CREATING COMMUNITY STRUCTURES FOR SUSTAINABLE

SOCIAL REINTEGRATION OF CHILD SOLDIERS IN LIBERIA

By

ALFRED STUART MUTITI

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Student number: **450-322-46**

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DECLARATION

I declare that **Creating Community Structures for Sustainable Social Reintegration of Child Soldiers in Liberia** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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(Mr)

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ABSTRACT

The study is about how to work with and create community structures for effective and sustainable social reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG), also called child soldiers in Liberia. It analyses the community structures which were engaged in the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration processes and questions whether these were premised on community values and norms. The study challenges some of the existing practices of working with community structures in reintegration programmes.

The Structural-functionalist perspective is used as theoretical framework of the study based on the notion that social events, like DDRR programmes can best be explained in terms of the functions they perform or the contributions they make towards stability and continuity of societies where child soldiers are to be reintegrated.

The study adopts a qualitative methodology to investigate community structures to reintegrate child soldiers in an effective, sustainable way. Different related research techniques, or triangulation, are used referring to a combination of mainly qualitative methods of data collection and analyses. Focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and documentary sources have different complementary strengths which are more comprehensive when used together.

The findings indicated that children of all ages were "recruited" by armed groups and forces for diverse reasons. The findings confirmed children going through difficult experiences as they participated and supervised over violence. The war disoriented children's socialization processes. In some situations they returned to dysfunctional communities, without adequate support systems. The humanitarian led community approaches delivered results, however, these were short-lived. The engagement of the community structures was not based on clear community analysis. The intended manifest functions of the DDRR programmes and reintegration objectives for sustainability were eventually dysfunctional in most cases.

The study's major recommendation is that a careful analysis of existing community structures, identification and engagement of positive community networks be made and that comprehensive capacity building programmes, built on societal values and norms nested within a National Planning Policy framework, will deliver durable and sustainable social reintegration of child soldiers in Liberia.

KEY TERMS

Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups, Social Reintegration, Community Structures, Socialization, Sustainability, Values, Norms, Armed forces and groups, Structural-functionalism, capacity building.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFL- Armed Forces of Liberia

AGRHA- Action for Greater Harvest

BAWODA- Bassa Women Development Association

CAAFAG – Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups

CAP - Children Assistance Programme

CC - Children's Clubs

CCB- Community Capacity Building

CCF- Christian Children's Fund

CEIP- Community Education Investment Programme

CESP - Christian Empowerment and sustainable Program

COHDA - Community Human Development Agency

CPA - Accra Comprehensive Peace Accord

CWC - Child Welfare Committees

DBH - Don Bosco Homes

DDRR - Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation & Reintegration

DIC - Drop in Centres

ECOWAS - Economic Community of West African States

EQUIP - EQUIP Liberia

FGDs - Focus Group Discussions

IASC - Inter-Agency Standing Committee

ICC - Interim Care Centre

IDDRS - Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration standards

IGA - Income Generating Activity

ILO - International Labour Organisation

INPFL - Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia

IRC - International Rescue Committee

KI - Key Informant Interviews

LDF- Lofa Defence Forces

LPC - Liberian Peace Council

LURD -Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy

MADET - Mano Training and Development Foundation

MODEL - Movement for Democracy in Liberia

NGOs - Non-Governmental Organisations

NPFL - National Patriotic Front of Liberia

OAU - Organisation for African Unity

PBRC - Peace Building Resource Center

SBU - Small Boys' Unit

SEARCH - Special Emergency Activity to Restore Children's Home

SERE - Special Emergency Relief for the Elderly

TSA - Transitional Safety Allowance

ULIMO - United Liberian Movement for Democracy in Liberia

UN - United Nations

UNCRC - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

 UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

UNMIL - United Nations Mission to Liberia

YMCA - Young Men's Christian Association Liberia.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide a background to the research study. It attempts to explain why the study is chosen, the existing challenges in working with community structures for sustainable social reintegration of child soldiers in Liberia**,** also called children associated with armed group and armed forces (CAAFAG), the statement of the problem, which challenges child protection practitioners to move beyond numbers to effectively identify appropriate community structures for sustainable reintegration. It provides the purpose of the study which is to show the glaring gap in working with community structures and raises research questions on the nature and type thereof. These structures are used in social reintegration, question the capacity building programme to empower the community structures and question whether social reintegration is built on the resiliency of former child soldiers and that of the community. Whether the structures are grounded within the government framework for recovery and reconstruction or other planning frameworks are also discussed**.**

