Seeing DDR from Below

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programming has become an integral element of national and international programming in countries transitioning from conflict. Yet the extent to which DDR has been an effective tool to achieve security and development goals remains unclear. The impact of DDR on a micro-level – that is, on the lives of individual ex-combatants – is also poorly understood. This New Security Programme Policy Brief builds on research conducted among DDR participants in Monrovia, Liberia to identify various areas of concern, challenges, and unintended consequences that should be taken into consideration in the design and implementation of future United Nations DDR projects. Its findings and recommendations aim to assist policymakers and practitioners in devising DDR programming that is more attuned to the challenges posed, and faced, by rank-and-file former fighters, as well as the societies of which they are a part.
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**Seeing DDR from Below**
Challenges and dilemmas raised by the experiences of ex-combatants in Liberia

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Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programming has become an integral element of national and international programming in countries transitioning from conflict. Despite attracting a high level of attention and resources, the extent to which DDR has been an effective tool to achieve security and development goals remains unclear. The impact of DDR on a micro-level – that is, on the lives of individual ex-combatants – is also poorly understood. One problem is that it is difficult to measure the ‘success’ of DDR, especially reintegration, which resists precision in both definition and evaluation; it is similarly problematic to establish causality between particular outcomes and DDR in the context of a complex, multi-dimensional peacekeeping operation. Another issue is that, with a few exceptions (Alden, 2002; Humphreys and Weinstein, 2005; Bøås and Hatløy, forthcoming; Jennings, 2007, forthcoming [a]), the evaluative focus is on the achievement (or not) of programmatic targets – numbers of DDR participants, numbers of guns collected, etc – or on related, higher-profile issues (actions of elite spoilers, elections). Yet examining how DDR plays out on-the-ground would likely enable future programming to be formulated and implemented more effectively, improving outcomes and mitigating potential unintended and harmful consequences.

The findings and recommendations in this policy brief, which are based on qualitative and quantitative research conducted among DDR participants in Monrovia, Liberia, aim to assist policymakers and practitioners in devising DDR programming that is more attuned to the challenges posed and faced by rank-and-file former fighters, and the societies of which they are a part. Particular focus is paid to reintegration, which is still comparatively under-researched and –resourced compared to disarmament and demobilization. This report is not primarily concerned with documenting the specific experiences, good or bad, of individual ex-combatants. Such material is primarily located in the articles and book chapter comprising the analytical component of this project, from which this Policy Brief draws extensively (see Jennings, 2007, forthcoming [a, b]; Bøås and Hatløy, forthcoming). Rather, it draws from and builds on those experiences to identify various areas of concern, challenges, and unintended consequences that should be taken into consideration in the design and implementation of future United Nations DDR (especially reintegration) projects. From this, some key recommendations follow:
Maximalist or minimalist reintegration?

Because the reintegration concept is so vague – referring to open-ended social and economic processes such as demilitarization, employment, acceptance, and development – it can be interpreted and operationalized either broadly or narrowly, i.e. in a maximalist or minimalist way. The former interpretation implies a more ambitious, transformative reintegration agenda; the latter would suggest an approach to reintegration focused on expedience, where the program aspires less to creating a lasting impact in the lives of ex-combatants and more to time-limited gains (such as those derived by giving former fighters something to do in the months immediately following demobilization). In Liberia, the language and expectations surrounding reintegration were those of the transformative agenda; yet the implementation and resources were minimalist, geared towards expedience. This incompatibility led to raised expectations, followed by frustration and dissatisfaction among our informants, who spoke of DDR’s unfulfilled promises and impatience with the lack of improvement to their own situations – specifically their inability to find paid employment even after completing DDR training courses.

The answer is not to prescribe only maximalist or minimalist responses: reintegration programming must reflect local constraints and conditions and available resources, and will therefore vary according to circumstance. However, approaches to reintegration should not vary internally within missions, as seen in Liberia, with its (probably unintentional) attempt to straddle the maximalist/ minimalistic divide. Local partners, practitioners, and donors must therefore decide in the planning phases whether a maximalist or minimalist approach is desired and realistic. Also in the planning stages, the link between DDR and development funding should be identified: at what point in the process is it envisioned that the shorter-term DDR funding will leave off and the longer-term development funding kick in, and how might this impact reintegration programming? How can reintegration programming be better integrated into the broader development planning agenda, considering that UN-led DDR begins under the auspices of a peace operation? Obviously, if a more robust, transformative approach is forwarded – one that attempts to facilitate fundamental social change, for example through programming that attempts to address ex-combatants’ substantive grievances and be a catalyst for broader social change – then donors and agencies must allocate human and financial resources accordingly, acting in close cooperation with local partners and civil society actors, and recognizing the contested nature of such programming.

Minimalist approaches to DDR, conversely, may look to the formal and informal private sectors to absorb and employ ex-combatants that have completed the program. This reliance on the private sector may actually be by default, if there are no allocated resources for state- or donor-sponsored employment programs. Insofar as the private sector is implicated in DDR programming – even in a minimalist approach – then
incentives should be provided to facilitate this process: these can include the extension of low-interest credit to participating employers, provision of risk guarantees; and preference in receiving state or donor contracts (Braud, 2004; SIDDR, 2006). Incidentally, in Liberia, where the private sector is extremely underdeveloped and remains ill-suited to the challenge of absorbing and employing thousands of ex-combatants, the wisdom of relying on the private sector for such a crucial element of post-conflict peacebuilding is questionable.

Communicate and manage expectations
Once reintegration’s scope and objectives are determined, these must be communicated clearly and consistently both within the mission, and between the mission and participants – commanders and rank-and-file ex-combatants – in order to manage expectations, especially where reintegration is scaled more modestly. The DDR program in Liberia suffered from inflated, and unattainable, expectations among ex-combatants. The most serious effect of miscommunication over the benefits of the program was the December 2003 riots that started in a cantonment site outside Monrovia, spreading into the capital and resulting in nine deaths and the temporary suspension of the DDR program (see Chapter II below). On a less dramatic, but nonetheless important, note, many of our informants seemed to believe that completion of DDR (particularly the vocational training courses) would lead to employment. This was clearly not the case, leading to frustration and, among some informants, a sense of both thwarted entitlement and betrayal. Transparency is thus key, both among practitioners (as to what they can promise) and between practitioners and DDR participants. Because peace agreements increasingly include provisions concerning DDR, the process of communicating and managing expectations around DDR should ideally begin during peace negotiations (see also SIDDR, 2006).

Be flexible about DDR content and structure
Faced with limited resources, more flexible or modular approaches to DDR – such as delinking the DD from the R – could fit with minimalist approaches to DDR, while potentially having a broader developmental impact even than maximalist approaches that focus solely on ex-combatants.

The Liberian case illustrates how specific aspects of the local context could have privileged an unorthodox approach to DDR. As seen in Chapter II below, the incentive structure of DDR in Liberia essentially created a situation where the ‘ex-combatant’ mantle became attractive to those lacking other resources and opportunities: in a context of widespread and extreme poverty and need, the benefits promised to DDR participants were enticing, leading to an explosion in the number of participants and,
accordingly, a severe problem in service delivery and resources for the reintegration component. In such circumstances it may be productive to decouple disarmament and demobilization/reinsertion from reintegration, instead focusing reintegration resources on large-scale infrastructure and employment programs that prioritize (but not mandate) hiring of ex-combatants and war-affected youth, and possibly supplementing these with complementary bilateral or multilateral education or support programs for particularly vulnerable groups.

Delinking recognizes that non-combatants are often in similarly dire straits as ex-combatants. It may also mitigate against the hardening of group identity among ex-combatants/DDR participants, and lessen resentment from non-combatants over preferential treatment for former fighters. It counteracts the incentive structure that encourages people to claim and maintain the status of ex-combatant, while reducing the period when ex-combatants are perceptibly differentiated from wider society. Combined with an adequate information campaign before disarmament begins, delinking would also enable the international community to provide an immediate and concrete disarmament benefit, without creating false or unrealistic expectations related to reintegration.

It is worth noting, however, that this approach depends on the willingness of international financial institutions (IFIs), other donors, and national actors to fund the implementation of large-scale projects. As evident in the reliance on the private sector noted above, this may face resistance owing to the IFIs’ typical determination to liberalize post-conflict economies and refrain from providing core financing to significant public works projects.

Where delinking is not considered a viable option, flexibility is still desirable in DDR programming, especially as the interests, circumstances, and resources of relevant stakeholders – including not just DDR participants, but also the national government, UN mission/component agencies, and donors – will change over time. Similarly, because DDR is typically implemented in a situation of incomplete or unreliable information (concerning e.g. numbers of combatants), contingency plans should be made as part of the planning process to accommodate possible scenarios of many more (or fewer) DDR participants.

Flexibility is also desirable with regards to DDR’s content, including its mix of cash and in-kind benefits. Training and education, the staples of reintegration programming in Liberia, are not uniformly necessary or appropriate in different conflict contexts. Projects should be integrated into and reflective of the local development framework, and take into consideration the priorities and capacity of local implementing partners.
Other key recommendations

Other key recommendations spring particularly from the case material and challenges discussed in chapters II and III, below. These recommendations will be outlined in greater depth in the concluding section, but briefly include:

- **Monitoring, evaluation and accountability.** Whether minimalist or maximalist, DDR should have clearly stated and communicated objectives and a mission-specific endstate, against which appropriate benchmarks can be set and monitoring and evaluation can proceed. The gathering of baseline data on benchmarks relevant to DDR, and continuous monitoring and data production during the mission, is crucial in order for some accountability to be achieved.

