view their world ... and the complexities of their individual perceptions and experiences”. The fundamental tenet of qualitative interviewing according to Patton (2002:348) is therefore “to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms”. Based on the assumption that “we cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time”, qualitative interviewing allows the researcher “to enter into the other person’s perspective” or simply put, “to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind, to gather their stories” (Patton, 2002:341). In addition, within the field of sociology, “there is a long humanist tradition ... which stresses the importance of attempting to understand the meaning of behaviour and experiences from the perspective of the individuals involved” (Elliott, 2005:4). In a similar vein, Weiss (in Elliott, 2005:19) established that:

Interviewing can inform us about the nature of social life. We can learn about the work of occupations and how people fashion careers, about cultures and the values they sponsor, and about the challenges

⁷⁶Qualitative interviewing also called interviewing for research (Keats, 2001:19) or conversation with a purpose (Berg, 2004:75).

people confront as they live their lives. We can learn also, through interviewing about people's interior experiences. ... We can learn the meanings to them of their relationships, their families their work, and their selves. We can learn about all the experiences, from joy through grief, that together constitute the human condition.

I therefore began each interview with what Spradley (in Suzuki, et al., 2007:310-311) referred to as 'grand tour question':

I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them.

4.4.2.1 Phenomenological interviewing

The phenomenological interview focuses on the *Lebenswelt* — life-world (Wagner, 1973; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009: 29-32) — in that it helps to obtain access to and describe the lived everyday world of the interviewee. It is qualitative in that it “seeks qualitative knowledge as expressed in normal language” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:28); it describes the life-world of the interviewee and avoids generating general opinion. It is characterised by a “deliberate naiveté” in that the researcher is open to “new and unexpected phenomena” during the interaction. During the phenomenological interview, the interviewer remains focused on some specific themes, and the interviewer should expect ambiguous answers or statements from the interviewee. The interview can cause the interviewee to begin to have a different understanding of the theme around which discussions revolve. Depending on the sensitivity of the topic, different answers should be expected from different interviewees. The phenomenological interview can provide the interviewee with new knowledge on his/her situation (ibid.:28). It must be noted that “with another interviewer, a different interaction may be created and a different knowledge produced” (ibid.:32). In this sub-section, I try to examine phenomenological interviewing which itself is a variety of qualitative

interviewing. The specific type of phenomenological interview used, in this case, was the “semi-standardized interview” (Berg, 2004:80).⁷⁷

4.4.2.2 The semi-standardized interview

The semi-standardized interview “provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject” (Patton, 2002:343), and the issues and topics to be discussed are “specified in advance, in outline form” (ibid.:349). The interviewer may add probing questions in the course of the interview as the discussion progresses. Suzuki, et al. (2007:11) asserted that the “semi-structured interview is designed to cover a common set of themes but allows for changes in the sequencing of questions and the forms of questions, enabling the interviewer to follow up on the interviewees”. Similarly, Berg (2004:81) opined that the semi-standardized interview “involves the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and special topics” and the researcher is allowed “freedom to digress” and to “probe beyond the answers” to prepared standardized questions. By using the guided interview, I made sure that certain topics were covered in all interviews; at the same time this kind of interview allowed the flexibility to follow up individually on interesting issues as they emerged.

I drew on Seidman’s (in Elliott, 2005:32) “three-interview structure” to conduct interviews. I did not, however, strictly follow Seidman’s suggested series of three interviews with each research participant, for reasons peculiar to the fieldwork. I conducted a three-stage interview with each respondent. The first stage was an “oral history interview”⁷⁸ (Bryman, 2008:442) which sought to document the informant’s transition from the military ranks to becoming a civilian; the second stage was concerned with the concrete aspects of the respondent’s experiences as

⁷⁷ The semi-standardized interview is also designated as a “general interview guide approach” (Patton, 2002:342-3), “semi-structured interview” by Suzuki, et al. (2007:311) and Wengraf (2002:51) and “guided interview” (Keats, 2001:17).

⁷⁸ An oral history interview is usually somewhat more specific in tone in that the subject is asked to reflect upon specific events or periods in the past. The emphasis is less upon the individual and his /her life than on the particular events in the past (Bryman, 2008:442).

lived in the post-war societal context on a day-to-day basis; and the third stage, consisted of encouraging the informant to reflect on his or her understandings of those experiences.

As suggested by Hermanowicz (in Elliot, 2005), the length of each interview in this study did not exceed ninety minutes. The shortest interview lasted twenty-seven minutes while the longest lasted eighty minutes. This decision to have average length interviews was mostly informed by ethical considerations pertaining to research in a post-war setting. Eleven interviews took place in two different offices of the LCL-THRP where I met the interviewees who, after prior arrangement, were willingly brought to LCL-THRP premises in one of the organization's cars. One interview was conducted in the office of a local NGO — the interviewee was a key staff member of the organization and could only be interviewed in his office owing to his tight schedule. In general, the interviews were conducted in LCL-THRP offices for reasons ranging from security to the research participants' convenience. I interviewed one young veteran at a time and the interviews were "face-to-face interactions" (Keats, 2001:4; Berg, 2004:75).⁷⁹ The interviews were conducted in English and recorded on a laptop upon prior consent from the interviewees. The interviewees did not have the same educational level. I was therefore constantly mindful of the fact that:

Standardized questions do not bring standardized answers, for the same question means different things to different people. In order to have questions mean the same thing to different people, they must be modified to fit the vocabulary, the educational background, and the comprehension of each subject (Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin, as cited in Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:134).

4.4.2.3 Types of questions asked

The research goals in view required the use of "experience and behaviour questions ... opinion and values questions ... feeling questions" (Patton, 2002:349-350). Experience and behaviour questions are questions revealing what a person

⁷⁹The face-to-face interaction is also called an "in person" interview (Suzuki, et al., 2007:309).

does or did and seek to “elicit behaviours, experiences, actions, and activities that would have been observable had the observer been present”. Opinion and values questions focus on “understanding the cognitive and interpretive processes of people” and “ask about opinions, judgments, and values”, while feeling questions draw out emotions. Through feeling questions, I was looking for “adjective responses: anxious, happy, afraid, intimidated, confident, and so on” (Patton, 2002:350).

4.5 Data analysis techniques: Constructing first cycle codes and second cycle codes

IPA approach, aims to arrive at the “account of how the analyst thinks the participant is thinking”; in order to achieve this, the researcher must perform a series of activities including “flexible thinking, processes of reduction, expansion, revision, creativity and innovation” (Smith, et al., 2009:80-81). Data analysis therefore requires that the researcher accurately assigns meaning to the research participants’ actions and statements.

The importance of coding in the analysis of qualitative data cannot be overemphasized. Strauss (in Saldaña, 2009:1), in an attempt to establish that importance, argued that research quality depends on the quality of the coding, and the best way for researchers to become effective qualitative analysts, is to “learn to code well and easily”. According to Saldaña (2009:3):

A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data. The data can consist of interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journals, documents literature, artifacts, photographs, video, websites, e-mail correspondence, and so on. ... Just as a title represents and captures a book or film or poem’s primary content and essence, so does a code represent and capture a datum’s primary content and essence.

The data collected from the young veterans have been analyzed through one “first cycle coding method” namely the “initial coding” (Saldaña, 2009:81-85); and two

“second cycle coding methods” namely “focused coding” and “axial coding” (Saldaña, 2009:155-162). The aim of using coding was to arrive at patterns and meanings that are important for a better understanding of phenomena under investigation. I therefore drew on the works of Charmaz (2006), Strauss and Corbin (1998), Smith, et al. (2009); and Saldaña (2009).

Before the series of coding, I transcribed the recorded data. Transcription is a preliminary bridge-building activity between data collection and data analysis without which any data analysis attempt is impossible. Transcription, an initial analytic process, is the transformation of the recorded oral interview into a written form amenable to analysis. The transcript should be both authentic and readable. In this study I personally transcribed all the interviews I conducted. I did so to avoid losing important information that is of most interest to me and which no one could understand better. I knew the interview segments that were the most relevant. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009:181) put this into perspective by asserting that “sampling in interview studies does not only concern selection of subjects, transcription involves the sampling of which of the multiple dimensions of oral interview conversations are to be selected for written transcription”. Although it is a time-consuming exercise I chose to do it.

4.6 Ethical considerations: Doing research in a post-war setting, a conundrum?

Ethical issues are very important in qualitative research especially when trying to delve into people’s life-world (Christian, as cited in Flick, 2007). “Respect for democracy, respect for truth and respect for persons” are to be considered as fundamental ethical issues. During research, fellow human beings’ dignity and privacy are to be respected, as is the freedom to give and receive information from both the researcher and researched (Bassey, 1999:73-74). Besides, as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009:74) pointed out:

...the researcher’s integrity is critical to the quality of the scientific knowledge and the soundness of ethical decisions in qualitative inquiry. Morally responsible research behaviour is more than abstract

ethical knowledge and cognitive choices; it involves the moral integrity of the researcher, his or her sensitivity and commitment to moral issues and action. In interviewing, the importance of the researcher's integrity is magnified because the interviewer is the main instrument for obtaining knowledge. Being familiar with value issues, ethical guidelines, and ethical theories may help the researcher to make choices that weigh ethical versus scientific concerns in a study. In the end however, the integrity of the researcher — his or her knowledge, experience, honesty, and fairness — is the decisive factor.

Doing research in war-torn communities is an odyssey into an unpredictable world with possibly unpredictable outcomes. Most of the inhabitants in such communities are labelled as 'victims' or 'vulnerable'. In the case of this research, the situation seemed worse because of the recent global spotlight on youth associated with warring factions who are the research subjects. For humanitarian workers, peacekeepers, and human rights advocates, the agency of young veterans is often undermined. Most of these youths are not considered perpetrators; rather they are viewed as victims and therefore should be regarded as such and should not in any case be subjected to further physical or psychological injury. Owing to this label of 'victim' often placed on children and youth who have taken part in armed conflicts in any capacity, ethical concerns surrounding this study are of utmost importance. Generally in a post-war context, it is difficult to present oneself as a former rebel for many reasons. In what follows I have presented the steps followed throughout the entire research process to ensure compliance with ethical requirements.

Any inquiry based on interview "affects the interviewees", and should be regarded as a "moral enterprise" concerning both the means used and the ends, and the knowledge produced shapes the "understanding of human condition" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:62). Throughout the interview sessions "ethical standards" (Keats, 2001:28) have been observed. I did the data collection through a host humanitarian organization, namely the LCL-THRP. As underlined earlier in this chapter, this organization helped in negotiating research relationships by facilitating my contact with research participants on the one hand and by

identifying and selecting young veterans who were coping on the other hand. Procedurally, the organization made me go through a methodological orientation on how to interview war-affected youths especially in the Liberian context. Those initial steps were useful guidelines that helped me prevent possible psychological injuries and any unconscious ‘waking up of former demons’. The overall ethical consideration was to seek the well-being of the subjects being studied. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009:63) put it, “the purpose of an interview study should, beyond the scientific value of the knowledge sought, also be considered with regard to improvement of the human situation investigated”. My credentials as a doctoral candidate, namely my student identity card and the recommendation from my supervisor, were made known to the respondents prior to interviews. The “informed consent” from informants preceded interview sessions. I made “promises of anonymity”, especially while quoting interview excerpts. I deliberately changed the names of interviewees and other names which could easily reveal identity in those excerpts. I equally observed other core ethical issues such as “confidentiality”, “care of records” to ensure privacy and security of “truth in representing the content of the interview” (Keats, 2001:29-32; Berg, 2004:32), consideration of “the possible consequences of the study for the subjects” and exactness during the transcription process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:63).

In addition, I ended interviews by “debriefing the interviewees” (Suzuki, et al., 2007:314). In my opinion, during interviews, interviewees might have felt some anxiety, sadness, or tension as a consequence of the discussion especially in a post-war context. Giving interviewees the opportunity therefore to ask questions and express how they felt about the discussion would be helpful. I therefore reviewed some of the points covered in a more relaxing and acrimony-free manner or atmosphere. Berg (2004:61), placing emphasis on “debriefing the subjects” argued that, “in the interest of ensuring no harm to participants, it is important to debrief the participants and give assistance if needed, counselling or

explanations for questions they have been asked during the course of the interview”. In this study, I tried to follow these ethical guidelines.

4.7 Rigor in qualitative research: Trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry as equivalent of validity and reliability in quantitative research

While qualitative research has become more influential, qualitative methods have not been fully accepted in some circles of quantitative research devotees. There is no doubt that the position of such proponents of the quantitative schools of thought has been informed by their training (Stein, 2004). Reliability and validity are regarded by quantitative social scientists as concepts through which rigor should be established (Creswell, 2003; Rubin & Babbie, 2005). This quantitative strategy of establishing objectivity in research is at variance with that of qualitative social scientists (Aguinaldo, 2003; Morgan & Drury, 2003). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009:30) in a similar vein argue that “the precision in description, and stringency in meaning, interpretation in qualitative interviews correspond to exactness in quantitative measurements”. Qualitative researchers argue that rigor in research, as conceived by quantitative researchers, is characterized by inflexibility and rigidity which cannot be applied to qualitative studies (Sandelowski, 1993). They also argue that, in qualitative studies, rigor can be established in different ways (Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006). Given that this research is a qualitative inquiry, it allows for “researchers’ values, prejudices, beliefs and attitudes being stated and interrogated, and their likely influence on the research being appraised” (Fawcett & Hearn, 2004:205). Despite these divergent opinions on how to establish rigor in research, ongoing debate among qualitative researchers on the issue (Creswell, 1998; Langer & Furman, 2005; Szto, Furman & Langer, 2005) points to a consensus among qualitative researchers: that participants’ meanings should be accurately presented in research findings (Padgett, 1998; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Horsburgh, 2003; Johnson & Waterfield, 2004; Li, 2004). For the purpose of this research, I chiefly drew on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985), who consider ‘trustworthiness’ as the means to establish rigor in qualitative research. Trustworthiness suggests that research

findings accurately represent the meanings as described by research subjects (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Despite the flexibility such concept connotes, Padgett (in Lietz, et al., 2006:444), argues that “trustworthiness is not something that just occurs naturally, but instead it should be regarded as the result of *rigorous scholarship* that includes the use of defined procedures”.

So far, the following key strategies have been identified (although this is not an exhaustive list): prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, negative case analysis, audit trail and reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 1998; Janse van Rensburg, 2001; Horsburgh, 2003; Johnson & Waterfield, 2004; Li, 2004; Mauther & Doucet, 2003). In addition to the aforementioned trustworthiness strategies, the credibility of results in qualitative research can be established through “theoretical validity” (Maxwell, 1992:291; Janse van Rensburg, 2001). In this research, I established trustworthiness through five strategies including reflexivity, audit trail, peer debriefing, member checking and theoretical validity.

4.7.1 Reflexivity

Also known as self-reflexivity (Janse van Rensburg, 2001:11), reflexivity according to Horsburgh (2003:308) is an “active acknowledgement by the researcher that her/his own actions and decisions will inevitably impact upon the meaning and context of the experience under investigation”. Reflexivity occurs through the researcher’s thought and his/her interaction with research participants. It is concerned with how the researcher’s and participants’ identity, beliefs and experiences intersect (Macbeth, 2001; Johnson & Waterfield, 2004), and how “the researcher’s position or social location can interfere with the research process” (Fawcett & Hearn, as cited in Lietz, et al., 2006:447). Reflexivity is similar to the “*epoche* — phenomenological attitude shift”⁸⁰ which Patton (2002: 484-485) referred to, and which reinforces rigor especially in the data analysis. With this

⁸⁰“*Epoche*” is a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things.

phenomenological attitude the researcher removes or becomes aware of prejudices, viewpoints or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation through the entire research process (Patton, 2002: 484-5). Mauther and Doucet (in Lietz, et al., 2006:447) suggested that reflexivity can be done “through meetings with a research group”. In this study, I had discussions with some researchers and PhD fellows of BIGSSS, the Faculty of Integrated Social Sciences at Jacobs University (Germany) and Rhodes University who expressed their views and made useful suggestions. My engagement with other researchers sensitized me “to ways in which varying perspectives could both support and potentially hinder this process” (Lietz, et al., 2006:448) and helped me “deal with subjectivity” (Russell & Kelly, as cited in Lietz, et al., 2006:447).

4.7.2 Audit trail

An audit trail is used during data analysis. Through an audit trail, the researcher describes the procedures he/she followed throughout the research process with the aim to establish rigor (Johnson & Waterfield, as cited in Lietz, et al., 2006:448). It also allows other scholars to appraise both the research process and the findings. As Lietz, et al. (2006:450) put it, an audit trail:

helps a qualitative project to be open for critique by the research community as the research procedures are fully described. The ability to critique research is an essential part of the research process. Whether it is quantitative or qualitative inquiry, critical analysis is a part of the research tradition. Audit trails allow for critical thinking to occur in qualitative inquiry.

In addition to the foregoing, I try to explain the procedures followed for data analysis.

4.7.3 Peer debriefing

Through peer debriefing the researcher engages “in dialogue with colleagues outside of a research project who have experience with the topic, population or methods utilized” (Lietz, et al., 2006:451). During the peer debriefing, consistencies and inconsistencies in analysis can be clearly exposed, thus allowing

for improvement in data analysis. In this study, I tried this by having discussions with experienced researchers whose research interests are related to the thesis. I also presented some chapters of this work during some conferences, workshops and seminars including a seminar at BIGSSS in May 2010 (Germany); the South African Sociological Association (SASA) conference in July 2011 (University of Pretoria); the Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Conference (IPGC) in September 2011 (Rhodes University); the African Humanities Program (AHP) workshop in September 2011 (Fort Hare University); other workshops and seminars within the Faculty of Humanities (Rhodes University). Colleagues and researchers made useful comments and suggestions on my presentations, and this greatly helped to improve some aspects of my research.

4.7.4 Member checking

In member checking, the findings from the researcher are shared with the participants in order to check with the source the trustworthiness of what was found. Member checking is also known as face validity (Bassey, 1999; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; O'Leary, 2010) or "respondent validation", and gives participants the opportunity "to review findings from the data analysis in order to confirm or challenge the accuracy of the work" (Creswell, 1998; Johnson & Waterfield, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, as cited in Lietz, et al., 2006:453). It is the process of making known to participants the findings of the study so that they may let the researcher know whether their perspectives were reflected with accuracy. In this research, I presented salient points of the findings to the interviewees and they identified areas that were missed or misinterpreted.

4.7.5 Theoretical validity

Theoretical validity implies the relevance of theoretical and conceptual frameworks used to support claims made in a research. It also suggests the relationships between these theories, concepts and the phenomenon being studied (Maxwell, 1992; Janse van Rensburg, 2001). In this thesis, I ensured this by using

a spectrum of theories and concepts deemed appropriate to examine the young veterans' life-world, agency and transformation.

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the qualitative approach used. The aim of the study being a study of the lived experiences of the subjects on a day-to-day basis, I mainly used one of the recent phenomenological approaches, that is the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). However Barakat, et al. (2002:991) point out that it has been increasingly acknowledged that “effective research design in war-affected societies” depends on an understanding of the origins and nature of the conflict as it is experienced by those involved in, or affected by it. Similarly, it has been recognized that working within a conflict-affected region cannot be regarded as a neutral activity. Instead researchers are frequently seen as having a significant bearing over the course, and even the outcome, of the conflict itself. These concerns have in turn led to a perception that researching in conflict areas presents such special challenges that it is difficult or impossible to apply rigorous methodological norms expected of social science research under these conditions. In this regard, these authors suggested what they term a “composite approach” which grants to researchers carrying out studies in war-affected areas the right to draw on many methodological approaches and procedures in order to achieve research goals. And this is what I have tried to do in this study, especially in the data analysis section where I drew on relatively recent works, and placed emphasis on the initial coding, focused coding and axial coding. So in this study, I did not rely on IPA alone and given the fact that this approach allows for flexibility and creativity. However, I could not apply all the listed qualitative research rigor criteria. The idea of prolonged engagement stems from anthropological fieldwork in which researchers spend extensive time with their participants in order to increase rapport leading participants to be more open in their interactions with the researcher could not be applied to this research. The post-war nature of the field with its unpredictable problems and the high cost of living were the main hindrances. The end of the war did not mean in anyway a

guarantee for security and taking all necessary precautions in order not to be harmed as a researcher in the field, is part and parcel of ethical considerations which I had to observe.

It is worth mentioning that the major limitation of this study lies in the fact that the small sample size used does not allow for the generalizability of the findings. All the same, it must be noted that the use of small samples is usually the hallmark of studies underpinned by phenomenology and symbolic interactionism, and this research is no exception.

Part Two

CHAPTER FIVE

Researching in a war-torn zone: A walk in a minefield alongside war-profiteers?

5.1 Introduction

Although qualitative research is generally thought to be grounded in specific epistemic frames of reference, contexts within which qualitative studies are conducted vary. What works during a research undertaking in a peaceful environment may not work in an unstable environment. Despite these contextual differences, researchers are expected to produce valid and reliable knowledge. The implication is that procedures and techniques used to collect data are context-driven and should be designed and applied accordingly. For instance, methods, techniques and procedures used to conduct sociological enquiries in rural areas may differ from those used in carrying out research in urban areas. It is one thing to conduct research in peaceful rural or urban areas, it is another to conduct research in an area where war is taking place or has recently ended.

Given the aforementioned analysis, it seems peculiar that methodological issues with regard to research in armed conflict situations have not been sufficiently highlighted in the literature, especially in the field of sociology. Such tangled methodological issues may directly or indirectly affect the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings. My focus in this section is to examine some peculiarities inherent in the conduct of qualitative research in a war-torn zone. This may serve as a framework for future research in armed conflict contexts. First, I try to highlight the interplay between war-profiteering (that is, perceiving war and its outcome as a lucrative cash-cow) (Ryan, 2008; War Resisters' International, 2011; Pein, 2011) and research relationship negotiation on various levels. Secondly, I examine ethical issues including researcher and researched

protection on the one hand, and possible impacts and risks of promises made during data collection on subsequent studies whether or not these are fulfilled.

5.2 Is war-profiteering a new phenomenon?

The scanty literature on ‘war-profiteering’ makes it an amorphous concept. The concept of war-profiteering dates back to January 1961 when the then American President Dwight D. Eisenhower⁸¹ in his farewell address warned his audience of what he termed “the military-industrial complex”, referring to the acquisition of unauthorized influence (Davidson, 2011:891). Similarly, many critics in post-World War I America expressed a revulsion against what they described as:

A cabal of death merchants — arms manufacturers and others who profited from war — existed at the highest levels of American society ... war profiteers used their political and economic clout to influence national policy, especially economic development and international relations, to serve their own interests at the expense of the general public. (Davidson, 2011:891)

But later, heated debates pertaining to war-profiteering in America led to the enactment of the “War Profiteering Prevention Act of 2007”⁸² by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, with the aim of “taking the profit out of war” (Ledbetter, 2011:25). While this anti-war-profiteering act mainly focuses on America, and it is not clear to what extent it is enforced, it fails to capture the phenomenon in all its ramifications especially in war-ravaged countries on the African continent. It is therefore worth revisiting this concept so that it actually percolates through academic circles for further analysis.

5.3 War-profiteering: A hindrance to research?

Although research is generally thought to be grounded in specific epistemic frames of reference, contexts within which studies are conducted vary and need to be considered. What is applicable during a research undertaking in a peaceful

⁸¹ President Dwight D. Eisenhower was the American War Department mobilization planner in the 1930s (Davidson, 2011).

⁸² For a full copy of the Act see Calendar No. 148, 110th Congress, 1st Session, S.119 [Report No. 110-66].

environment may not work in an unstable environment. Despite these contextual differences, researchers are expected to produce valid and reliable knowledge.

Post-war societies are typically societies in dire straits due to the disruptive effects of the war. There is no doubt that the majority of the inhabitants therein are perceived as vulnerable for a number of reasons. They are faced with a struggling economy and a higher cost of living, and therefore increasingly get anxious about their livelihood. But amidst this collective war-induced wretchedness, there are people who use war as a source of enrichment. Using NGOs he likened with war-profiteers, Lendman (2012) noted that “war is big business. NGOs like corporate predators cash in”.⁸³

For instance, evidence is available that during the Liberian war, top leaders such as warlords massively looted mineral resources. They connived with other interested stakeholders to trade weapons, timber and diamonds, and to create human trafficking networks (Global Witness, 2010; Sherman, 2011). External actors contributed to/masterminded the war for high-level political and economic reasons/gains, be they individuals (e.g. mercenaries), organizations, countries or groups of countries. I call this first set of individuals or corporations that immensely benefited from the war, ‘upper-level war-profiteers’ (van Niekerk, 2002; Soggot, 2002; Campbell, 2002).

For instance, during the disarmament operation in Liberia, there were factional commanders who collected arms from ex-combatants and distributed them to their “family members in order for them to qualify for the disarmament money” (Alusula, 2008:11).

Charles Taylor, one notorious former warlord during the Liberian civil war epitomizes an upper-level war-profiteer. As Singer (2006:56) pointed out:

Within five years, Taylor was the richest warlord in the country, with ‘Taylorland’ pulling in \$300 million to \$400 million a year in personal income through illegal trading and looting. A decade later Taylor was

⁸³ This is a quote of Lendman (2012) available at <http://www.opednews.com/articles/NGOs-Promote-Wars-for-Prof-by-Stephen-Lendman-120425-895.html>

Liberia's president, demonstrating the potential payoffs of this new strategy of mobilizing force. Through child soldiers, he was able to use a small gang to gain a kingdom.

There were also individuals who considered the war and the post-war social chaos as an avenue to earn their living or make huge amounts of money, or enrich their curriculum vitae although in a disguised manner. It may not have been their original intention to profit from the war, but by virtue of their involvement in the war in any capacity, they derive a certain form or level of profit. Some consciously engaged in benign or illegal activities, although not necessarily criminal, to achieve their aims without necessarily having any links with external profiteers. This second category, which I term 'midlevel war-profiteers', comprises local and national criminal syndicates (former fighters), organizations and associations which beyond their debatable humanitarian concern used the war and its outcome as moneymaking business, donors, sex workers, peacekeepers, mediators, diplomats, consultants, researchers and individuals who have gained or are seeking political, economic and diplomatic leverage locally, nationally or internationally as a result of the war.