The chapter looks at tentative hypotheses around community structures, community networks and social networks during armed conflicts, capacity building and policy framework for community structures in post-conflict programming. These tentative hypotheses will be investigated in the qualitative study.

The chapter also provides the justification and significance of the study, theoretical and conceptual framework, the research procedure and techniques, the scope of the study and limitations encountered. The key terms around the reintegration process and community structures are defined to clarify future discussions**.**

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The study grows out of interest having worked on reintegration programmes for Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG), also called child soldiers in Liberia and Uganda. The reintegration programme in Liberia involved over 10,000 formerly demobilised children (UNICEF 2007: 6) and over 25,000 formerly abducted children in Northern Uganda (Pham, Vinck & Stover 2007: 3).

The study challenges the existing practice of working with community structures in reintegration programmes for children. These practices have become the norm of working with Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups. Instead of releasing energies of the community to effectively support children formerly demobilised, the approaches have stifled community initiatives.

There is consensus among practitioners focusing on child soldiers that effective community structures are pertinent to sustainable social reintegration. A successful demobilisation and reintegration programme for child soldiers will depend on the ability of the communities to which they return to accept them. Mutual acceptance within the family and the community is essential for successful reintegration. Many children targeted by reintegration programmes live on the margins of their community, because they are feared and rejected. Acceptance must be gained by re-establishing family and community links disrupted by the conflict (ICRC 2011:13). It is further argued that community ownership is the single most important factor in ensuring effective and sustainable programmes. Mobilizing and empowering the community are essential from the outset. The community should feel collectively responsible for addressing child

reintegration issues and take ownership of the programme, from designing it to implementing and evaluating it (ICRC 2011: 13).

The United Nations (UN) refugee agency confirms the importance of communities in the child protection work for national and refugee children. The involvement of the community in the identification of child protection issues and design and implementation of activities will ultimately lead to better acceptance and greater impact of child protection interventions. Involving the community will enable interventions to reach more children because resources are used more effectively. Active participation of the community in the protection of children will guarantee sustainability of the actions undertaken. Strengthening the engagement of communities in the protection and care of their children will support refugees to acknowledge greater self-reliance and dignity (UNHCR 2013: 1).

The mostly used approach in the reintegration programmes has not delivered sustainable results for children. It has only shown short lived success stories. The CAAFAG have either fallen out of the programmes or not utilised the skills acquired meaningfully, despite having gone through the various reintegration programmes, like skills training and educational programmes.

Despite the level of success achieved in child reintegration, the Liberian experience yet revealed a significant under-achievement in terms of the decreasing numbers of former child soldiers in the streets of Monrovia. For example, the three years of educational support which were provided was not enough to see a child through elementary and secondary schools. For skill acquisition, former experiences showed that many of those who completed trainings at vocational centres and were given start up tools, sold them and returned to the street (Awodola 2009:7). The level of interaction in most cases among peers has been wanting and the children have not felt a sense of belonging to the community where they have been integrated.

Different typologies are advanced for working with community structures. Benham (2008: 13) outlines **four typologies**:

- The **first typology** states that the community sees the intervention as the responsibility of the agency (organisation) that intervenes with the community and that the agency owns the intervention.
- With the **second typology**, the community sees responsibility as being shared with the agency and there is some degree of partnership between the agency and the community. The community's sense of responsibility may range from limited to extensive, but it sees ownership as being shared to some extent with the agency. Consequently, the continuity of the activities involved depends on the continued involvement of the agency and the community.
- With the **third typology**, the community has taken ownership of the issue and sees itself as responsible for addressing it. The agency's on-going role, if any, is seen by the community as supportive.
- With the **fourth typology**, the agency's involvement follows a community having taken responsibility for addressing an issue, and, as with the third category, its role is supportive.