- **Local context and knowledge.** DDR programming should be formulated using relevant country-specific information, including findings from e.g. anthropology and critical security studies that rarely filter into policy forums. DDR staff should ideally have some thematic and country expertise, and the process of integrating existing UN country teams into mission planning and implementation should be followed through. Again, data collection and production are important tools in generating and expanding empirical knowledge on the local and national levels.

- **Not all ex-combatants are alike.** Women and children ex-combatants are typically considered separate groups from the ‘default’ (adult male) ex-combatant, but important differences relating to rank, age, ethnicity, and the urban/rural divide also come into play in the adult male category. Differentiating DDR benefits according to groups can be a useful tool in more DDR more effective and relevant to recipients, so long as it is done sensitively.

- **Create incentives for cooperation between DDR and the private sector.** Because the private sector is often relied upon to absorb and employ ex-combatants that have been through DDR programs, it is important to create incentives that will make DDR both more efficient and attractive to the private sector, including low interest credits, tax credits, and linking cooperation with the DDR program (through hiring ex-combatants) with eligibility for infrastructure-related projects funded by the national government or donors.

The remainder of this report will briefly introduce the ‘state of the field’ on DDR, before turning to an analysis of the Liberia case. The case material from Liberia is then carried forward in an examination of some of the challenges and dilemmas faced (and posed) by DDR. The report concludes with additional policy recommendations. Reflecting the primacy of the Liberia case material, the report mainly addresses UN-supported DDR processes oriented towards individual recipients.
I. About DDR

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) has become a standard policy tool in post-conflict environments, especially as part of United Nations peacekeeping operations. DDR consists of disarmament, which the United Nations defines as ‘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 .... [and] the development of responsible arms management programs (UN SG, 2005)’; demobilization, which is ‘the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups (UN SG, 2005)’ and encompasses both cantonment and reinsertion (see below); and reintegration, which is ‘the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income .... essentially a social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level .... part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility, [which] often necessitates long-term external assistance (UN SG, 2005)’.

DDR programs are now commonly written into peace agreements, as in Liberia. Although ‘DDR’ is the standard terminology, the concept (and acronym) has variously expanded to suit donor imperatives: from rehabilitation and reintegration (Liberia) to repatriation, reintegration and resettlement (Democratic Republic of Congo). Yet despite this growth of R elements – which are typically seen as the ‘soft’, development components of DDR – the reintegration project itself is increasingly seen as part of a ‘security first’ package rather than a development or rehabilitation initiative (Muggah, 2006, p. 193; Jennings, forthcoming [a, b]).

Although DDR was originally conceived of as a continuum – with disarmament first, demobilization beginning when disarmament is achieved, and reintegration starting when demobilization finishes – this notion of strict chronological order is increasingly considered outdated in principle, if still evident in practice (UN, 2006). The effort to more effectively integrate the various components of DDR comes both from the reintegration side – in an attempt to make it less of an afterthought – and the disarmament side, in recognition that time-limited or one-off disarmament programs may be hindered by a lack of initial trust in the peace or the international presence, and by insufficient immediate capacity for small arms management. Longer-term disarmament processes are also referred to under the generic term ‘weapons reduction’ (Muggah, 2006), which encompasses both legislative and practical efforts.
Significantly, however, efforts to make DDR more cohesive are undermined by the way in which UN-led DDR programs continue to be funded, with disarmament and demobilization covered by assessed funds while reintegration relies on voluntary and national funding—a succinct reflection of the actual priority generally attached to the constituent parts. However, it is worth noting a recent shift in how DDR is organized and funded. Since May 2005, the UN differentiates for budgeting purposes between reinsertion and reintegration. Reinsertion forms part of demobilization, and refers to 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 short-term material and/or financial assistance to meet immediate needs, and can last up to one year (UN SG, 2005). Interestingly, what is now referred to as reinsertion—specifically the provision of education, training, and tools—formed the bulk of the reintegration programming coordinated by the Joint Implementation Unit (JIU) of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), as will be seen in the case study below.

The point of dividing reinsertion from reintegration and linking it to demobilization is that reinsertion programming can then tap into assessed rather than voluntary funding. This is still not the case for reintegration. Terminologically, most work on DDR, including the UN’s new (2006) Integrated DDR Standards, continues to refer to the three-letter acronym; this policy brief will also conform to the accepted terminology.

Reflecting the different funding arrangements for the various components, the arguments by which DDR is typically justified in policy and analytical work have been striated. Disarmament and demobilization are seen through a security lens, as measures taken to immediately and tangibly improve physical safety in the affected area. The security argument for disarmament and demobilization has two facets. One focuses on the foot soldiers, the vast majority of ex-combatants, and the benefits to public and military security derived from identifying, disarming, demobilizing, and dispersing them. The other deals with managing and neutralizing elite spoilers, where DDR is perceived as a useful carrot to get elites to the table, and may also include the integration of some elites and combatants into government or a reformed military as part of a larger program of institutional or security sector reform (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2005).

Conversely, the reintegration component of DDR has typically been perceived and represented more as a development than security imperative: a long-term activity focusing on the economic and social adaptation of ex-combatants to ‘productive’ civilian life (UN DPKO, 2000:2) as part of a newly cohesive and rehabilitated society.
Gleichmann et al (2004, p. 65) write that, ‘Reintegration shifts from a primary focus on the individual and his/her needs ... to a focus on this person becoming a responsible member of the community, thereby supporting community development’. To this end, psycho-social and rehabilitation programs are considered important elements of reintegration programming (Salomons, 2005), even though these are usually the least-resourced and fulfilled aspects of DDR.

As noted above, however, the typical development focus of reintegration seems to be changing, as the justification and implementation of reintegration has over the past several years become explicitly security-driven. Whereas reintegration has always had some security component – because reintegrated ex-combatants are typically deemed less of a security threat than unintegrated ones – it increasingly seems that the development rationale for reintegration is secondary (Jennings, forthcoming [b]); or that no distinction is made between policy attempting to achieve security goals and that attempting to foster development. This substitution of security for development, or conflation of the two, can be problematic with respect to post-conflict reintegration, primarily because security and development conceptions of and goals for reintegration may neither coincide nor be mutually realizable.

Finally, and specifically in reference to reintegration activities, it is notable that the idea that ex-combatants deserve special assistance – whether that assistance is justified on security, development, or other grounds – is underpinned by the notion that ex-combatants are disadvantaged vis-à-vis ‘civilian’ society, and that this disadvantage can and should be rectified through dedicated programs and processes (Jennings, forthcoming [a]). This notion does not exist to the same extent in disarmament, perhaps because exchanging weapons for money or incentives is seen as transactional, whereas bestowing benefits on the basis of one’s status is a normative decision based at least in part on judgments as to how that status is perceived. The idea of ex-combatants as a specially disadvantaged group that can be successfully targeted with policy interventions depends on several assumptions: most obviously, that ex-combatants are substantively different (and worse off) than civilians in terms of skills, earning capacity, stigmatization, and the level of hardship endured during conflict; and furthermore, that there is a clear difference between civilians and combatants; that combatants are organized into a limited number of discrete factions; and that the civilian population is a relatively static, skilled entity into which ex-combatants can be placed (Ibid.). As evident in the case study below, the Liberian experience severely tests the veracity of these assumptions.

**Status of DDR Literature**

DDR has generated a sizable gray literature and a much smaller collection of critical work. The gray literature – which is weighted towards technical guides, identification
of general trends, and ‘lessons learned’ – has played an important role in making a case for DDR as a post-conflict priority. It has also identified operational shortcomings related to DDR funding, prioritization, and implementation (see e.g. UN, 2006; Salomens, 2005; Meek and Malan, 2004; Gleichmann et al, 2004; UN DPKO, 2000; Taylor and Pike, 2000).

The analytical literature, meanwhile, has primarily attempted to examine the impact of DDR in specific contexts, and formulate recommendations that are more sensitive to local communities or conflict histories (Jennings, 2007, forthcoming [a, b]; Bøås and Hatløy, forthcoming; Spear, 2006; Fithen and Richards, 2005; Humphreys and Weinstein, 2005; Pouligny, 2004; McMullin, 2004; Baaré, 2004; Alden, 2002; Kingma, 2000; Colletta, 1999; Berdal and Keen, 1997; Berdal, 1996). The critical literature also led the way in identifying reintegration in particular as a political process and activity, as opposed to a technical or apolitical activity. This emphasis on the political has filtered through into the gray literature: both the UN’s Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) and the Swedish government’s Stockholm Initiative on DDR (hereafter ‘Stockholm Initiative’ or SIDDR) emphasize the political nature of DDR. The critical literature is also increasingly focusing on the political economy of DDR/peacebuilding, and on the connections between DDR, ex-combatants, and criminalized economies (see especially Alden, 2002; Pouligny, 2004; Spear, 2006).

Two high-profile, recent policy-oriented contributions to DDR policy and implementation deserve particular mention: the UN’s IDDRS and SIDDR.

The IDDRS framework indicates the UN’s continued commitment to DDR as an important component of integrated, multi-dimensional peace operations. It gives practical guidance to planners and practitioners, and identifies pitfalls of past DDR programs—such as the problems caused by delays between demobilization and reintegration and the potential segregating effects of DDR (both witnessed in Liberia). The IDDRS also argues that, while a goal of DDR programs is sustainable reintegration, this cannot be achieved solely by DDR, noting that DDR must be ‘linked with the broader processes of national reconstruction and development (UN SG, 2005, p. 4)’. However, a crucial weakness of the IDDRS is that it makes various and conflicting claims about what reintegration can and should do, without requisite prioritization, thus giving the impression of reintegration as a catch-all policy (Jennings, forthcoming [a]). In particular, it is unclear in reading the document whether reintegration is supposed to primarily be a development or security exercise, or equal parts both. In some areas, reintegration is described ambitiously, in language that emphasizes the ‘long-term humanitarian and developmental impact of sustainable reintegration processes and the effects these have in consolidating long-lasting peace and security (UN, 2006, 2.10, p. 1)’, and establishes links between reintegration to political reform and economic reconstruction. Conversely, elsewhere in the document, the aims of reintegration (and DDR) are more limited, emphasizing containment and deterrence: ‘the
establishment of security through the management of ex-combatants is the primary goal of DDR (UN, 2006, 2.10, p. 8). This is problematic because the two approaches to reintegration are not necessarily complementary, much less synonymous; the scope and objectives of the former are far less circumscribed than the latter.