It must be noted that some of the midlevel war-profiteers might have contributed to the transition of war-affected countries from war to peace in diverse ways; but I contend that the encomia which usually envelop such contributions overshadow the concealed benefits these 'benevolent actors' derive from their acts. For instance, it came as no surprise that the president of the Haitian National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion, M. Alix Fils-Aimé (in Radio Kiskeya, 2010), accused the United Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and NGOs of practising a "crisis business," and claimed that "foreigners find their interests in our [Haitian] crises and Haiti will never make headway unless its sons resolve to take full control of the country's destiny" [author's translation from French].

With regard to this category of war-profiteers, in Liberia, there were individuals who clinched prestigious awards as a reward for their effort in bringing back

peace in the country, although some of them contributed in a way to the war (Liberia's Nobel Peace Prize winners look to the future, 2011; Nossiter, 2011). Scholars who carried research or published on any aspect of the war in Liberia are also war-profiteers, simply because without the phenomenon called war, there wouldn't have been any war-related subject for research. With regard to scholars deriving profit from war, and using Sierra Leone as an example, Zack-Williams (2006:121) narrated former child-soldiers' consciousness of the phenomenon:

By the time I arrived in the field after the civil war in August 2001, I found that many of the former child soldiers had started showing signs of 'research interrogation fatigue' — tired of being interrogated about their experiences in the bush by researchers and journalists. A number of them claimed that the researchers' interest was to further their careers. One former child combatant observed: 'We feel like animals in the zoo, people come to talk to us, but our plight remains the same'. These concerns raised an added moral dilemma relating not just to the issue of value interference, but to the responsibility of the researcher to the respondents, particularly minors and young people who had experienced both physical and emotional abuse at the hands of the state (and its agents) as well as adjuncts of civil society.

Diplomats who participated in various peace talks or served as advisors in any capacity have reinvigorated the diplomatic networks of their countries of origin, and their own networks. Consultants must have made money, and marketed their consultancy skills for new job opportunities. I contend that there has always been the tendency of considering 'upper-level war-profiteers' as the only ones profiting from the war, undermining how things play out on a micro-level. War-profiteering goes beyond monetary gains — it encompasses fame, change in social status; academic, professional and diplomatic achievement to mention a few.

There is a third category of war-profiteers which I call 'grassroots war-profiteers'. This category comprises inhabitants who have seen a remarkable improvement in their living conditions as a result of the war. According to some of these war-profiteers, the betterment of their living conditions would have been a mirage without the war owing to pre-war entrenched structural inequalities between Americo-Liberians and indigenous population on the one hand, and between indigenous groups on the other hand (Gershoni, 1996; Osaghae, 1996; Weissman,

1996; Mekenkamp, et al., 1999). For instance, in Liberia there were former child-soldiers from poor families before the war who acquired or furthered their formal education as a result of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) process after the war. The following interview excerpts from some Liberian young veterans⁸⁴ attest to this:

For my own interpretation the DDRR process was good for me, it helped us to go far in school. My parents can say today they have a child who is in high school. I am satisfied with that. (Author's interview with *Enfant*, 2010)

I usually tell my friends that if you want to go far in life, the medicine is going to school. So far, I can see myself in school today. I can say that my dreams are fulfilled. (Author's interview with *Martine*, 2010)

I have decided and my focus is to do peace and conflict studies up to the level that I can do it. My major focus is to work in conflict-prone communities. You see my experience to see how especially communities that experience war where I can interact with ex-coms or combatants or military personnel, people who have experienced war, because I have had an experience of war and I know what it means to fight war. So my major focus of life is now is to become, I mean to learn conflict, to understand conflict from a deeper perspective and know what are the feelings and thinking of the actors of conflicts so that whenever I see a conflict situation, I will not be too much judgmental to it. I will understand the feelings of those that are involved into conflict because one thing I know is that people don't get into conflict because they want to get into it, their feelings, their interests that can bring people into a conflict situation so my major focus is to do conflict to a higher level. I was just telling Nimi [real name withheld] that I am presently reading sociology as a big foundation and I told him I want to do peace and conflict studies as my Master's degree and if I can pursue it even to the level at which you are I will be to glad. (Author's interview with *Petit*, 2010)

I want to become a doctor because there in the war front, I was serving as a doctor. When people were wounded, or received bullet, I used my own experience to help people. So I decided to do it as a course for myself. (Author's interview with *Enfant*, 2010)

In the second category of war-profiteers, I purposely left out a group I call 'local war scholars'. These were individuals who individually or collectively could carry out some action research, or serve as gatekeepers to assist foreign researchers to

⁸⁴ Interviewees' names mentioned in this research are pseudonyms.

gain access to their research field. Collective action was usually undertaken through humanitarian organizations or associations they set up. They were either civilians or former fighters who perceived their assistance to foreign researchers as a moneymaking avenue.

I acknowledge the fact that local people by virtue of their knowledge of local realities are often used by researchers to gain entry into their community, but my claim here is that in war-torn countries, the craving for money is very high. Profitability from war tends to supersede other considerations. War-affected societies are often infested with opportunistic individuals or groups, be they local, national or international. Such a state of affairs calls into question the credibility and dependability of individuals who ‘volunteer’ to assist researchers.

Another huge concern this raises is that of ‘access to the real research respondents’. For instance, young veterans (research subjects in the case of this study) were not necessarily clustered together in the post-war society, although there were areas highly concentrated with former fighters such as Santos Street. How can the researcher therefore trace and gain access to the real research subjects? Based on the field experience in Liberia and other war-affected zones, I argue that some factors need to be taken into consideration while negotiating research relationships (Maxwell, 1996) in war-torn countries.

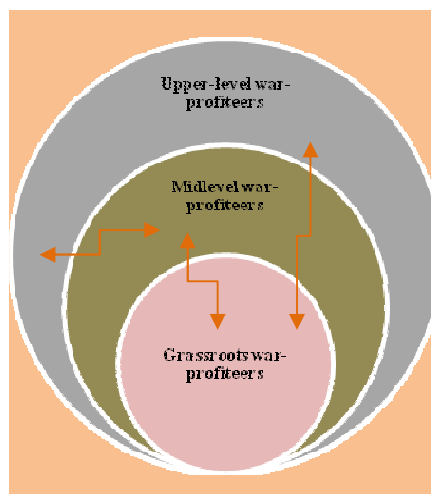


Figure 4: Interconnectedness between the three categories of war-profiteers

Researchers should be cognisant of the fact that, in general, war-related statistics provided are not fixed statistics and are quite often full of inconsistencies (Peters & Laws, 2003; Wells, 2009), therefore casting doubt on the real dimension of the phenomena under study. Statistics can be provided for various reasons, most importantly in the interest of organizations that do so, and this boils down to the issue of profitability from war mentioned earlier. Every ‘war theatre’ should be perceived by researchers as a huge, attractive and at times untapped political, humanitarian and diplomatic market where complex and controversial deals are made among both local and international actors. So how researchers manoeuvre to ethically collect data appears to be a daunting task. It without doubt requires a painstaking analysis of the terrain in order to identify war-profiteers before building any credible research relationship.

The influence of war-profiteering on fieldwork should be perceived as complex reciprocal relationships characterized by direct or indirect profits including money, fame, and change in social status.

5.4 Access negotiation for data collection in war-torn zones: A multi-layered endeavour

Access negotiation to research subjects in war-torn countries may be considered a multi-layered and daunting undertaking. On a general note, in war-affected countries most sectors are dysfunctional. For instance, Liberia “was left without basic political, social, and economic structures in place. Poor governance resulted in a virtually non-existent rule of law and an environment rampant with mass corruption and state looting” (Global Witness, 2010:4). Consequently, foreigners travelling to such countries are often suspected of war-profiteering regardless of whether they are business men and women, humanitarian workers, peacekeepers, diplomats or researchers. Although there are usually good reports confirming the positive role played by peacekeepers in those countries (Diaz, 2010), there are also dumbfounding instances of bogus humanitarian workers and peacekeepers involved in the immoral looting and smuggling of mineral resources from war-affected zones (UN News Centre, 2011a; All Africa Global Media, 2011; Radio

Okapi, 2011d), and cases of sexual abuse (Le Monde & Agence France-Presse, 2011; Sapa-AP, 2011; Delva, 2011).

This gradual involvement of peacekeepers and humanitarian workers in war-profiteering quite often erodes the confidence of immigration officials in visitors, thus setting the stage for complicated visa application procedures for those who may want to travel to such war-torn countries, and researchers are no exception. Any researcher therefore preparing for fieldwork in a war-affected country should be psychologically prepared to encounter unpredictable situations which have the potential to hinder his/her access to the field.

A great deal of information and early preparation (prior analysis of the political, economic and security atmosphere) are therefore needed. In addition, researchers should be cognizant of the fact that war-torn countries are plagued by many ills such as lawlessness (especially immediately after the war), corruption and insecurity (Global Witness, 2010). A set change can only occur after a long period of time. The mere fact that eight years after the war officially ended in Liberia “idle ex-combatants still roam the streets, reawakened by the fighting in neighbouring Côte d’Ivoire to their potential as guns-for-hire” attests to this (Ajayi, 2011).

How sensitive the research topic is may also influence the entry process. At this juncture the involvement of reputable organizations, associations or other key institutions is very important. The negotiation of host organizations may be done through informal channels (indirect negotiation) or formal channels (direct negotiation). One overriding condition which should govern the choice of a host institution or organization is its credibility. By credible organization, I mean an organization which is not enmeshed in corruption and unavoidably in connection with controversial politicians and dubious business men and women. A thorough investigation is required to establish such credibility. If the intended host organization is a local one, the researcher may enquire from international organizations intervening in the country especially the United Nations Office for

the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). This is important because UNOCHA is regarded as the umbrella organization coordinating humanitarian activities, and can therefore provide the researcher with a list of organizations which constitute various clusters.

The new approach used by the humanitarian community is the cluster approach. In this approach various organizations, both local and international, form clusters to focus on specific areas of needs of war or disaster-affected communities. Areas of focus of these clusters for instance are protection, camp coordination and management, early recovery, emergency shelter, health, water, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition, education, agriculture, logistics, emergency and telecommunications (Global Protection Cluster Working Group, 2007).⁸⁵ A snowballing strategy can be used to identify organizations which can pertinently assist the researcher. This necessitates a careful study of the activity profile of organizations. Researchers may equally find out whether the identified organization assisted researchers in the past, and the outcome of such a research relationship.

In the case of my research, I identified the Lutheran Church Liberia-Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Programme (LCL-THRP) which referred me to the National Ex-Combatants Peace-Building Initiative (NEPI) — a sister organization (Boelt, 2007; Jaye, 2009). A proper identification of host organizations is to a great extent a guarantee that the researcher can gain access to the research subjects from which he/she intends to solicit data.

There may be cases of misleading information. For instance, researchers can be provided with ‘research subjects’ who are not actually the intended respondents. The process of selecting research subjects is a tricky one in war-torn contexts and requires a painstaking approach on the part of the researcher. For example, it is not easy to distinguish between an ordinary criminal or miscreant and a disgruntled former fighter, as they share some common attributes. They may both

⁸⁵ Details available at <http://www.humanitarianreform.org/>

display asocial behaviour. Similarly it is difficult to distinguish between a former fighter who displays prosocial behaviour and an ordinary gentleman or lady. Elusive local war-profiteers therefore bank on these factors to deceive researchers and present them with ‘fake research subjects’ capable of providing researchers with answers that suit questions, in other words, the wrong set of people providing seemingly suitable answers. In my case, the identified young veterans were individual former child-soldiers who were known to the two host organizations. These young veterans underwent at least one of the programmes of the organizations and had their names recorded or were easily identifiable. In summary, the researcher should be able to know at every stage of his/her access negotiation when war-profiteering begins to interfere with the research aim.

5.5 Ethics and research in war-torn zones

5.5.1 Protecting the researcher and researched

The protection from harm of both the informants and the researcher is important during research in war-torn zones and cannot be overemphasized (Social Research Association, 2001; Bloor, Fincham & Sampson, 2010). Jensen (in Boothby, 2006:246) put this into perspective by asserting that “any research done in a war torn setting is difficult and fraught with practical and ethical constraints”. It is therefore obvious that a war-affected zone is a place of unpredictable events. Although researchers can build up rapport with research participants in some cases, I argue that whether a foreign researcher gives research subjects some money or not, he/she should consider him/herself as a potential target for criminals who may connive with the very research subjects. This, therefore, suggests that researchers should find a secure place to conduct their interviews or focus group discussions. They should equally be briefed on the security situation in the area where they may want to collect data. It is also advisable to undergo a prior induction course and counselling from the host organization.

Prior knowledge of the type of research subjects the researcher will be interviewing is very important. For instance, although there may be general

assumptions about how young veterans behave, there are country-specific behaviour patterns which should be taken into consideration. It is also important to have a brief historical account of similar data collection sessions in the country and what the weaknesses, strengths and proffered solutions were.

5.5.2 Promises during data collection: A risk or an advantage for subsequent researchers?

Conducting research in war-affected countries is similar to walking in a minefield. Research subjects in war-affected countries generally perceive researchers as the *haves* and regard themselves as the *have-nots*. Respondents and even the gatekeepers perceive themselves as vulnerable and expect foreigners to regard them as such. Such lines of thought put them in a position of dependence. It is worth mentioning that such a dependence syndrome is an endemic hallmark of war-affected countries. One important question researchers may face during their interview sessions with respondents, as a young veteran asked, will be the following “what are we going to gain from this research?” (Author’s interview with Philemon, 2010). Such a question warrants an ethical answer on the part of the researcher.

Making promises of financial remuneration to respondents is likely to render that particular research site slippery to subsequent researchers regardless of whether those promises are kept or not. Even if the promises have been kept, such an approach to research may negatively affect knowledge production itself. It will simply increase war-profiteering. In addition, knowledge produced in such conditions raises ethical concerns which cannot be dealt with extensively in this section. In the case of this study, when I was asked the above question, I answered within a broader peace-building perspective. I explained to my interviewees who asked this question that my research was hopefully going to contribute to the stability and development of their country, and that this stability would potentially allow for a peaceful environment where individuals could easily go about their activities and earn a living. Such an answer in my opinion is ethical. Firstly, the

answer is true because the research output can inform the country's policy-making processes; secondly, it satisfies the interviewee to a great extent.

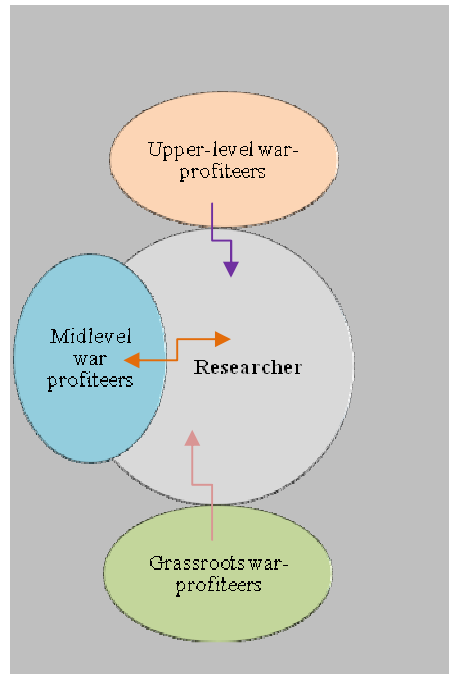


Figure 5: Interrelationship between researcher and war-profiteers

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I tried to briefly introduce 'war-profiteering' by describing three types I had identified including 'upper-level war-profiteering', 'midlevel war-profiteering' and 'grassroots war-profiteering'. I attempted an explanation of how these three categories of war-profiteering are interrelated, and how researchers in war-torn countries can easily be trapped in that unpredictable web of 'profiteers'. The overall aim is to warn or remind novice researchers of such field impediments capable of affecting negatively themselves, the research process and the findings.

Research carried out in a stable environment differs considerably from that conducted in a war-affected zone. A prior understanding of the origins and nature of the conflict as it is experienced by those involved in, or affected by it, is very important. Similarly, it has been recognised that working within a conflict-affected region cannot be regarded as a neutral activity. Instead, researchers are

frequently seen as having a significant bearing over the course, and even the outcome of the conflict itself.

I maintain that the research process in a war-affected setting is predominantly characterised by war-profiteering elements. The magnitude of profit derived by the various actors involved in the war or post-conflict life of the country may vary, but the undeniable truth is that the aforementioned three categories of war-profiteers have benefited. I also argue that on a macro-level, the upper-level war-profiteers are usually thought to be the only ‘war-profiteers’ and are tagged criminals. But the reality is that the war-profiteering phenomenon has percolated through various layers of war-affected societies, and researchers must navigate these profit-centred complexities in order to obtain credible results. Some of these war-profiteers may try to negatively influence the research process especially if the latter conflicts or affects their interest.

I also argue that research is perceived by local people as a money-making opportunity, undermining therefore the trustworthiness of research findings which is the researcher’s top priority. The researcher can easily be misguided by organizations and individual ‘gatekeepers’. My claim is simply that researchers should painstakingly and carefully negotiate their access to the country of research, host organizations and research subjects, taking into consideration the political and economic atmosphere prevailing before and during their fieldwork.

I further suggest that researchers should sedulously avoid making promises to research subjects as these promises may constitute huge obstacles for subsequent researchers on the one hand, and impinge on the credibility of knowledge production in the field of social sciences on the other hand. The study of war-profiteering as a phenomenon is beyond the scope of this thesis. However the discussion in this chapter constitutes a springboard for further research on the issue, especially in other war-affected countries.

CHAPTER SIX

Shifting from military identity to civilian identity: The role of the technologies of the self, self-agency and instrumental coalitions

6.1 Introduction

Based on young veterans' own stories, this chapter examines how a synergy of their agency, internal conversation, technologies of the self and instrumental coalitions, produces a transformational effect, and allows for their shift from a military identity to a civilian identity. This deliberate undertaking on the part of young veterans to build a new positive civilian identity is often overshadowed by overpraised humanitarian considerations, leading to a paucity of writing on the issue within the broader topic of child-soldiering, particularly with regard to African post-conflict societies.

In order to achieve the above, the chapter tries to establish child-soldiers' post-conflict identity crises — their 'dented identities'. The identity crisis of young veterans is simply a spillover of the general societal perception of regular soldiers as modern warriors. With a focus on West Africa, particularly Liberia, and considering who a professional soldier is as the point of departure, this chapter highlights the nexus between the 'negative identities' foisted upon young veterans in the post-conflict communities, and the cumulative perceptions society has of regular and guerrilla armies. Regular armies have been plunged into existential and sociability crises, as well as guerrilla armies whose original liberation project has been altered, and replaced by a predatory warlordism. The discussion in this chapter centres on how some Liberian young veterans actively negotiated inherited identity hurdles which militate against their social acceptance.

6.2 Fragile states armies caught between sociability and existential crisis

In the majority of fragile African states, the army-society relations during wartime or peacetime have, to a great extent, deteriorated. What is the nature of army-society relations in the affected countries? How do civilians perceive soldiers? Are these armies truly under civilian supremacy? These are a few questions I try to answer in this section. But first, it would be appropriate to unpack the attributes of a professional soldier. As Pope John II (in Haitiner & Kümmel, 2009:75) observed:

Looking at its nature, military service in itself is a very honorable, very beautiful, very noble thing. The real center of the vocation to be a soldier is nothing but the defense of good, of truth and, in particular, of those who have been unjustly attacked.

Professional soldiers are therefore individuals committed to the state, and are an embodiment of civic virtue (Helman, as cited in Sasson-Levy, 2003). They are characterised by their strict adherence to the military code of honour including gentlemanly and gentlewomanly conduct towards fellow-citizens, personal fealty, self-regulating brotherhood and sisterhood (Janowitz, 1960). They must swear allegiance to “support and defend the constitution with civilian supremacy” (Janowitz, 1960:220), and develop a sense of discipline and patriotism (Radio Okapi, 2011b, Radio Okapi, 2011c). Professional soldiers show intense group loyalty, through brotherhood/sisterhood, leading to social cohesion, and are often above politics (Janowitz, 1960).

Soldiers under civilian authority are to be acclaimed for any of their outstanding patriotic achievements. Although there are various ways through which societal gratitude to armed forces can be expressed, I have decided to buttress my argument with just two recent illustrations. Diverse reactions trailed the killing of the former Al Qaeda terrorist network leader Osama Bin Laden across the world. But the widely broadcast encomia American people bestowed upon the crack commandos which successfully carried out the operation, constitute an expression of the pride a nation takes in its army. Expressions such as “job well-done” (Radio

France Internationale, 2011a; CNN Wire Staff, 2011b; Reuters, 2011), “these Americans deserve credit for one of the greatest military operations in our nation’s history” (BBC News, 2011a), and the decoration ceremony (Agence France-Presse, 2011a), are all forms of positive army-society relations. Similarly but in a different context, the Igbo community heralded the Nigerian army, in the Northern region of Nigeria, for protecting them during the post-electoral mayhem (Oyelere, 2011).

In sharp contrast to the above-mentioned amity-centred army-society relations, it appears that the presence of uncouth soldiers within the ranks of various African armies, especially in West Africa, has plunged state armies into a “military identity crisis” (Filho & Zirker, 2000:151) similar to that experienced by the Brazilian army in the 1990s. Of course, such an identity crisis is not peculiar to African armies. For instance, American troops committed atrocities in Iraq ranging from rape to murder, in their anti-terror campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan (Randall, 2006; Jamail, 2008; North, 2010).

This military identity crisis engendered two other crises, including a “crisis of sociability” and an “existential crisis” (Teixeira, as cited in Filho & Zirker, 2000:143). The sociability crisis is due to a total breakdown of the army-society relation, while the existential crisis is the result of the lack of battlefield exercise. In Africa, this existential crisis is to a great extent due to the fact that many armies were quasi-absent during independence wars; they were rather used as pawns by the colonial masters (Welch, 1967). Combat is a key feature of the military which enhances soldiers’ development (Dunivin, 1994; Teixeira, as cited in Filho & Zirker, 2000). In my opinion, it seems most of these armies have substituted their defence and protection roles with two new functions they excel in, that is, preying upon innocent civilians during peaceful demonstrations, and serving as political thugs.

Surprisingly and unfortunately, coups d’état leaders particularly in Africa, that is the politicians in uniform (Welch, 1967; Jackman, 1976; Nwolise, 2001; Alusula,

2008), did not keep to their promises of economic recovery and modernization (Jackman, 1976). They simply ruined their respective countries, and established regimes based on ethnocentrism, nepotism and cronyism. Samuel Doe of Liberia was a typical politician in uniform, who threw the country into a political and economic imbroglio (Mekenkamp, et al., 1999; Alusula, 2008), setting the stage for the 14-year civil war. The bloody coup d'état, led by Samuel Doe on April 12, 1980, has left many civilians with scars and scripts they can never forget:

It was 31 years ago when the nation awoke to a new era throwing the old in a pool of blood with the execution of 13 officials of the Government. President William R. Tolbert was executed in the Executive Mansion. His officials, tied to the poles with their backs facing the Atlantic Ocean on which their ancestors sailed to establish a country called Liberia in 1822, were shot in broad daylight. This new era, promising freedom and plenty with massive jubilation and street dances, can now only be judged by history ... we heard the National Anthem played and Doe announced that non-commissioned officers had taken over the Tolbert government for rampant corruption, misuse of public offices and high treason and that no enlisted men should take orders from any commissioned officers. And that was the overthrown [*sic*] of law and order. So on that day no officers of the police, immigration, army and any law enforcement officers had any authority to command. The Constitution was also put one side [*sic*], so on that day ... law and order were banned by Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe. Since that time, we have been trying to repair up to this date. (New Democrat, 2011)

The first post-conflict democratic government has done little to eradicate the very factors which sparked the civil war. A recent report of Amnesty International (2011:208) revealed that:

Impunity for human rights violations committed since the end of the civil war remained a serious concern ... police officials, Special Security Service agents and Liberia National Police officers were allegedly engaged in or ordered beatings, looting, arbitrary arrests, abductions, shootings, ritualistic killings and other abuses.

Although there are uncouth soldiers within armies of developed countries such as the United States (Yardley, 2011; Murphy, 2011), examples of uncivil behaviour of African armies towards fellow civilians are numerous, and vary in magnitude

from one country to another, but with a common denominator: the dehumanization and objectification of unarmed fellow human beings.

During the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia, soldiers targeted civilians (Hoffman, 2004). In Central African Republic, troops killed civilians during hostilities (The Observer, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2007). In Côte d'Ivoire, before and after the 28 November 2010 presidential elections, the Ivorian soldiers were involved in widespread extortion, racketeering, killing of peaceful demonstrators, attacks on religious leaders and places of worship (Human Rights Watch, 2010; CNN Wire Staff, 2011a; Human Rights Watch, 2011a).

Nigeria's laudable intervention to bring about peace during the Liberian civil war (Yoroms, 1993) was not done without collateral sexual scandals (Okenwa, 2010; Nyam, 2010; Mugaga, 2010).⁸⁶ As Mugaga (2010) disclosed:

Over 250,000 children born by soldiers who served in the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) peace keeping force are still roaming the streets of Liberia. ... Some soldiers in the Nigerian contingent at ECOMOG had relationships with Liberian women during the war resulting in the birth of those children who thronged the Embassy every now and then to trace their biological fathers. ... There are 250,000 Nigerian children of ECOMOG soldiers. The children were born by Nigerian soldiers who went to Liberia during the war.

From the few aforementioned unfriendly and coarse attitudes of many African soldiers vis-à-vis their fellow civilians, it can be said that in many cases, the army-society relation is characterized by a reification of civilians by soldiers.

In countries infested with such unprofessional and uncouth armies, soldiers are generally perceived as thieves, robbers, rapists, murderers, racketeers, criminals and crooks. Young veterans voluntarily or forcefully inherited these asocial military attributes during their service within the ranks of these armies. This of

⁸⁶ See also <http://www.newdemocratnews.com/index.php/news/from-the-court/232-over-250000-ecomog-children-abandoned-here>

course makes it difficult for young veterans to blend in with their post-conflict damaged societies.

6.3 Contemporary guerrilla armies: Freedom fighters or predators?

Many African countries have known guerrilla campaigns in the past, and currently there are still guerrilla armies across the continent (Grundy, 1971; Clapham, 1998; International Crisis Group, 2009; International Crisis Group, 2011). But it seems there is a shift from the original *casus belli* (the act that justifies a war) of liberation campaigns, which affects the identity of warlords and their followers including child-soldiers. Four major forms of guerrilla campaigns have been identified in Africa, namely the “liberation insurgencies”, that is the anti-colonial insurgencies; the “separatist insurgencies”, that is insurgencies aiming at an autonomous status; the “reform insurgencies”, seeking radical national government; and the “warlord insurgencies”, seeking a change in leadership (Clapham, 1998:6-7).

