

## CHAPTER 5

# DISARMAMENT AND ILLEGAL TRADE

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### **The Peace Process and Disarmament in Liberia**

On 18 August 2003, a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in Accra, Ghana, ending more than ten years of recurring civil war in Liberia. A National Transitional Government in Liberia (NTGL) was formed, and the signatories planned for a Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (DDRR) programme. On 19 September, the United Nations (UN) Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1509 (2003) to deploy a peace mission to Liberia. It decided that UNMIL would consist of up to 15,000 United Nations military personnel, including up to 250 military observers and 160 staff officers, and up to 1,115 civilian police officers, including units to assist in the maintenance of law and order throughout Liberia, and the appropriate civilian component. The mandate of the mission was established for a period of 12 months (later extended). The Council requested the Secretary-General to transfer authority to UNMIL on 1 October from forces led by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which it commended for its rapid and professional deployment.

The disarmament statistics from UNMIL, officially concluded on 31 October 2004 (excluding “mop-up operations” which continued into November), are staggering: over 100,000 ex-combatants have been disarmed. And yet, border regions were the last to be reached, and UNMIL internal intelligence shows that there are still substantial small arms caches in the country as well as some larger, Taylor-era weapons that have not been recovered. As the country heads for potential elections in October 2005, the implications of disarmament failures will become a primary security concern. Additionally, clear evidence of 2001 and 2002 Chinese AK variants having been trafficked into Liberia despite an arms embargo introduce the spectre of outside complicity in continued political demand.<sup>51</sup>

The statistics show that the original UN estimates of 38,000 combatants to be disarmed was far surpassed, with a total of over 102,000 participants in the DDRR process. Of these, 11,221 were children and 22,020 were women, and neither group was required to present a weapon or ammunition

Qualifications for Entry into the DDRR Programme				
	Description	Qualifying number of people	Remarks	
Approved Weapons	Rifle/pistol	1	Serviceable weapons only (unserviceable = parts missing and cannot be made functional)	
	RPG launcher	1	---	
	Light/Medium/Heavy Machine gun	2	Belt fed weapons only	
	60 mm Mortar	2	Tube, base plate, and stand	
	81 mm Mortar	3	Tube, base plate, and stand	
	106/120/155 Mortar/ Howitzer	6	---	
	Anti-aircraft guns	4	---	
	Descriptions	Qualifying number of people	Number of munitions required	Remarks
Approved Ammunition	Grenades	1	2	---
	RPG (Rocket and Grenade)	1	1	Together or no entry (not to be handed in as separate items)
	Mortar Bomb (120, 60, 81 mm)			
	Smoke grenades	1	4	---
	Ammunition	1	150	Single or linked

Source: UNMIL Military Observers (MILOBS)

to gain admittance. Charles Achodo, the DDRR Programme and Policy Advisor at the UN Development Programme (UNDP), indicated that the eligibility requirements were looser than they had been in Sierra Leone after complaints about a lack of child and gender sensitivity. He said, “the larger numbers may be because we allowed more women and children into the programme, or it may just be that more males took advantage of the criteria (specifically, only 150 rounds of ammunition per fighter) to disarm more easily for the ‘RR’ benefits like training.”<sup>52</sup> Whatever the case, Liberia’s ratio of disarmed ex-combatants to weapons collected was noticeably high.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement outlined that DDDR was to target the three main warring parties: former government of Liberia forces and other paramilitary groups, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), and Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). There were 11 separate cantonment sites managed by UNMIL personnel: Buchanan, Ganta, Gbarnga, Harper, Kakata, Schefflin Barracks, Tappita, Tubmanburg, VOA, Voinjama, and Zwedru. In order to qualify for the programme, applicants had to present a serviceable weapon or ammunition which met the required entry criteria, be an under-18 year-old child associated with the fighting forces (CAFF), or be a woman associated with the fighting forces (WAFF).