Thus, although the IDDRS rightly argues that reintegration objectives should reflect local needs and be clarified early, it does not effectively link these objectives to the strategic claims made elsewhere in the document, or identify how different objectives (such as those centered around deterrence) make unsupportable or instrumental some claims and expectations (‘sustainable reintegration’). For example, although it details three categories of reintegration approaches, which more-or-less coincide with the perceived threat posed by ex-combatants, it does not adequately differentiate expectations and outcomes on the basis of these approaches. In other words, objectives and resources are to some degree divorced from outcomes and expectations. The unwillingness to promise less is also enabled by connecting DDR to wider development and reform programs. Linking reintegration programming to other peacebuilding efforts is necessary for an integrated approach, but it has the effect of allowing reintegration efforts to be divorced from outcomes. Intentionally or not, the presumption is that good outcomes will result regardless; where reintegration cannot deliver, other components of the peacebuilding agenda will. This is, to say the least, unsupported by the record of reintegration in particular. This unwillingness to scale expectations and outcomes to approaches and objectives undermines an otherwise important and interesting document.

The Stockholm Initiative comprises a final report (2006) and a series of commissioned background studies on various themes. Cumulatively it is an important and impressive effort, which takes a pragmatic and considered view of the role and potential of DDR. The Stockholm Initiative is more explicit than the IDDRS in its acceptance of a security-centric understanding of DDR, and is averse to the ongoing overloading of the concept:

SIDDR . . . maintains that the primary aim of DDR is to contribute to a secure and stable environment in which the overall peace process and transition can be sustained. A key common element of DDR processes is that they aim at removing the immediate threat to a fragile peace posed by groups of armed, uncontrolled and unemployed ex-combatants. When implemented, the DDR programme should ideally influence and contribute to a secure environment that can provide minimum basic conditions to enable long-term development without immediate threats of violent conflicts. It is only in this kind of environment that political and security restructuring as well as social and economic reconstruction and longer-term development can take root (SIDDR, 2006, p. 14).
The report thus punctures some of the grander rhetoric and expectations surrounding DDR, by establishing a minimalist, security-focused baseline for DDR that can be built upon according to circumstance. Importantly, it acknowledges that this more limited understanding of DDR impacts the breadth of reintegration efforts undertaken therein, and thus argues strongly for the need to establish effective links between DDR and other programs – although it is less specific about how this might be done.

Like the IDDRS, the Stockholm Initiative also distinguishes between reinsertion and reintegration, referring to the former as ‘transitional reintegration’ and the latter as ‘sustainable reintegration’ (SIDDR, 2006, p. 25). It further contends that sustainable reintegration efforts should have a wider target audience than ex-combatants, to include a) other war-affected groups and, b) communities receiving demobilized ex-combatants. Such efforts should receive matching funds (to DDR) from donors in two funding windows – one focused on long-term reintegration for ex-combatants, the other on support to affected communities – and be constructed and implemented as parallel programs. This to some degree echoes the third recommendation given in the introduction above, concerning delinking. While the Stockholm Initiative does not advocate delinking the DD and R components (notwithstanding the distinction made between reinsertion and reintegration), it stresses the importance of clearly defining DDR’s objectives and expectations, and of the desirability of extending the benefits associated with DDR beyond the sphere of ex-combatants.

A final worthwhile recommendation from the Stockholm Initiative is the establishment of international advisory teams on DDR for missions. It also notes the need for DDR programs to be able to accommodate differences in ex-combatant populations, specifically between higher- and lower-ranking ex-combatants.
II. Implementing DDR: The Liberian Case

Liberia’s brutal and bloody war lasted for the better part of 14 years.1 It began with a Christmas Eve incursion from Côte d’Ivoire into Nimba County, Liberia by a small group of rebels led by Charles Taylor and calling themselves the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). It ended with the exile to Nigeria of President Charles Taylor, formation of a transitional government, and signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in August 2003. The war was not continuous: a lull in hostilities prevailed in most of the country from 1997 to 2000, the result of a peace agreement that led to democratic elections and Taylor’s subsequent landslide victory. Although Taylor pledged after his victory that his government would help ex-combatants from all factions reintegrate, little was actually done (Utas, 2003). This inactivity may be attributed in part to the international community’s general disengagement from and lack of support to Liberia after Taylor’s election: as Bøås (2005) notes, the most active engagement by the international community during this period was the economic sanctions regime implemented by the UN in 2000 against the Taylor government.

Liberia’s war featured a complex and changing cast of rebel groups, state forces and state-aligned militias, and international actors (particularly the Nigerian-led ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)). Of the Liberian rebel groups, most are identified with ethnic groups—notably the NPFL with Gios and Manos, ULIMO-K (and later LURD) with Mandingos, and ULIMO-J (and later MODEL) with Krahn. However, it is important to note that the composition of these groups was by no means ethnically or ideationally homogenous. Indeed, most of our informants claim to have joined an armed group (or groups) for tactical and/or practical reasons – out of concern for their own or their family’s safety, or because they were forced to join. Very few claim to have joined primarily because they believed in the group’s cause, or said that the group promised them the opportunity to fight to help their ethnic group. In other words, outside of the leadership, commanders, and core fighters, the armed groups – including militias directly linked to government forces – were seemingly neither very cohesive nor ideologically driven, at least over the duration of the conflict (or group’s existence). Undoubtedly for some, fighting for an armed group was based on principle and belief, but for many if not most others it was a matter of circumstance, opportunity, lack of better options, or downright force. The opportunism necessitated by the war continues today in ex-combatants’ current existence in post-war Monrovia,
which is also to a large extent tactical – focused on surviving, not thriving (Bøås and Hatløy, forthcoming).

The Liberian Process

Post-war Liberia is in many ways a success story for the international community and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Organized violence has essentially subsided since the August 2003 signing of the CPA, helped by elite buy-in. The elections in October and November 2005 were peaceful, fair, and well organized and, despite accusations of fraud by losing presidential candidate George Weah, the results were eventually accepted with little disturbance. The country, host to approximately 15,000 UN peacekeepers, has shown few signs of succumbing to the ongoing turbulence in neighbors Côte d’Ivoire and Guinea. Return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) has been steady; a truth and reconciliation commission has been established; ex-president Charles Taylor has been turned over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone; the security services are being restructured; and the print media in Monrovia is flourishing. These achievements are undoubtedly important and, in a country emerging from prolonged civil war, impressive.

But naturally, serious challenges remain. Un- and under-employment and poverty are pervasive; the economy is primarily informal and commodity-based; and infrastructure remains poor. In the process of rebuilding capacity and reasserting governmental authority, state institutions must tackle a long history of predation. The nation is still polarized – by age, gender, education level, ex-combatant/ non-combatant status, and place (urban/ rural) – and ethnicity remains politicized in some areas. The security situation is exacerbated by a severe urban violent crime problem, high numbers of ex-combatants, and rumored weapons caches.

The present lack of organized violence in Liberia is a major achievement, even if it is extremely difficult to establish a causal link between this and DDR (see Humphreys and Weinstein, 2005). A public opinion survey conducted in 2006 illustrated that Liberians themselves had very favorable views of UNMIL, although their views of the disarmament process were more mixed (Krasno 2006). Yet measured against its own rhetoric and objectives – both mission-specific (in terms of providing access to reintegration programming for all participants) and those claimed by the UN for DDR generally – the Liberian DDR program has some worrying shortfalls. These are examined in the following sections.

Established by Security Council resolution 1509 in September 2003, the UN Mission in Liberia took over peacekeeping duties from ECOWAS forces on 1 October 2003. From the outset, DDR was considered a mission priority. In a September 2003 report to the Security Council, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned that ‘failure to adequately plan for and implement the various stages of disarmament, demobili-
zation and reintegration, including obtaining timely and adequate funding, would jeopardize the entire peace process and destabilize Liberia and the entire subregion (United Nations S/2003/875, 2003:13); and DDR-related assistance was specifically mentioned in UNMIL’s mandate.²

The immediate prioritization of DDR was also a function of the fact that the time-tables imposed on the process by both the CPA – with cantonment, disarmament, and demobilization scheduled to begin by 15 December 2003 – and donors – with a donor conference in January 2004 – necessitated that implementation of DDR begin before UNMIL’s 15,000 peacekeepers were fully deployed. This was a disaster. In the weeks leading up to disarmament and demobilization, it was evident that security throughout the country was insufficient and preparations inadequate: only one of the three planned cantonment camps would be ready before the deadline, and security could not be guaranteed for any camp site (Refugees International, 2003). Commitment to disarmament was hostage to politicking by the parties while little in the way of reliable information about the process was disseminated to ex-combatants themselves (IRIN, 2003). Moreover, the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) expected to assume primary responsibility for implementing reintegration programs – primarily Monrovia affiliates of international humanitarian NGOs – generally lacked capacity or were unwilling to prioritize reintegration over their existing activities, especially given the short lead time and lack of up-front funding for reintegration activities from the UN Development Program trust fund (Refugees International, 2003; Paes, 2005).