The Liberian civil war could, to some extent, be categorized among Clapham’s (1998) last insurgencies typology. Charles Taylor, the leader of the very first faction (NPFL), which launched the attack against the troops of Samuel Doe, was himself trained in guerrilla warfare in Libya (Dennis, 2006; Claiborne, 2012; Bowcott, 2012). But its dehumanizing conduct casts serious doubt on this classification. As a matter of fact, some peace and conflict scholars considered such uncouth guerrilla armies as characterized by a “predatory warlordism” (Aning, 2005:3). Unfortunately, such negative labels were also foisted on former child-soldiers who fought within the warring factions of these predatory warlords, especially because of the roles child-soldiers played during the war (see Chapter One).

In Liberia, the two DDRR programmes were marred by irregularities such as insufficiency of funds, poor planning, and ongoing fighting, especially the first programme. Evidence is available that the ‘DD’ (Disarmament and

Demobilization) components were to a certain degree successful, while the 'RR' (Rehabilitation and Reintegration) components were not (Alusula, 2008).

It should be noted, in fact, that, on a macro level, DDRR programmes tend to have a positive impact on ex-fighters, but on an individual basis, these programmes hardly provide decent solutions to the challenges facing ex-fighters in war-affected countries.

Owing to weak institutional reforms characterized by corruption, comatose economies, and the lack of political will on the part of state authorities (Dennis, 2006; Jennings, 2008), the ownership of DDRR programmes as suggested by the international community resulted in a mirage. The direct consequence of such a state of affairs is a flood of NGOs which, in the majority, are insidious war-profiteering machineries, leading to confusing but profitable series of interventionism (Nazemroaya, 2011; Lendman, 2012; Teil, 2012). While some humanitarian organizations serve as partners in a disguised imperialist project (Nazemroaya & Teil, 2011), others through research repeatedly collect information from inhabitants for their evaluation and assessment without providing in many cases the corresponding aid, as it was the case in Sierra Leone (Zack-Williams, 2006). Even the United Nations are to be blamed at times for their unclear role in post-war recovery. Dallaire (2010:154) blatantly exposed the bad faith of the majority of these humanitarian organizations involved in the post-war recovery, with particular focus on the United Nations: "the UN can only push an agenda if it has buy-in from its member nations, and if child soldiers are not a priority for those nation states, funding and resources for DDR programmes can be hard to maintain". The import of Dallaire's assertion is that at times, concealed interests may channel humanitarianism that is, concern for human welfare. Peacebuilding programmes in Liberia were certainly affected by this.

Some young veterans echoed Dallaire's stance on these defective peacebuilding programmes, ranging from suffering to unfulfilled promises. A young veteran

stated that “the first time it was in suffering”⁸⁷ (Author’s interview with Fleur, 2010). Another interviewee pointed out that:

After a while, we got trapped. They said no money was in the programme. ... The bad aspect is that if someone tells you that they are going to help you they should go to further steps and do it. But in our case, they dropped the process of sponsoring us on the way. (Author’s interview with Jardin, 2010)

Other young veterans noticed the inexpedient nature of the DDRR vocational training programmes, and how this impinged on the perception people have of young veterans:

No means leading these ex-com ... or providing opportunities for them to use the skills they’ve acquired ... Some of these ex-com saw those two cases as an embarrassment ... A carpenter going round the town a whole day and could not even get a single contract as a means of survival. The following day, I will take the hammer and give it to somebody and ask him to give me something to eat ... at the end of the day all those tools were sold ... and they went back to square one ... some began to beg, some became armed robbers ... the way of life they knew before ... they decided to go back to it ... so you can see the reason why a lot of ex-com decided to go back ... so you find out that there is an increase in the criminal rate in Liberia, there is an increase in robbery, there is an increase in street beggars because these guys had nothing to exchange against the gun they had before for survival. (Author’s interview with Petit, 2010)

As revealed by Petit in the above interview excerpt, many young veterans completed inadequate and substandard vocational training. They have voluntarily or forcefully embraced humdrum jobs which, instead of helping them create a new and acceptable identity for themselves in the post-conflict society, have rather reinforced their vulnerability, and perpetuated their military identity. The deficient training they received did not in any way make them professionals, but constituted a palliative measure which unfortunately could not abate their plight.

⁸⁷The use of the expression ‘the first time’ in Fleur’s (2010) interview, is a clear indication that some young veterans underwent the DDRR process several times, and could remember that the first experience they had was a bad one. Such a statement clearly underscores the manoeuvring young veterans were involved in, but more importantly, the disorder and laxity that marred these programmes.

The shocking aspect of this vocational training is that many young veterans are trained in the same field, to sell their skills in a society relying on a devastated economy. These vocational training programmes designed to pave the way for social inclusion, therefore leading to a total reintegration, paradoxically embedded elements capable of fostering young veterans' social exclusion. To emerge from such chaotic conditions, individual young veterans' self-agency was required, and that is exactly what some young veterans did. It is clear that the DDRR process, owing to its unclear nature, means and end (Jennings, 2008; Jaye, 2009) did not adequately prepare some young veterans for a soft-landing in the post-war communities.

In a war-torn country where the international community has failed to help young veterans redeem their civilian status and dignity, not in term of simply handing in their weapons and uniforms for those who had, self-agency becomes the key element to be used by those who are willing to be accepted by receiving community members as civilians.

Some young veterans did not allow their asocial behaviour inherited from both state soldiers and guerrilla fighters to linger. They decided to cultivate habits that could guarantee their reintegration into post-conflict communities. How possible has this been? I try to answer this question in the next sections.

6.4 Gaining back our civilian identity, not to us but through and by us: The role of the technologies of the self, instrumental coalitions and self-agency

6.4.1 Building civilian identity through storytelling

In Liberia, there were young veterans who believed that they had gone through a transmogrification after they had voluntarily or forcefully abandoned their military career. They considered themselves as former fighters who have completely lost military attributes, and were known as civilians within the post-conflict communities where they were living. They perceived themselves as role-models: peace campaigners whom other disgruntled young veterans should

emulate and listen to. As one of these self-perceived successful young veterans disclosed during an interview session:

Most often, I try to make my life as role model for them. “You guys, there is still hope for you, you can still be transformed into the society” ... Well, I want to say that it has changed a lot, many place where I go when I tell people that “I am an ex-com” they say I am lying, people don’t believe that I fought the war except sometimes when I show them the marks, in fact, some say it is an accident mark ... you know the level of what we have done, even ex-coms themselves except when I begin to identify some of those traits that we share, before they accept I am an ex-com. When I speak some of the languages we used to speak, you know, that is when they will believe. (Author’s interview with Petit, 2010)

These *transformed* or *successful* young veterans enhanced their self-confidence whenever they shared their transformation experiences with former comrades, the defeatists who were sceptical about any possible change of their social identity. Not only did these defeatists fail to envisage any change of identity, but they were also sceptical about it, and therefore expressed a form of despair and resignation. They preferred to continue living according to jungle stereotypes. As a young veteran disclosed:

Once a soldier is always a soldier in his entire life. If he gets to the larger community it doesn’t mean that he has forgotten his training. He can perform any guerrilla tactic in that community to survive at the detriment of the community. (Author’s interview with Gracias, 2010)

Another young veteran supported this point:

One guy was telling them, that guy is an ex-com, the other one said “that is a lie,” because I was wearing a costume ... I peeped at him and I said, what they are telling you is not a lie ... and I told him I am an ex-com and he said he cannot believe it and I said you guys and I were once upon the time together, we used to do this and that we fought over rice; at times you even ordered to beat me, but today we are into another thing. (Author’s interview with Petit, 2010)

By repeatedly trying to tell their stories of change, the self-perceived successful young veterans played the role civilians were supposed to play in order to transform former fighters. As revealed in the second interview excerpt, the unrepentant young veterans, that is, the counselees, could not believe that the counsellors before them were once in the jungle. The successful ones, through

such interaction, were able to figure out their counselees' statements, and cleverly understood that one easy and honourable way of regaining their civilian status and dignity was to tell their change stories repeatedly. They used two key strategies. First, they banked on the community members' general reluctance to interact with war veterans. Secondly, they used their own ability to penetrate the world of former fighters, which civilians generally assumed to be a world of criminals. They understood better the life-world of their comrades (Wagner, 1973). Through these experience-sharing sessions, the successful young veterans affirmed their new status which they actually worked towards. The interplay between Goffman's (1969) presentation of the self and Mead's (1934) role taking might have contributed to this.

6.4.2 Building new identities through instrumental coalitions

After the disarmament and demobilization stages of the DDRR process, some young veterans realized that the process could not provide them with a sustainable solution to their plight. They viewed the whole process as a transient or episodic operation, which could not guarantee them survival or welfare in the long run, especially in a country ravaged by corruption, whose woes increased with the 14-year civil war. In their opinion, most of the humanitarian actions designed to end the plight of war-affected people seemed to have sidelined some sets of people, the *undesired* of the society, the *killers* (Jaye, 2009). Their inquisitiveness and technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988) provided them with new ways of facing the grim challenges of their society. Referring to the genesis of an organization young veterans formed, and which later metamorphosed into a full-blown NGO (Jaye, 2009), a young veteran revealed how they proactively strategized:

We knew that this organization will not live. Even if any other president took over, they will not give support to the national veterans' programme because all the support we got for veterans' assistance were actually from Charles Taylor, supplying rice, giving Christmas package. We thought it is wise that we cannot continue with the veterans' assistance programme, but we have to think of what can be done. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

Some young veterans realized that their plight had never really been taken to discussions during peacebuilding fora, conferences and workshops. This seemingly deliberate indifference and apathy of peacebuilders unwilling to espouse any suggestions related to their hidden pains, made young veterans develop an ad hoc *esprit de corps*, as a response to the marginalization, and therefore find creative and innovative ways to fend for themselves. As Gracias disclosed:

People were talking but we could not see anybody talking of veterans, because to be factual, we were very disgruntled at that time. Yeah! Veterans were disgruntled, they could ... sometimes, they could even clash with the police, and police cannot handle the situation. Yes! They were terrible. They could do anything, so a lot of people were actually afraid. And because we came from that background, we actually decided to take on that task. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

The self-agency of young veterans in their bid to lose the 'bêtes noires' label society has foisted on them, was expressed through their ability to form instrumental coalitions (Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2004). As mentioned earlier, having commonalities in values remains the overriding condition to be part of such coalitions. The post-conflict country being a fertile ground for antisocial behaviour, choosing to exhibit prosocial attitudes, becomes to a certain degree a self-imposed and personal decision. Members of these coalitions were former comrades who found themselves in almost the same situation and therefore decided to overcome their predicaments. For instance, some young veterans took a first step by forming an organization of veterans.

Young veterans understood that there was a need to engage in manful actions to survive. They were left with two options: (1) engage in activities which connote prosocial behaviour, which would likely draw them nearer to the society, or (2) develop antisocial attitudes which without doubt would foster their ungentlemanly military attributes despised by civilians, thus widening the gap between them and the society.

In their desperate bid to change their social identity, some young veterans had to prove to be tough-minded. They used a web of wartime relationships ranging from ties among comrades within the same warring factions, ties among young veterans from different warring factions who met on frontlines and became friends, and ties developed between young veterans and commanders on the basis of their prowess. As a young veteran disclosed:

I became famous anywhere I went. Anywhere I became a leader. People loved to be with me to the extent that I could see even soldiers leaving their units and coming to join my unit. ... in the warfare and from the peace building perspective, people also saw that I have that kind of talent of controlling larger groups. ... I am going to a frontline a lot of soldiers would want to go with me because I used to care for my men. When we came to the veteran regime, I also saw that there was a lot of favour because I had a little bit of IQ. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

Through these complex ties, some young veterans were able to map out plans to set up NGOs or associations. The following interview excerpts from some young veterans illustrate this ingenuity:

We were able to put ourselves together and we called that the National Assistance Veteran Programme and I became one of the leaders there ... So we quickly put our information together Rototo [real name withheld] and myself since we met at the training, we were also hospitalized together at Yekepa, so we became friends. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

Another young veteran, a pioneer of an NGO, stated that:

I was into the group of wounded soldiers ... called war veterans; they called themselves the war veterans and were supported by the then president Charles Taylor. He was giving rice for support so we all grouped there and then started. (Author's interview with Petit, 2010)

Through the instrumental coalitions, young veterans were able to set up an NGO which they ran successfully. They managed to move from the level of beneficiaries to attain various leadership positions. Of course, some of these leadership positions were as a result of jungle networks which young veterans cleverly used to achieve their goals. Their initial despicable and wretched post-war conditions and identities did not prevent them from emerging as peacemakers,

counsellors, managers and even as job providers. The following interview excerpts reveal their self-agency in charting a course to regain their civilian identity. Not only were they convinced that they were redeeming their civilian identity, but they also contributed to the reconciliation of post-war Liberian society:

People see a level of dignity in me today, because through the organization, we are self-employed, we write proposals out there ... and we go about implementation and through that process, we hire people both ex-combatants and non-combatants. So we bring them together so they can work together as a sign of bridging the gap between ex-com and non-ex-com, the community and those rejected by the community. The organization has impacted my life in a lot of ways; I have been to a lot of peace building trainings, reconciliation, human rights meetings on different levels. I even had the opportunity to travel to the US twice, South Africa where I attended inter-peace summit in 2004. I went to represent Liberia as a former child-soldier; I have been in Guinea, Ivory Coast for conferences. (Author's interview with Venunye, 2010)

Another young veteran supported this point:

The institution has made a great impact ... that some of us are being taken through a transition to another level into the society ... because of this, we think there are other ex-coms that we have trained and we think they should take over the institution now ... you know, so that we can transition to another level. But this institution has done much. (Author's interview with Petit, 2010)

Young veterans' agency was also exercised through studying, to the extent that it became difficult for their interlocutors to believe that they were once child-soldiers. As a young veteran explained: "that is actually the surprise of people who are into our way, especially my level of English and interaction, except anybody says this guy is a former fighter" (Author's interview with Venunye, 2010).

Determination was another key factor that helped young veterans to change their identities. For instance, a young veteran referring to like-minded comrades stated that, "those that are determined like me" (Author's interview with Frero, 2010), while another one said, "I want to make impact on the society, build institutions, encourage people to make a difference, keep on lecturing" (Author's interview

with Martine, 2010). The above-mentioned young veterans, namely Frero and Martine, built ‘active identities’ for themselves — what they wanted to become. Active identities are as a result of personal efforts, efforts which lead to a change of how an individual is perceived by others (Bradley, 1997).

Not only did young veterans decide to value peace in their post-war societies, but they indeed became part of the crusade for peace and reconstruction in their country. As an interviewee pointed out that:

Peace is also costly so we all need to build a spirit of peace ... in the absence of peace, you can never have development ... and you know we all went to war. We all contributed to the war, the destruction of lives and infrastructures, so there is need to work hard for peace and not wait for other people to do it for us. (Author’s interview with Venunye, 2010)

Young veterans were proud of their level of achievement within the society and believed that their lives have changed immensely. Based on the symbolic interactionist perspective, the *selves* of the young veterans have perceived that the *others*, that is, other civilians, have started to consider them as civilians and genuine community members. Such a self-perception fostered the desire to become more inclusive. I argue that the young veterans’ craving for new identities, their social inclusion and agency, are interrelated.

6.4.3 Prosocial behaviour, technologies of the self and identity change

Contrary to the disgruntled young veterans, the successful young veterans understood that they needed to develop prosocial behaviour patterns as a way of getting closer to other civilians in their respective receiving communities. My simple claim here is that, no matter the amount of sensitization done by the government, humanitarian agencies, and human rights bodies to ensure the acceptance of former child-soldiers into the society, without the latter’s agency to conform to societal norms, such acceptance will always be a mirage.

Owing to the general self-assertiveness noticed in the behaviour pattern of many former fighters, it is clear that self-agency and the Foucauldian technologies of the self have an important role to play in making this possible. Although, literature

reveals that social rejection leads to “decreased prosocial behavior”, the findings of this study have showed that young veterans displayed “prosocial behaviors,” that is, “a wide range of actions, such as sharing, helping, giving, and comforting” (Blackhart, Baumeister & Twenge, 2006:242). One easily conforms to ideals, expectations, values and other societal norms of the social group, when his/her self-regulation augments. This increase in self-regulatory and prosocial behaviour would enhance social acceptance from the group (Blackhart, et al., 2006). Accordingly, some young veterans who wanted to be accepted by the communities had to change their “persona to reflect the social audience” (James, as cited in Abrams & Hogg, 2004:147).

6.4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that the identities young veterans bear in the Liberian post-conflict communities are to a certain degree a replica of identities exhibited by soldiers of state regular armies, and recent guerrilla fighters dominated by predatory warlords.

Child-soldiers were associated with these uncouth soldiers and rebels, and together wreaked havoc during the war. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, it now becomes clear, took place within a deceptive and vaunted humanitarian intervention which has never been able to do appropriate groundwork to help young veterans redeem their civilian status and dignity, at least for those who were willing to change.

Most agencies mandated or auto-mandated to help in the post-war recovery have rather become insidious war-profiteering machineries. Giving back one’s weapon and uniform after the war, in the sociological understanding, does not mean a change of status or identity. In the case of the successful young veterans in Liberia discussed in this chapter, their self-agency expressed through the formation of instrumental coalitions, experience-sharing, and positive use of jungle ties, paved the way for a gradual identity shift from soldiers to civilians.

CHAPTER SEVEN

From cantonment sites to Santos Street⁸⁸: Not our fault but theirs

7.1 Introduction

In light of young veterans' stories, this chapter critically examines the DDRR process, and shows how flaws embedded in this process impinged on young veterans' reintegration into the post-conflict society. It particularly focuses on the vocational training schemes, trying to show whether the schemes actually contributed to abate or aggravate young veterans' plight; and how the perceptions — positive or negative — young veterans derived from these schemes shaped their decision-making processes. These perceptions pertain to the duration of the process and the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of the promises made to the young veterans in the cantonment sites where the demobilization took place. Consequently, the chapter attempts a discussion centred on young veterans' career orientation.

Young veterans diversely appraised their transition from military to civilian. The opinions they formed about the DDRR process could influence their way of life. For instance the young veterans who considered the DDRR process as a redemptive process, and their counterparts who regarded the process as the source of their woes, would react dissimilarly. The two groups may express agency but differently — social or antisocial agency. The chapter also highlights the influence of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the participation of some young veterans in the DDRR process, and ensuing consequences for peacebuilding processes.

⁸⁸Santos Street, like Johnson Street, is a place in Monrovia with a high concentration of loitering former fighters (both young people and adults).

7.2 From cantonment sites to Santos Street: They took our weapons but we were still mentally armed

Santos Street epitomizes areas within Monrovia where clusters of disquieting former fighters, both young and adult could be found in June 2010 when the data collection for this study was undertaken. Typical uncouth soldiers *manqué*⁸⁹ were numerous in that part of the city.

Although both adult and young war veterans could be found in Santos Street, reliable sources revealed that there were other slums and other streets littered with homeless and wretched former fighters. Santos Street was simply a distinctive and proverbial veterans-dominated zone within Monrovia. A young veteran put this into perspective:

If I take you to Santos Street, I don't need to tell you that this person is an ex-com; you see it and you will know. A lot of these guys got used to taking drugs which they were taking to be brave on the warfront ... and they continue to take drugs. Even all the negative impacts gained during the war are still in them today. Some of them don't have sleeping places. They go to the drug shop even if they don't have the money they share with their colleagues who get, that is the relationship. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

As the above interview excerpt reveals, after the disarmament and the demobilization stages (DD) of the DDRR process which took place in the cantonment site, young veterans found new assembly points together with adult veterans. Contrary to sedulous and clear-sighted young veterans whose lives have taken a new positive turn, scores of impenitent former fighters including commanders and young veterans, after disarmament and demobilization stages, were ironically completing the rehabilitation and reintegration (RR) stages of the process in the street. They had no fixed abode except areas like Santos Street where they shared their frustrations and drugs.

Santos Street represented for them a jungle-like setting in which they could feel a sense of camaraderie. This was a place where former fighters could use their war

⁸⁹ Soldiers *manqué* are former fighters within warring factions who hoped to follow a military career but failed to do so as a result of disarmament and demobilization.

nicknames and at times passwords.⁹⁰ Santos Street represented for them a place where they could find in-groups, that is instrumental coalitions and alliances to fit into (Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2004; Abraham, 2006). In such groups, the use of narcotics, heavy consumption of alcohol, and criminal behaviour were the norms. Instrumental coalitions among these supposedly eccentric war veterans were not haphazardly formed. They stemmed from uninspiring and skewed peace operations, typified by the DDRR process.

The DDRR process, on a macro level, seemed to have achieved most of its goals in paving the way for an agonizing and slow post-war reconstruction process. However, interviews with young veterans who went through the process revealed that there was a caveat to such quick glorification of peace operations. The humanitarian praise which lent credence to the presence of the international community including NGOs and sister agencies, seemingly overshadowed the deep cries of the beneficiaries.

The widely broadcast big success story of collecting weapons from former fighters usually overshadows other thorny issues which can easily cause post-war countries to relapse into war. Former fighters cleverly understood the war-profiteering business (Radio France Internationale, 2011b; UN News Centre, 2011a; Radio Okapi, 2011d; Lendman, 2012), and on occasion, decided to hide good guns and turn in junks. The intention was to keep some arms caches in the bush for possible military campaigns, especially in case the peace agreement collapsed.

The glorification of peace operations at the macro-level downplayed the effects of peace operations on individual young veterans on the micro-level. The reality is that most young veterans were physically disarmed but were still ‘mentally armed’. This gives credence to Malan’s (2000:44) emphasis on “mental disarmament”. A post-conflict society in such circumstances could be likened to military barracks with soldiers without uniforms. A physical disarmament process

⁹⁰‘Passwords’ were words or codes used by soldiers during the war to identify comrades.

without a genuine concern for mental disarmament is a humanitarian debacle. As Lama (in *Universal Responsibility in the Modern World*, 2008) put it:

Genuine, lasting world peace must be through inner peace. I sometimes call that 'inner disarmament' ... At the global level, we need external disarmament for genuine world peace. If there is first inner disarmament, there is a real possibility to achieve external disarmament, step by step.

Criminal behaviour displayed by disgruntled war veterans, were seminal acts capable of negating the very purpose of peace operations. In virtually all war-torn African countries, Comprehensive Peace Agreements (CPA) are typically signed amidst concealed and irreconcilable political and economic vested interests of the parties involved. In addition, the hasty manner in which the international community tends to implement most of the terms of these post-war agreements hardly helps war-affected countries to deal with the root causes of the wars, thus ensuring a complete healing of social wounds.

The persistent push for democratic elections in post-conflict zones, infested by corruption (Ajani, 2011) with the frequent co-optation of former warlords into government apparatuses (Jennings, 2008; BBC News, 2010), cannot guarantee genuine social stability. Accordingly, such sham elections are characterized by intermittent political violence and intimidation (BBC News, 2011b; Sirleaf, 2011b). In Africa, fundamentally flawed elections have plunged many countries into perennial crises. Little wonder, such elections are trailed by violence, military upheavals and barbaric armed conflicts (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2008; AP, 2011; Diallo & Callimachi, 2011; Wibisono, 2011; SAPA & Agence France-Presse, 2011a).

The process of disarmament and demobilization considered as a milestone in bringing peace back to the war-affected Liberia, apparently had negative impacts on some individual beneficiaries, particularly the young veterans, that is, the quasi-forgotten cohort of war veterans. Evidence is available that the latter's rehabilitation process has been marred by the political and economic considerations of donors (Jaye, 2009; Dallaire, 2010).

In a war-torn country where the international community has failed to help young veterans follow an appropriate civilian recovery trajectory, and thus redeem their war-stolen dignity, agency remains one key element to be considered. Instead of considering their distressing condition as a *fait accompli*, some young veterans deliberately decided to abandon their socially-perceived inhuman jungle attributes. Such deliberate decisions to change one's habits or attitude require Goffman's (1969) work on *the presentation of the self in everyday life*. According to Goffman (1969:3)⁹¹, when an individual presents him/herself before other people:

he may wish them [others] to think highly of him, or to think that he thinks highly of them, or to perceive how in fact he feels toward them, or to obtain no clear-cut impression; he may wish to ensure sufficient harmony so that the interaction can be sustained, or to defraud, get rid of, confuse, mislead, antagonize, or insult them.

The demobilisation stage of the DDRR process is supposedly the stage in which painstaking reorientation actions and measures are taken to offer young veterans adequate assistance on their way to recovering the lost dignity. Regrettably, its implementation was mediated by parameters which left many young veterans with covert regret and remorse for having gone through the process. Some young veterans considered the process as being too brief and insufficient. For instance, a young veteran stated: "yes, I went to spend three days in the cantonment site. After I have spent almost 20 years in war just to spend three days in cantonment site" (Author's interview with Martine, 2010). It seems the process suffered from a lack of clear sensitization. The implementing partners focused primarily on the logistical aspects which paradoxically have never proved efficient, and consequently failed to sensitize young veterans to their benefits vis-à-vis their reintegration into the society.

I contend that peace operations tend to focus on groups and not on individuals. The consequence is that the impact of such operations on individuals is given less attention, thus negating the very purpose of the operation, that of positively

⁹¹Masculine pronouns used in the above quotes are those of the authors. However it is worth mentioning that the pronouns 'he' and 'him' encompass the pronouns 'she' and 'her' respectively.

transforming individuals to contribute to the peace and stability of any group to which they belong. Of course such an approach to things is in the interest of the implementing organizations or agencies usually involved in a 'game of statistics' which determines their usefulness.

Iniquitous behaviour displayed by dissatisfied young veterans and which of course is inimical to the interests of post-war society, can to a certain extent be regarded as an epiphenomenon of their flawed transition from war to civilian life. The DDRR process which was meant to write off the inglorious chapter of their involvement in the war was rather more concerned with a mere collection of weapons, recreational activities and the gift of a token amount of money.