The first two typologies are the most practised, as further amplified by (Wessells 2009: 18) as:

Typology 1: Direct implementation by agency: the agency is a service provider, and community members are beneficiaries.
Typology 2: Community involvement in agency initiative: the agency is a promoter of its own initiative, a planner and a trainer, and community members are volunteers and beneficiaries.

In the typology analysis, there is a glaring inability to define what type of community structure is necessary to work with in the reintegration process.

The study will firstly analyse the **first typology**, where the community structures are created by humanitarian organisations. This is the common approach used in the reintegration process in Liberia. The structures created through this approach, in many countries where reintegration has happened in Africa, have taken over the same trend and character. They often have stipulated guidelines that are written down to govern membership of the structures often referred to as terms of reference or protocols for operation. The organisations have substantial structural requirements; structures created with this approach have taken on different names depending on the organisation, ranging from committees, associations, volunteers and networks.

In Liberia, the reintegration programme was designed with the intentions of promoting the reintegration of CAAFAG into the communities by supporting them in their social context for long term solutions, which involved working with existing community structures in the communities or forming new ones where none exists. However, the programme mostly formed new ones which included, Child Welfare Committees, Children's Clubs, Children's Resource Centres and youth clubs (UNICEF 2007:13). They have guidelines for formation and procedure for operation.

The structures comprise of elders, respectable members of society such as, local authorities, religious leaders, children, women leaders and youth. This approach tends to bring all categories of people together without analysing the power dynamics of a given community. Often the rural elites like teachers and nurses take the processes over, while another fundamental mistake is **"**ganging up" people, regardless of stratification of people in the same community. This approach greatly contributes to the distortion of the existing community structures.

Wessells (2009: 43) argues that child protection programmes made modest efforts to be inclusive and to balance power across groups, yet these efforts did not go far enough, and were outweighed by entrenched social injustices and practices of social exclusion such as caste or stratification barriers, patriarchy, and the privileging of local elites. It was particularly challenging to maintain the full participation of people from the poorest,

most marginalised groups of people, who were often faced with brutal decisions, such as to do volunteer work on child protection or engage in gainful activities that would help to feed their families. Gender inequities also posed significant challenges, as traditional gender roles limited women's full participation. Many a time these structures have ceased to be informal and have acted like NGOs themselves.

There has been limited involvement of communities in planning this approach, structures created are not owned by the communities, but more often associated and referred to as structures for the organisations or agencies implementing the reintegration programmes. These structures are project based; most often they end with the project. The commitment to the project values is determined by the availability of funding. The approach is more linked to the mandate of the implementing organisations; they are most of the time under significant pressure to produce results in a short timeframe. Children pay allegiance to the organisations and not the community. Due to these realities, the children take long to re-establish links with the community.

Most often the structures created by humanitarian organisations do not complement existing community structures in place, but are like a replacement to the existing community structures. The situation is worsened if there are several organisations implementing the same programme and at times decides on forming parallel structures. This has led to unnecessary competition, waste of resources and uncalled wars among NGOs.

Participation has been limited to identification of members to join the structures, training and presentation of songs whenever there are visitors/donors. The level of participation of the communities is not meaningful. The community is not involved in all key stages of the social reintegration, which would be important for confidence building, building a sense of trust and eventual realisation of a sense of belonging.

The **second typology** which is community-led and used to a very limited extent in Liberia is essentially formed by the community without any external influence.

Guidelines to these groups are not written, but are known by heart by the respective members. The approach builds on the original community based structures in the communities. It is based on a clan system, around a community problem, is sensitive of the cultural beliefs and values of a given community and membership is known by the community members.