Thus, when a higher than anticipated number of ex-combatants arrived to disarm at the cantonment site near Monrovia’s airport – and found that, contrary to their expectations, they would not receive a cash payment immediately after handing in their gun – rioting ensued. The situation quickly escalated and spread to Monrovia itself; and after three days of rioting, nine people lay dead, including a woman pulled from her car and shot in the city center by a group of ex-combatants.

The DDR process was subsequently suspended, resuming only in April 2004 once the process was redesigned, more peacekeepers deployed, and more camps opened to receive members of all armed groups. Crucially, entry requirements to the program were lowered during this time: from requiring ex-combatants to turn in a weapon to requiring only the presentation of 150 rounds of ammunition, a change that may have been made to accommodate worries that ‘camp followers’ (primarily considered to be women and children) would be excluded from the process (see also below, Chapter III). This was despite the fact that, as Refugees International (2003) argued, ‘Many of the women are considered to be “camp followers” but were actually fighters who should receive similar benefits to the male combatants’. As seen below, this change significantly impacted the DDR process.

In return for handing in a weapon or ammunition, ex-combatants received a DDR identification card, were briefly housed in cantonment camps – although the surge in
enrolment meant the typical stay fell from three weeks to five days (or less) – received two cash payments of $150 (US) each, and were entitled to reintegration programming, consisting of formal education, vocational training, public works training, or agricultural, livestock, and fishing programs. School and training fees were to be paid by the DDR program for up to three years, and participants in registered reintegration activities were to receive a monthly stipend (decreasing from $30/month in year one to $15/month in year two, to nothing in year three) and, if in vocational training or agricultural programs, a set of appropriate tools upon completion of their course.

After restarting, the DDR process proceeded fairly calmly, without repeat of the December disaster. The disarmament and demobilization components of Liberia’s DDR process formally ended in November 2004, with a total of 102,193 children and adults registered as disarmed and 92,714 as demobilized (NCDDR JIU, 2004). Crucially, this total was far in excess of the anticipated number of ex-combatants: before the program began, practitioners expected 38,000 to 45,000 participants. As noted below, there is evidence that the number of ex-combatants was inflated, bolstered by non-combatants taking advantage of the lowered entry criteria in order to access the cash and other benefits they would otherwise be denied. Of the 102,193 enrollees in November 2004, the Joint Implementation Unit at the time estimated that 11,484 were in reintegration programs, and that 47,121 ex-combatants were uncovered by the allotted reintegration funding (Ibid.). However, and problematically, the number of arms and ammunition collected – just over 28,000 weapons and 6.5 million rounds of ammunition – was significantly less than the total number of people disarmed. This calls into question the extent to which the security aims of disarmament could be considered accomplished. Also problematically, as of November 2006, two years after the DD components formally ended, over 40,000 registered ex-combatants still had no access to reintegration programs.

**DDR participants: Who they are and why they fought**

The fieldwork for this project was conducted in Monrovia (Red Light and Duala Market) in November 2005, in cooperation with the Liberian Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used. 490 informants were interviewed for the quantitative portion; for more detailed analysis, see Bøås and Hatløy (forthcoming). The qualitative component comprises over 40 open-ended, often repeated, interviews, along with almost 20 focus group discussions, ranging from 2 to 8 participants per discussion (see also Jennings, 2007; forthcoming [a]). Informal conversations with ex-combatants at the field sites were used as background.

Despite efforts to recruit women for interviews, the overall majority of people in the sample, 90 percent, were men, although there were differences between the sites
(16 percent of respondents at Red Light were women, versus almost none at Duala Market). The lopsided gender ratio is not unexpected, as many more men than women participated in the different warring factions. It is likely also a function of the fact that, in both field sites, the men – many of whom were unemployed – seemed to have more free time (to participate in interviews and focus groups) than the women and girls, who seemed continuously engaged in domestic, childcare, and/or market tasks. Moreover, it is possible some of the women belonging to or affiliated with an armed group returned to their home communities without picking up the ‘tag’ as ex-combatants – although whether this ‘spontaneous’ reintegration was out of choice or neglect remains an open question. Our informants were also a young population: 64 percent of the ex-combatants are less than 26 years of age, and only nine percent are above 34 years of age. On average the persons interviewed at Duala Market were younger than those interviewed in Red Light; and while the majority in Red Light are of Kpelle, Loma, Bassa and Gio origin, Kru is the dominant ethnic group at Duala Market.

Approximately one-third of the ex-fighters interviewed in Red Light and on Duala Market were born in Montserrat (which includes Monrovia), whereas the ex-fighters born outside of Monrovia mainly originate from Lofa (15 percent), Nimba (13 percent), and Bong (11 percent). Ex-fighters born in Montserrat were the dominant group at Duala Market, whereas people from Lofa, Nimba and Bong were the three largest groups in Red Light. Almost none of the fighters were of foreign origin; similarly, only around 600 of the 100,000-plus people enrolled in DDR were non-Liberians. This may seem surprising, given the high-profile report from Human Rights Watch (Dufka, 2005) claiming the existence of a West African mercenary community of regional rebels that cross borders to take part in wars and/or benefit from DDR programs. Conversely, our findings indicate that either these fighters had already moved elsewhere, or this group is much smaller than indicated by previous research. We also found that fewer fighters switched between the armed factions than suggested by other reports (see e.g. Dufka, 2005; Utas, 2003); and that, where this did happen, it was driven more by tactical or survival considerations than entrepreneurialism. Our data indicates that the combatants that see war as an occupation – and therefore changed ‘employer’ when new economic opportunities (of looting and plundering) emerge – are relatively few. The ‘mercenary warrior’ problem may exist, but this group seems to be smaller than popularly envisioned.

Before joining an armed group, the majority of our informants went to school: as many as 60 percent were in school, and almost 25 percent were working. Only 11 percent reported that they had nothing to do. This seems to run counter to the argument that idleness and boredom lead young people to join armed groups (see e.g. High-Level Panel, 2004). We found instead that our informants were much more likely to have joined an armed group in order to increase their own or their family’s security. Other important reasons for joining an armed group included force/coercion – cited by ap-
proximately one-third of our informants – and material incentives (access to money or goods) (Boås and Hatløy, forthcoming). Only a few of our informants claimed that they had nothing else to do. Crucially, there is little in these background variables to indicate that our informants were any more marginalized or stigmatized than most other young people in Liberia. They went to school, worked, and lived with their families: 79 percent of our informants lived with their parents or other close relatives before joining an armed group. The ex-combatants’ background is therefore surprisingly normal. They do not seem to fit the paradigms of Mkanadawire’s (2002) uprooted urban youths or Abdullah’s (1998) ‘lumpens’ – unemployed youths ‘prone to criminal behaviour, petty theft, drugs, drunkeness and gross indiscipline’ (Abdullah 1998, pp. 207-8). There is little in their background to single them out as a particular group.

However, it is important to remember that pre-war Liberia was a country in which exclusion and marginalization were normal conditions for the majority of the inhabitants. In other words, saying that the ex-combatants’ lives before joining armed groups were ‘normal’ does not preclude that existence from having been one of poverty; political, social, and economic disenfranchisement; and lack of upward mobility (see Clapham, 1982; Gifford, 1993; Ellis, 1999; Richards et al, 2005). The civil war did not improve people’s living conditions; for most Liberians, it only made them worse and more unpredictable. Nevertheless, there may be substantive differences between, and even within, groups; for example, LURD ex-combatants in and around Monrovia compared to LURD ex-combatants from Mandingo communities in Lofa County. The LURD members in Monrovia seem to have been much more ‘accidental’ fighters, swept into events as LURD made its push towards Monrovia in the summer of 2003; by contrast, the LURD fighters from Lofa seem to have been more dedicated to the group and its objectives, seeing themselves as the ‘real’ fighters and looking down on the Monrovia-based recruits (see Boås and Hatløy, forthcoming). This is just one way in which ex-combatants can be differentiated, with other important distinctions being rank (high-level commander, mid- or low-level commander, foot soldier, non-fighter), gender, place of origin, and to some extent, ethnicity.

It is also important to remember that the conflict period in Liberia (as elsewhere) was characterized by a great deal of fluidity, opportunism, and change. This seems as true on the micro- as macro-level. For example, our data suggest that some people fought for a while, then returned to other, more peaceful activities, then took up arms yet again. This echoes Ellis’s (1999, p. 133) observation that, ‘there appears to have been a large number of people who took up arms at some stage of the war, but who may have been victims at other times (...). Even hard-core fighters seem to have remained attached to wider social communities’. Insofar as this is the case, it should indicate an easier reintegration process in Liberia than in e.g. Sierra Leone, where the RUF did not maintain the same social links within communities.
Finally, we noted above that most of our informants were either in school or working before joining an armed group. A large group of our informants (41 percent) reported being in school after the war as well, primarily under the auspices of the DDR program. In addition, 44 percent report being unemployed, of whom half were looking for a job, the other half were not. Alarmingly, considering the oft-made link between youth unemployment and violence in post-conflict situations (CSIS-AUSA, 2003; High-Level Panel, 2004), only 15 percent of our informants claimed to be working, either as their main activity (12 percent) or in addition to attending school (3 percent). Crucially, this indicates that neither their wartime experience nor the DDR program placed them in a better position than before the war.

**Analysis: DDR where ‘everyone fought’**

A number of issues with the Liberian DDR program deserve special attention. One is the explosion in DDR enrolment over expectations, and the related disconnect between numbers of disarmed versus weapons collected. We noted above that the gap between ex-combatants enrolled and weapons collected calls into question the effectiveness of the disarmament component in actually removing small arms from circulation. Furthermore, the explosion in enrolment created a ‘dangerous disconnect (Paes, 2005, p. 253)’ between disarmament and reintegration in Liberia, both in terms of capacity – a lack of adequate space in and funding for reintegration programs, stemming from the huge number of enrollees – and timeliness. Reintegration in Liberia was operationally challenged at the outset, but the substantial increase in enrolment exacerbated these problems, resulting in a lack of adequate space in and funding for reintegration programming, and long delays to enter education and training courses. As already noted, many of the disarmed were unable to access programs for months or years, if at all. The result was a program marred by unfulfilled promises, disappointed expectations, unintended consequences, and associated instability.