### Liberia DDDR Statistics<sup>53</sup>

Total Ex-Combatants Processed		
ADULTS	M	68,952
	F	22,020
CHILDREN	M	8,704
	F	2,517
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>102,193</b>

Total Ex-Combatants Processed by Faction	
AFL	12,246
LURD	33,485
MODEL	13,149
Ex-GoL (incl. paramilitary)	15,589
Other	27,724
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>102,193</b>

Total Ammunition Collected	
Small Arms Ammunition (SAA)	7,129,198
RPG Rockets	8,703
60/81mm Mortars	12,287
82mm Mortars	15
Hand Grenades	10,410
Surface-to-Air Missiles	12
Miscellaneous	1,103
<b>TOTAL Ammunition (excluding SAA)</b>	<b>32,530</b>

Total Weapons Collected	
Rifles/Sub-Machine Guns	20,458
Machine Guns	690
Pistols	641
RPG Launchers	1,829
Mortars	178
Miscellaneous	4,008
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27,804</b>

Prior to the start of the DDRR process, there were no concrete estimates of how many weapons were present in the country. The UN Panel of Experts reports in 2002 and 2003 indicated that there were six known flights containing shipments of arms from Yugoslavia between June and August 2002. This information was used to estimate what percentage of this shipment was being brought in during disarmament. Included were 5,000 automatic rifles (7.52x39mm) with consecutive serial numbers ranging from 795163 to 800163. As of the last available information in November 2004, virtually at the end of the disarmament process, a total of 3,175 M70 AB2 rifles had been collected, representing 63.5 per cent of the original 5,000. Of 200 RB M57 missile launchers, 184 were turned in, for an impressive-sounding 92 per cent.

Chinese AK-47 Norinco 56/2 models also began appearing in large numbers: 1,027 were collected in the first two phases of disarmament. The serial numbers were as follows:

Serial number range	Number of recovered weapons in range
3701100 to 3709952	114
3710024 to 3717892	100
3718166 to 3719968	31
9011697 to 9029950	113
35015878 to 35087304	87
3522276 to 3788522	670
3700132 to 3732010 (all in Zwedru)	100

The brand-new condition of some of the Norincos (still wrapped in plastic) and the serial numbers indicated a clear breach of the arms embargo, and is



In this photograph<sup>54</sup> of a weapon handed in during the DDR process in Liberia, the markings clearly show it to be a 2002 M70 from one of six shipments from Yugoslavia during that year. The information from the Panel of Experts report was used to gauge what percentage of the small arms shipped into the country were being collected through disarmament.

a reminder that the Yugoslavia shipments were the tip of the iceberg in terms of weapons presence in Liberia. Although an estimated 80 per cent of the Yugoslavian weapons were collected, there are many caches still assumed to be hidden. The demand for small arms and lights weapons of all varieties was still present as disarmament was ongoing and as it concluded, and supplier networks are not scarce in West Africa. Further skewing the DDRR estimates, many ex-combatants and commanders were probably aware that the Yugoslavia shipments were known to the UN, and therefore may have decided to turn in those weapons in first. Those that were not recovered in Liberia may turn up eventually during the Côte d'Ivoire disarmament process, which will provide useful information about the extent of cross-border trafficking.

As one UNMIL official pointed out, however, the initial phases of DDRR were not necessarily only defined by the need to take every gun out of circulation.

	Items on board	Weight	Date of Landing in Liberia
Flight 1	1000 automatic rifles 7.62x39mm 498960 cartridges 7.62x39mm M57 2000 hand grenades M75	21 tonnes	1 June 2002
Flight 2	1000 automatic rifles 7.62x39mm 1260000 cartridges 7.62x39mm M57 2496 hand grenades M75	40 tonnes	7 June 2002
Flight 3	1500 automatic rifles 7.62x39mm 1165500 cartridges 7.62x39mm M57	40 tonnes	29 June 2002
Flight 4	120000 ammunition 7.62mm for M84 11250 ammunition 9mm NATO 75000 ammunition 7.65mm 100 missile launcher RB M57 4500 mines for RB M57 60 automatic pistols M84, 7.65mm 20 Pistol CZ 99, 9 mm 10 Black Arrow long range rifles M93, 12.7mm 5 machine guns M84, 7.65mm	33 tonnes	5 July 2002
Flight 5	100 missile launchers RB M57 1000 mines for RB M57 50 machine guns M84, 7.62mm 1500 automatic rifles 7.62x39mm 17 Pistol CZ 99, 9mm 92400 ammunition 7.62x54mm 52680 ammunition 7.62x39mm 6000 ammunition 7.65mm 9 hunting rifles	38 tonnes	23 August 2002
Flight 6	153 missile launchers 1000 mines for RB M57 10 Automatic pistols M84, 7.65mm 5200 ammunition for Black Arrow long range rifle M93, 12.7mm 18300 ammunition 7.62x54mm 999180 ammunition 7.62x39mm 2 sets of rubber pipelines 3 propellers 1 rotor head	38.5 tonnes	25 August 2002