In addressing developing social reintegration solutions, they are rooted in community values. They are often passed on from one generation to another. They are not project focused. This structure is built around community resources such as healers, chiefs, elders and women groups. The structures are community created, led, owned, managed and sustained by the community. The structures are based on community engagement, where mapping of community resources is done in solving community problems. There are clear channels for community dialogue through this approach.

The typology identifies the community as primary duty bearers, an intervention to the demobilised children is to fill the community capacity gaps, to enable the community members fulfil their obligation in providing for vulnerable children. It builds on the community values, beliefs and traditions. The "we feeling" of the community that symbolises the oneness is the driving force (Barton and Mutiti 1998: 49).

The community led structures have a high degree of ownership. The communities feel they have a responsibility to shape the demobilised children to responsible and respectable human beings. In engaging in discussions with these structures references to words like "our children" is common. This creates a sense of belonging to that given community.

In the community led structures, cases are handled not by a single structure, but by different structures depending on the nature of the problem. The women groups tend to address the issues that are more women related in nature, while the clan would focus on issues that affect community welfare. Inclusion of different categories of people while aiming at building social capital is often applied uncritically with inadequate

understanding of the cultural and political context and vested interests in the status quo (Commins, 2007: 4).

There are many factors at play for an effective social reintegration of demobilised children. However, a poor community based approach is one major limiting factor that has greatly affected the effective and sustainable social reintegration of demobilised children in the community. This has led to the questioning of the whole community based reintegration process for child soldiers, or CAAFAG.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

There is consensus that good and effective community structures are vital for the reintegration of CAAFAG. However, the type of community structures to bring on board in the reintegration programmes is still a challenge. The study recognises that the humanitarian led community approach has delivered results, however, these have been short lived. They have been more process and output focused, ably enumerating the number of the children who have passed through the reintegration programmes, with limited evidence of the impact on children having been effectively reintegrated. Due to the poor approach of working with communities, there is little evidence of follow-up programmes after the end of the projects to monitor how children have reintegrated. The organisations do not design a clear exit strategy to ensure programme sustainability. These limitations cause one to question the type of community structures used during the reintegration programmes and to ask the question: **"what are some of the missing ingredients necessary for effectively working with community structures for sustainable social reintegration"?**

The study examines how different community structures are identified during the reintegration programmes and it questions as to whether the right structures are normally identified. The study recognises the need to de-link the children from the former commanders and examines whether there are positive relations during the bush war times that are investigated during the reintegration programmes. Some of those

relationships have changed due to the socio-economic situation. The relationships become employer-employee relationships or a peer group member relationship. It examines whether they are investigated as networks to support sustainable child reintegration processes. The study also examines the reintegration options to the CAAFAG and the capacity building programmes to the structures involved in the reintegration programmes and how this impacts on the sustainability of the social reintegration.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND TENTATIVE HYPOTHESES

An overarching Functionalist perspective is employed in this research study in the quest to analyse and interpret the stated research problems and to attain the aim of the study. The Functionalist perspective will be used to guide the qualitative sociological research by finding answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of children who were formerly associated with the fighting forces, also referred to as child soldiers in Liberia?

2. What reintegration services are provided to CAAFAG and how do these foster the social reintegration process?

3. What community structures are used in the reintegration of CAAFAG in Liberia and how do community structures engage in the process?

4. What are the mistakes identified in working with community structures in the reintegration process and how do they impact on child reintegration?

5. What capacity building programmes are developed for community structures to ensure sustainable support to former child soldiers?

6. What legal frameworks exist globally and nationally to support social reintegration of former child soldiers and community structures to provide sustainable support?

These research questions act as guidelines in the search for answers to the questions flowing from the problem statement. They can also serve as tentative hypothesis which indicate possible relationships between variables in this qualitative study.