The essence of the operation itself has not been understood by some beneficiaries. It was supposed to be the starting point of a genuine transformation towards conforming to new societal norms. But it failed to do so, allowing for a simple transfer of the unrefined military mentality, acumen and mores into the society. The DDRR process of young veterans in Liberia, despite its outwardly laudable appearance, left scores of former child-soldiers self-demobilized (Williamson & Carter, 2005), and those officially demobilized with deep regrets. Amazingly, some young veterans were able to recover their self-worth through personal initiatives which need to be explored.

7.3 Turning in the guns is losing power, creating power

The experience of disarmament should be seen beyond the mere act of handing in the gun. It had a deep significance for young veterans. Some young veterans had mixed feelings during this exercise. Disarmament is incontestably the abandonment of a source of power and assertiveness. So there is an inner struggle that takes place at that time; a feeling which might inform post-war decision making.

The gun has a peculiar importance in the hand of its users, and one may arguably conclude that it is to a great extent, tied to the soldier's dignity and soul. As a

young veteran pointed out, “you know the thing they call gun, when you get it you just feel say you be president” (Author’s interview with Fleur, 2010). Thus the gun is viewed as a symbol of supremacy over others in a society. The symbolic meaning (Blumer, 1969) young veterans had of a gun was not that of those who were carrying out the disarmament exercise. The gun was perceived as a source of power and command. As a young veteran regrettably put it, “when I was leaving I felt bad. I knew that power has gone from me” (Author’s interview with Martine, 2010).

The guns young veterans wielded during the war were a source of power for them, not a simple tool to kill enemies in the battlefields. They could be used to compel innocent civilians to do what ordinarily they wouldn’t have done. In the context of armed conflict, a gun can be used to kill enemies, and to ensure one’s survival through looting and robbery. The soldier identifies with his/her weapon to the extent that losing it could be equivalent to jeopardizing one’s survival chances and security. A young veteran disclosed that, “you only feel safe when you have gun in your hand ... and without guns you could be killed any moment” (Author’s interview with Venunye, 2010). But it must also be noted that during the disarmament stage, some fighters who had battle fatigue turned in their weapons willingly. As Venunye further pointed out, “people willingly turned in their guns due to this war fatigue of 14 years of fighting without any achievement, no development, and no genuine security”. But other young veterans had mixed feelings at that point of leaving their guns. As one young veteran explained:

Once you are disarmed you could be witch hunted ... so they took a kind of defence. Some of them hid their guns, some of them changed locations some of them could not go through the official disarmament because of travel purposes, and some of them were wounded and were hospitalized ... so they decided to shy away from the entire disarmament. (Author’s interview with Venunye, 2010)

If to some young veterans turning in their gun symbolically represented an end to their power, others understood that the disarmament period was a transitional stage to exert a more dignified power in the post-conflict society. Through an interaction with their ‘selves’, they came to the realization that the gun was not

the only source of power, and that there was an alternative way of wielding power without necessarily holding a gun. Such an understanding assuaged all regrets related to the detachment from the gun.

The realization that there are better options and avenues to explore in society through which one can still wield power was the point of departure of a rewarding self-agency. As Martine (2010) noted, “but later on I realized that I was released totally, I realized that I was released and I said why ... seeing people now at my age now working ... seeing people working around me I feel bad” (Author’s interview with Martine, 2010).

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that some young veterans at the point of disarmament found themselves caught up in mixed feelings concerning a loss of power symbolized by their guns. However, an understanding of the existence of more dignified sources of power to be explored in post-conflict societies helped many to embrace the disarmament process.

But individual agency was needed to explore such alternative sources of power. Such understanding or realization of making better choices in life takes place within the individual through an ‘internal conversation’ (Archer, 2003). It can also be seen as a result of the individual’s ability to actively interpret objects surrounding him/her at the time when events occur, in this case the disarmament process. As Blumer (1969:2) argued, “human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them” or as Charon (2001:29-30) maintained, “things in situations are defined according to the use they have for us at the time”. Like other human beings, young veterans “can routinely, and even habitually, manipulate symbols and orient their own actions towards other objects” (Denzin, 1969:923).

7.4 The DDRR programme: The beautiful and ugly stories we know about it

7.4.1 DDRR process: Not an unceremonious undertaking

During protracted armed conflicts, the earnest desire to be freed from the vicious jungle life and combat fatigue may make young fighters consider the DDRR as a salutary process. In Liberia, some young veterans were involved in hostilities for almost 14 years, and others fought within at least three warring factions. The result was total exhaustion. The disarmament and demobilization stages of the DDRR process were not only perceived as a route to freedom from servitude, but also a timely disengagement from the jungle turpitudes, to recommence the civilian life the war stripped them of. Some interviewees exemplified this positive perception of the process. As a young veteran put it “In one way I was happy because I was tired with war. God helping me in 2003 we disarmed and got USD 300” (Author’s interview with Fleur, 2010).

The DDRR process helped to bridge, to a certain extent, the longstanding gap between the poor and the rich, especially with regard to some young veterans’ access to formal education. As presented in Chapter One, the Americo-Liberians had full economic, social, and political control over the country until Samuel Doe took power in 1980. But unfortunately, Doe’s military regime did not do much to end these structural inequalities (Mekenkamp, et al., 1999; Dennis, 2006). Access to education was one of the most affected areas of these structural differences. Concerning the pre-war situation of education in Liberia, a young veteran pointed out that:

If you actually study the history of Liberia you will find out that from that time up to the coup leadership was actually dominated by the Americo-Liberians and they were very few and the larger majority was actually like downplayed in one way or the other. And that was actually physically seen structure-wise down to institutions to the extent that if you were not an Americo-Liberian you could not even access some of the higher education institution in this country so when today people talk of Liberia being 85% illiterate, those are things that people structured in our own system so it never came about because it wanted to. People did not actually want to see the indigenes educated

in order to compete when it comes to leadership so we ourselves contributed to our own illiteracy problem and because of illiteracy too, a lot of things can happen. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

The pre-war educational gap between the Americo-Liberians and indigenous Liberians has been bridged to a certain degree through the DDRR programmes. Some young veterans from poor backgrounds who went through the process had access to formal education. Of course, this was not a compensation for their active participation in the civil war. They perceived it as a windfall. War made young veterans famous through the gains they were able to make at this turning point.

Young veterans can often be considered as grassroots war-profiteers as mentioned in Chapter Five. As one young veteran stressed, "For my own interpretation, the DDRR process was good for me. It helped us to go far in school. My parents can say today they have a child who is in high school. I am satisfied with that" (Author's interview with Enfant, 2010). Another young veteran supported this statement: "I usually tell my friends that if you want to go far in life, the medicine is going to school. So far, I can see myself in school today. I can say that my dreams are fulfilled" (Author's interview with Martine, 2010).

The above accounts of the young veterans suggest that without the DDRR process (and of course the war itself), it would have been difficult or even impossible for some young veterans to go school. The education they received, although not perfect owing to the shaky nature of post-war institutions, was an indirect product of their involvement in the war. The education gained through disarmament and demobilization was not perceived by young veterans as a panacea to the predicaments their belonging to warring factions foisted on them, but was rather perceived as an opportunity to bridge the pre-war gap that existed between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' (Mekenkamp, et al., 1999).

Acquiring a formal education can symbolically mean success in life for young war veterans. It was perceived as a pathway to a higher social status. It was seen as a

stepping stone to climbing the education ladder, which in the pre-war Liberian society, many youths were denied. Furthermore, “establishing lasting peace is the work of education”.⁹² Such a set change in social status as a result of the war has been noticed in other areas of young veterans’ lives. Young veterans did not consider education as being the only salutary aspect of the DDDR process, but in a broader perspective, “the process of DDDR carried on changed some people’s life. It changed some people’s mind. They had some training, people learned how to drive, people learned mechanic” (Author’s interview with Jardin, 2010).

Some young veterans, after they were disarmed and demobilized, had the opportunity to travel out of Liberia to represent their country on many occasions. They took part in conferences and workshops where issues related to children’s involvement in warfare were discussed. They had the opportunity to go to places where they probably could not have gone without the war. Without the war, their voices would never have been heard, even in Liberia let alone outside of the country. These multiple trips could be credited to the demobilization process. But it should be noted that the disarmament and demobilization process gained credence only after the fulfilment of young veterans’ dreams and ambitions.

Young veterans realized that the transitional stage of their journey from the jungle to post-war communities was more than necessary although not sufficient for their success after the war. The positive perception young veterans had of the disarmament and demobilization process informed their thinking and roles in the post-war societies. Astoundingly, their roles in society greatly contributed to the post-war reconstruction process, thus giving them an entirely different and positive identity in their various receiving communities, thereby rebutting previous opinions and theories regarding them as vacuous individuals or social misfits.

⁹²This quote is from Maria Montessori and is available at http://www.msmresources.org/montessori_newsletters.htm accessed on 25.05. 2012.

It is worth mentioning that such a positive perception of young veterans of the DDRR was not the only factor responsible for their transformation. Opportunities have always existed and war-affected countries are no exception. Such countries draw the attention of donors willing to succour the masses, and particularly the most vulnerable, including children, women and the aged (Nwolise, 2001).

Of course the swarm of humanitarian organizations and agencies is not without its negative consequences. The competition among these organizations which suffer from the lack of adequate coordination, despite the ‘multiple coordination meetings’, is an indication that they pursue at times, hidden agendas which may prove antithetical to their expressed mission or mandate. Despite all these defects impinging on the work of humanitarian organizations, assistance offered by the latter also focused on the youth, particularly with regard to their education.

It is one thing is to have available opportunities; it is another being able to take advantage of these. It can be argued that young veterans who emerged made use of their agency as there was no rigid structure orientating their long-term decisions. I also posit that the treasure troves the donor community constituted, required self-agency, human action or the stream of action (Charon, 2001) to tap the embedded resources. This could also be explained through an interactionist emancipatory point of view. Interactionists siding with the downtrodden people support the thesis that social reality should be conceived “from the vantage point of change and transformations which produce emancipatory ideals” (Denzin, 1992:2), and human beings are endowed with the capacity to “manipulate symbols and orient their own actions towards other objects” (Denzin, 1969:923). Although there is a success story behind the aforementioned process, some of its negative aspects as noticed by young veterans need to be highlighted.

7.4.2 Why leave cantonment sites for Santos Street?

The DDRR process on a macro-level seemed to have been eulogized nationally and internationally. Although as mentioned in the preceding section, some young

veterans owed their formal education to the process, others' opinions of the process revealed that the acclaimed success was a phantom success.

The truth is that there has never been a totally unflawed DDRR operation in African war-torn countries. The precipitant manner in which the international community, together with frail governmental institutions implement the terms of peace agreements, has never helped war-affected countries to deal with the root causes of the wars. It is therefore not surprising to witness the cyclical reoccurrence of armed conflicts and democratic elections in the same zones over decades.

Former fighters, including young veterans, easily and indirectly became victims of the very peace operations intended to abate their war-related plight. One unavoidable outcome was that individual former fighters found themselves at loggerheads with members of their post-war communities. The main objective of the demobilization process which consisted of breaking down the military identity and beginning the construction of a new civilian identity in the young veterans was not successful on an individual level, and this was reflected on the societal level. The existence of young veterans in areas with a high concentration of former combatants in Monrovia such as Santos Street and Johnson Street attests to this.

It seems the implementing partners failed to engage fighters in genuine confidence-building and explanation campaigns. Such a cursory analysis of the process is not an assessment of the DDRR programme, but a set of conclusions emanating from the stories of young veterans. As one young veteran stated:

The manner and fashion in which it took place left a lot of people out because where disarmament's original intention is to disarm people and take them through the process of cantonment related activities and then you go through real integration before you can rehabilitate or reintegrate. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

Young veterans denounced the inconsistencies embedded in the demobilization process, including the demobilization package they were given and some unfulfilled promises. A young veteran stated that: “I went to a school to start my education and I was benefiting. They even gave us some benefit like 30 USD first time, second time it start coming you know the Liberia something it was expired” (Author’s interview with Philemon, 2010).

The stories of young veterans in Liberia revealed that there has often been a discrepancy between promises made during the DDRR process and their fulfilment. Young veterans also realized that the process was marred by a mismanagement of funds. Referring to the reason why she stopped going to school, a female young veteran stated this: “the money was not given on time ... that is why I left” (Author’s interview with Flaviano, 2010).

Because of the lack of proper briefing prior to the disarmament and demobilization process, some young veterans gravitated to the cantonment site, not with the intention of undergoing a reorientation exercise in order to possibly overcome post-war challenges, but for pecuniary gains. A young veteran distinctly indicated: “I tell you, I felt happy but when we went there we only spent three days in the cantonment site. Even at the time I only needed the money, football game, someone lecture and you receive at the end of the day USD 150 ... but honestly, I just needed the money” (Martine, 2010).

Even if some young veterans regarded the DDRR process as a rewarding experience, for others it was a deceitful rendezvous where they were duped by the international community and their fellow citizens, who never came through with the promises they made when the former willingly and kindly accepted to lay down their guns and become civilians. To young veterans it was an expression of bad faith on the part of DDRR process to call it a cash-strapped program despite all the promises. As a matter of fact, unfulfilled promises are full of risks and can

easily impede the DDRR process (Colletta, et al., as cited in Fuhlrott, 2007), and Dallaire (2010:172) cautioned DDRR officials against such by pointing out that:

Ultimately, one of the biggest barriers to successful reintegration programmes is the danger of broken promises. When the gap between words and actions keeps growing, people start to doubt your intentions. When promises of support have been made, it is absolutely critical that they be kept in order to avoid problems associated with mistrust. It is crucial that all parties involved in post-conflict DDRR programmes understand that their primary function is to help foster trust.

Symbolically, to some young veterans the DDRR was simply a dubious undertaking. Such humanitarian and state circumvention eroded the young veterans' trust in the DDRR implementing partners, government officials and receiving communities, and consequentially paved the way for resentment with its attendant negative outcomes. Some young veterans, fed up with seeing their lives stuck in limbo, sought ways to limit their post-war quandary, and often found their dreams shattered.

7.5 The International Criminal Court: A deterrence machine or an impediment to peacebuilding?

The Rome Statute establishes a permanent International Criminal Court to try persons charged with committing war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. And in the case of an internal armed conflict such as the Liberian civil war, "conscripting or enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into armed forces or groups or using them to participate actively in hostilities" is considered a war crime (International Criminal Court, 2011:7).

There is evidence that during the Liberian civil war, children as young as six years old were used as child-soldiers in Liberia (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, 2009). But it seems that the ICC, besides its deterrent role, had a negative impact on the DDRR process especially the disarmament and demobilization component. I contend that by brandishing the ICC prosecution to deter warlords from enrolling children into their factions, the international community aimed at achieving two goals. First, the international community

sought to prevent or abate the child-soldiering phenomenon. Secondly, it sought to accelerate the release of child-soldiers already enrolled from armed forces or groups. Child-soldiers in Liberia fell under this second goal, that is, their exit from the ranks of warring factions. While such a humanitarian and legal measure is fundamental in preserving children from physical and psychological damages from the war, thus ensuring a better future for them, indirectly it appeared to have had far-reaching negative consequences on the beneficiaries.

First, it has allowed for numerous cases of self-demobilization of former child-soldiers who have infested post-war societies. Some statistical discrepancies attest to this. For instance, it was estimated that out of the 21,000 child-soldiers who needed demobilization (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2004; Singer, 2006; Jaye, 2009) only 8,771 boys and 2,511 girls have been officially demobilized (Williamson & Carter, 2005; Alusula, 2008). The whereabouts of the remaining unofficially demobilized child-soldiers are unknown. With the unrefined behaviour young veterans developed in the jungle, the likelihood that they coalesced into gangs and criminal syndicates is high. As a young veteran pointed out:

At that time former fighters [adult ex-combatants and young veterans] thought once you are disarmed you could be witch-hunted ... so they took a kind of defence. Some of them hid their guns, some of them changed locations ... After the disarmament the demobilization went on with the destruction of command structures, some of our colleagues regretted why they did not go through the DDR process because they began to hear the good news where some of our colleagues were given USD 300 ... some went through the formal education and some did vocational training ... for some who did not know the importance of education, they sold their daily allowance cards. (Author's interview with Venunye, 2010)

The element of fear pointed out by Venunye clearly suggests that the simple fear of the ICC might account for such self-demobilization. It is clear that there were some former fighters including young veterans who did not go through the DDRR process simply because of the fear that they might be arrested and prosecuted. What might not be clear was whether child-soldiers who self-demobilized did so

voluntarily or in connivance with their commanders. However, to a certain degree, there is evidence that some child-soldiers followed instructions from some of their commanders who knew the legal implications of the use of children in warfare. For instance, in September 2003, there were Liberian former child-soldiers living in refugee camps in Sierra Leone. Some of these former child-soldiers “looked only nine or ten years old, but when asked, none gave an age of less than 15” (IRIN, 2003c). The implication of such an attitude is that these former child-soldiers were possibly informed of the consequences of denouncing their commanders for using children under 15 during warfare. Besides, it can be argued that it was not easy for the former child-soldiers to reverse the uncritical loyalty they showed to their bosses over the years in the jungle; and probably, the meaning they had of the covenant they made with their commanders during their induction training might have overridden legal dynamics.

Secondly, this deterrence role played by the ICC has in my opinion plunged many young veterans into a ‘destiny crisis’. Before progressing in this line of thought, I want to make it clear that my argument here is neither meant to advocate a forceful enrolment of young veterans under-18s or older into the army, nor to propose a militarist agenda to authorities of war-affected countries. It is rather a position which should be given careful attention. My position should be seen as a viable recovery option for post-war societies.

I contend that skilful former child-soldiers could be utilized to form a trained army reserve instead of throwing them onto the streets where they unavoidably metamorphose into criminal syndicates. Of course I do not suggest that a military career should be considered as the only feasible solution after the DDRR failed to transform some of them. Some of the young veterans who could not further their formal education, or take up vocational training should be given an alternative which would be more profitable not only to them but also to their nation, that of a military career. It is simply my claim that the military skills they acquired during their service within the various warring factions could be formally channelled and

improved upon, thus making them good soldiers. Of course critics may advocate different arguments. For instance, the following question could be raised: how do you want society to accept child-soldiers who committed egregious crimes against innocent people to become state soldiers? The answer is, if the Liberian people accepted the co-optation of former warlords and war financiers (Jennings, 2008), accepting former child-soldiers into the army should not be problematic. For instance, Prince Y. Johnson was among the “most notorious perpetrators” but was finally elected senator (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, 2009:332), and has emerged as ‘kingmaker’ in the 2011 Liberian presidential election (Howden, 2011; Valdmanis, 2011). H.E Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Liberian president, was one of the financiers of Charles Taylor at the outset of the war (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, 2009:125). Although she was among war financiers who were debarred from holding public offices, she later became the first female African president (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, 2009:271). During the run-up to the 2011 presidential elections, Prince Y. Johnson decided to back the incumbent president (Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf) (Corey-Boulet & Binda, 2011; Campbell, 2011) for the following reason:

I have decided to join the Unity Party because the CDC [main opposition political party] officials have said that they will do everything to implement the TRC recommendations ... Because I do not want to go to the Hague (where the International Criminal Court is based) I prefer dealing with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf who is also indicted by the TRC. (SAPA & Agence France-Presse, 2011b)

General Butt Naked (also known as ‘the most evil man in the world’)⁹³ was another notorious warlord (Casey, 2010; Fernandes, 2010). The following account reveals the atrocities he committed during the war:

He and his boy soldiers would charge into battle naked apart from boots and machine guns. The initiation sacrifice that he carried out aged 11, was the first life he took out of the 20,000 deaths for which he now claims responsibility.... the man became known as one of the

⁹³General Butt Naked [real name: Joshua Milton Blahyi]. A church service he officiated after the war as a pastor can be accessed at <http://www.unfreemedia.com/africa/2010/01/general-killer-rapistbible-thumper-welcome-to-liberia.html>

most inhumane and ruthless guerrilla leaders in Africa's history. ... the former General Butt Naked confessed his past to Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 2008 ... His crimes included child sacrifice, cannibalism, the exploitation of child soldiers and trading blood diamonds for guns and cocaine, which he fed boy soldiers as young as nine.⁹⁴

From the above account, it is obvious that the International Criminal Court did not indict some former warlords. The former General Butt Naked's enjoyment of freedom and even the permission to pastor a church imply that the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission had the power to make Liberians forgive and accept war criminals; allowing former child-soldiers therefore to embrace a military career ought not to be met with any social resistance.

There is also evidence that some young veterans blatantly and overtly expressed the desire to become soldiers after the war. For instance, in an interview a 15-year-old child-soldier in the person of Kanaba (real name withheld), a battle-hardened killer within the LURD revealed to IRIN reporters the following: "I enjoyed fighting. I want to be soldier when war finished [*sic*]" (IRIN, 2003b).

Since the military genius in former child-soldiers was not detected or simply undermined by the Liberian government and its DDRR partners, those former-child-soldiers were later used in other wars in neighbouring Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child-soldiers (2008:212) disclosed that:

In the period June 2004 to June 2005 there was reportedly active recruitment of former combatants in Monrovia and in Bong and Nimba counties bordering Guinea for both pro- and anti-government groups in Guinea ... Many of the Liberian former combatants approached by recruiters had previously been recruited as children during the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia ... Former armed group commanders were reported to have said that child recruitment was unnecessary, given the number of experienced combatants – many of them former child soldiers – available. ... Scores, if not hundreds, of Liberian children who had been reunited with their families following their demobilization during the disarmament

⁹⁴Full details of this account can be accessed at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1333465/Liberias-General-Butt-Naked-The-evil-man-world.html>

process were reportedly re-recruited in Liberia between late 2004 and late 2005 to fight in Côte d'Ivoire, both for pro-government militias and for the opposition Forces armées [*sic*] des Forces nouvelles [*sic*] (FAFN).

I concur that the global conceptualization of childhood (Wells, 2009) could help to tackle many humanitarian issues related to children's protection, but I distance myself from such positions when such international legal standards remain unfairly unobserved by countries that supposedly are to set the pace. This raises another discussion pertaining to the definition of a child. Sociologically, a child should be defined according to cultural standards. Legal issues revolving around children's age remain confusing, and depending on their interests, countries choose whether to comply with these legal instruments or not.

For instance, in the United States of America, children as young as 14 years old are enrolled in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) (Ross, 2008). By federal law (10 USC, 510) the minimum age for enlistment in the United States Military is 17 (with parental consent) and 18 (without parental consent) (Powers, n.d.).⁹⁵ The minimum age for enlisting in the UK armed forces is 16. The UK is the only country in Europe which routinely recruits people aged under 18. Those who sign on when 16 or 17 years must serve until they are 22. Up to a third of new soldier recruits are aged under 18 years (Gee & Goodman, 2010; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2011; The Guardian, 2011; Defence Management, 2011). "Non-officer recruitment draws mostly on young people from 16 years of age living in disadvantaged communities, with many recruits joining as a last resort" (Gee, 2007:1). The recruitment of former child-soldiers into a military academy should be seen as a recovery strategy. Using legal standards to deter child-soldiering is understandable, but using legal instruments to induce child-soldiers' exit from warring factions without critically thinking of the aftermath, should be perceived as 'a crime against their destiny'.

⁹⁵See <http://www.goarmy.com/about/service-options/enlisted-soldiers-and-officers/enlisted-soldier.html>

Individual young veterans, for instance, who have a low self-esteem when they are among people other than their comrades (the military), and knowing that the individual's survival is tied to an in-group, may want to keep company with other young veterans to have a high self-esteem (Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2004).

7.6 The vocational training or education for all: Against or for young veterans

During the disarmament and demobilisation process in Liberia, the young veterans' career orientation interviews seemingly revolved around going to school, or learning a trade through a vocational training project. The vocational training:

...is part of the rehabilitation and reintegration phase of the ongoing DDRR program in the country. Participants will acquire basic skills for the establishment of income generating microenterprises, including carpentry and wood work, masonry, plumbing, metal works and welding, blocks and tiles production, blacksmithing, painting, and electrical installation. (UNMIL, 2004)

In the majority of African war-affected countries, skill acquisition through vocational training programmes is commonplace, and considered as one of the viable options to reintegrate former combatants and Liberia was no exception (UNMIL, 2004; Scott, 2007; International Rescue Committee, 2009; Gordon, Miyawaki, Rosbe, Scharf, Slagle, & Ziegler, 2010; Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, 2011). Consequently such countries are usually flooded with vocational training-focussed organizations and institutions, both local and international. According to the Liberian Executive Director of the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR), Dr. Moses Jarbo, the vocational training project was meant to "help ex-combatants earn their living through decent and peaceful means" (in UNMIL, 2004). Whether authorities ensured or not the fulfilment of this clearly spelt goal, remains a conundrum. If authorities quite often openly enjoy the encomium tied to the inception of such projects, the beneficiaries at times suffer from the negative consequences of such undertakings. Sub-standard apprenticeship from these programmes has left many with pains and regret.

The missing element, in my own analysis, is the lack of an holistic approach to the suggestion or choice of career for young veterans. The choice of a career, particularly in a war-ravaged country, should be painstakingly done because of its various aspects ranging from financial to social.

I concur with Vroom (1964:30) that people work because of “the money they are paid for working”. In the post-war context, the primary motive for people working is to earn a living. Giving young veterans such opportunities sounds good at the present moment, but in the long run such an approach to abating their plight may prove unethical. Work which provides food to young veterans but neglects the “attainment of acceptance and respect by others” in the society (Vroom, 1964:44) may become a problem to young veterans. Any career orientation programme they go through should take into consideration their war-inherited assertiveness.

Unfortunately, it appeared that these vocational training schemes were incongruously designed or implemented. They provided individual former fighters with sub-standard vocational skills which did not allow them to compete with pre-war professionals trained for a longer period of time. Such skill deficiencies aggravated young veterans’ vulnerability in many regards. As a young veteran put it:

There was no means leading these ex-coms, or providing opportunities for them to use the skills they’ve acquired. ... A carpenter going round the town a whole day and could not even get a contract as a means of survival. The following day, I will take the hammer and give it to somebody and ask him to give me something to eat. At the end of the day, all those tools were sold, and they went back to square one. Some began to beg, some became armed robbers. The way of life they knew before, they decided to go back to it. So you can see the reason why a lot of ex-coms decided to go back. (Author’s interview with Petit, 2010)

In the neighbouring Sierra Leone, a small number of urban-based former combatants, instead of seeking to compete with existing professional craftsmen by all means through the quasi-failed vocational training scheme, organized themselves to make their living by riding motorbikes as local taxi drivers (Peters, 2007). While such an initiative marks a success story, and shows how former

fighters can navigate and survive in the Sierra Leonean context, it cannot be considered as a panacea to the plight of ex-combatants including young veterans in other contexts such as Liberia.