List of weapons shipments from Yugoslavia to Liberia from June to August 2002 as found in the UN Expert Panel Report on Liberia (October 2002)

combatants at large in Liberia, demobilisation may be their only exposure to assistance before the elections scheduled for October 2005.

The demobilisation phase and building a cultural shift to signal the end of the war was as important. Unfortunately, demobilisation was woefully inadequate to address the needs of ex-combatants, a group which includes many more children and females than the group in Sierra Leone. Some policy makers argue optimistically that the reintegration phase is yet to come, and that is where ex-combatants are meant to be supplied with vocational training, educational opportunities, and guidance in building lives within their communities again. However, budget predictions appear to render this hope misguided. As of April 2005, there remained a USD 39.5 million shortfall that leaves 42,000 ex-combatants excluded from assistance.<sup>55</sup>

That is only a minor improvement on the shortfall of USD 44.2 million and 47,000 excluded ex-combatants predicted in December 2004. For 42,000 ex-

## Demobilisation and Reintegration

The demobilisation phase at the 11 cantonment sites in Liberia lasted for only five days, a period during which ex-combatants were supposed to gain the skills and insights to transform from fighters or the equivalent of indentured servants to civilians ready to assume the duties of life in peacetime. Participants joined trainers for pre-discharge orientation activities in the areas of:

- Personal Development and Career Counselling,
- Trauma Healing,
- Civic Education, and
- Conflict Resolution and Peace Building.

Women were also supposed to be provided with reproductive health and sexually based gender violence (SBGV) counselling. One of the trainers for FIND (the Foundation for International Dignity) worked with ex-combatants at Tubmanberg for six months and then at Voinjama as a supervisor for another three months. He described a four-day process, since the first day was dedicated to logistics:<sup>56</sup>

Demobilisation Schedule <sup>57</sup>		
Day:	Topic:	Goal:
1	Conflict Resolution and Peace Building	To understand conflict and how to resolve and cope with it
2	Personal Development and Career Counselling	To start a process of redefining one's life through the development of a healthy self-image and self perception
3	Civic Education	To understand our basic responsibilities to our nation and fellow citizens
4	Trauma and its Healing Processes	To understand the effects of trauma, how it is able to destabilise a normal person and ways to cope with it

FIND is contracted by the Liberia Community Infrastructure Programme (which is, in turn, funded by USAID) to do conflict resolution and reconciliation. Two trainers there admitted that “four days is a drop in the bucket.” In almost a year of working with ex-combatants, they believe strongly that the lack of adequate counselling is an issue that will, if not fuel demand for guns through the possibility of prolonged or renewed conflict, at least fail to put a damper on it:

The structure of the training is participatory and informal. We do role plays, especially to narrow down ethnic tension. We need to get the ex-combatants back to their communities before another outbreak of violence like the one in Monrovia on 28 October. We want them to extend similar messages to their communities like the ones they receive in our training. There is a lot of work to be done, especially among youth. The energy fuelling this war is not the guns; it is the people who physically engage in armed conflict. We need to rebuild the education system, tear down and rebuild their values. We say to these guys at the camp: “If a Big Man gives you a gun and says, kill this person, will you do it? If it is a woman or child? Will that Big Man ever ask you to kill his son or himself? No. He will always be using you to kill people just like you.” When they start to think about

it, some of them cry. We send them away like that sometimes, having opened another wound of what they have done but with no time to close it properly.<sup>58</sup>

There are other ongoing projects to address the need for general “demobilisation” (as it is widely called in Liberia) not just of ex-combatants but also within communities that must prepare to re-absorb former fighters into their homes, villages, businesses, churches, and mosques. Civil society is not optimistic about the reintegration and rehabilitation (“RR”) phase of DDRR, and although at least one UNDP official responsible for civil society funding has openly acknowledged that she is “stingy” because of a lack of technical capacity in the sector, it may fall to these under funded groups to pick up 42,000 ex-combatants where “RR” leaves them.