These tentative hypotheses are used as guidelines in qualitative, inductive research procedures because fixed hypotheses do not exist at this stage of the qualitative research process, since hypotheses are formulated during the data gathering process. This is how theory is built and the process is called grounded theory, since it is grounded in the data. The following tentative hypothesis will be investigated in order to change and rectify the myths, misconceptions and falsehoods attached to reintegration processes:

1. Child participation in armed conflict reverses their socialisation process. Their norms and values are disrupted and actions are dysfunctional for communities.

2. Formal and informal education regarding reintegration services and post-reintegration services are offered to former child soldiers in Liberia. However, there is minimal engagement of the community structures in the whole planning, implementation and monitoring cycle of the programme.

3. Creating community structures does not necessarily lead to effective social reintegration of CAAFAG. But a comprehensive analysis is required to find the type of structures that can be engaged in the reintegration process.

4. Existing structures and community coping mechanisms used in the reintegration process do not suffice in the reintegration process. Informal networks and the nature of programming and how they foster sustainable social reintegration, is questionable. Building community networks is pertinent in enhancing social

reintegration of children. Positive networks formed by children during the bush war can be effective in enhancing social reintegration of children.

5. The capacity building programmes by child protection practitioners for community structures, has not been comprehensive. Where trainings have been conducted, they have been haphazard and once off. There has been a narrow engagement on the nature of capacity building programmes by all the actors involved in child reintegration programmes, which has limited the functionality of community structures.

6. Positioning reintegration services as a stand-alone service for post-war recovery programmes led to a lack of a systematised legal institutional framework for response at national and lower levels of government. There is need to move beyond ratifying and ascending to international and regional conventions and treaties to ensuring sufficient policy provisions at national level. Reintegration programmes need to be mainstreamed within the national planning frameworks. Community structures need to be linked to formal systems of government for effective support. This is important in making the structures more accountable and also a sense of re-cognition that they are appreciated. Their contribution at the lower level would greatly enhance government programming at the district and national level.

In accordance with the research questions and tentative hypotheses the study sets out to address the objectives below.

1.5   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to provide answers to the research questions above. The study will also provide information to child protection practitioners in the future

Demobilisation, Disarmament, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) programmes on how to meaningfully engage community structures.

The study will examine through qualitative interviews the functionality of the community structures that existed before the DDRR processes and those formed during the programme, as well as the interface the structures had with the children at each stage of the DDRR process. It will show the extent to which positive social networks formed during the war (former commanders, peer groups) are explored and utilised during reintegration.

The study will show how different international conventions, protocols, treaties and national legislation, national policy frameworks enhance functionality of the community structures. The study will also examine the extent to which sustainability of community structures is addressed in the DDRR design; that is during the planning, implementation and monitoring stages. How the different reintegration options contributed to social reintegration, as well as how reintegration processes are linked to other government programmes and structures to ensure sustainability, will be explained.

1.6 JUSTIFICATION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will fill a gap in the existing knowledge in working with community structures during the reintegration programmes of CAAFAG as it will bring to light the key aspects on how to constructively engage community structures, for sustainable social reintegration. It is the first study, which challenges child protection practitioners to explore the positive relationship formed by children during captivity, not down playing the aspect of breaking the children-former commander structures. It will question some of the practices and held assumptions in the social reintegration of CAAFAG.

The study is significant and sociologically relevant because it will provide insights into the lives of child soldiers during the reintegration processes. It will therefore unearth crucial issues that need to be addressed by policy-makers and implementers and

advocacy groups, as well as the relevant societies in which they are reintegrated. It thus refers to the sociological significance and relevance, societal input, policy implications and the solution to structural problems of sustainable reintegration of child soldiers in Liberia.

The study not only sheds light on best practices in engagement of community structures, it also dispels some of the traditionally held views on networks formed by children during the fighting. It calls for an analytical lens of positive social networks formed by children for sustainable social reintegration. It retools the child protection practitioners with practical knowledge, vital in narrowing the gap between the normative frameworks for DDRR and actual implementation challenges.