In addition to difficulties related to the skill acquisition through vocational training schemes, young veterans (in this case not young children) had to sit down in classrooms with younger children. Fears that keeping former child-soldiers together might make them congregate and wreak havoc, might account for the lack of specific schools to cater for them. Even putting them with other younger children in classrooms was risky.

As a matter of fact, some young veterans were too disgruntled and assertive. For instance, a female social worker in a refugee camp in Sierra Leone hosting Liberian refugees gave the following account: “they [former child-soldiers] sometimes come to my house at night and demand food and sex saying that they know I am not a virgin and that in the bush they slept at will with women even better than me” (IRIN, 2003c). In an article entitled *Sierra Leone: Liberian child soldiers still make trouble without guns*, it was reported that “in mid-August (2003), a group of about 20 child soldiers organised a strike amongst the 7,000 people living in the camp (refugee camp) near the eastern town of Kenema to demand bigger food rations. They barred camp officials from entering the settlement until the police intervened” (IRIN, 2003c). Some humanitarian workers blatantly stated that:

They [former child-soldiers] are stigmatised a lot, having carried out grievous atrocities while in battle. They tend to feel bad and react accordingly ... Violence has become part of their lives. They find it extremely difficult to recognise authority since they had power over the civilian population in their previous lives. (IRIN, 2003c)

Allowing such unruly young veterans angered by “all sorts of unfulfilled expectations” (IRIN, 2003c) to stay in the same classrooms with younger pupils seems inconceivable. Although such experiences worked in some contexts, in others, it was an uphill endeavour for educators on the one hand, and for young

veterans themselves on the other hand. For instance, in classrooms some young veterans became the laughing stock for younger students and pupils who did not fight during the war. While with time palliative measures were taken to reduce this discrepancy in schools, the demobilized students felt the weight of discriminatory behaviour on the part of their classmates. A young veteran put this into perspective:

I disengaged [left the war] and went back to school. My friends saw me and they knew that I was involved in the war, I was already fighting ... in fact, in class, I was a laughing stock. Because of the determination I decided to go back to school and I graduated from the high school. (Author's interview with Petit, 2010)

I contend that despite its positive outcomes, the compliance of war-torn states with international legal standards paradoxically has a negative threefold impact. Firstly, it distorts young veterans' individual career dreams; secondly, it deprives the post-conflict nation of a host of its youth capable of serving in the army if given the opportunity; and thirdly, it regrettably infests the society with miscreants and assertive mendicants.

Most of the young veterans spent their time on the frontlines during hostilities, and made good fighters (Dallaire, 2010). Many developed, although not in a well-organized or professional manner, exceptional skilfulness in military tactics and operations. Just like adult fighters they laid ambushes, manned checkpoints and underwent tough induction training. Although some of them were forcefully recruited, the one career for which they were trained and through which they could have served their nation, was a military career. Paradoxically, the likely envisaged military career they commenced in the jungle was hamstrung by age-centred legal considerations.

The widespread and prevailing criminal syndicates in post-war countries and even in neighbouring countries although not always, are the result of a diversion of former fighters' ability to do something they have been prevented from doing

officially. It would have been fairer to hive off all the mature⁹⁶ young veterans who would like to continue with their military career and create a special military academy for them, instead of infesting fragile post-war communities with individuals whose lives could not fit into a society where they are forced to become what war did not prepare them for. Such a stance may raise the following questions: What of the economic implications? How do you transform soldiers who committed atrocities and who people don't trust into dependable soldiers? There is a need for rational choices or options. I argue that, it would be better to make out of mature young veterans professional soldiers. Definitely when they learn the values and ethos with which professional soldiers should identify, they would become refined soldiers and be more controlled.

The young veterans' integration into the army at the point of demobilization could be done with the help of reliable warring factions' commanders, who could attest to the military capacity of some of the former child-soldiers. For instance, at the outset of the second official DDRR process in Liberia, 48 generals from various warring factions were used for information dissemination campaigns in 2004 (United Nations Development Programme Liberia, 2004). Those generals could also be used to identify young veterans capable of serving in the newly formed state army. For such a selection process to be successful, it must be guided by measures guarding it against nepotism and cronyism.

It is obvious that some young veterans could not fit into any category of activities hastily imposed on them by the DDRR framework. Without proper follow-up, such young veterans may use the guerrilla tactics they developed in the jungle to survive. This may hamper the peacebuilding process (see the excerpt of author's interview with Gracias in section 6.4.1). And beyond direct war, some might volunteer to become martyrs within terrorist networks (Rader, 1975; Albert, 2005; Nwoli, 2005; Hughes, 2009).

⁹⁶By mature young veterans the author means young veterans who have exceeded 18 years or who do not develop any battle fatigue, and who are healthy enough to begin a military career.

The international community-backed DDRR process particularly in some African war-affected countries appears to have left military mentality undone. It always leaves post-conflict countries in a dilemma: it complies with international norms but craftily disregards social instability. One key question which merits attention is: What will society do with individuals involved in hostilities, and whose only career can be in the army but who have unfortunately been denied this opportunity?

7.7 Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter revealed that the DDRR process is multifariously perceived by young veterans. Various experiences led to various reactions and outcomes. The DDRR process was perceived by some young veterans as a successful process because their expectations at the point of turning in their guns, especially the dream of furthering their formal education, have been partially or completely fulfilled.

But there were young veterans who perceived the process as defective. For this second set of young veterans, the process, far from redeeming them from the war-induced predicaments, has rather compounded their woes. Their disappointment is unveiled through the way some young veterans expressed their grievances. These grievances encompass the non-fulfilment of promises made to young veterans during the demobilization stage of the process, and the inexpedient nature of the vocational training which left some young veterans with substandard training. I contend that keeping silent over such deficiencies which are considered sacrosanct within the humanitarian and international community would reflect concealed deliberate disregard for individuals and the larger post-conflict society.

For instance, young veterans' befuddlement in the post-war classrooms, where they were compelled to learn and play with younger counterparts should not be surprising. Some of these young veterans were so disgruntled that it became clear that forcing them to go to school might not have been the best solution. I contend that if school remains the only envisaged escape route, such education should be

done in a military context. In such a context, not only will they receive the formal education their counterparts are receiving, but their difficult behaviour can be dealt with. I argue that although in some contexts, non-military teachers can deal with the uncouth behaviour of former child-soldiers, in other contexts this can be futile.

The continual effort to transform former child-soldiers into upstanding citizens even when the war has moulded some of them into potential professional soldiers, has deepened their isolation from other citizens within post-war communities. I agree that the importance of education as a key to the development of an individual and the society cannot be overemphasized (Jeffrey, Jeffrey & Jeffrey, 2004; Chandola, Clarke, Morris & Blane, 2006; Glaeser, Ponzetto, & Shleifer, 2007). However, I do not subscribe to the blind assumption that all young veterans must go to school even if there are signs that they may not be successful in life through such formal education. There is empirical evidence that just like some street children, some former child-soldiers have become a danger for the whole society and could even bully other children in classrooms (Palitza, 2011). While success stories concerning the education of former child-soldiers abound, there is also evidence that some former child-soldiers are beyond redemption through education.

Ignoring young veterans' military prowess on the frontlines and undermining their usefulness in consciously building a post-conflict military academy, should be perceived as a strategic oversight with negative outcomes. The wealth of combat techniques some of these young veterans acquired could be improved through a more formal military academy. Such a military academy in my understanding may have the capacity to refine their objectionable behaviour.

Becoming part of the defence vanguard of their post-conflict nation could instil in young veterans a sense of national pride. But in the name of crime, the overstressed vulnerability, and the physical and psychological immaturity, some young veterans' promising future became a cynical mirage.

The skill acquisition schemes for some young veterans only compounded their vulnerability. In the space of a few months, many young veterans received substandard vocational training and thus were unable to compete with their regular professional counterparts, trained for three to four years, and who are masters in their vocations. This again raises a few questions on career choices during the demobilization stage of the process: was vocational training foisted upon young veterans? If they chose the vocational training, how voluntary was that choice? Are there mechanisms put in place by DDRR officials to genuinely assess the impact of this vocational training on individual young veterans? Interview excerpts clearly pointed to the fact that these skill acquisition programmes did not adequately prepare them to rise above their previous status. The programmes did not positively channel the agency of young veterans. It seems some of these young veterans were asked whether they would like to go to school or embrace vocational training, regardless of whether or not they were suited for academic work or skills. I contend that, allowing young veterans to make unchecked choices for their future, is conspiratorially contributing to the ruination of that very future.

Without proper preparation of young veterans to face post-conflict challenges, like-minded comrades may form criminal syndicates. Some of these young veterans may re-enlist or enrol in militias across the porous borders of West Africa where mercenaries are becoming important war commodities, hungry for war-allowances. A typical example was the active involvement of many former child-soldiers in fighting in Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008).

To a great extent, the interpretations and meanings young veterans gave to their interaction with both local and international actors involved in the DDRR process must have orientated some of their choices. Not only did such meanings offer young veterans an understanding of the politics surrounding humanitarian aid on both local and international levels, but also the flaws embedded in the process.

I also argued in this chapter that the usual hasty nature of peace operations geared towards organizing democratic elections with concealed political and economic agendas, especially in many African post-war countries, has been one of the principal causes of the noticeable discrepancy between projected humanitarian activities and the results. At times, armed militia leaders who continue to commit crimes against their fellow citizens are allowed to run for political offices (Human Rights Watch, 2011b). There seems to be a general disregard for eventual snags capable of delaying or impeding the reintegration of former fighters including young veterans.

The International Criminal Court which serves as a deterrence machinery, has indirectly contributed to the failure of some DDRR processes. The numerous cases of self-demobilization and some former child-soldiers' refusal to disclose their real age (in order to protect their bosses) attest to this. While the ICC intends to prevent child-soldiering, the consequence of its preventive mechanisms on the individual child-soldiers and the society cannot be overemphasized. This research is only seminal work on the controversial role of the ICC which further studies could examine.

CHAPTER EIGHT

From jungle ties to post-conflict social ties: Not for ‘chicken missions’⁹⁷ but for self-reliance and mutual help

8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the extent to which the ties amongst former fighters were indeed destroyed or maintained. It also tries to tease out the conditions and processes through which the social ties among former fighters were developed or maintained; the factors that informed or shaped these ties; the sources of strength of the ties; and the perceived influence of such social ties on the individual young veterans and the larger society.

One of the major goals of the demobilization stage of the DDRR process is to undo all the command structures and ties between former fighters. The overall objective of such an undertaking is to make any influx of throngs of former fighters, whether child-soldiers or adult fighters, impossible in post-conflict communities. One of the underlying reasons was that allowing the reproduction of jungle ties among former combatants in the post-war society was deemed risky, as it could constitute a menace to the shaky security situation. After 16 failed peace agreements (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, 2009), the country was resting upon a precarious hard-earned peace process which could be truncated if such ties maintained among former fighters were not extinguished. Besides, Liberia shares porous borders with other conflict-ridden countries including Côte d’Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Guinea Conakry. Tolerating internal networking among former fighters, socially perceived as criminals may promote a remobilization of war veterans, give rise to national and regional networks among

⁹⁷The term ‘chicken missions’ was used by a young veteran, and signified the series of ‘thefts’ he was involved in with his comrades (Ginker, 2004:26).

unemployed former fighters, thus setting the stage for strong gangs. And if adequate preventive measures were not taken, such ties might pave the way for new forms of warmongering which without doubt might make the country relapse into war.

At the outset of the peacebuilding process, hoping for the best and avoiding the worst was the top priority of both the post-war state authorities and the international community. Such a seemingly mechanic approach or line of reasoning by peace operations experts undermined key pillars upon which social life usually hinges. Actually, ties among individuals constitute the bedrock upon which relationships between members of communities are built, and the Liberian post-conflict society was no exception.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the DDRR framework was crafted in such a way that the destruction of all military ties could be an achievable goal. But this raises a question: To what extent could young veterans' reorientation in the cantonment site over a few days or weeks completely sever longstanding horizontal ties among young veterans, and vertical ties among young veterans and their commanders, especially in a post-war country already diseased by other ills?

8.2 Was the web of relationships among young veterans a reality?

Although there were no formal 'assembly points' for former fighters in Liberia after the war, war veterans still had strong ties with their former comrades and commanders. Such relationships took various forms, and were guided by many factors and conditions on various levels.

While there was geographical evidence of a high concentration of former fighters in general and young veterans in particular (e.g. Santos Street and Johnson Street), what drew young veterans to those overcrowded zones, and what they did through these ties, merit particular attention. These social ties between young veterans were expressed through their ideas, interests and shared values. Of course, the existence of such geographical concentration points of war veterans calls into

question the envisaged destruction of command structures and ties during demobilization. Apart from those more visible areas where clusters of former fighters could easily be found, some formed war veteran communities in slums almost geographically isolated from the rest of the population in Monrovia. As a young veteran put it:

In fact personally when you get in their midst [former fighters] ... they play those music that remind them about their time, reggae music, all those things that remind them of those days, just taking in their grass ... Oh my man! I remember the other attack ... Yeah my man! You make me think of that place now now. That is all they do, they smoke, drink, play music dance whole day from morning to night. They just sit in a place only discuss war, discuss their activities; that is all they discuss. My man yeah, they day it will come back again it will not be easy. I call them the forgotten community, the reason is because, society's attention is not on them, and people feel that DDRR process has gone, the war is finished and our lives are going on normally, so people don't really care about those who fought the war where they are gone. What is their source of survival now? How are their lives doing? People don't really care, society doesn't give them attention. So because of that, they are moved into concentrated communities, you will find now that they are not integrated into the larger society. (Author's interview with Petit, 2010)

From the above, it is clear that the overstressed destruction of command structures and ties was not effective. Referring to this destruction, a young veteran stated that "it is destroyed [probably on paper] but we still have some relationships which are still on ground" (Author's interview with Jardin, 2010). Referring particularly to Charles Taylor, a young veteran mentioned that, "his original faction that was disarmed was still structured" (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010). These ties were actively maintained for many reasons. Actually, the ties were developed and maintained in some cases for almost 14 years (as a reminder Liberia did not actually experience interwar years as armed groups and forces were still in possession of their guns). Some of these ties were built on covenants and pacts which could not be easily undone *in toto* during the few days (three to five days) in the cantonment site. As a matter of fact, some ties became stronger after the cantonment site rendezvous. Ties, just like instrumental coalitions and

alliances, do not erode easily simply because members had shared values developed in the jungle which transcended mere verbal counselling sessions.

The platoons, companies or battalions young veterans belonged to during the war were in-groups within which members defended prosocial and antisocial values. Within these jungle in-groups, fighters had “a common identity, at least some feeling of unity, certain common goals and shared norms, and fairly high levels of interaction” (Abraham, 2006:96). Making young veterans lose their military identity by collecting their AK-47s and military uniforms could not in any case imply a severance of the military relationships built over the years in the jungle. In fact, Dallaire (2010:154) pointedly revealed that child-soldiers “may have better access to food and medicine inside their armed groups than they will have after they’ve been repatriated to their home communities, and both the children and the people who attempt to demobilize them know that”. The import of Dallaire’s assertion is that if after demobilization young veterans’ families or foster carers could not provide them with better living conditions, the tendency would be to re-join their jungle comrades or commanders. Also, it is worth mentioning here that the military *esprit de corps* (brotherhood or sisterhood) is a strong ethos every soldier identifies with (Janowitz, 1960). A few days of reorientation in the cantonment site in my opinion cannot put an end to such an intractable ethos which actually forms the basis of their ties.

8.3 Staying in touch with comrades, not a mere choice but a necessity and a safeguard

Young veterans developed or maintained ties with their comrades for various motives including mutual assistance in the midst of the poverty-stricken post-war society, education, jobs, money, psychological support, counselling, reminiscence and the sharing of experience.

8.3.1 Our camaraderie beyond wartime for mutual help and prosocial behaviour

After 14 years of civil war, Liberia was left in almost total ruin on all levels. All sectors including the economy, education and health were wrecked by the war, and virtually all state institutions were dysfunctional. Like other war-torn countries, the reconstruction was a Herculean task, with heavy dependency on foreign aid (Sirleaf, 2011a). An almost impossible performance was required from workers in both the public and private sector in order to raise the country from its ruined state. Unfortunately, the rampant corruption coupled with the lack of rule of law has compounded the woes of Liberian people. Young veterans found themselves in an extremely shattered society with scores of broken families. The USD 300 young veterans were partially or fully given at the point of demobilization could not eradicate their lingering misery. As a matter of fact, this reinsertion package usually constituted another source of conflict between former fighters and members of their families and communities, especially in the case of young veterans (Dallaire, 2010) (see Chapter Two).

In the midst of such post-war gloom, young veterans had to rely on the ties they built during or immediately after the war. Owing to the fact that many young veterans, “feel [felt] so marginalized to the extent that they don’t [didn’t] trust the society” (Author’s interview with Petit, 2010), some had to depend largely on their jungle camaraderie to ensure their livelihood. In the face of continual marginalization and stigmatization, spirited young veterans relied on instrumental coalitions and alliances (Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2004). In these groups, young veterans usually agreed on a spectrum of interests and mutual help.

The brotherhood and sisterhood attitude still worked in them, and just as a former fighter could not see his/her fellow soldier wounded and leave him/her in the battlefield, young veterans showed concern for their comrades in the post-war society. Such relationships among young veterans certainly had a symbolic meaning. The meeting of two young veterans might constitute a source of joy. It meant meeting a sister or a brother with whom one shared food together, or

escaped death on the frontline. That same meeting might mean a source of worry to outsiders who perceived former fighters as criminals. Through such direct understanding and mutual compassion, young veterans who had specific skills were ready and willing to help others. Elements embedded in such mutual help were proposal writing, training and business ideas to mention a few. As a young veteran pointed out:

I can say we have a kind of relationship. Presently, some of the special forces who are still in this town, they come to me when they want to write letters to people, I do that for them, they come to me when they want to design proposals and I do it for them free of charge because we have related before in the past and that relationship is not yet broken. Even from that scene, I can also tell you that in most instance, in the command structure is still in place. Yes! Because people depend on each other and one good identity that I saw is that when the former fighters find themselves in a community, even if they are five, they feel very lively. They talk about their wartime experience, so they feel more guarantee when they are in the midst of their comrades. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

Some young veterans maintained strong ties with former commanders for financial assistance. Referring to his former commander, a young veteran stated that:

He is schooling in Ghana doing economics ... He was assisting me and at times I go to his house. The last time I needed my school fees I went to him, and he asked me how much was it and I said about LD 3500 and he gave me USD 60 to go and pay. (Author's interview with Jardin, 2010)

Another young veteran, referring to a late comrade, similarly revealed that:

There was one former fellow called Ejollo [real name withheld]. He is dead now. If I had problem and I went to him he was ready to help. Unfortunately for me, he is no more alive ... At times you can go and introduce yourself and the person may help you. Ejollo was the only good person at that time I remember. (Author's interview with Philemon, 2010)

8.3.2 Ties for counselling purposes

In the face of the far-flung post-conflict wretchedness which characterized their society, some young veterans chose to depend on informal channels in order to survive. They related with friends and acquaintances from the war, especially

those they deemed approachable and who were willing to offer solutions to their problems. Some commanders, who during the war served as mentors, were now playing the role of counsellors. Their roles as military instructors metamorphosed into that of counsellors. Such relationships could also be interpreted as a continuation of the jungle surrogacy. This became imperative in situations whereby young veterans could not find their biological parents after the war, were not willing to return to their families, or simply decided to relocate.

Beyond these reasons, the earnest desire of some young veterans to continue enjoying that spirit of camaraderie which reigned during the war led them to maintain former ties. The stronger the stigmatization became, the stronger the ties grew. The counsel young veterans received from their former comrades or commanders varied. Some commanders became peace campaigners and have helped many refractory and intransigent young veterans to deal with their antisocial behaviour.

The war was over and the relationship between comrades, to a great extent, was based on solidarity and truth. Some commanders disclosed that at times during the war, child-soldiers were fooled and easily recruited. Such commanders came out of their egomania and encouraged former followers to resist any form of countercultural suggestions. Such ties among former fighters were made strong simply because they were based on trust among counsellors and counselees, and were devoid of any form of gullibility. Referring to his relationship with his former commander, a young veteran stated that:

He is the main man. He gives me advice. ... Any job you see now do it! Don't let anybody fool you. Fighting in the bush, no! Don't do it again. We were small; they forced us to do it. So do not let anyone to fool you today ... We were small we knew nothing good for ourselves. (Author's interview with Amour, 2010)

Such counselling sessions were optional, voluntary and most of the time unplanned. Disgruntled young veterans hardly accepted taking part in such counselling sessions. As a young veteran pointed out, "... at times we try to talk to them for those who want to listen" (Author's interview with Martine,

2010). Not only did these ties take the form of advice and experience sharing, but they also constituted an expression of power differentials among young veterans, whereby some young veterans considered themselves as pace-setters, to be emulated by others.

8.3.3 Ties even for unglamorous jobs

In their effort to find the means of livelihood, solidarity among young veterans and commanders was reinforced. Ties allowed for the discovery of former fighters or comrades who could help one solve his/her livelihood ordeal. One of the benefits of networks among former fighters was to help each other get clean jobs. Given that Liberia was in a phase of reconstruction, young veterans had the opportunity to serve as labourers, and it was often possible to get these jobs through ties with friends and acquaintances that had knowledge and were willing to share such opportunities.

Some former commanders used certain young veterans as labourers to perform manual jobs in the post-war period. In stark contrast to what took place during the war, a situation whereby warlords and their immediate top ranking subordinates could impose any job on child-soldiers, the post-war realities compelled some young veterans to look for jobs to survive. But the thinking in the war veterans' circle at that time was that, regardless of the nature of the job, survival should supersede any element of honour. Again, such individual decisions were engineered by the technologies of the self. Individual young veterans in this case, weighed all available options to ensure their survival, and oriented their *self* towards particular choices (Foucault, 1988). Such behaviour can also be understood through Dewey's "circularity of interaction between the individual and the social group" (Meltzer, et al., 1975:43).

The Liberian post-war environment required the individual's agency to survive. Individual young veterans wanted to influence their immediate environment by working. At the same time, the environment was not that favourable for such intended success. What contributed greatly to the emergence of some young

veterans was their self-agency (Dumka, et al., 1996). Job opportunities may have been available, but young veterans who felt that others considered them to be vulnerable, could not take advantage of such opportunities.

Young veterans who accepted some of these menial jobs were those who understood that no matter what their previous rank in the army, life outside warring factions required a reorientation, individual effort, humility, and agency for survival. As a result, some young veterans were still attached to their former jungle bosses to access jobs. The principal aim in accepting such lowly jobs was to stem the tide of joblessness and suffering, specifically hunger (IRIN, 2009; Bread for the World Institute, 2010). Hunger was so severe that “people are [were] hunting dogs for food” (Vick, 2003). Relationships were therefore useful means to get work. As a young veteran indicated, “In this country, you need contacts to be able to make it” (Author’s interview with Philemon, 2010). With the unspoken marginalization which usually prevails in post-conflict countries, especially vis-à-vis former combatants, instrumental coalitions and alliances (Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2004) were needed among former fighters in order to create means of livelihood.

For most of the young veterans, life in the post-conflict society is a continuum of jungle friendships and ties. This is in sharp contrast with what the DDRR process proponents tend to make people believe. Actually, young veterans did not necessarily become enemies after disarmament and demobilization. They jealously and consciously maintained most of the good ties, and even the bad ones which could profit them, that is, the ones through which they could meet their needs. Even young veterans who fought within enemy warring factions could easily relate to and help each other. The ties were maintained not only among young veterans of the same warring faction, but across young veterans of various factions. During the Liberian civil war, there were child-soldiers who fought within more than one warring faction. Some child-soldiers fought against their former comrades who became their friends in the post-war era. So what drew young veterans together was not the fact that they were once soldiers within the

same warring faction, but their consciousness of belonging to the ‘broader body of war veterans’. Such wider membership awareness was smartly used by young veterans on various levels to survive. Some of these ties were actually built upon relationships already developed during the war. A young veteran confirmed this:

He [former commander] is not here now. He is in Gbarnga [a town in Liberia] now. In 2007, I was here, he came, he took me, he said oh! You know what happened, I got a job — let’s go and work. So we went to Lofa side and last year, I came back ... So later, I was involved in construction work with him to earn money. (Author’s interview with Amour, 2010)

Another young veteran shared a similar experience: “like my commander, presently, he works with Public Works and is called Roboto [real name withheld]. Last time he called me, and I went for a contract for two weeks and I got paid USD50. Each time he gets contract, he gets in contact with me” (Author’s interview with Fleur, 2010).

During the war, soldiers from other warring factions were perceived as enemies. The military brotherhood at that time was grounded on belonging to the same armed group or forces. In the post-war society, things have taken a new turn. Young veterans perceived themselves as being part of a broader vulnerable group: the downtrodden people who needed mutual assistance to survive. The active formation of in-groups became imperative. Remaining aloof from other former fighters may not be a rewarding experience to the individual. The decision-making processes of young veterans were definitely influenced by the understanding they had of their life-world. Their everyday experiences through interactional situations within their social environment must have informed their line of thoughts and their choices (Wagner, 1973). A war-torn country should be considered as a place where challenges coalesce to orientate individual decisions and choices. Such challenges can, to a great extent, be overcome through a strong exercise of self-agency rarely stressed in the literature.