But how did the enrolment explosion occur? One problem, common to most post-conflict scenarios and difficult to resolve even with cooperation from the warring parties, was a simple lack of knowledge on how many fighters existed, both at the time of the war ending and from previous engagements (i.e. those that were in an armed group but left/escaped before August 2003). Another factor in the explosion in DDR participants was ‘cheating’ to get into the DDR process – normally by non-combatants pledging a chunk of their first cash payment in return for guns or ammunition to hand in (Jennings, 2007; Nichols, 2005; Paes, 2005). We found that this practice was common and openly discussed. It also points to a revealing attitude among both ex- and non-combatant youths towards what counts as ‘fair game’ in a society struggling to recover from years of bloodshed and international community neglect. It is important to note that ‘cheating’ is here used strictly in a descriptive ca-
pacity, as informants themselves used the term, and not in a normative way implying condemnation of non-combatant DDR enrolees.

The extent and form of cheating is of course a function of the lax entry criteria to the DDR program, as well as the inconsistency with which those criteria were enforced (Dufka 2005, p. 45). Particularly important was the fact that, according to informants at both sites, the program only paid out for one gun (or collection of ammunition) per person. This made cheating a pragmatic and opportunistic response, both by those that had access to multiple firearms as well as non-combatants that sought entry to the program for the cash benefits and school fees/training course.

Over the course of many discussions with informants, however, it nevertheless became clear that, notwithstanding its financial benefit to some, cheating was condoned – even encouraged – by ex- and non-combatants because the program itself was seen as fair game for manipulation. Moreover, this perception seemed to be rooted in the recognition by people on the ground that the DDR program was, at some basic level, unfair. The frequency with which the sentiment recurred indicates that the reasoning is to some extent shared. In interviews with multiple non-combatants ‘passing’ as ex-combatants, the same sentiment was always expressed: I suffered too, so I should benefit too. Nor was this notion of an equality of suffering confined to non-combatants: ex-combatants were also generally dismissive of suggestions that cheating to enter the program was wrong. One ex-combatant explained that, in Liberia, ‘everybody fought’ and therefore everyone should benefit if they could.

And clearly, most informants thought that everybody could. Every informant that admitted to enrolling in DDR without being ex-combatants claimed that the program was practically, if not intentionally, open access. Indeed, one informant claimed that, ‘If someone didn’t benefit, it’s due to their own negligence’ – a statement that met with general agreement from other informants. Of course, this is not strictly true, as there were undoubtedly many people – including genuine ex-combatants – that were unable to access DDR owing to disability, inability to travel, reluctance to be photographed and registered, or other reasons. Women in particular may have had practical obstacles, such as lack of childcare or inability to leave their domestic responsibilities, which were not reconcilable with the schedule of reintegration programming.

Nevertheless, the perception of DDR as ‘free benefits for the willing’ is important, as it points to a dilemma that has plagued the program, particularly on the reintegration side. The program was too oversubscribed to run smoothly, ensure access to programming and benefits, and fulfil the promises made to recipients; but was not broad enough in design or impact to have a wider developmental effect. In Monrovia, at least, the benefits are only intermittently evident at individual level, much less at the community level. Some ex-combatants are going to school, but many more are spending their days doing petty trading and ‘small-small’ business, having emerged from training courses (if ever admitted to one) with no discernible change in their situation. Although
many of our informants claim to have been pleased with the program – only 11 percent said it was worse than they expected – the high level of unemployment among our informants indicates a disjunction between their experiences of the program and its usefulness to their daily life (Boås and Hatløy, forthcoming). Essentially people were being trained for a labour market that had no place for them. Moreover, the value of expectations-based data is hard to ascertain without knowing what people’s expectations were beforehand. Among the rank-and-file, these may have been quite low: most of our informants said that they were happy to get any benefits at all, with complaints about the programming only coming out in the course of longer conversations.

Prevalent among these complaints was the problem of corruption in the program, which seems to take several forms but primarily revolves around payment of the monthly stipends. The most common complaint concerned consistent and multi-month delays in dispensing the cash by schools (which distribute the money on behalf of JIU); students also reported that some of their stipend was regularly missing by the time they received it, having been (allegedly) skimmed off by the school principal or administrators. This is important not just as another example of corruption in a post-conflict environment, but because such actions replicate and reiterate power relationships from prewar and wartime society. Program recipients are at the mercy of ‘big men’ – in this case, school principals and administrators – and have little in the way of recourse: most informants claimed that they felt they must accept corruption and disrespectful treatment in the program because they feared that complaining would result in being marked ‘NTR’, or ‘never to return.’ This is not to conflate school administrators with commanders or warlords; the point is rather that the program has created power structures in which older people, mainly men, dominate and control the resources of relatively powerless youths, and that they take advantage of this relationship to enrich themselves (Jennings, 2007). Many informants also described relationships with the local DDR administrators in terms that can best be described as confrontational, even conflictual.

Informants, particularly those with dependents, also highlighted their inability to support themselves and their families while in school or training programs, even if they received the full monthly stipends. This meant that they had to miss school or training in order to earn money. This in turn had risks, as some schools levied financial penalties for absences, with excessive absence leading to expulsion from the school (and effectively from the program).

Finally, the findings outlined above raise a crucial question: if security considerations brought about by the localized nature of the Liberian civil war were the main reason people joined armed groups, then how effective has the DDR program been in addressing this issue? Almost all Liberians were poor, un- or underemployed, and politically and economically disenfranchised before and during the war, yet some joined armed groups and others did not. Immediate security concerns or force/coercion were
the key factors given by our informants for joining an armed group. The data therefore suggest that the ‘idleness’ and ‘unemployment’ effects are overstated with regards to people joining armed groups. Yet developmental claims aside, the reintegration component of DDR to a large degree hinges on the idea that keeping the ex-combatants occupied – for example through reintegration programming – will keep them out of trouble and ‘buy time’ for the transitional government and mission. The question that then begs to be asked in the Liberian case is, if idleness does not seem to have been behind the first decision to pick up the gun, why should post-conflict policymakers assume that tackling idleness would hold the key to solving the security problems after the war (Bøås and Hatløy, forthcoming)?

Thus, the DDR program was compromised by an inability to live up to its promises (whether real or imagined), resulting in disappointingly little change in ex-combatants’ social and economic situations and potentially feeding their dissatisfaction. Moreover, the dilution of the entry requirements, combined with relatively generous cash benefits, seems to have exacerbated the problem by creating a market for ex-combatants. It is to a large degree incidental that not all claimants were genuine because, upon accepting the label and participating in the process, they ‘became’ ex-combatants, and therefore subject to the same assumptions, prejudices and expectations as their genuine counterparts. Insofar as ex-combatants are considered to be a major problem in post-conflict environments, then expanding their ranks seems to be counterproductive. Moreover, privileging them above their equally impoverished countrymen (through the provision of DDR benefits) arguably helped harden the divisions between former fighters and civilian society, reinforcing ex-combatants’ ‘separateness’ (see e.g. IRIN, 2005). This in turn undermines reintegration’s rationale.
III. Challenges and Dilemmas

The Liberia case usefully brings into sharp relief many of the challenges and dilemmas facing DDR in general and reintegration in particular. These are outlined below; while possible means of dealing with these challenges are put forth in the succeeding section on Recommendations.

The entry criteria dilemma and non-combatant participation in DDR
Devising eligibility criteria for DDR programs can be challenging. Practitioners must strike a balance between ensuring access to the DDR process and maintaining the integrity of a program that is supposed to be narrowly targeted — a sensitive task, especially where information about the size and composition of armed groups and state forces, and the amount of arms under their control, is either unavailable or untrustworthy. Setting the eligibility bar too high — for example, by requiring submission of a weapon without exceptions; requiring units to disarm together; or requiring ex-combatants to vouch for each other — will likely exclude those populations ‘associated with’ (but not fighting for) armed groups, as well as those unpopular or unlucky enough to lose their place in the group: there is anecdotal evidence that commanders will substitute family members or friends for genuine ex-combatants, leaving the latter without hope of accessing DDR benefits.

In Liberia, conversely, the balance tipped seemingly too far in favor of access: as seen above, the program was seen as virtually ‘open-access’ and taken advantage of by non-combatants, overcrowding the program and swamping its resources. Yet it is not entirely clear why the entry criteria to the Liberian program were changed mid-stream. While downgrading the entry requirements may have been an attempt to ensure access for ex-combatants lacking their own weapons (a group typically understood to comprise women and children), there were already special considerations in the eligibility requirements for women and children, making the shift in eligibility requirements superfluous. Instead, the mid-process downgrading of the eligibility criteria in Liberia indicates an absence of consensus among practitioners over what the reintegration component should aim to accomplish. That is, it indicates a lack of understanding of how greatly expanding the pool of participants would be problematic in light of two key constraints: the fact that reintegration resources could not similarly expand; and that the efficacy of job training programs for employment diminishes as more
people receive the same training (Jennings, forthcoming [a]). Even had an effective and thorough market analysis been conducted before the DDR program began, its insights would have been mooted by greatly increased participation rate.