1.7   THE RESEARCH PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES

The study employs a combination of different related qualitative research techniques, also called triangulation to gather data, such as questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to ask similar questions to different respondents with different viewpoints. Relevant issues are observed to substantiate findings which enhance the validity of the study. Validity is the degree to which an instrument or research tool measures what it is supposed to measure, ensuring soundness and effectiveness of research techniques to give meanings to social events like reintegration which can be re-checked when data analyses is done (Neuman 1997:138). These techniques are found relevant for it provides rich data about real life situations.

Reliability is enhanced by consistency and dependability of both the process and the product of the research by using various related techniques to compare data obtained from similar techniques to ensure consistency (Babbie 1994:124). An interview schedule or guide is designed to assist in conducting focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Focus Group discussions will be held with community leaders, child welfare communities and CAAFAG, or child soldiers. Focus group discussions are

separated between boys and girls. Key informant interviews are held with NGO officials, government officials and UN officials.

The interview questions are based on the following topics in order to answer the research questions posed in this chapter:

- The functionality of the community structures that existed before the DDRR and those formed during the programme. The focus is on the interrelationship between the structures and the demobilised children at each process of the DDR and the extent to which positive social networks formed during the war (former commanders, peer groups) are exploited during reintegration. Topics also include how the different international conventions, protocols, treaties and national legislation, national policy frameworks enhanced functionality of the community structures relate.

The respondents are purposefully selected, using a snowball sampling method. Participants identified include the beneficiaries to the reintegration programme, programme implementers, donors to the programme and those with policy oversight. A thematic data analysis will be done, where a pattern of themes across the full data set is categorised and analysed to establish relationships between variables.

1.8 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study covers 5 counties out of 14 counties in Liberia, namely Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Bassa and Montserrado. A total of 63 respondents, 29 females and 34 males are taking part in this study. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews are conducted with the following respondents: 27 children (9 boys and 18 girls), 21 staff of Non-Governmental organisations and 13 members of the child welfare communities and 2 government officials.

The study focuses on the establishment of community structures, functionality of the structures, linkage of community structures with other structures, capacity building programmes provided to the structures, sustainability mechanisms developed during programme implementation and the link the programme had with other social networks.

Limitations experienced were that the study took place after the major DDRR process had ended, some of the community structures that had been very active have ceased to exist. Some members of the child welfare committees, can hardly remember some issues, as the study was undertaken a year after project completion. This prompts a lot of probing.

There were approximately 25 NGOs involved in the reintegration process, offering both education and vocational skills training programmes. By the time of the study, due to lack of donor funding most wound up their operations, especially those that focused on formal education options. Some valuable information could not readily be attained.

Another limitation is that the researcher was unable to meet the former adult commanders, to explore their views on relationship with the children after the DDRR. The information relied upon is mainly from the children and members of the community structures.

Some of the senior government officials are too busy to be interviewed. Telephone interviews are conducted with these officials, denying the researcher the opportunity of face to face advantages.

1.9   CONCEPTUALIZATION OF TERMS

The following concepts are relevant to the study and therefore need clarification:

Armed forces: refers to the military institution of a state with a legal basis and supporting institutional infrastructure (Paris Principles 2007: 7).

Armed groups: refers to groups distinct from armed forces as defined by article 4 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (Paris Principles 2007: 7). In this study armed groups also refer to rebel groups or non-state actors.

Children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG): The definition commonly applies to child soldiers in prevention, demobilization and reintegration programmes and derives from the *Cape Town Principles and Best Practices* (1997), in which the term 'child soldier' refers to: " Any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members. The definition includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriages. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms (IDDRS 2006: A29). The terminology of CAAFAG and child soldiers will be used interchangeably in this study.

The long term 'children associated with armed forces and groups', is used to avoid the perception that the only children of concern are combatant boys. It points out that children eligible for release and reintegration programmes are child soldiers and those who fled armed groups (often considered as deserters and therefore requiring support and protection), children who were abducted, those forcibly married and those in detention.