8.3.4 Together we lecture⁹⁸, but deep within we know we are different

There is a caveat to the perception that ties among young veterans and former commanders are meant for mutual help. The self-perceived level of transformation of young veterans affects such relationships. Discussions with former fighters revealed that there were two categories of young veterans. The first category comprised the self-perceived transformed young veterans, who consciously developed prosocial behaviour patterns by constructing active identities (Bradley, 1997). The second category comprised young veterans who displayed asocial behaviour patterns. In the first category, young veterans perceived themselves as sociable, but considered as inferior their counterparts in the second category who needed help such as counselling and financial assistance. This categorization made by young veterans themselves is an expression of their agency to distinguish prosocial attitudes from obnoxious behaviour. Of course, such a distinction may have a bearing on the strength or weakness of the ties. Concretely, how did the self-perceived sociable young veterans relate with the perceived asocial young veterans? Elements embedded in the following interview excerpts disclose how those differential relationships played out: “at times I call some of them to lecture” (Author’s interview with Fleur, 2010); “many times we speak to them ... now we are thinking of the future but at times we may say some things and laugh over old things” (Author’s interview with Philemon, 2010); and “I sit down with them. We discuss, lecturing not to go back to the street again. Don’t let someone fool you again ... if anyone tells you say take gun go fight don’t do it again. We advise ourselves” (Author’s interview with Amour, 2010). The pronoun ‘them’ is used almost in the same way in the first two interview excerpts, but differently in the third. In the first two excerpts, the interviewees tended to consider themselves as superior to their interlocutors, and this is shown in expressions such as ‘we speak to them’ or ‘I call some of them to lecture’. In the third interview excerpt, the interviewee sat with his/her interlocutors and discussed with them. This last scenario connotes friendliness and the attempt to conscientize comrades who have

⁹⁸To ‘lecture’ in the Liberian context popularly means to admonish, to advise, to reprimand or to share experience.

deviated from social values and norms. Such an effort to help directionless comrades conform to social norms can also be regarded as an expression of self-agency. Some of these improvised counselling sessions represent young veterans' active participation in the local or national efforts to eradicate some societal war-induced ills. Such counselling sessions also unearth the power relations among young veterans, an area which I develop further in Chapter Nine. They further unveil the self-confidence some young veterans had, and reveal how they expressed their superiority in terms of knowledge and experience.

8.3.5 The guns were taken, not our jungle camaraderie and brotherhood

During the war, child-soldiers served in various capacities. They played logistics support roles, had combat functions and intelligence duties (Dallaire, 2010). In most cases they did not perform those duties in isolation but usually together with other comrades. Through the collective performance of their roles, they formed sub-groups within which they developed strong ties. The group life must have made them develop a sense of self-categorization characterised by the 'we feeling' which a few days of recreational activities in the cantonment site could not extinguish (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). A simple recollection of some of the experiences young veterans shared may revitalize their ties. I strongly argue that such ties could not be easily undone during demobilisation. As a young veteran pointed out:

I had a very good relationship with all my subordinates ... At times, I call some of them to lecture say "brother, those days it was because of conditions some of us used to do that ... Try and desist from all those habits." And on Sundays in my yard all my friends come and visit me. At times, I visit some of my friends. We still have very good relationship. The good relationships we had during the war, is still building on. (Author's interview with Fleur, 2010)

The friendships this young veteran was involved in at the time of the interview were actually friendships that commenced in the jungle. He could maintain these friendships since they were positive in his own understanding. It can therefore be argued that ties that could profit young veterans were the ones they preserved the most. As two young veterans revealed:

So people know us that we might not even know because the factions were many, the fighters were many, the units were many, you definitely know people depending on the frontline you fought. People you interacted with, they will remember you because of your performance, how brave you were, and the kind of protection you had provided for others on the frontline. That is what keeps the chain ... And when it comes to the rebel line, there is still a form of chain ... So we interact with many of them whether they came for our training or not and that is a form of chain. As long as this guy can come to you with his problem and you solve it; and someone needs him, you call him and he comes over, there is a kind of relationship. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

I also had some friends from the war, former combatants, so we sit together as former combatants; we discuss the issue, the former issue about the war. We discuss church matters; with my family, we discuss family matters. That has been the kind of interaction. (Author's interview with Venunye, 2010)

Ties, at times, had peculiar hallmarks. For instance, some young veterans were relating with other veterans, pursuing almost the same goal. Commanders, who were in the construction business could easily relate with young veterans interested in construction jobs. Such young veterans could be used as labourers by their former commanders. Similarly, young veterans who were studying could easily approach some of their former commanders involved in activities related to formal education. It can be argued that the formation of ties between young veterans and their commanders, beyond any other consideration, is interest-oriented.

8.3.6 Ties on the basis of roles played after the war

While some of the ties between young veterans date back to the wartime, others were developed during the post-war period. Some young veterans saw some of their counterparts actively involved in peacebuilding activities. Some were used as counsellors in the cantonment sites during the demobilization, and even emerged as trainers who trained other young veterans to become counsellors. A chain of peacebuilders solely made up of young veterans was gradually formed.

Considered as a social nuisance during and immediately after the war, young veterans ensured their transmogrification through initiatives hinging upon their technologies of the self and self-agency. Such positive perception of young veterans calls into question previous positions which tended to solely consider young veterans as social misfits whether they were resilient or not. So, right from the demobilization period, new ties were built among comrades, even among those who served in different factions during the war. Enemies on the battlefronts erratically became friends during and after demobilization. Giving his own example, a young veteran disclosed the following: “because we work with the ex-combatants, they know us. We have trained a lot of them. A lot of them passed through our work during cantonment. Those pieces of advice we gave them are making them very successful” (Gracias, 2010).

8.3.7 The forgotten community of young veterans: An underworld?

Former fighters considered by both their counterparts and other community members as intransigent, through their ties detached themselves from the rest of society. While such seclusion strengthened the ties among young veterans, it became a threat to the rest of the society. The clustering of young veterans may make or mar the stability of the society depending on the individual veterans making up such in-groups. The general societal perception of young veterans was that they were social misfits. If the various groupings of young veterans were made up of disruptive former fighters, there would be an increase in antisocial behaviour such as criminality, hooliganism and robbery to mention a few.

The reality is that members of instrumental coalitions possess and defend in unison common goals and values. If the values they defend are antisocial, they will display antisocial behaviour which will be detrimental to the communities they live in. This unfortunately may result in conflict between these *forgotten communities* and the larger society. Such conflict may take the form of clashes among youths and security forces. They would simply act as ‘men of the underworld’. Referring to these secluded communities of war veterans, a young

veteran stated that “they are only waiting for a one day opportunity, they are living in regret, there are a lot of communities they live in, they are concentrated” (Author’s interview with Petit, 2010). Such ties among war veterans who wielded guns can be considered a ticking bomb. Unfortunately social ills related to such clustering of uncouth war veterans may spread across generations. As a worried Petit further indicated:

What are they telling their children? What messages are they giving to their children? ... These are forgotten communities growing up with a different mind that people are not concerned about. That is why for me some day, I say that is my focus, what are the messages they are transmitting to their children? What are the messages they are transmitting to their wives? Even their family members that are depending on them ... when the community gets wider and the society does not accept it one day, there must be a reprisal. (Author’s interview with Petit, 2010)

8.4 Conclusion

The stories of the young veterans revealed in this chapter, suggest that the acclaimed destruction of command structures and ties among young veterans and their comrades, as envisioned by DDRR officials, was not absolute. Evidence is available that some of these ties have been destroyed. Others were reinforced, while new ones were developed. Ties that were maintained especially between young veterans and their former commanders were a continuation of the jungle loyalty to the warlords and also the pre-war patrimonial clientelism. They were simply an expression of the interplay of some ‘push and pull factors’ which initially set the stage for child-soldiering as a phenomenon.

Ties were maintained or developed for mutual or unidirectional help. Ties served as platforms for counselling among peers, as a prolongation of jungle camaraderie. In this chapter, I argued that ties are not easily destroyed and a few days of reorientation during demobilization could not sever such webs of relationships upon which social life hinges. What is important is how to uncover

individuals' self-agency through such ties and how to channel these ties in order to create a stable society.

It is clear that ties among young veterans, as presented in this chapter, were positively utilised for mutual help, contributing towards peace, social cohesion and national stability. It would therefore be a grave mistake to assume that such ties which began in the jungle were destroyed during the demobilization process. They exist and can either be used negatively or positively by young veterans. Policy makers are therefore enjoined to take into consideration the existence of these networks while designing post-conflict programmes and their importance in the stability of war-affected societies.

Many young veterans had very impressive initiatives in the field of business, education and other domains. This partly was made possible because of their willingness to relate to their comrades. War veterans exist in various countries in associations to defend their interests. The existence of such groups can be a source of menace to war affected countries if the behaviour of the members is not channelled towards positive and nation-building goals. Disgruntled young veterans can be used as thugs by senseless and greedy politicians and warmongers to destabilize the internal peace process, or serve as mercenaries, if care is not taken.

CHAPTER NINE

Boys and girls in the bush, bosses in the post-war society: When self-agency alters power relations among war veterans

9.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the diversity and dynamic nature of power relations between former child-soldiers and their former bosses in the post-conflict society. During armed conflicts, it is generally assumed that the most vulnerable people are children, women and the aged and that they bear the brunt of the war (Nwolise, 2001; Carpenter, 2005). But it seems child-soldiers suffer most as they are psychologically injured from both having been separated from their families and from being exposed to gruesome treatment. Liberia was no exception. Many young veterans received degrading treatment within the warring factions and as a result, suffered negative consequences (Human Rights Watch, 1994; Human Rights Watch, 2004). They were subjected to appalling dehumanization. They came out of the war with psychological and physical scars.

Some of the former girl-fighters continually nurtured an inner pain often aggravated by the mere presence of a rape-induced child (Dallaire, 2010). Other young veterans, as a result of their jungle-inherited assertiveness, were unwilling to submit to authorities in their communities. Consequently, it was assumed that many young veterans were in dissonance with members of their immediate families and the larger society. In fact, young veterans were generally regarded as war casualties, unhinged by war. These negative attributes and labels combine to depict young veterans as shiftless and dispirited human beings or simply as social nuisances. In addition, owing to the widespread poverty and corruption which characterize war-affected countries, one could conclude that the pre-war patron-client relationship which existed between child-soldiers and their commanders would be reproduced in the post-conflict situation, a situation whereby young

veterans might continue to depend on their former bosses. This chapter examines how power relations played out between young veterans and their jungle commanders in the post-war society. It specifically seeks to show how the pre-war patron-client relationship has been altered.

9.2 From decoys to effective counsellors, opinion leaders, researchers and NGO managers

During the war in Liberia, about 80 percent of child-soldiers were directly involved in combat (Human Rights Watch, 1994; IRIN, as cited in Singer, 2006). During their service within warring factions, child-soldiers were forced into unholy alliances, pacts and related roles. One of the meanings of ‘boys’ in the *Oxford Advanced Dictionary* is ‘soldiers’ of a country. So within armed groups or forces, foot soldiers are generally referred to as ‘boys’.

During the Liberian war, one of the notorious rebel leaders in the person of ‘General Butt Naked’ referred to his subordinates as ‘boys’.⁹⁹ This connotes an idea of ‘submissiveness’ of foot soldiers to their commanders. Child-soldiers were referred to as boys and girls for at least a couple of reasons. Firstly, most of them were foot soldiers although some did emerge as commanders. Secondly, by virtue of their immature physical appearance they were considered as minors. Their duty was to serve their commanders. It must be noted that the word *boys* usually overshadows girl-soldiers. In African war-torn countries, females whether young, adult or old are generally regarded as “forgotten casualties of war” (Save the Children Fund, 2005:i).

Within warring factions child-soldiers were caught between service and servitude. They were to carry out any instructions they received from commanders without question. As a young veteran put it, “... the military order is obey, obey and obey” (Author’s interview with Venunye, 2010).

⁹⁹A clip confirming the use of ‘boys’ to refer to subordinates in the warring faction, and the practice of cannibalism during the Liberian civil war can be watched at <http://www.parentdish.com/videos-partner/meeting-ex-general-butt-naked-joshua-blahyi-in-liberia-517131025-210>

Child-soldiers were involved in a full range of egregious acts including murder, rape and executions. As a female young veteran pointed out, “some children, mostly the boys, they just get that wicked mind. Like in my presence, during the war, some children raped their great grannies” (Author’s interview with Perfecto, 2010). It must be noted that traditionally, in Liberia as in any society, ‘children raping grannies (grandmothers) in the presence of other children’ is a taboo and perceived as an abomination. There was a dehumanization and objectification of child-soldiers as they were to serve under a “harsh disciplinary code” (Wells, 2009:147).

Young Liberian veterans did not have pleasant experiences within the warring factions. Not only were they exposed to sickening scenes, but they were also condemned to show what was supposedly regarded as incredible bravery by committing dreadful acts. In all, young veterans were subjected to a multifaceted bondage. So the use of the term *boys* was not related to child-soldiers’ age alone, but stemmed from their degree of enslavement, the treatment that put them in a situation of total dependence on warlords, whereby violence was considered a norm, a form of worship (Kippenberg, 2011). What forms did this servitude of child-soldiers take? There is a range of ways in which slavery was deeply entrenched within armed groups and forces. One way was to be trained in small-scale theft. As a young veteran pointed out:

When they tried to reunite me with my family, they found that my father was dead. They could not find my mother. Now I live on my own. I sleep in the waterside area of Monrovia with some other boys. We hustle for food. We go on chicken missions. We go into the community and when we see a chicken, we just grab it. (Ginker, 2004:26)

Some of the units within which child-soldiers served, determined their status. The name of the unit itself described soldiers as boys. For instance, a young veteran revealed that: “because I had to go to look for food for my mother that is what made me be a *small soldier*¹⁰⁰ [child-soldier] until I grew big and I became

¹⁰⁰ ‘Small soldier’ was another appellation for ‘child-soldier’ in Liberia.

SBU¹⁰¹ Commander, Small Boys commander, junior body guard commander under General Buffalo [General's real name withheld]" (Author's interview with Fleur, 2010). Notwithstanding his rank as commander, Fleur was categorized among the boys. He was in command but he was still considered a small soldier, a boy. He was not a commander of adult soldiers, but a commander of a platoon or company made up of foot soldiers as young as himself. No adult soldier was a member of the SBU. So, physical immaturity was also a determining factor of who should be called boys or girls within warring factions.

The transition from war to post-conflict society did not immediately change this demeaning designation. As one interviewee revealed, "in the bush people were calling me small soldier. When I came in my community that name was still behind me ... but after a while people started calling my real name. When I came first they were calling me small soldier" (Author's interview with Jardin, 2010). Another young veteran stated in a similar vein: "I was picked up and they taught me how to fire pistol and they were calling me small soldier, small soldier ... So I got brave" (Author's interview with Martine, 2010). The age at which child-soldiers were recruited, meant they would be perceived as boys and girls by all cultural standards. A young veteran stated that, "the war started in 1990 ... you can't leave, you are forced to join the war, so I joined ... I was at the age of 10" (Author's interview with Philemon, 2010). Gregarious behaviour, a hallmark of peer pressure, was also an indication of child-soldiers' immaturity. During an interview session, a young veteran in trying to answer the question, *What do we say about your tattoo?* stated that:

When I put this mark on me my father disliked me because he is a bishop. But he knows we are in a team. After the war, I went to Bikenue I was immature at that time, I saw my other friends ex-combatants doing it and I joined them and they put this on me. The tattoo is not related to war. There was a time a fellow called me and asked me "do you know what this sign indicates" I said "no I don't know," and I was informed that anybody who has it is part of a society, but I didn't know at all. (Author's interview with Philemon, 2010)

¹⁰¹ SBU means Small Boys Unit.

The level of loyalty to commanders, or the identification with the aggressor syndrome through which child-soldiers were strongly attached to their commanders, who became their surrogate parents (Hundeide, 2003), was a sign of immaturity as well. Referring to Charles Taylor¹⁰² as surrogate father, a young veteran stated that: “when I open my eyes I only know one man called Charles Taylor” (Author’s interview with Martine, 2010). Such identification with commanders could only be easier with immature soldiers, the child-soldiers.

But the immaturity and servitude which characterized child-soldiers in the jungle shifted after the war, paving the way for young veterans’ self-agency in the post-conflict context. Self-agency formed the bedrock of the dejected young veterans’ emergence as influential figures and acceptance in the post-conflict society. Through constant, consistent and deliberate attempts to serve within organizations, schools and communities, some young veterans became role-models and even mentors to their comrades and former commanders. Their determination made inroads into the generally perceived shiftlessness of former fighters. The drive to become relevant in society captivated many of them to the extent that some reached the upper echelons of leadership. It can be argued that their deliberate effort to emerge as leaders, especially within associations and organizations, gained impetus through a strong sense of motivation. Motivation is a key component of Vroom’s (1964) theory of expectancy. In whatever organizations, associations or other groups young veterans found themselves, they actively expected an improvement in their living conditions and hoped for an identity accepted by community members. They strove to build such active identities for themselves (Bradley, 1997). This allowed for the attainment of their goals. As a young veteran revealed about himself:

In school, I put myself strongly in politics, I was part of the student movement ... I went to Don Bosco training school, I became a counsellor, talking to people ... When I left from Don Bosco, I went to

¹⁰²Charles Taylor was the leader of the NPFL (National Patriotic Front for Liberia).

another organization ... Buzzi college association. I even emerged to become youth chairman. (Author's interview with Martine, 2010)

Ambition, motivation and focus were driving forces which helped young veterans to occupy leadership positions in their communities. For instance, to the question: *What are you studying in the University?*, a young veteran answered "sociology;" and to the question *Why did you choose sociology?*, he replied "I see myself in the field talking to people and socializing with small small organizations and leading societies" (Author's interview with Martine, 2010). It is clear that the motives behind the choice of sociology as a field of study were leadership-oriented. Martine who was a 'small soldier' before, was studying not to impress but influence other people in the Liberian society.

These young veterans did not perceive their multidimensional difficulties as insurmountable obstacles, but as challenges which they cleverly transformed into success stories. Young veterans were able to voluntarily stifle all previous attributes in order to be accepted by members of the communities they were living in. And such deliberate efforts are made through the presentation of the self. As Goffman (1969:13) put it, "when an individual appears before others he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive". This is an expression of the individual's self-agency. For example, a young veteran disclosed that:

I went to Don Bosco Home for workshops so I took the initiative to go by their training. In the training, I saw people below my age presenting, aaah! I got stuck I said ah! ah! so I was in the bush with the gun ... something continues to tell me you can be like them, do it. Then the director of the centre called me one day and asked me what are my expectations and I told him my expectations. After he called me and talked to me that I have seen you as a junior counsellor. So he took me to a school when I talked to girls and fear started leaving me. ... and so forth I talked to many categories of people. (Author's interview with Martine, 2010)

The above interview excerpt reveals Martine's ability to discover his own retardation through the interactional situation he was involved in. But through agency he was able to overcome those challenges faced at the outset of his post-

conflict civilian life. Such personal initiatives to enhance one's self-confidence became possible through a chain of actions upon the self. I consequently argue that the realization that one is lagging behind here occurred as a result of the interaction with the self. As Thomas (in Meltzer, et al., 1975:23) argued, "conflicting features of the environment" shape the individual behaviour, but such behaviour finally stems from the "definition of the situation" that is the individual's internal deliberation. This is similar to Archer's (2003) internal conversation, Charon's (2001) stream of action, and Foucault's (1988) technologies of the self, which all help the individual young veteran to redefine him/herself in the post-war social environment. Such active action upon the self allows for self-agency through which the individual presents to others a new 'self'. The excerpt which follows reveals Martine's improvement:

I started seeing myself progressing. When organizations were looking for people in the community, so I see they chose me. So I see myself going for other trainings, other trainings, I started seeing myself developing. I was at a point of time team manager and with that role, I could get to chairmen. I became mobilization chairman to later become chairman for the youths. I started making football key letters and making citations [was in charge of writing letters soccer issues]. At the end of the day, it was election time. So there was a deposit of LD1000 ... Buzzi Quarters¹⁰³ needed a lot of things. I have worked with organizations before, so I can talk to them. At the end of the day, I emerged as the leader in that community. (Author's interview with Martine, 2010)

A young veteran while explaining how, together with other young veterans, they were able to set up an NGO at the time of this research, pointed to how understanding a situation and having the desire to change it can have an impact:

So one day, I was sitting and I said "how about we are plenty here, there is no coordination among us. I think it is good to put ourselves together, structure ourselves and in that kind of form if you are" ... that is how we were able to put ourselves together we called that the National Assistance Veteran Programme and I became one of the leaders there. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

¹⁰³ As indicated in Chapter Four, Buzzi Quarters is a location within Monrovia where Martine was living in 2010 when the interview was conducted.

Some young veterans developed a sense of prominence heightened by their self-agency. That allowed for easy access to humanitarian organizations intervening in the country, to learn and keep abreast of the latest developments in the NGO sector. Through such initial informal channels and contacts, they became active participants in the peacebuilding process.

One striking feature of these active young veterans was their awareness of the importance of their intelligence and ability in changing their dismal situations into success stories in the post-conflict society. Of course such self-consciousness could only be possible through their self-agency. In a damaged society where individuals categorized as war victims become psychosocial counsellors and peacebuilding agents and peace campaigners, it can be concluded that the stream of action (Charon, 2001) and the technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988) played an important role in orienting the behaviour of such individuals.

I contend that the fragile state of post-conflict societies allows for the speedy emergence of individual agency. In such societies, exogenous forces have less influence on individual agency, especially on individuals who embark on initiatives devoid of all self-deprecating thoughts and attitudes. In a war context, individual agency can be strong and lead to negative or positive consequences. The young veterans in this research took prosocial paths. As one of them revealed, “we all contributed to the war, the destruction of lives and infrastructures, so there is need to work hard for peace and not wait for other people to do it for us” (Author’s interview with Venunye, 2010).

This was a frequent theme for young veterans who believed that the reconstruction of their war-shattered country required their active participation instead of fully depending on external donors to rescue it from its war-induced maladies. As another respondent put it:

When we got in Monrovia, I actually got in contact with the Lutheran Church through the first awareness workshop. They got very much encouraged with my participation and my level of IQ and a lot of them did not actually believe that I have fought the war except when I showed some body bullet marks and ... that is when they think that I

actually took part in the war. So I was also selected from that group to do a trainer of trainers training TOT [training of trainers]. When my period came, they called me I came and I was taken to Torota where I stayed for a long time doing the trainings there, peace building training. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

The ways in which some young veterans articulated their dreams and ambitions clearly placed them in a position of emergence among their fellow ex-fighters, a world usually considered to be an ill-omened community of vacuous war-casualties, who display eccentric behaviour and accordingly, are capable of masterminding nefarious schemes (Miller & Affolter, as cited in IIEP, 2010). A young veteran, a key management team member of an NGO, referred to this in the following terms:

The next step actually besides self-actualization is to contribute to a greater society and that could not only be in Liberia. So because of that, I am trying to see how best I can get myself equipped educationally, do some studies in peace and conflict that will give me a broader concept that will help me look at other theories and concepts that have been used. For instance in Colombia, we saw that their system of conflict resolution was completely different from what we have here. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

Some young veterans have progressed from local to global change agents. On the local level, they believed that they had gone through sufficient transformation and could then be considered as role models. Organizations and associations they created focused not only on young veterans, but on all categories of former fighters, regardless of their age, rank or warring parties during the war. This put this category of young veterans in a position of authority vis-à-vis their counterparts.

On the international level, some young veterans had the opportunity to travel abroad where they attended workshops, conferences, fora, short-term courses, and seminars. During such trips to foreign countries, they learned that war is a categorical enemy to development, and education is without doubt a fundamental ingredient for the development of both the individual and the society. This also positively contributed to an improvement of their societal status. As a young veteran put it:

When I came in contact with LC-THRP ... one or two capacity-building workshops and because of my interest in the programme, I was taken for a TOT programme for like a month. From there you know I had a change of mind, rehabilitation was going on and I had the desire to now be a transformer, see myself as a role model to see how I can bring more ex-coms into the arena of peace building ... The three of us came from there and we had a new mind set, and that was how we thought of establishing an organization called NEPI National Ex-coms Peace building Initiative, ex-combatants involved into peace work. So NEPI became a vibrant institution, we have been working with ex-combatants ... see how we can bridge the gap between ex-com and the larger community, those ex-coms rejected in the society to see how we can use ourselves as a role model to the family and to them to see, just to help the building process of Liberia. With the peace building work, I have been able to travel to Sweden in a peace building programme, where I spent like three months, three weeks in Uppsala. And I have also travelled to Cambodia for some training programme, that is, how the work has been. (Author's interview with Petit, 2010)

Some young veterans understood early on that formal education is fundamental to an individual's success. As a matter of fact, education was perceived by young veterans as a pedestal for one's development in life. As Petit disclosed, "I could have gone back [to war] ... One motivation I had was going to school, if it were not school, my brother, I am telling you I could have gone back". Another young veteran echoed this view, "I usually tell my friends that if you want to go far in life the medicine is going to school. So far, I can see myself in school today. I can say that my dreams are fulfilled" (Author's interview with Martine, 2010).

To many people, because of the psychological and physical ruination child-soldiers suffered, any positive transformation of the latter was seemingly impossible. There were even young veterans who could not believe in the transformation seen in their counterparts. And because they could not believe that former child-soldiers could change, it became difficult for them to accept the possibility of their own change from asocial behaviour to socially accepted attitudes.

The continual craving for education increased the sense of change in young veterans' lives. Some young veterans realized that they could use the experiences

gained through the war to provide solutions to other armed conflict-affected countries or regions across the globe. For instance, some of them wanted to specialize in ‘conflict studies’. As Petit pointed out that:

I have decided and my focus is to do peace and conflict studies up to the level that I can do it. My major focus is to work in conflict prone communities. You see my experience to see how especially communities that experience war where I can interact with ex-coms or combatants or military personnel, people who have experienced war, because I have had an experience of war and I know what it means to fight war. So my major focus of life is now is to become, I mean to learn conflict, to understand conflict from a deeper perspective and know what are the feelings and thinking of the actors of conflicts so that whenever I see a conflict situation, I will not be too much judgmental to it. I will understand the feelings of those that are involved into conflict because one thing I know is that people don’t get into conflict because they want to get into it, their feelings, their interests that can bring people into a conflict situation so my major focus is to do conflict to a higher level. I was just telling Nimi [real name withheld] that I am presently reading sociology as a big foundation and I told him I want to do peace and conflict studies as my Master’s degree and if I can pursue it even to the level at which you are I will be too glad. (Author’s interview with Petit, 2010)

A female young veteran, who was once a wife to a rebel commander, and who had two children by the time the interview was conducted, placed emphasis on ‘education’ as being a cardinal component of children’s development. Referring to lessons she intended to convey to her children about war, she clearly stated: “I will tell them not to go to war, and they have to go to school ... I want to labour for a better future for my children ... Because my future is spoilt. Children must be sent to school and not to go to war” [she was an interviewee full of regret but believed that through education her children would achieve what war prevented her from attaining] (Author’s interview with Flaviano, 2010).