A programme officer at the Centre for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE) that is also the acting secretariat for the Liberian Action Network on Small Arms (LANSA), points out the deficiencies and dangers of inadequate demobilisation and reintegration:

Demobilisation was not done properly. There is not enough trauma counselling, and only five days in the camps. Post-1996, there were problems when Taylor was elected. DDR wasn’t done properly then and they became part of continued conflict. In the recent conflict and rioting, people were caught with AKs. Monrovia is overpopulated. The best way to secure yourself is to keep some arms with you. The security sector cannot defend you. National security has no capacity. Mob violence is there; in seconds, conflict can erupt. Guns are dangerous when ex-combatants are being reintegrated without proper demobilisation.<sup>59</sup>

In this view, reintegration is compromised by a steady flow of ex-combatants returning to their homes without a sense of a peaceful future. However, there are problems with civil society taking on the burden of filling this gap. WANEP Liberia has 26 members and focuses on early warning, conflict prevention, and peace education that targets youth – currently 300 students – with peer mediation and 75 teachers. The students are between 10 and 18 years old and live in violence-prone communities, including refugee camps. WANEP is one of Liberia’s well-established NGOs, partly because it is connected to the regional network based in Accra. Children are taken to peace camps for ten weeks while their parents are educated on the Rights of the Child. After the violence on 28 October, WANEP claimed that there were no burning of mosques or churches in any of the communities where they work.

WANEP is also at the forefront of an early warning programme that is meant to fit in with an ECOWAS database to coordinate early warning across the region in one central location. The database will ideally allow information to flow up from the ground level and inform policy decisions. WANEP trains analysts and monitors and has been successful particularly in involving women, whose grassroots efforts were a well-known influence on the peace agreement. These activities are undoubtedly helping to complement demobilisation and reintegration, but there are some drawbacks. According to a WANEP representative, the religious dimensions of conflict are not well provided for in the almost exclusively Christian character of civil society organisations:

There are few Muslim organisations other than at the inter-religious council level. At the functional level there are no Muslims. With the early warning monitors we train we try to be religiously balanced, but 99 per cent of the peace practitioners are Christians. If there was religious violence here today, we would have a difficult time navigating as peace builders. This is probably a large structural problem or issue, at the donor level. Christian groups are interested in funding peace work specifically, and maybe Muslim groups internationally are afraid to get involved.<sup>60</sup>

The CEDE officer's view is that "We need civil society to get involved, to deglorify small arms for young people. Peace building programmes will help them appreciate civil life and reduce violence. Awareness programmes can also educate communities about the dangers of arms." However, without oversight, coordination, technical capacity, and representative staff and opportunities, civil society may not be the right substitute for an under funded reintegration programme. Edward Mulbah of the Peace Building Resource Centre, agrees:

Civil society in Liberia is disjointed and uncoordinated. There are too many networks, and things get territorial instead of focusing on how much work there is to be done. Another problem is that a lot of INGOs are not pairing with NNGOs or local organisations so when they leave there will be a gap in their projects.<sup>61</sup>

On the other hand, according to Mulbah, UNMIL will eventually move out, possibly leaving behind tens of thousands of young people who have not been properly reintegrated into their communities. It is civil society that will be left picking up the pieces:

DDRR has left out many who are not going to give in their guns. Civil society will become responsible for what happens to these people. The UN needs to build the capacity of national structures. We feel that non-essential staff is wasting resources. The Ministry of Youth and Sport is under-capacitated. They need to learn the importance of family and communities. Some regret now that they burned down schools, clinics, and communities. There is a gap in follow-up support psychologically.