Ultimately, devising effective eligibility criteria depends on the ability to identify and separate out a specific group from the general population. Yet the Liberia case illustrates the difficulty of implementing targeted programming like DDR, which depends on clear distinctions between ‘civilian’ and ‘combatant’, or ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’, in environments where these distinctions could be blurred. At various times, people could be, and often were, both civilians and combatants; they could suffer great calamities and also inflict them.

This has both practical and ethical implications for DDR. Practically speaking, the fact that the combatant/non-combatant divide can be ambiguous thwarts the intention to screen out ‘fake’ ex-combatants, and makes it difficult to plan realistically for the human and financial resources needed for reintegration. Ethically, it raises issues about the appropriateness of targeted programming (to ex-combatants) in such environments (see also below). Cumulatively, low barriers to entry and relatively high incentives to enroll in DDR makes it unsurprising that the entry criteria issue continues to pose dilemmas for practitioners.

**Insufficient resources for reintegration**

We saw above that, in Liberia, the reintegration component was on the back foot from the outset, with NGOs unable or unwilling to prioritize reintegration programming over their own goals – especially, as Paes (2005) notes, in the absence of upfront funding from UNDP, which was in turn related to reintegration’s status as receiving voluntary rather than accessed funding. This problem was of course exacerbated by the increase in enrolment over expectations, which deleteriously impacted reintegration planning and implementation. Although practitioners realized during the disarmament process that they would have a severe shortfall in reintegration resources, it took time to mobilize additional (and still insufficient) resources.

The decision in 2005 to differentiate between reinsertion and reintegration is important in enabling accessed funding for activities previously considered under the remit of reintegration, such as the provision of cash or in-kind benefits, and short-term training or education programs. This is a crucial step in ensuring that reintegration-type benefits will follow closely on the heels of disarmament and demobilization, as opposed to the long time lapse experienced by many Liberian ex-combatants. This does not, however, ensure adequate funding of longer-term reintegration programming, which remains dependent on both national and external assistance.
Timing
Another challenging issue illustrated by the Liberian case is that of timing. DDR is seen as a concrete peace dividend for ex-combatants and potential spoilers, making it important to launch the program quickly, before ex-combatants (and their weapons) disperse or lose patience. Yet beginning DDR too quickly, before adequate security is established or enough peacekeepers deployed, can also have severe consequences, as evidenced in December 2003 at Camp Schiefflin. The imposition of inflexible deadlines, whether by the peace agreement or donors, makes the issue more problematic, by limiting the discretion of the national and international actors on-the-ground.

The flip side of the timing issue is not when to start, but when to stop. The time horizons for DDR remain short. This is especially obvious with reintegration, which, although intended to be a long-term process, is vulnerable to diminishing attention from both donors and practitioners, even if programming is ongoing. However, disarmament can also suffer from the lingering perception that the problem can be quickly and finally resolved; and as Muggah (2006) notes, linking the short-term disarmament efforts conducted under DDR with longer-term, more comprehensive weapons reduction efforts remains challenging. Arguably, the lack of a longer perspective towards DDR inhibits institutional learning, fosters unaccountability among implementing agencies, and enables insensitivity to potentially counterproductive implications of the program over time. (This is compounded by the assessment problems that affect reintegration; see below.)

The two aspects of the timing question are in fact linked. In DDR, as in other components of peacekeeping, there is a tension between short-term expediency and long-term efficacy and sustainability. This tension is most commonly acknowledged in terms of post-war elections: because elections are seen as both a key indicator of intervention success and a trigger for withdrawal, they may be rushed or forced, resulting in outcomes that are problematic for sustaining peace and counter to international intentions. DDR is subject to the same dynamics. A rush to take advantage of the immediate post-peace agreement momentum can result in inadequate planning, insufficient preparation, poor communication leading to unrealistic expectations, and strategic disconnect. The tendency to declare DDR finished after the first two phases are complete (i.e. while reintegration is ongoing) also impedes accountability, insofar as it discourages substantive follow-up and evaluation of reintegration effectiveness.

Measuring success
One of the oddities about the standardization of DDR as a post-conflict policy tool is that there is little clear evidence that it works, especially on the reintegration side. The difficulty in ascertaining reintegration success is of course related to a problem mentioned above: a lack of clarity at the outset of what reintegration should comprise and
accomplish. Because a meaningful assessment of reintegration ‘success’ must relate to the specific parameters and endstate of the program, it is impossible to gauge programming effectiveness and improve future implementation if these are vague or lacking.

But measuring success for reintegration, in particular, is also complicated by the fact that reintegration itself is difficult to assess on the bases of measurement, comparison, and causality. How can reintegration be ‘measured’? And if metrics are devised, how can it be determined that relative success or failure to reintegrate is attributable to participation (or non-participation) in a DDR program, as opposed to other factors? And without being able to determine causality, how can comparisons be systematically made across and within populations and countries (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2005)? Instead, there is mostly silence over what constitutes reintegration success over both the immediate and long-terms.

Immediate to intermediate judgments of program success thus tend to reflect metrics relevant to disarmament and demobilization, not reintegration: numbers of registered ex-combatants, type and number of weapons collected, numbers of demobilization camps and reintegration projects on offer, whether DDR started and ended on schedule, and whether donors were able to hit their targets and spend their funds in the allotted time. This data, although useful to auditors, are of little substantive value in accessing reintegration. Numbers can also be misleadingly interpreted, as seen in Liberia. When Jacques Klein, former head of UNMIL, declared the Liberian program success on the basis of much greater than anticipated registration numbers, his claim not only took the existence of 100,000 ex-combatants at face value, but ignored the discrepancy between numbers of program enrollees and weapons collected – as well as Klein’s own February 2003 estimate of three guns per fighter. Klein’s pronouncement further overlooked the crucial point that reintegration programs could not cope with and pay for the huge influx. And of course, the numbers say nothing about what happened to ex-combatants on a group or individual level after leaving cantonment sites.

Training for unemployment

DDR in Liberia, as elsewhere, comprised a massive job training and education program presumably predicated on future large-scale entry into wage labor. This was problematic in light of the condition of the country’s economy, which was highly informalized; lacked jobs in both the formal and informal sectors; plagued by administrative and legal processes or omissions that discriminated against foreign investment and made doing business inefficient and unpredictable; lacked capacity in both the public and private sectors; hampered by unclear and occasionally contradictory land use and tenure policies; and afflicted by a high degree of capital flight and a small (and largely destroyed) manufacturing base (FIAS, 2006). (Many of these conditions still prevail today.) Simply put, there were nowhere near enough jobs to account for the 100,000-plus
disarmed, not to mention the release back into the labor market of returned refugees and internally displaced persons. While employment was not formally promised as part of the DDR program – although many of our informants seemed under the impression that they would receive a job upon completion of the reintegration component, particularly those taking vocational courses – it is nevertheless worth questioning the extent to which training thousands of people for non-existent jobs is the best use of limited resources in post-conflict environments.

Further, the focus on educating or training ex-combatants for wage labor was undercut by international agencies’ and donors’ reliance on the private sector to provide employment and spur economic growth (see e.g. IMF, 2007, pp. 37–60, 77–86; Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program Agreement Document, 2005). In post-conflict Liberia, given the obstacles outlined above, the private sector was simply unable to cope with this burden. There were also no incentives given to the private sector to seek out ex-combatants in meeting its labor needs. Without precluding the possibility of future development, formalization and growth in the private sector, therefore, it was nonetheless the case that, in the immediate post-war period, dependence on the private sector to provide employment was misplaced.

This also speaks to the timing issue raised above. If reintegration programming is designed so that it essentially depends on the ability of the private sector to absorb a significant expansion in the labor supply, then a push to start DDR quickly (e.g. as part of the peace agreement) is likely to have problematic impacts on implementation.

**Presumption of passivity: women and children**

A further challenge for DDR programming is to accommodate women and children fighting for or associated with armed groups. Two issues in particular are pertinent here. First is access: ensuring that women and children know that the DDR program is open to them even if they didn’t carry weapons, and identifying relevant incentives and removing practical obstacles to their participation. Such obstacles may be particularly prevalent for women, who in many cases must shoulder the bulk of the childcare and domestic responsibilities. In Liberia, however, the public information campaign and the exclusions in the entry criteria for women and children did seem effective in bolstering their participation: approximately 33 percent of the total number of disarmed combatants were women or children, with the majority of those (22 percent) being women. It is not known with any certainty, however, whether these totals are representative of the actual composition of ex-combatants.

A second issue relates to the content of the DDR programming as regards women and children, including the extent to which reinsertion and reintegration programming, in particular, should be different from the ‘standard’ package given to the ‘default’ recipient (adult male fighter). In conflict and post-conflict scenarios, both women and
children tend to be deprived of agency: the presumption is that of coercion, force, and passivity. This is evident in the language used to describe these groups: women and children tend to be considered as ‘associated with’, rather than in or of, the fighting forces. This presumption of passivity or victimcy (Utas, 2003) raises a number of dilemmas relevant to DDR. For example, it may induce practitioners to regressively downplay or de-prioritize women’s roles in conflict. As MacKenzie (2007, p. 6) argues with respect to the Sierra Leonean DDR program, ‘naming females as non-combatants excluded them the immediate attention of post-conflict programs’ and ‘reordered’ them into the domestic or private realm (Ibid, p. 1). This in turn meant that ‘the reintegration process for women and girls was largely seen as a social process that aimed to return females back to their communities and back into more “traditional” roles . . . . by encouraging women and girls to return to their “places” in the community, any new roles, or positions of authority that they may have held during the conflict were effectively stripped from them (Ibid, p. 10)’.