Duties performed during the war by some young veterans laid the groundwork for their career ambitions. Even if the Liberian civil war was generally perceived as a source of most if not all the post-conflict ills, it however had some positive impacts on some young veterans. By virtue of their participation in the war, many young veterans were able to discover a professional path for themselves. I agree

with Dewey (in Hart, Jickling & Kool, 1999:105) that “in directing the activities of the young, society determines its own future”, but there are situations whereby societal institutions responsible for such orientation of the youth are weak or inexistent. And countries ravaged by war are an example of such damaged societies.

Education helped many of the young veterans to occupy key leadership positions in society. As Enfant put it, “even now I serve as youth assistant chairman in my area. There was an NGO that came and was looking for DDDR people [former fighters who underwent the official DDDR process], who went to school, that was how I was selected to be an assistant to the local chairman in my area” (Author’s interview with Enfant, 2010).

Another factor that allowed for the emergence of some young veterans as prosocial former fighters was their desire to help their comrades correct their way of life and be accepted. Through various means they wanted to let their disgruntled counterparts know that although war is a dispiriting experience, former fighters can become as clear-sighted as other members in their respective communities; and that despite all the atrocities committed during the war, one can still be accepted into the society if only he/she could show conciliatory attitudes towards community members who bore the brunt of the war. As a young veteran pointed out:

The next motive for setting up that organization [an NGO he founded together with other young veterans] is to reach our colleagues that are out there and give them hope because most of those guys out there, male and females are hopeless ... and that is the reason why they are staying on drugs and not doing anything meaningful. That is the reason why their lives have not made any change or impact. So it is not just to build peace but to give them hope, use our own lives as a model, as an example that we used to be like you, and the only reason why we are different from you right now is based on the fact that we had a different orientation, so need similar orientation, to take a different step and way of life ... we are actually giving them encouragement, giving them hope, building up their own skills and making them understand that the war has taken effect, you must see yourself to be the worst killer, you must see yourself to be rejected

and denied but however don't give up. (Author's interview with Venunye, 2010)

9.3 From jungle bosses to post-war mendicants: The fallen demigods?

The fate of leaders of warring factions after the war differed. Through the co-optation of war spoilers, warlords and war financiers (those who committed atrocities and profited most from the war and yet have been officially promoted even as leaders), some gained some level of political leverage and were still 'heroes' (Jennings, 2008; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, 2009). In stark contrast, some became fallen heroes, putting to test the loyalty of their former subordinates, that is, the young veterans. Do former subordinates pay homage to former commanders whose luck has run in the post-war society? Some former rank and file soldiers, especially young veterans tried to show forms of respect, but deep inside of them, they knew that nobody could actually boss around another person after the war. It was clear that young veterans were not willing to pander to the wishes of their former taskmasters anymore. Some young veterans disclosed the following:

Sometimes, some of them are fearful and you are forced to call them boss. But the reality is that, they have no right over me now. At times, when you are going to school all you see them doing is to be drinking and smoking. So all of us we are equal today. And if we want to give that respect, I can, but I must not be forced. We are equal. (Author's interview with Perfecto, 2010)

Yes, when we meet, we greet one another. When you see them there is a kind of smile because these were people who had a kind of authority. When they say you are finished you are finished, if they say move here and do x y z, that is it. So when you see them today and you look at your own level, everyone at the same level, and everyone can ... greet and pass ... When we see our comrades they may say "my man" the other time I saw the former chief, very simple, in fact, he was smiling when he was going, so I don't know what the guy is doing. At times we see some of them we wonder because of whom they are. ... we say that guy people don't know him oh but during the war he was very dangerous ... what is the person's intention? I hope they are not recruiting or having another plan. Because these were commanders who trained in Libya, Burkina Faso ... You see just a

man moving around without any job or any place to be you wonder. So we can see once in a while. Some still recognize us. So ask man how are doing ... we greet and continue our way ... everyone on his business. (Author's interview with Venunye, 2010)

These two above interview excerpts reveal that what counts in post-war society is not the military prowess during the war, but one's social status after the war. Former commanders were no exception. Some of them became wretched beggars. They shifted from honour to ignominy. And of course their former subordinates, particularly child-soldiers in this case, have on occasion become their redemptive figures.

I contend that in post-war society, after the guns have been collected, only those that exercise their agency for self-improvement will emerge positively. This leads to a change in power relations. As two young veterans mentioned:

I can meet them everywhere. I see them we shake; we laugh ... "you big men now where are you working?" I say "I am not working I am going to school." But at times, we try to talk to them for those who want to listen. I saw some of our bosses but the push wheel barrow today, you speak to them and they want five dollars from you ... Oh my man! Most of them are there wasting totally. (Author's interview with Martine, 2010)

Sometimes we meet but not to discuss war, nobody is commanding anybody this time around. You have many of these jungle generals who are beggars today because they took nothing serious. (Author's interview with Enfant, 2010)

Young veterans acknowledged a drastic change in power relations between them and their former bosses who were plunged into a crisis of credibility in post-war society. As one young veteran put it:

I see some of them but, you know stratification has taken place, some of them actually you know say, they are actually now they see me, I was their junior but today they see me because of my level in the society ... they call me boss and I say you are the chief, they will say you are the boss ... so these are jokes but you know I see a lot of them but, I will be true a lot of them are bad of [wretched]. (Author's interview with Petit, 2010)

There is a power shift which occurred during the transition from war to post-war society. Some of the fighters who lorded it over their subordinates in the jungle became paupers. As one young veteran pointed out, “people who bossed us around when they see us in the street they say buy scratch card for me and if I have the means, I can help, that is my attribute” (Author’s interview with Gracias, 2010). The young veterans’ post-war superiority was also based on the ‘formal education’ some of them acquired after the war. This put them in a position where others depended upon them. For instance, a young veteran revealed that:

One of the special forces for Charles Taylor, he does painting; he learned it as career ... he wanted to learn larger skill, he can do any creative design for you but he never went far academically. So when he wants to write proposals he comes to me and I am able to carve the proposal for him ... and I advise him. (Author’s interview with Gracias, 2010)

Some young veterans boasted about their contributions in changing the behaviour of other former fighters. And in truth, some of the ex-combatants who participated in their training were originally their bosses in the jungle. These young veterans developed a sense of self-appraisal. The self-congratulation that stemmed from such self-appraisal gave a fresh impetus to their self-agency. Actually, a high self-esteem reinforces self-agency. They believed they have achieved a significant amount in the peacebuilding process. There was a sense of self-perpetuating effort in everything they do. As a young veteran pointed out:

I am better than some of them because some of them what they did to the people, some of them ran away from this country and some of them ran away from where people are and settled in the bush because if people set their eyes on them, to them self they will be thinking that people will come to harm them so they don’t want to be among group of people. ... For me, I haven’t gotten problem with anybody, I can move here, any part of this city, nobody will come to me to say, you—you did that one to me or you did that one to me. (Author’s interview with Frero, 2010)

9.4 From jungle leadership to post-war leadership

Some young veterans who held leadership positions at the time of this research, were not in their first leadership roles. They held leadership positions within their

respective warring factions during the war. Such jungle leadership positions set the stage for their post-war leadership roles. A young veteran who was the director of an NGO referred to such leadership roles in wartime: “I was again part of the reinforcement that came back to Kowe to take over. At that time I was the leader of a group called ‘Dragon Force’” (Author’s interview with Gracias, 2010).

As young veterans began to uncover and interpret the political environment, they gradually and cleverly mapped out the civilian trajectories to follow, in order to escape the widespread and unfathomable misery that marred their post-conflict societies. Such pioneer initiatives undoubtedly derived from young veterans’ conscious and deliberate efforts. The various layers of interaction they had with people during meetings provided them with experiences which they consequently translated into actions, and even built upon. It was a deliberate and pre-emptive interpretation of the political, social and economic situation prevailing in the country, which informed their actions. Change did not come to them but change came through them, and they were the principal actors of that change. As a young veteran noted:

Gradually until when the Taylor regime started phasing out, we knew that this organization will not live. Even if any other president took over, they will not give support to the national veterans’ programmes because all the support we got for veterans assistance were actually from Charles Taylor; supplying rice, giving Christmas package. We thought it wise that we cannot continue with [name of organization withheld] but we have to think of what can be done. (Author’s interview with Gracias, 2010)

The agency of young veterans is reflected in the above statement. Two striking expressions establish this. The expressions *we thought it was wise* and *we have to think of what can be done*, put this into perspective. The thoughts were not initiated by others but by the congregation of young veterans themselves. Such pre-emptive expressions reveal a deep sense of interaction with the self which engenders innovative approaches to tackling issues, thus fostering leadership skills. This also refers to a combination of the Foucauldian technologies of the self and the stream of action (Foucault, 1988; Charon, 2001). Such pre-emptive measures are also as a result of

reactions to the symbolic meaning of the probable end of a political regime and its aftermath (Blumer, 1969). In this case, young veterans making up the National Veterans Programme realized that the end of Charles Taylor's regime meant the end of the benefits they were enjoying under that regime. Such a realization strengthened their self-agency. The end product was the creation of an NGO. They transformed challenges into a rewarding opportunity. These young veterans were acutely aware of their plight. Regarding their post-war situation and appalling living conditions as adventitious, they refused to be considered as addled former fighters. To such young veterans, failure was an anathema. Through their acuity, they interpreted people's actions towards them and they realized that they needed to exercise agency to overcome war-induced difficulties, and this in a society under reconstruction. They understood that they were being sidelined in public debates related to their living conditions and social decision-making processes. As an interviewee put it: "people were talking but we could not see anybody talking of veterans" (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010). They therefore transformed this communal apathy towards their predicaments into profitable initiatives.

A clear and growing realization that social institutions were ruined, most importantly the weak and shapeless security parastatals, and the lack of clear programmatic security reforms, led young veterans not only to make a prognosis on the security situation of the country, but to join the humanitarian fray and actively contribute to improving the situation of their fellow citizens. This was possible because the young veterans involved, understood more than the ordinary civilians, the life-world of their unruly counterparts (Wagner, 1973). As a young veteran revealed:

To be factual, we were very disgruntled at that time. Yeah! veterans were disgruntled. ... Sometimes they could even clash with the police, police cannot handle the situation. Yes, they were terrible; they could do anything so a lot of people were actually afraid and because we came from that background, we actually decided to take on that task, yeah, people commended us for that bold step and in fact, they said

they needed to know the driving force behind our idea to make it more work that is how we began to form the National Ex-combatants Peace building Initiative. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

The earnest desire to be part of the reconstruction process, and role-models, made it possible for some young veterans to fully develop prosocial attitudes, which consequentially singled them out. This frame of reference made them different from the war veterans of Santos Street who displayed more antisocial behaviour.

As Gracias mentioned:

As we were part of the war, the destruction of the war, we found out that it was necessary to contribute to the reconstruction of the country ... so we can use ourselves as role model for other ex-coms to follow ... We have gone through this level of transformation. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

Young veterans followed many pathways to become *bosses*. In the process, they developed cordial relationships with their communities, and through prosocial behaviour, they established themselves as examples to other former fighters. They were ready to learn even during workshops they were privileged to facilitate. And any activity they were involved in was done with painstaking care, which fostered the development of strong relationships with other peacebuilding partners they had the opportunity to meet. As a young veteran revealed:

I assisted people in the community to the extent that when I even told some people that I am an ex-combatant, they were saying I am lying ... So we were not only there because we wanted money, we were there to learn in the process. ... a lot of international donors ... just called us by phone. Oh yes! I heard about you from that person; I have that piece of job to do and we only want to see you and discuss so that we can know what to do. So it is like if you are doing something well ... it will serve as a form of recommendation. So, if you are not doing good thing that could attract our own community that could attract the recovery process of the nation, other people could not just sit down and call upon us because there are a lot of NGOs in Liberia. A lot of local NGOs and a lot of INGOs. So for local NGOs to be called, it means that you are doing something meaningful. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

9.5 Conclusion

This chapter revealed that power relations within post-conflict society, especially among former fighters be they former child-soldiers or adult fighters, underwent a series of changes. Although, through a seemingly unfair co-optation of conspicuous war-profiteers, some warlords and war financiers gained political leverage, some young veterans were able to accede to leadership positions. These changes were as a result of the conscious definition of civilian trajectories by these young veterans themselves. Some young veterans exercised their self-agency, formed instrumental coalitions with their peers in order to overcome the war-imposed challenges.

Originally boys and girls in the bush during the civil war, some were able to overcome the laxity that generally characterizes former fighters. I argued that such a difference was made possible through a conscious and painstaking interaction with the self, the technologies of the self, after an interpretation of the day to day grim realities of their new world.

Besides, within their respective communities, young veterans were able to deviate from the generally presumed passivity and vulnerability of young veterans, to move up the social ladder. Some occupied leadership positions in community associations, professional bodies and schools. But most importantly, the expression of the stream of action to coalesce with others and set the pace in creating NGOs used by international institutions to carry out research in the war-torn country, and to assist former fighters, and even provide jobs for others, made some of the young veterans legendary figures in post-conflict society.

Through their own stories, it became clear that some of these former jungle boys and girls became 'bosses' in the post-conflict society. Ironically, some deified jungle commanders became paupers and mendicants. Paradoxically, some jungle warlords became key political figures. Through their self-agency, young veterans successfully overcame individual and societal hurdles to get to leadership

positions, and to change the trend, turning their former bosses in the bush, into ‘boys’ in the town.

In sharp contrast to previous positions which mostly conceptualized young veterans as laggards, a bunch of maladjusted and obdurate human beings in post-conflict societies, I have argued in this chapter, based on their own stories, that some young veterans had the capacity to influence power relations that existed before and during the war, and to hold leadership positions.

CHAPTER TEN

Individual hope amidst collective hopelessness

10.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights how, despite their exposure to the social chaos created by war, young veterans still had hope, a hope which sharpened their thinking and shaped their perspective on the future. It also examines the source of such phenomenal hope, and describes what war represents symbolically for young veterans.

No individual living in Liberia between 1989 and 2003 was spared the tragedy of the war, which bedevilled the country. Effects range from individual to collective trauma. The war was characterized by a wanton disregard for human life, infrastructures and institutions. The list of casualties is long: lives lost, families dispersed, shattered and dislocated communities, ruined infrastructure and collapsed state institutions. Actually, in war-affected societies, there is usually “widespread destruction of many critical economic, political, and even social institutions” (Kumar, 1997:2), and Liberia was no exception.

Liberia was “a traumatized country” where virtually everyone needed a comforter (Borris, 2008); and which needed to shift from that “collective trauma to collective peace” (Jalloh & Marong, 2005:54). Unfortunately, the international community represented by humanitarian organizations and agencies, and other local and international charity organizations, was overwhelmed and could offer only what their resources, policies and politics allowed or dictated to them. The post-war government’s war chest, almost completely dependent upon foreign aid, was not enough to guarantee the country’s quick and fair return to normality.

How could one envisage hope in the midst of such post-war pandemonium? There is no doubt that the war had disruptive effects on former child-soldiers’ development, and they also suffered from a double trauma: the individual trauma

based on their active involvement in the war, and the collective trauma caused by the heavy toll the war took on their society as a whole. Regardless of humanitarian agencies' ineffectual assistance, some young veterans knew how to develop and nurture 'hope' for themselves, not only to overcome their present predicaments, but also to improve their future living conditions.

10.2 Lessons learned from the war

There is a great deal of writing depicting the roles young veterans played during the war as child-soldiers, and the impact war had on them (Machel, 2001; Honwana, 2006; Singer, 2006; Wells, 2009). However, there is a dearth of literature capturing one pivotal element which allows for the understanding of young veterans' perspective on their future, that is, the symbolic meaning that war as a phenomenon has for them.

Young veterans' appraisal of the war should be seen as the point of departure for their healing from war injuries, and their transmogrification. Opinions may diverge on such an argument, but the reality is that some, if not most of the young veterans' decision-making processes and their perspectives on the future, to a great extent are informed by their experiences of the war, precisely what war signifies to them. Interviewees were able to draw lessons from war experiences.

Most young veterans interviewed perceived war as synonymous with destruction of their own childhood, their lives and destiny. After the war, they realized that they forcefully or voluntarily wasted their time and life by being loyal to disloyal warlords, perpetrating crimes, killing innocent people and shaming key female social figures through public rape, to mention only a few atrocities.

They realized that they were lagging behind as far as education was concerned. They acknowledged that their latitude to prey upon innocent civilians, among whom were probably their mothers, fathers and siblings, jeopardized their future. They expressed regret and remorse in various ways. Some young veterans regretted missing out on their formal education. As a young veteran pointed out,

“we discuss and I tell them I regret how I wasted my time to war. All that time, I should have gone to school” (Author’s interview with Flaviano, 2010). Others felt remorse over having wreaked havoc: “I began to really identify myself, I began to regret my own participation in the war, the things that we did and the war that we fought so forth” (Author’s interview with Venunye, 2010).

Still, some young veterans, especially those forcefully recruited, considered their participation as a mishap. A young veteran used the adverb *unfortunately* and the expression *trapped in that net* [war net] to describe his misfortune. He put it this way:

Yeah, I played a role in the war and I continue to play role. Initially, I became one of the fighters and I actually fought for NPFL. It was the biggest faction ... the strongest faction. It was a fast moving faction so they cover a lot of the country. Unfortunately for me, I was also trapped in that net and went to war. (Author’s interview with Gracias, 2010)

Some young veterans have learned that their participation in the war introduced them to dreadful acts in a situation where the subordinates’ lives were considered worthless. As a young veteran put it, “our bosses will tell you to continue to fight and there is no retreating, if you are trying to retreat they will either tell you to go back or they themselves they will fire you [they will kill you]” (Author’s interview with Fleur, 2010).

War was regarded by the interviewees as having a destructive impact on human beings. Young veterans noticed that war never added anything positive to their personal lives, families and societies. One young veteran frankly stated that “when family members are being killed in front of you it is not good at all” (Author’s interview with Fleur, 2010), while another said: “oh! what I learnt ... to just destroy the country; carry some people, destroy some people’s lives, destroy life and property to carry the country backward” (Author’s interview with Frero, 2010).

Young veterans did not only acknowledge that war was an execrable occurrence, but they began to exert themselves and proactively offered solutions they thought

could curb the war-induced ills ruining their society. One young veteran expressed this attempt at problem-solving:

There is no good war, there is no bad peace. Peace is also costly so we all need to build a spirit of peace ... in the absence of peace, you can never have development ... and you know we all went to war ... we all contributed to the war, the destruction of lives and infrastructures, so there is need to work hard for peace and not wait for other people to do it for us. (Author's interview with Venunye, 2010)

Young veterans equally understood the importance of a sound democratic government in a post-war country. They candidly suggested that the authorities of the post-war new state needed to be elected carefully. The calibre of leaders to be elected should not be based on mere popularity, but on the basis of the candidates' capacity and know-how, to deliver, draw investors into the country, and to boost the country's economy. This made young veterans become constructive patriots (Schatz, Staub & Lavine, 1999). One young veteran opted for seasoned economists capable of strengthening the comatose economy based on democratic principles:

My dream is that Liberian people should select good president. After Helen went to power, myself, I sat down and I said to myself ... thank God George Weah did not win. If he won at that time, the people that were behind him were warlords so they would have destroyed the country for once. So as for me, Helen has that brain as president, but for the 2011 election, I don't know what to do because I still get love for Helen and I still get love for George Weah ... but actually for leadership to me, he [George Weah] is not the best. Actually at that time, it was the wrong time. So Liberia is just from war so we need someone that gets experience, and leadership ability, but Helen worked in many positions before, World Bank, UN and here she was even as minister. (Author's interview with Fleur, 2010)

Education helped young veterans to further uncover the ugly nature of war. War became morally repugnant to them in all its dimensions. As an interviewee stated, "with the education level I have today, even if you give me millions dollars today to fight, I will tell you I don't like war. The experience I saw in war is not good" (Author's interview with Fleur, 2010).

10.3 Hoping within a hopeless society

The manner in which young veterans articulated their envisaged careers and other dreams is an expression of hope and desire for self-improvement. In a post-conflict society, such tremendous dreams look stupefying, especially when the authors are originally considered to be disadvantaged. In a war-ravaged zone, such projects can only be achieved through strong self-agency. What seems appealing about these dreams is that some stemmed directly from the young veterans' participation in the war. War experiences themselves became a 'source of hope'. For instance, a young veteran stated, "I want to become a doctor because there in the war front, I was serving as a doctor. When people were wounded, or received bullet, I used my own experience to help people. So I decided to do it as a course for myself" (Author's interview with Enfant, 2010).

Some former girl-soldiers have transformed their failure to go to school into a challenge to be overcome. It has created in them a better sense of mothering which will encourage education. A young female veteran stated in this regard that, "I want to labour for a better future for my children ... Because my future is spoilt [regret for not going to school]" (Author's interview with Flaviano, 2010). Some envisioned self-reliance through their jobs. They wanted to shift from the have-nots to the haves of the post-conflict society. They wanted to have a repertoire of skills and aptitudes which could help them become more independent. An interviewee expressed it this way, "I want to venture into construction activities; I want to be someone for my future, I don't want to go backward again. Going back means trying to depend on someone to help you, it is not good" (Author's interview with Amour, 2010). Another young veteran pointed out that, "Actually for my future, I want to be an economist or accountant. As an economist, if I make USD100 profit, I will know how to use that money, I will know how to set my budget" (Author's interview with Fleur, 2010). Others aspired to be relevant in the field of NGOs. This could be regarded as a result of NGOs that mushroomed in Liberia during and after the war. One young veteran said: "I see

myself in the field talking to people and socializing with small small organization leading societies” (Author’s interview with Martine, 2010).

Some of the young veterans who furthered their education were aiming at greater achievement in high institutions. They aspired to become preeminent scholars. What is fascinating about their dreams is their clever use of their socially-perceived immoral participation in the war to build their future careers. In fact, some were determined to get scholarships and proceed to post-graduate studies in peace and conflict studies. They wanted to understand, in a formal way, theories explaining their war experiences. It can be argued that without their participation in the war they wouldn’t have made such choices; this is another dimension of grassroots war-profiteering (see Chapter Five).

But their dreams were not only geared towards understanding conflict. There was a prosocial component embedded in them. Some of the young veterans wanted to become peace campaigners. Not only did they intend to help their own society to avoid a repetition of the scourge of war in the future, but also to become agents ready to assist other societies in preventing war or recovering from war. One young veteran indicated that:

My goal of becoming a great conflict manager or peace builder into the world because I will tell people that what I have learned from war is destruction ... and then, I got a new sense of life and today. I am now serving as an ambassador of peace ... propagating peace messages or ... so my major focus of life now is to become, I mean to learn conflict, to understand conflict from a deeper perspective and know what are the feelings and thinking of the actors of conflicts so that whenever I see a conflict situation, I will not be too much judgmental to it. I will understand the feelings of those that are involved into conflict because one thing I know is that people don’t get into conflict because they want to get into it; there are feelings, there are interests that can bring people into a conflict situation. So my major focus is to do conflict to a higher level. (Author’s interview with Petit, 2010)

Another young veteran indicated a similar interest in pursuing studies in the field of peace and conflict. He stated that:

The next step actually, besides self-actualization, is to contribute to a greater society and that could not only be in Liberia. So because of that, I am trying to see how best I can get myself equipped educationally, do some studies in Peace and Conflict that will give me a broader concept that will help me look at other theories and concepts that have been used. (Author's interview with Gracias, 2010)

10.4 Conclusion

Although other post-war structural factors may determine young veterans' belief in a fulfilled destiny, their tenacity to overcome life hurdles in the war-affected society merits attention. Beyond mere resilience, their self-agency and rectitude in seeking to symbolically understand their past within warring factions and to understand the impact of war on them as individuals on the one hand, and on their communities and nation on the other hand, have shaped their perception of life.

The confluence of the aforementioned factors greatly contributed to the self-reorientation towards positive thinking. The consequence is the big dreams some of the young veterans had, which were nothing else but an expression of hope. Young veterans, through their envisaged careers, were geared towards self-improvement. Not only did they intend to become self-supporting, but they equally intended to influence their society and actively contribute to the reconstruction of their country. This has a dual purpose: it rectifies the situation they created by participating in the war, and it allows them to become fully involved in the reconstruction process of their country as responsible citizens.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Conclusion: Not all young veterans are still social anomalies

The successful reintegration of some young veterans into the Liberian post-conflict society could be described as a result of a synergy of many factors. It is simply my claim that self-agency emerges as the overriding factor. Young veterans' self-agency is expressed in many ways including the formation of instrumental coalitions, experience-sharing, and positive use of jungle ties. These factors interact to pave the way for a gradual identity shift from soldiers to civilians, from social misfits to social conformists. This study revealed a few points revolving around the importance of young veterans' agency in negotiating their reintegration hurdles.

The fragile state of conflict-affected societies allows for the speedy emergence of individual agency. In such societies, exogenous forces have less influence on individual agency especially on individuals who embark on initiatives devoid of all self-deprecating thoughts and attitudes. In a war context, individual agency can be strong and can lead to positive or negative consequences. The young veterans in this research took prosocial pathways.

I argue that 'humanitarian aid or assistance' in its diverse and controversial forms, may be made available to young veterans; but individual or collective agency is needed to positively channel this aid, and bring about a genuine change in the life of these young former fighters.

The authorities' failure to consider the implications of some young veterans' military prowess on the frontlines, and undermining their usefulness in consciously building a post-conflict military academy should be perceived as a strategic oversight with grievous consequences for individual reintegration into the society, the security situation of the country and neighbouring countries in the long run. I contend that the wealth of combat techniques some of these young

veterans acquired during the war could have been improved upon through a formal military academy. Such a military academy may greatly contribute to refining their objectionable behaviour. Young veterans selected to be part of this military academy could have access to a formal education, but such formal education will be offered in a purely military context with which they are already familiar. I argue that a voluntary education in a military context would be more conducive to some of the young veterans than education offered in the midst of stigmatization and regret.

Becoming part of the defence vanguard of their post-war nation could instil in some young veterans a sense of national pride, and could reinforce their constructive patriotism. But in the name of crime, and the overstressed vulnerability, physical and psychological immaturity, some young veterans' destiny has been distorted. The continual effort by humanitarian agencies, human rights organizations and post-war government authorities to transform at all costs former child-soldiers into upstanding citizens especially through 'education', even when the war has moulded some of them into professional soldiers in the making, has rather deepened the isolation of young veterans from other citizens of post-conflict communities.