If the “RR” follow-up to disarmament and demobilisation does not reach tens of thousands of ex-combatants, then empowering civil society to deal with the ramifications over the long term should be a priority for donors.

In Sierra Leone, reintegration is still very much an issue, particularly in the context of unemployed youth. Although the DDR process there was widely hailed as a success, problems like drug addiction and a lack of psychological support have left some communities burdened with crime and potential instability because of youth populations that are unemployed and instil fear even in political leaders who cite them as the biggest risk to the sustainability of peace. Civil society is under-equipped and financed to deal with this burden and the Ministry of Youth and Sport in the post-war context is relegated to onlooker status when it comes to questions of security. With UNAMSIL pulling out, Sierra Leone has yet to face the challenge of maintaining peace without international re-enforcement. Creating a climate of political inclusion through reintegration and an active civil society and local government structures can diffuse the threat of a rekindled conflict. Providing education and job opportunities for youth is likely to anchor them within their communities, helping to remove the pull of mercenary work or easy recruitment into armed groups both within their own country and in neighbouring ones. Sierra Leone’s slow devolution of power from Freetown to local governments, where a quota of the representatives must be youth, is an excellent first step in this direction.

***Women peacebuilders can stop war, but not fix reintegration***  
***Lindora K. Howard, Programme Assistant, WIPNET/WANEP Liberia***  
***11 November 2004***

We had the “Never Again” campaign, never again talking about war, drugs, rape, and guns. UNMIL coordinated it. On December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2003, violence broke out again. Women moved in to calm the situation with water and biscuits, and the boys listened. The women were recognised. We followed up by talking to the ex-combatants to incorporate them in

DDRR. Under contract from UNMIL, this job is over in June. The second contract is for more sensitisation. Ex-combatants are afraid to disarm – they have guns in hiding because communities may not help or accept them when it comes time to reintegrate. When the women were talking to the boys who were hiding guns, they listened to the women and then escorted them safely from the camp even as everyone else was hiding.

Communities also may be helping to hide arms, so they need to be sensitised. We talk to the boys, get them to tell their friends who are hiding guns. Five days in cantonment sites is too short. Girls who were sex slaves, in five days, they are discharged; it is not enough time to demobilise them. Those youth who carried guns are disarmed, but back in the community they are feared. They haven't changed. How can we be with them?

Women ex-combatants often have their guns stolen by men who then go to disarm, and they are left with nothing. There is a special programme needed to work with women ex-combatants. Women are not united, they have different groups and leaders. They need coordination. WIPNET met with UNMIL DDR to promote recommendations; women need to benefit even if they were sex slaves or wives and not combatants. UNMIL provided short-term rice but nothing long term or concrete, and WIPNET did not follow up.

Women at WIPNET are always in the field, moving. They are energetic responders to conflict as well as peace builders. Our peace outreach project encourages women to get up and join in the peace efforts. Women walk miles and miles to talk to ex-combatants. With sitting actions, rural women are ready to make history by sitting in even once a week. Monday and Thursday is the schedule all over the country at IDP camp sites and other key places. We will do this until the war is over!

We train rural and IDP women to be early warning monitors so that as they are resettled they will grow the network for early warning. Also, we give them self-esteem and leadership training; moving beyond the home and what men call us to the environment as a whole and even the country. These things will be better taken care of if women are involved. Future programmes for women in communities will focus on agriculture and promoting critical thinking about what gaps exist in communities, and planning projects around those needs.

In the IDP camps, food security is the biggest problem. Women prostitute for food or money to buy food.

Is there a religious dimension to the violence? No, it's the youth who are just waiting for an opportunity to join violence or create havoc. Religion is now being used to cover or explain general violence; but how is this being exposed or dealt with at the grassroots? WIPNET community people are responsive to peace outreach. Ex-combatants are mostly the ones doing the violence, and communities respond violently. Peace outreach is diffusing the community response and preventing violence from spreading. We are promoting peaceful ways of conflict resolution.