The content of reintegration courses on offer for women in Liberia seems to affirm this analysis of the perpetuation of stereotypical gender roles in post-conflict programming. While male ex-combatants were offered vocational courses in auto mechanics, carpentry, computers, and various other trades, our female informants (that had been through reintegration) spoke of being offered courses in sewing and hairdressing, in addition to education. Offering women courses in such stereotypically female trades may have been an attempt to make reintegration more ‘relevant’ to women, but it nevertheless brands certain paths or careers as ‘unsuitable’ or masculine, likely discouraging female participation. It is also worth noting that the presumption of women’s passivity in particular often accompanies a preoccupation with disordered sexuality, both during conflict (e.g. women as sex slaves or camp wives) and in its aftermath:

While there is concern that idle men will become violent, the greatest concern regarding idle women and girls seems to be their participation in prostitution. These characterizations sustain gendered binaries associated with conflict: men are naturally aggressive and may manipulate this power in desperate situations whereas women are naturally nurturing and may manipulate their bodies in desperate situations. Put another way, under conditions of collapsed or absent social regulations, men will become violent while women will become overtly sexual (MacKenzie, 2007, p. 10).

If this preoccupation compels DDR programs to include components relevant to sexually active women – such as medical checks, testing for sexually transmitted infections, access to HIV or other relevant medication, access to contraception, and counseling – then it could be of utility. Encouragingly, the IDDRS strongly recommends the provision of basic, reproductive, and psycho-social health services during cantonment (demobilization), including for men and boys as well as women and girls. In Liberia, an
attempt was made to provide health care provisions for mothers of infants and nursing mothers in the cantonment sites, although provision of counseling was (according to our informants) extremely deficient.

However, a danger of this preoccupation with women’s sexuality and behavior is that it presumes stigmatization, which may in turn reinforce the ‘re-domesticization’ of women noted above. Thus, both during and after conflict, women are seen as ‘politically significant only insofar as they are in need of protection (Skjelsbæk, 2006, p. 16)’ – a highly unsatisfactory state of affairs, and counter to many post-conflict missions’ professed goals to increase the political representation and economic power of women. The creation or perpetuation structures and stereotypes that constrain women’s agency should be resisted, even if these are arguably well-intentioned.

With children, the presumption of passivity is less a function of retrograde views towards gender roles and more a legal concern: Article 4 (1) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts prohibits both the voluntary and forced recruitment (for use in hostilities) of children under 18 by non-state armed groups; and the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court makes the conscription or enlistment of children under the age of 15 a war crime, whether done by state armed forces or armed groups. The prohibition of voluntary recruitment of under-18s by armed groups removes consent as a viable legal argument for the use of children in armed conflict. Although not all states are signatories to the Optional Protocol, it is nevertheless important in establishing further protections under international law for child soldiers. DDR programs have accordingly attempted to tailor demobilization and reintegration to the special needs of child soldiers. This can be a double-edged sword: we found anecdotal evidence that children lie about their age in order to make themselves older, so as to be assured of receiving the same cash and other benefits as their fellow combatants. Separating out children from their wartime ‘colleagues’ can help facilitate their breaking away from the armed group, but arguably it can also isolate them, shatter their social networks and coping mechanisms, and make them more vulnerable – making it particularly important that the counseling and rehabilitation programs promised to child soldiers as part of DDR have sufficient capacity and are well resourced.

Prioritizing the perpetrators
The primary ethical concern prompted by DDR – that it prioritizes or rewards the perpetrators of conflict over its victims – is acknowledged in almost all the literature. Privileging ex-combatants leaves less donor and national funding and programming for non-combatants that may have suffered as much, if not more, during wartime. Thus, DDR as a concept essentially ranks and rewards suffering on the basis of membership in a particular group, without reference to agency or individual experiences, and taking
advantage of non-combatants’ perceived passivity in order to prioritize the ‘trouble-makers’. However, this ethical argument against DDR is usually brushed away by the assertion that the need for such programming outweighs its seeming unfairness.

All policymaking deals with tradeoffs; this is all the more so in a vulnerable post-conflict environment, where the stakes are high and the international community’s time and resources are usually limited. The tendency on the policy side is therefore to accept that the creation of some inequity, if it advances security and development imperatives, is a necessary if not ideal trade-off in these societies. Yet lack of fairness is intrinsically related to lack of justice – a persistent and serious problem in countries emerging from conflict – and thereby to the prospects of reconciliation. Moreover, in the absence of clear evidence that reintegration programs in fact have positive security and developmental impacts, the calculation becomes trickier. Two questions must then impose themselves. Why aren’t the policies more effective? And under such circumstances, is the trade-off still valid? If the answers to the first question indicate that the concept’s actualization is particularly problematic in some contexts, then the second question becomes all the more pressing.

There is also an underlying notion in reintegration, in particular, of the need to ‘correct’ for the disadvantages that this particular group (i.e. ex-combatants) faces in and from society. In this understanding, ex-combatants are seen not just as perpetrators but victims, making them worthy of special assistance and, in this way, mooting the ethical argument against DDR. This notion is difficult to sustain in Liberia, where ex-combatants living by the ‘rule of the gun’ were likely better off, at least materially, than non-combatants. This is implicitly recognized by the ex-combatants that con-doned non-combatants ‘passing’ in order to receive DDR benefits, on the grounds that they also suffered.

**Lack of local knowledge**

An important factor that consistently constrains the formulation of effective DDR programming is the absence of critical information. This knowledge gap is partly attributable to a simple lack of credible data, and partly to an overly narrow determination of the usefulness of the information that exists. Specifically, rich qualitative data that are potentially valuable to reintegration efforts – such as that deriving from ethnographies, critical security studies, or practitioners with long in-country experience – seem consistently sidelined or overlooked.

As previously mentioned, DDR often starts at a disadvantage because of what is not known: the size and location of armed groups, the amount and type of weapons possessed, and the number of child soldiers, female soldiers, and ‘camp followers’ involved. Parties to the conflict have an interest in obscuring these details, particularly during and immediately following peace negotiations – a crucial time for DDR plan-
ning – when trust in the peace is likely to be low and adversaries unwilling to reveal sensitive organizational information. At the same time, estimates from other sources, such as international or NGOs, may be built on faulty assumptions or influenced by the source’s specific bias. Yet in the absence of credible information, it is exceedingly difficult to properly calibrate the financial and human (civilian and military) resources needed for DDR, both in order to safely complete the disarmament and demobilization phases and ensure adequate funding for and access to reintegration programming for registered ex-combatants.

impacts of reintegration on ex-combatants. A major constraint is the lack of local knowledge among mission staff: typical mission staffers at both mid- and upper-levels usually have thematic expertise or extensive field experience from other missions, but not the in-depth knowledge that their counterparts in the country offices possess.
IV. Concluding Recommendations

In the Introduction we identified three key recommendations for DDR planners, donors, and practitioners, intended to improve the implementation of DDR and minimize unintended consequences:

- **Make it minimalist or maximalist from the start**
- **Communicate and manage expectations**
- **Be flexible about DDR’s structure; this may include delinking the DD from the R.**

The above case study and discussion of challenges facing DDR suggest further recommendations for future DDR programs, whether or not implemented as part of an integrated mission strategy. These include:

**Monitoring, evaluation, and accountability**

A major problem with evaluating DDR programs, especially on the reintegration component, is that there is generally silence on what constitutes reintegration success over the immediate and long-terms (Jennings, forthcoming [a]). This lack of clarity at the outset complicates determinations of policy success and weakens accountability. Accountability is also to some degree undermined by the UN’s emphasis on reintegration as a national responsibility, which – although necessary to reduce dependence on the international presence – nevertheless creates few incentives for sustained institutional attention, thus enabling insensitivity by international practitioners to counterproductive impacts of the program over time.

This reiterates the importance of DDR programs (including the reintegration component) having clearly stated and communicated objectives and an endstate – whether minimalist or maximalist – against which monitoring and evaluation can proceed. The endstate should be mission-specific, and go beyond the template and rhetoric surrounding reintegration to define what the mission actually means by reintegration and ‘reintegration success’ in the particular country and, more specifically, economic reality. Appropriate benchmarks should be established accordingly. Relevant questions to ask concerning mission-specific reintegration include:

- **What does economic and social reintegration into civil society actually mean in the**
affected society – especially when economic life and civil society have been battered by or co-opted into conflict – and how can it be assessed? What indicators can be used as proxies for the level of ex-combatant ‘acceptance’ in society, and how so?

- Is the goal a return to the contours and demographics of pre-war society (or at least, what the interveners deem that society to be)?

- Or is the aim to propel more people into wage labor, predicated on the formalization and expansion of labor markets?

- What should reintegration aim to contribute to post-conflict security and stability? Is the ‘real’ goal of reintegration merely to keep ex-combatants occupied in the period immediately following demobilization? If so, how should the mission manage expectations in line with this bottom-line objective?

Regarding benchmarks, maximalist DDR approaches will require more and various types of data collection and analysis – potentially including such indicators as levels of youth employment and participation in the formal economy; participation in informal and/or criminal economies (and whether these have contracted or expanded); economic growth rates; poverty rates over time; resettlement rates (spontaneous or facilitated); participation in community activities; and incidence of gender-based violence (Jennings, forthcoming [a]; see also Law, 2006). This suggests the importance both of gathering baseline data, and continuous monitoring and data production throughout the life of the mission. The new IDDRS correctly identifies the importance of monitoring and evaluation to DDR accountability and implementation, but robust follow-up will be key.

Monitoring and evaluation should be ongoing, and must also take into account transparency and corruption issues. One way to facilitate this is to establish an external, independent financial management and auditing unit to oversee the distribution of disarmament, reinsertion, and reintegration benefits (SIDDR, 2006). Moreover, where the infrastructure permits, cash reinsertion payments should be made directly into ex-combatants’ local bank accounts. This could minimize corruption and help mitigate the crowd-control problems that could arise with on-site cash distribution to large groups of ex-combatants. Moreover, the need for transparency is not limited to field operations: the Stockholm Initiative (2006, p. 47) found that donors do not keep complete overall data on the funding they provide to DDR programs. Such practices complicate attempts to evaluate overall efforts on DDR, and point to inefficiency and a lack of coordination in bilateral funding, even where channeled through multi-donor trust funds.