While there are success stories concerning the education of some former child-soldiers, there is also evidence that some are beyond redemption through education, and policy makers are urged to reckon with this reality and act accordingly.

Besides the education conundrum, the skill acquisition schemes actually compounded the woes of some young veterans. In the space of a few months, some young veterans received substandard vocational training with which they could not rise above their previous status. But through agency, some young veterans were able to negotiate their vocational training-induced difficulties.

Through their 'interaction with the self', certain young veterans gained a symbolic understanding of formal peace and humanitarian activities, as schemes which

could not fully abate their plight. They realized that relying on external donations may not help them overcome war-induced challenges in the long run. The DDRR's unfulfilled promises, is a typical example. Young veterans were able to identify flaws embedded in these activities and consequentially took initiatives to promote self-reliance.

In sharp contrast to previous claims upholding a total dismantlement of command structures during the DDRR process, I posit that ties between individuals or between individuals and groups are not easily destroyed, and a few days of reorientation during the demobilization stage of the DDRR could not sever such relationships upon which social life hinges. They exist and can either be used negatively or positively by young veterans. One fundamental action to be taken during the reintegration of young veterans, is to uncover individuals' agency through such ties and to channel these ties usefully. Policy makers are therefore enjoined to take into consideration the existence of these networks when designing post-conflict programmes to stabilize war-affected societies. Any inadvertence on the part of policy makers, may lead to menacing consequences.

Ties among uncouth like-minded comrades may be strengthened to engender criminal syndicates. Some of these young veterans may re-enlist or enrol in militias across the porous borders of West Africa where mercenaries are becoming important war commodities, hungry for war-allowances. The active involvement of many Liberian former child-soldiers in fighting in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, attests to this.

It is evidenced in this research that ties among young veterans were positively utilised for mutual help, contributing towards peace, social cohesion and national stability. But how to enhance such ties remains an area this study could not cover. Young veterans' own stories clearly suggested that a shift in power relations took place in the post-conflict society, between young veterans and their former commanders. Some young veterans, by virtue of their new social status, became

bosses. Ironically, some former deified jungle commanders metamorphosed into paupers. Paradoxically, other warlords became key political figures in the country.

Through their internal conversation, self-agency, technologies of the self and instrumental coalitions, some young veterans successfully negotiated individual and collective hurdles that the war imposed on them, to get to leadership positions, and to alter power relations, thus turning their former bosses in the bush into 'boys' in post-war towns. This is in sharp contrast to previous positions which tended to conceptualize all young veterans as laggards, maladjusted and obdurate human beings.

Beyond mere resilience, young veterans' self-agency and rectitude in seeking to symbolically understand their past within warring factions and to understand the impact of war on them as individuals on the one hand, and on their communities and nation on the other hand, have shaped their perspective on the future. This shift in perspective, greatly contributed to the self-reorientation of young veterans towards positive thinking. The consequence is the 'big dreams' some of them had, which were nothing but an 'expression of hope'. Such optimistic young veterans, through their envisaged careers, were geared towards self-improvement. Not only did they intend to become self-supporting, but they also intended to influence their society and actively contribute to the reconstruction of their country shattered by a 14-year civil war. It can be argued that such active involvement in the reconstruction of the country provides the groundwork of the young veterans' constructive patriotism which policy makers should consider for the stability of the country.

This study also highlighted the multi-layered phenomenon of 'war-profiteering' which may impinge on the research process and findings. Three levels of this phenomenon were identified including 'upper-level war-profiteering', 'mid-level war-profiteering' and the 'grassroots war-profiteering'. These three categories are interrelated, and researchers in war-torn countries, especially novice researchers, can easily be trapped into that unpredictable web of 'profiteers'. This research

serves to warn or remind novice researchers of such field impediments capable of negatively affecting themselves, the research process and the findings.

Of course, the study of ‘war-profiteering’ as a phenomenon is beyond the scope of this thesis. However the cursory discussion in this work constitutes a springboard for further research on the issue, especially in other war-affected countries.

There are many forms of symbolic meanings that young veterans attributed to their experiences during their transition from military to civilian life. Some saw in war a source of individual or collective trauma, which led to the wanton destruction of their country. Others realized that their transition from the military to civilian life entailed self-agency, the technologies of the self and instrumental coalitions. This was possible for the following reason: in fragile post-conflict countries, external forces have less influence on the individual whose agency emerges speedily, and allows for active identities.

In order to form instrumental coalitions, young veterans used the existing ties among them and some of their former commanders or newly built social ties in the post-conflict community. This is evidence that demobilization cannot easily sever ties among individuals simply because such uniting forces are entrenched in the military brotherhood (sisterhood), or surrogacy. Besides, it must be noted that some of these ties were covenants made during induction ceremonies which ushered child-soldiers into warring factions, mostly on risky and complex spiritual grounds.

There is also evidence that the military structure can be destroyed ceremoniously during demobilization, but relationships between former fighters are not so easily broken, partly because these relationships play a fundamental role in ensuring former fighters’ survival. What should therefore be done, is to ensure that the existing and newly formed networks among former fighters are positively directed towards contributing to the peace, the stability and the reconstruction of the country, an aspect which has not been adequately dealt with in this study.

This research has shown that there is a caveat to the apocalyptic view of young veterans as comprehensively presented in the available body of writing. The findings of this study reveal that far from being considered as social misfits, young veterans have the potential to express their agency particularly towards their reintegration. The change noticed in the life of some young veterans, does not necessarily depend on exogenous sources: what engineered the change was the agency that their internal conversation produced.

The symbolic meaning young veterans had of a gun was that it was a source of power. Wielding a gun, therefore, was an expression of superiority of a child-soldier over ordinary civilians, regardless of the latter's age or social status. Detaching oneself from the gun during disarmament meant losing that power. But some young veterans understood that this primary source of power could be replaced with other power sources, including but not limited to education. Disarmament was symbolically perceived by young veterans as a moment when they were to trade off their main jungle power source represented by the 'gun', in exchange for more dignified sources of power such as education.

There is evidence that some aspects of post-conflict substandard training schemes have compounded the predicament of former fighters, young veterans included. Some young veterans responded to such devastating situations by individually or collectively devising ways to overcome their challenges. This awakened them to the importance of the ties, brotherhood/sisterhood and camaraderie they developed during the war. I contend that the weaknesses embedded in these vocational training schemes, in some cases sharpened the agency of some young veterans.

As a matter of fact, procedural defects which marred the DDRR process sometimes allowed for the reinvigoration of previous wartime ties. The *esprit de corps* among soldiers regardless of their age, was grounded on a peculiar sense of brotherhood or sisterhood.

There is no doubt that a plethora of peace and conflict scholars, psychologists, legal researchers, medical researchers, anthropologists, and sociologists, to mention a few, have produced and continue to produce vast amounts of literature pertaining to the involvement of children and youth in armed conflicts across the globe.

Literature extensively dwells mostly on the root causes of the phenomenon, its impacts on individual former child-soldiers, their communities, their countries and neighbouring countries; and the transition from the military to civilian life usually through disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration; and partly on their agency. This research therefore sought to contribute more specifically to that latter body of writing, by trying to have a midterm insight into some young veterans' agency, especially, after their demobilization, to ensure their reintegration.

This research has shown that there is a caveat to the apocalyptic view of young veterans as generally presented in the available body of writing. The findings of this study reveal that far from being considered as social misfits, young veterans have the potential to express their agency particularly towards their reintegration. The set change noticed in the lives of some young veterans, does not necessarily depend on exogenous sources. What engineered the change was the agency that their internal conversations produced.

It is a fact that through their active involvement in the war where most of them were used as pawns, many young veterans were mentally damaged and forced to survive in a damaged society. They were victims of individual and collective trauma. They were used as 'decoys' and 'cannon fodder' by predatory warlords within various factions. Their agency within warring factions, which led to them being tagged as perpetrators, undermined their well-being and future. That agency was used to cope with the military life or environment. Programmes designed to assist them to regain their civilian status suffered setbacks. From the foregoing,

the logical conclusion would have been that all former child-soldiers, as some scholars argued, would be branded social misfits with a paralysed future.

But in the midst of that post-conflict societal chaos, some former child-soldiers metamorphosed into civilians and change agents in their communities. The source of such a set change cannot solely be attributed to humanitarian agencies and human rights organizations operating in a post-conflict country enmeshed by a widespread 'multidimensional war-profiteering'. The main factor behind this astounding transformation of some young veterans was the 'agency' of young veterans. Opportunities might have been available to them, but it was only those who decided to take action who overcame some of the daunting challenges they faced. This self-agency which stemmed from their technologies of the self and internal conversation, allowed for the formation of instrumental coalitions, and the discovery of the importance of previous ties. The end results were the identity shift from military to civilians, a participative attitude towards the reconstruction of their country whose destruction they had actively been part of, self-reliance, positive perspectives on their future and constructive patriotism.

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Appendix 1: Glossary

Some key terms have been defined for the purpose of this study. Although they may have other meanings in other contexts or fields of research, the definitions they have in this work are deemed suitable.

African code of honour

The African code of honour is “a set of moral principles accepted by a society for ensuring good personal character, justice, equity and fairness in interpersonal and intergroup relations, inculcating a strong sense of what is morally right in order to produce people of honour, good behaviour, truthfulness, and great reputation ... The code of honour is often stronger than law as people are honour-bound to do certain things even when the law does not require them to do so ... In pre-colonial Africa, honour was a very important factor in personal, family, group, and societal life” (Nwolise, 2001:7).¹⁰⁴

Armed forces

“Armed forces generally refer to official government armed forces, including the army, navy and air force” (Uganda Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2007:24).

Armed groups and armed political groups

“Armed groups and armed political groups refer to non-state or irregular armed groups which use arms for political reasons. They include opposition forces, factional or tribal groups, armed groups belonging to ethnic or religious minorities and a range of other militia groups. These terms are also sometimes used to refer to armed groups [often paramilitaries and militias] which are backed by or allied to government forces but are not officially part of them” (Uganda Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2007:24).

¹⁰⁴ See Diallo (1976) for details on code of honour in pre-colonial Africa, particularly with regard to women and children’s participation in armed conflicts.

Child-centred reintegration

“Child-centred reintegration is multi-layered and focuses on family reunification; mobilizing and enabling care systems in the community; medical screening and health care, including reproductive health services; schooling and/or vocational training; psychosocial support; and social, cultural and economic support. Socioeconomic reintegration is often underestimated in DDR programmes, but should be included in all stages of programming and budgeting, and partner organizations should be involved at the start of the reintegration process to establish strong collaboration structures” (UN DPKO, 2006:19).

Child-soldier

The irreconcilable positions of the proponents of the internationally age-based legal definition of who a child is, on the one hand, and the exponents of a culture-based sociological definition of a child on the other hand, provide adequate ground for another more sociological definition of the concept ‘child-soldier’. Although during my field work in Liberia, the majority of the interviewees pointed out that they were generally referred to as *small-soldier* in their communities, this appellation is in itself problematic and may not be appropriate. I have therefore decided to craft a new definition for the concept child-soldier to avoid the unending debate and controversy woven around it.

A child-soldier is any individual born within warring factions, or any soldier considered as a child in his/her the community not necessarily on a strict age basis, and whose military involvement in any capacity within the ranks of armed forces or groups, the society culturally deems precocious; and could attract the attention of child rights advocates be it locally or internationally. However, terms such as juvenile soldier, underage soldier, boy-soldier, girl-soldier, and children associated with armed forces or groups, are also used when quoting directly authors who used them to refer to child-soldier in their work (Author’s definition).

Child-soldiering

Child-soldiering is defined in this study as the use of child-soldiers during armed conflict.

Child-soldier demobilization

“The formal and controlled discharge of soldiers from the army or from an armed group. Demobilization includes the verification of the child’s participation in fighting forces, the collection of basic information to establish the identity of the child for family tracing and to allow an assessment of priority needs, and the provision of information to the child about what is likely to happen next” (Uganda Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2007:25).

Conflict

“A situation in which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive as being obtainable by one or the other, but not both ... each party is mobilizing energy to obtain a goal ... and each party perceives the other as a barrier or threat to that goal” (Stagneras, as cited in Nwolise, 2001:6)

Armed conflict

According to Rupesinghe and Anderlini (1998:26) and based on the scale of violence:

- Any conflict with over 1,000 battlefield-related deaths per year is defined as war or major armed conflict.
- Intermediate conflicts are those where battle-related deaths are between 25 and 1,000 during a particular year, but exceed 1,000 throughout the duration of the conflict.
- Where violence is more sporadic and less intense, the conflict is said to be of low intensity.

- While conflicts in which one of the parties has threatened the use of violence or has deployed military troops or made a show of force, are labelled serious disputes.

But specifically with regard to armed conflicts taking place in the African context, Nwolise's (2001:8-10) following categorisation of violent conflicts in Africa can be used:

- **High intensity conflicts**

"International wars, civil wars, border clashes, liberation wars and rebellion, and involving over 1,000 lives lost" (Nwolise, 2001:8-10; Rupesinghe & Anderlini, 1998:24).

- **Medium intensity conflicts**

"Communal clashes, ethnic clashes, religious riots, coups, terrorism, land-based riots, chieftaincy riots and involving between 100 and 1000 lives lost" (Nwolise, 2001:8-10).

- **Low intensity conflicts**

"Armed robbery, political thuggery, law enforcement operations of security forces and involving between 0 and 100 lives lost" (Nwolise, 2001:8-10).

Cultural trauma

Cultural trauma occurs "when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Alexander, as cited in Saito, 2006:356).

Disarmament

"The collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programs" (UN definition in Ball & van de Goor, 2006:2).

Fighting forces

“Armed forces, armed groups and armed political groups in a particular armed conflict” (Uganda Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2007:24).

Guerrilla warfare

“A set of military tactics utilized by a minority group within a state or an indigenous population in order to oppose the government or foreign occupying forces” (Beckett, 1999:ix).

International Law

“The body of law which governs the conduct of and relations between States. International law is derived from two primary sources: international treaties and customary law” (Global Protection Cluster Working Group, 2007:15).

- **International treaties**

“International treaties are agreements between States. A treaty is legally binding on all States that have agreed to be bound by it, for instance by way of ratification or accession. A treaty can also be known as a covenant, convention, charter or protocol” (Global Protection Cluster Working Group, 2007:15).

- **Customary international law or custom**

“Customary international law or custom results from a general and consistent practice of States followed out of a sense of legal obligation. It is binding on all States, unless a State has persistently objected to the practice” (Global Protection Cluster Working Group, 2007:15).

Post-conflict

Post-conflict describes “the time, period or events taking place in a given State or region that had experienced an outbreak of violence or conflict in its recent past” (UN DPKO, 2006:17).

Receiving communities

“The communities where the ex-combatants will go, live and work. Within this concept, the social network of a small community is referred to, and also the bordering local economy” (UN DPKO, 2006:18).

Recruitment

The term recruitment refers to the ways in which people become members of armed forces or groups. It can be compulsory, voluntary and forced.

- Compulsory recruitment is usually known as “conscription”, where some citizens are required by law to join the armed forces for a certain period of time.
- Voluntary recruitment is usually regulated by law or policy for the armed forces, but also refers to a situation when a person is enlisted or joins an armed group without the use of force.
- Forced recruitment entails the illegal use of force, for instance in the form of abduction or other duress.
- The lines between compulsory, voluntary and forced recruitment are often blurred. Children may be subjected to various political and economic pressures that provide them with few alternatives to ‘voluntarily’ joining armed forces or armed groups (Uganda Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2007:25).

Reinsertion

“Reinsertion is the assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilization but prior to the longer-term process of reintegration. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education, training, employment and tools. While reintegration is a long-term, continuous social and economic process of development, reinsertion is a short-term material and/or financial assistance to

meet immediate needs, and can last up to one year” (UN definition in Ball & van de Goor, 2006:2).

Reintegration

“A long-term process that aims to give children a viable alternative to involvement with fighting forces and to help them resume their life in the community. Reintegration can include family reunification (or finding alternative care if reunification is impossible), providing education and training, and devising appropriate strategies for economic, livelihood and psychosocial support” (Uganda Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2007:25).

Revolutionary guerrilla warfare or insurgency

“A campaign fought by a minority group within a state to gain political power through a combination of subversion, propaganda, and military action” (Beckett, 1999:ix).

Rule of law

“A principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness, and procedural and legal transparency” (UN DPKO, 2006:20).

Young veteran

A former child-soldier who has been officially demobilized while he/she was still a child, or became an adult soldier before demobilization.

Appendix 2: Some socio-economic indicators of Liberia

Indicators	Year 2009
Real GDP Growth Rate (%)	4.6
Public sector workforce (active duty civil servants)	47,506
Informal Sector Employment	569,790
External Debt (USD Billion)	1.7
Domestic Debt (USD Million)	292.6
Exchange Rate (end of period LD/USD)	70.5
Population growth rate (%)	2.1
Percentage of Population under 15yrs	41.93
Life Expectancy at birth	47
Illiteracy Rate (%)	44.13
Percentage of population with access to education	31.46
Infant Mortality Rate (per 1000 live births)	72
Maternal Mortality Rate (per 100,000 live births)	578
Population below poverty line (living on less than US\$1 per day)	63.8
Human Development Index	0.442
Male Senators	25
Female Senators	5
Male Representatives	55
Female Representatives	8

Adapted from Liberia 2010 MDG Report: Achieving 2015 Progress, Prospects, and Constraints. Liberia's Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, September 2010.

Appendix 3: cursory description of research respondents

	Area/Location	Young veterans (pseudonyms)	Cursory description
1	Buzzi Quarters	Fleur	He was on his way to look for food when he was abducted by rebels to join the war. He was once a commander of the Small Boys Unit. He maintained strong ties with his former comrades. The most shocking thing he saw during the war was the killing of his family members.
2		Jardin	Served within the LURD. He was able to pinpoint both the positive and negative impacts of the DDRR process. He believes that considering the fact that young veterans go to school, there is hope that things will get better.
3		Philemon	Joined the war at the age of 10 years. He realized that in war-torn Liberia, one needs contacts to survive. He had the desire to further his education and become an NGO administrator.
4	Bassa Community	Martine	Joined the war at the age of seven years and fought for almost the entire 14 years the conflict lasted. He believes that people see him as a role-model in the community. He tells his friends that if they want to go far in life “the medicine is going to school”.
5		Gracias	According to him, the only way to survive was to join rebels, draw water and cook. He was sent to the battle front without any military training. He believes in his ability to mobilize other war veterans. He intends to become a conflict analyst.
6		Petit	Joined the war at the age of 14 years and fought within NPFL. He served in subsequent demobilization operations as a counsellor and could pinpoint embedded flaws. He strongly believes in the transformation of young veterans into prosocial citizens.

7	Sinkor	Amour	He acknowledged participation in a massacre in a church hall in Monrovia. He believes in self-reliance to survive.
8		Flaviano	A female young veteran who joined the war between nine or ten years old. She fought within three different warring factions as the war continued. She served within NPFL, LURD and MODEL. She was once a commander's wife. She strongly believes that children should go to school and not to war.
9		Perfecto	A female young veteran who was abducted by rebels on her way from school. She could recall war names given to her former comrades such as <i>Blood thirst</i> , <i>Next to god</i> and <i>Bulldog</i> .
10	Outland Community	Enfant	He joined LURD rebel group after the 1997 elections. It was poor living conditions that made him join the war. After the war, he held a leadership position in the association of the youth in his community.
11		Venunye	Joined the war at the age of 15 years and served within NPFL. The key lesson he learned: "there is no good war, there is no bad peace."
12		Frero	Joined the war in 1991 at the age of ten and served within ULIMO and later within MODEL. He believes in self-determination to succeed in life; and longs to become an engineer.

Appendix 4: Interview schedule

Introductory statement

Let me begin by introducing myself and explain what we will be discussing. I am a student from Rhodes University (South Africa) carrying out research towards my doctorate thesis. Therefore, our discussion is completely meant for academic purposes. It does not have anything to do with politics. As a matter of fact, here are my credentials (student identity card, university and host organization recommendation). Your answers to my questions during this discussion will be kept secret and your name will not appear. Owing to the fact that I may not be able to write down all you will be saying, I thought it would be good to use this recording machine so that after our discussion, I can easily transcribe it, read it for a better understanding. This will help me to avoid distorting your answers as well. As you can see, it is just a laptop with this microphone. I cannot use it without your permission, and anything we do during this discussion should be consensual. As you might know already, we will be discussing for the next one hour and a half how you experienced the transition from the end of the war as a military to becoming a civilian. We will also be talking of how you see yourself in the society you have been living in, and how people see you as well. We will also be discussing social ties you have, that is, people you relate with and how you experience those ties. Maybe to finish, we will discuss some of the decisions you may want to take based on all these experiences you have had. So before we start our discussion, feel free to ask any question you have.

Experience of the transition from the military ranks to becoming a civilian

- Could you share your experience from the time you left the military ranks to becoming a civilian?
- How did you personally feel to leave military ranks and become an ordinary civilian?
- What were your thoughts and feelings (joy, regret, remorse) when you were told that it was time for you to undergo the official disarmament,

demobilization, and reintegration process?

- What aspects of the process were you pleased with?
- What aspects of the process were you less pleased with?
- Do you see the expectations in your post-demobilization fulfilled?

Post-war identity conundrum

- How do you feel or see yourself today in your community vis-à-vis other people? I mean to explain how you feel when you are with other people in your community (conditional or unconditional acceptance, excluded, included, particularly labelled...).
- How do people treat you in your neighbourhood or community?
- In your opinion, who do you think people in your community think you are?
- I heard that during the war, some foot soldiers changed their names and after the war some continue using such names. Could you share your experience?
- Could you share instances whereby you were faced with exclusion problems or even given some names or nicknames you did not want?
- How did you cope or overcome those problems?

Choice of post-war social ties

- After the demobilization process you certainly have friends. Could you share how you relate with them?
- How about your ties with your family members and peers?
- How would you describe your ties with your former army commanders and comrades?
- How do you experience these contacts?

Reflection on lessons learned and perspectives

- From the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration until now, what personal lessons have you learned that you may want to share?
- How could re-integration be improved in your opinion?
- What actions and decisions do these lessons make you take for the future?

Appendix 5: Letter of introduction of researcher from supervisor (Rhodes University)



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
Tel: +27 (0)46 603 8361
Fax: +27 (0)46 622 5570

Thursday 2 June 2010

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to introduce to you the bearer of this letter, Mr. Komlan Agbedahin, and request that you give him all the assistance he requires for his research work. Mr. Agbedahin is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Sociology, Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa. He is doing his doctoral research under my supervision and has the full support of the Department of Sociology and Rhodes University. He is visiting Liberia in order to undertake his data collection. He will be conducting interviews with youth formerly associated with armed forces and groups, and who went through the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information pertaining to this.

I would appreciate if you could extend to Mr. Agbedahin all assistance he needs for a successful field research.


Yours sincerely,

Professor Michael Drewett


www.ru.ac.za

Appendix 6: Letter of invitation from host organization (LCL-THRP)

Trauma Healing & Reconciliation Program



LUTHERAN CHURCH IN LIBERIA
13th Street, Sinkor / Payne Avenue
P. O. Box 10-1046
1000 MONROVIA 10, LIBERIA



May 15, 2010

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter comes to confirm that **Mr. Komlan Agbedahin** has been invited to visit the Lutheran Church Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Program (LCL-THRP) in Liberia from June 10 – 20, 2010 to conduct his research.

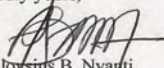
Mr. Agbedahin, a Togolese, is a student at the Rhodes University, South Africa and Jacobs University, Germany. He is currently conducting his post-graduate research on: **Child Soldiers**.

The LCL-THRP has existed for more than ten (10) years and has become a national leading peace building organization in Liberia. The program seeks “to contribute to peace-building in Liberia through the strengthening of community and civic structures.” Its major strategy is to work through community based structures, local Non-governmental and civic organizations by providing training in peace building and reconciliatory practices.

Mr. Agbedahin will cover the costs of his trip to Liberia while the LCL-THRP will serve as a host. As a guest of the LCL-THRP, **Mr. Agbedahin** will be lodged on the Lutheran Compound on 13th Street, Sinkor.

We therefore request that you afford him the need assistance as may be necessary in order to make his visit to Liberia a reality. You are welcome to call or email us if you have questions or concerns regarding this letter.

Thanks in advance for your assistance and cooperation as we all strive to build peace in Africa and the world at large.

Truly yours,

Aloysius B. Nyanti
Programme Officer
LCL-THRP

Email: traumahealing@yahoo.com, korboiweegie@yahoo.com. Cell: 231-6528626



Figure 6: LCL-THRP Programme Officer (Photo: Researcher, 10.06.2010)

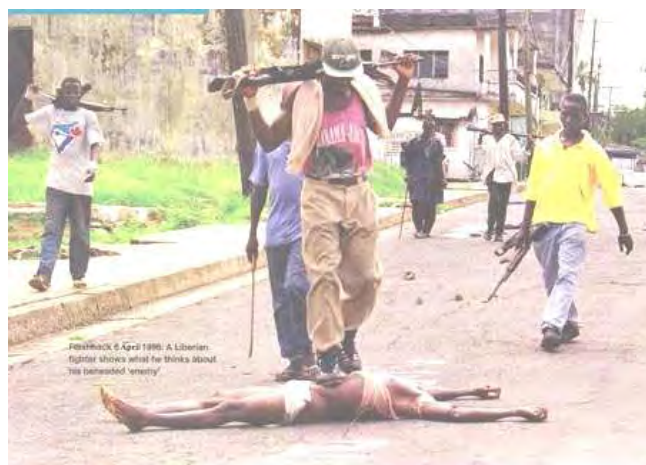


Figure 7: Scene of horror on 6th April 1996 when competing gangs took Monrovia leaving 3000 dead by UN estimates¹⁰⁵



Figure 8: Former MODEL child and youth fighters [Newdemocratnews.com]

¹⁰⁵ Photograph available at http://www.newdemocratnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=605:where-were-you&catid=47:national&Itemid=70 (Accessed on 05.05.2011).



Figure 9: NEPI staff members (Photo: Researcher, 12.06.2010)



Figure 10: Compound of LCL-THRP where most of the interviews with young veterans were conducted (Photo: Researcher, 14.06.2010)



Figure 11: Mass grave where 600 civilians massacred in Saint Andrew Lutheran Church during the war were buried (Photo: Researcher, 14.06.2010)