The bulk of the women are illiterate. We meet and brainstorm early at the office and then move out for peace campaigns or sit-ins. Sit-ins usually take place from 7:30am to 12:30pm. Women were part of the internally displaced populations, moving from place to place: they will move from their homes, then there is more fighting and they have to move again. These people have been walking all over this country until they landed in Monrovia, and then when Monrovia became tense, they said, "we have nowhere else to go." So the sit-ins began, and they locked the men into a room to sign a peace agreement while people were dying. They said, "enough is enough". The grassroots women feel they are part of something, a group that is being heard even though many are illiterate. They are recognised and heard by warlords, ex-combatants, politicians, and at the highest levels. The white [WIPNET] T-shirts gain them entrance as peace builders.

## DDR Cross-border Markets

"The DDR markets are an issue of concern. When they offered more in Côte d'Ivoire, people wanted to move across to disarm there. In Liberia, commanders are confiscating arms and selling them in Guinea for USD 700 rather than allowing USD 300 here. Commanders don't know how many guns are out there. There is a need for mapping and research."

– Centre for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE),  
Small Arms Programme Officer, 12 November 2004

Failure to demobilise and reintegrate ex-combatants is a graver problem than failing to disarm them. A total of 102,193 ex-combatants participated in the DDR process in Liberia, but only 27,804 weapons were turned in. Significantly, of the 4,008 "miscellaneous" weapons, at least three quarters of them were shotguns; this represents more than 10 per cent of the total arms turned in. Obviously, it is questionable whether shotguns were ever

actually used as weapons of war by ex-combatants. Larger weapons, such as the ones used in fighting in Monrovia in 2003, were recovered from faction leaders. UNMIL's discovery in 2003 of large weapons caches in the Executive Mansion, Moses Blah's residence, and in the bush in Voinjama and near the Sierra Leonean border lend credence to the assumption that there are other, similar caches that have not been found. When Charles Taylor left the country he may have deliberately left some large weapons behind in case of an eventual return or for use by his supporters.

The disarmament process began with a heavy focus in and around Monrovia. By the time cantonment sites were being set up further afield, the rainy season had begun and even those who wanted to participate often had a difficult time with transport. So, the areas with the most weapons and the highest probability of hiding large caches were the last and least adequately reached by the process. What happens to weapons that are not turned in? In Côte d'Ivoire, which shares a porous border with Liberia, the DDR process had been scheduled for 15 October 2004 but was derailed. Fighters there were originally offered USD 900 for turning in their weapons, as opposed to the USD 300 paid in Liberia. This overlap may have significantly impacted on Liberia's success at collecting arms, and fuelled a frantic trading market for young men who wanted to acquire weapons to take across the border. As fighting in Côte d'Ivoire escalated, some of them took the weapons to fight, but others are simply waiting for the DDR process to begin so they can claim their financial reward. Although only Ivorian fighters are eligible for the process there, those that cannot enter the programme will sell their weapons to an Ivorian for a tidy profit.

DDR processes create instant demand across borders by setting prices differently. Informal accounts hold that the ebb and flow of conflict has sometimes been instigated or held back by faction commanders to influence the timing or planning of disarmament. It is unclear whether manipulation happens to that extent, but there is no more straightforward example of the way even peacekeeping operations can fuel the movement of arms and the enrichment of those with the means to broker deals. At a workshop in Ghana in August, 2004 titled "Identifying Lessons from DDR Experiences in Africa," the following lessons were observed and recorded:

DDR is a way to make money. For example, it has been suggested anecdotally that some former combatants in West Africa have gone through demobilisation centres multiple times, qualifying for reintegration benefits each time. This illustrates the need for more accurate and better shared databases of those who have registered

for DDR, and for the tracking of former combatants to ensure that they do not exploit the system either within their own country or, as has been suggested, by moving across borders, for example from Liberia to Côte d'Ivoire, where the cash benefit will be greater...in areas such as West Africa where the region has been militarised by armed groups selling their labour, there is a need for a sub-regional approach to DDR that includes coordination with other UN efforts in the region.<sup>62</sup>

By increasing coordination between programmes in neighbouring areas and recognising the importance of demobilisation, reintegration, and reconciliation to the actual disarmament process, DDR processes can avoid becoming part of the markets they are trying to dismantle.