Finally, regardless of DDR’s form and scope, it should not be sealed-off from other policy and programs, but rather integrally linked with the economic, political, and security agendas of the national government, UN mission, and donors. Security sector
reform, transitional justice, community-based reconstruction efforts, and more traditional economic development interventions are all relevant arenas of cooperation for DDR. The resources and capability of these players should factor into decisions made concerning maximalist versus minimalist approaches, as should other elements such as the scope of the peace agreement, the estimated number of former fighters, and the extent to which transformative social change is constrained by the integration of elite spoilers into powerful positions in the post-conflict administration.

**Local context and knowledge**

Although it is unrealistic to expect policymakers and practitioners to themselves generate critical knowledge on all areas in which they work, it is less so to expect programming to be formulated using relevant country-specific information – including findings from anthropology and critical security studies that, though germane and accessible, rarely filter into policy forums. A notable exception from Liberia is the World Bank/UNDP Post-War Rapid Social Assessment conducted by Paul Richards et.al. (2005), which brought anthropological expertise to bear on issues of community cohesion and community-driven development.

It is also crucial that DDR staff, and ideally the overall mission staff, have some thematic and country expertise. Of UNMIL, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations’ (UNDPKO) Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit itself conceded that, ‘the absence of a strong political team, with in-depth knowledge of the country or region, made it difficult for the mission to develop effective contacts with the parties to the conflict or armed factions . . . and obtain accurate information about political developments in the country, notably during the DDRR process (2004, p. 16)’. It is also important to continue the process of integrating existing UN country teams into mission planning and implementation, as they may be knowledgeable on issues relevant to reintegration in particular, such as the composition and perceived legitimacy of armed groups or the possible implications of co-opting spoilers.

On the thematic front, funding dedicated efforts at data gathering and analysis at the early stage in the peace process would also smooth the implementation of DDR, especially where it enables more solid information on the strength of the various armed forces (see also SIDDR, 2006).

**Not all ex-combatants are alike**

The simple fact that not all ex-combatants are alike has proved difficult to accommodate in DDR programs. This is the case not just for women and child ex-combatants, but also for ex-combatants at low- or mid-level officer ranks (or corresponding in irregular armed groups). As Alden (2002) has shown from Mozambique, the ‘men in the
middle’ – those above the rank of foot soldiers but insufficiently high-ranking to be accommodated as elite spoilers – can be among the most difficult group to reintegrate. Alden found instead that many in this coterie, stung by being lumped in with soldiers they felt superior to and disaffected by a reintegration package they felt was too stingy for people in their position, parlayed their organizational skills and wartime networks into criminal economic activities. In some cases, these activities were a continuation of wartime activities, but were expanded significantly after peace was achieved.

The challenges raised by women and children’s participation in DDR, outlined above, raise the question of how much difference there should be in the content of reintegration programming between different groups. This reflects both a practical concern – e.g. that under-18s won’t admit their true age if they think they will be treated differently, especially with regards to accessing cash and in-kind benefits – and critical ones: the concern that reintegration programming supposedly catering to women actually ‘reorders’ them back into ‘traditional’ roles; and the (implicit or explicitly) preoccupation in post-conflict programming with women’s sexuality and behavior. At the same time, the example from Mozambique cited above suggests the desirability of developing differentiated DDR packages where substantively different groups are disarming – despite the fact that more amply ‘rewarding’ the commander ranks in DDR effectively perpetuates wartime power structures and dynamics. This thus extends the special treatment accorded to high-level spoilers, whose special treatment – although considered a necessary tradeoff – can be ethically and practically problematic.

Ultimately, differentiating DDR benefits according to groups can be a useful tool in making DDR more effective and relevant to recipients, so long as it is done sensitively. This means that:

- **Child ex-combatants should be offered the same cash and in-kind entitlements as adult disarmers, including access to cash reintegration benefits, in addition to assistance, psycho-social, and other services targeted to the specific challenges faced by child soldiers/ armed group members.**

- **Vocational courses targeted to women ex-combatants (e.g. hair-dressing, sewing) should be clearly identified as supplementing, rather than replacing, those offered to male ex-combatants. Affirmative action-type efforts can be instituted, such that women expressing interest in ‘male’ trades (e.g. auto mechanics, plumbing) be given priority enrolment.**

- **Programs aimed at women should not presume their stigmatization. Treatment and information on sexual health, and counseling for trauma stemming from sexual violence, are necessary components of a DDR program, but a discourse of ‘victimcy’ and/or passivity should be discouraged.**
The involvement of low- to mid-level commanders in criminalized wartime economies is a factor to consider in determining whether to differentiate DDR benefits according to rank. Giving more extensive or valuable DDR benefits to commanders is problematic in that it carries over power structures and hierarchies from the conflict, despite the fact that a professed goal of DDR is to rupture these very structures. Nevertheless, it may encourage this group to channel their energies into licit rather than illicit activities. Conversely, it may abet such illicit activities, by giving those already implicated in criminalized economies more capital to fund their continuation. This is an issue that must be decided on a case-by-case basis; factors to take into account include the degree of buy-in to the peace agreement and the perceived extent and breadth of the criminalized economy.

Create incentives for cooperation between DDR and the private sector
To some degree, a policy focus on DDR obscures the structural issues that impede social and economic development among ex-combatants or, indeed, within the wider society, because a DDR program shifts attention from the wider political, economic and social space to specific individuals or groups (Jennings, 2007; forthcoming [b]). This allows for scapegoating ex-combatants by emphasizing their ‘refusal’ – rather than inability – to reintegrate. The obscuring of the structural also helps explain the contradiction that, in Liberia, reintegration comprised a large job training program in a country acutely lacking jobs, including in the informal sector. Training people in these circumstances is likely not the most efficient use of resources, and seems to stem primarily from the desire to keep ex-combatants busy. To counter this problem, one useful activity for donors would be to fund both surveys mapping the formal and/or informal ‘new growth’ areas of the economy, as part of or in addition to more standard market analyses conducted prior to DDR, so as to target training and/or micro-credit programs more effectively.

As noted in the introduction, moreover, the private sector is often relied on, by design or default, to pick up the slack for DDR programs. This abets the overlooking of the structural: by depending on the private sector to drive economic growth, there is less need to focus on the public sector beyond the narrow demands of ‘good governance’. Yet reliance on the private sector has its own blindness, in ignoring the reality that, in many post-conflict countries, the private sector is weak and/or wholly unregulated, capital flight is the rule, and the operating and administrative environments are arbitrary and poor. Thus, in order to make DDR both more efficient and attractive to the private sector, Braud (2004) suggests the following incentives to encourage businesses to link with the DDR program:

- Access to low-interest credit for businesses hiring ex-combatants.
• Making the hiring of ex-combatants a pre-requisite to receive infrastructure-related contracts from the national government or donors.

• Tax credits to businesses that hire ex-combatants, where the tax system functions. This could also encourage businesses to start shifting operations from the informal to the formal economy.

The provision of micro-credit and start-up support to businesses started by ex-combatants is also an obvious way to facilitate private sector development while specifically improving ex-combatants’ prospects.
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References


Notes

2 The Comprehensive Peace Agreement established the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration, which included representatives of all the armed groups. In actual fact, however, most DDR planning and control was (and is) in the hands of UNMIL’s Joint Implementation Unit (JIU) (Paes, 2005). In discussions with informants about their DDR experiences, particularly when the conversation turned to grievances, the acronym “JIU” was frequently mentioned.
3 Ex-combatant explaining why it was fair for non-combatants to access the DDR program; Duala Market, Monrovia, 15 November 2005.
4 Non-combatant and DDR participant in Duala Market, Monrovia, 15 November 2005.
5 For example, not a single participant interviewed said that they received any counselling, either during their time at cantonment camps or afterwards, despite some expressing a strong need and desire for such assistance.
7 The number of weapons collected is undoubtedly valuable information to those concerned with the management and disposal of small arms and light weapons, but even this information is of limited utility on its own. For example, it is difficult to assess the success of disarmament on the basis of the number of weapons collected without having a realistic sense of the number of weapons previously in circulation, the over-time trends in street prices and general availability of firearms, the state’s ability to manage the weapons under its control, and the ability of customs agencies and border security to control the flow of SALW across borders.
9 See http://www.unddr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=52. Although our data does not reflect this gender distribution, we noted above that, despite efforts to recruit women for interviews and focus groups, they were more elusive than male informants – possibly because the greater demands on their time left them unable to participate.
11 The Optional Protocol entered into force on 12 February 2002. With regards to state armed forces, it raises the minimum age for participation in direct hostilities from 15 to 18 years; and outlaws compulsory recruitment into state armed forces before age 18, although it allows voluntary recruitment into state armed forces after the age of 15.
Seeing DDR from Below

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programming has become an integral element of national and international programming in countries transitioning from conflict. Yet the extent to which DDR has been an effective tool to achieve security and development goals remains unclear. The impact of DDR on a micro-level – that is, on the lives of individual ex-combatants – is also poorly understood. This New Security Programme Policy Brief builds on research conducted among DDR participants in Monrovia, Liberia to identify various areas of concern, challenges, and unintended consequences that should be taken into consideration in the design and implementation of future United Nations DDR projects. Its findings and recommendations aim to assist policymakers and practitioners in devising DDR programming that is more attuned to the challenges posed, and faced, by rank-and-file former fighters, as well as the societies of which they are a part.