Child demobilization, release and exit from an armed force or group: The term 'demobilization' refers to ending a child's association with armed forces or groups. The terms 'release' or 'exit from an armed force or group' and 'children coming or exiting from armed forces and groups' rather than 'demobilized children' are preferred. Child demobilization/release is very brief and involves removing a child from a military or armed group as swiftly as possible. This action may require official documentation (e.g., issuing a demobilization card or official registration in a database for ex-combatants) to

confirm that the child has no military status, although formal documentation must be used carefully so that it does not stigmatize an already-vulnerable child (IDDRS 2006: Annex A: 29).

Child reintegration is the process through which children transition into civil society and enter meaningful roles and identities as civilians, who are accepted by their families and communities in a context of local and national reconciliation. Sustainable reintegration is achieved when the political, legal, economic and social conditions needed for children to maintain life, livelihood and dignity have been secured. This process aims to ensure that children can access their rights, including formal and informal education, family unity, dignified livelihoods and safety from harm (Gleichmann et al., 2004: 15).

Community: In Sociology, the concept of community has led to significant debate, and sociologists are yet to reach agreement on a definition of the term. Traditionally a "community" has been defined as a group of interacting people living in a shared geographical location, organized around common norms and values and is attributed with social cohesion, generally in social units larger than a household. Knight, Johnson & Holbert (1990-91:145-54) defines community as one which can energetically resolve its problems and provide community structures that help individuals within the community to pursue satisfying lives.

Community Structures: Child protection practitioners refer to community structures as social structures. Social structure is the distinctive, stable system of social relations that exists in any human society. It deals with the organization of social relationships: how they are arranged into patterns and assumes that human social relationships are not arbitrary or coincidental, but rather they follow certain patterns that can be identified. Social structure is thus the institutional framework that makes for order in repetitive, rhythmic interactions among people. The key to the social structure of a society lies in understanding its social institutions and their intertwining combinations. Social institutions provide the order necessary to make social structure possible.

Culture refers to the way of life of its members, the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation. It is the 'design for living' held by members of a particular society (Haralambos and Holborn 1990:3). Macionis (1997:62) defines culture as the values, beliefs, behaviour and material objects that constitute people's way of life. Culture includes what we think, how we act and what we own. As our social heritage, culture is also a bridge to the past as well as a guide to the future.

Disarmament is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programme (Paris Principles 2007: 8).

Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of the demobilization may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampment, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilization encompasses the support package provided to the demobilized persons, which is called reinsertion (Paris Principles, 2007: 8). Berdal (1996: 39) defines it as the formal disbanding of military formations and the process of releasing combatants from a mobilised state. The purpose of demobilisation is to register, count and monitor the combatants and to prepare them for their discharge with identification documents while simultaneously gathering information necessary for their integration into the community (Gleichmann et al., 2004: 15).

Formal DDR process is the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process that contributes to security and stability in a post-conflict recovery context by removing weapons from the hands of the combatants, taking the combatants out of the military structures and helping them to integrate socially and economically into society by finding livelihoods.

Norms are a large number of guidelines which direct conduct in particular situations. They are specific guides of action that define appropriate and acceptable behaviour in specific situations. They are enforced by positive and negative sanctions which may be formal or informal (Haralambos and Holborn, 1990:5-6).

Recruitment refers to compulsory, forced and voluntary conscription or enlistment of children into any kind of armed forces or armed groups (Paris Principles 2007: 7).

Release: Includes the process of formal and controlled disarmament and demobilization of children from an armed group as well as the informal ways in which children leave by escaping, being captured or by any other means. It implies disassociation from armed force or armed group and the beginning of the transition from military to civilian life. Release can take place during the situation of armed conflict; it is not dependent on temporary or permanent cessation of hostilities. Release is not dependent on children having weapons to forfeit (Paris Principles 2007: 7).

Socialization is defined as the process whereby a helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, socialized in the ways of the culture into which she or he is born. Norms and values are internalised by young people to act according to rules and regulations of their societies. Socialisation connects the different generations to another (Giddens 1993: 60).

Unlawful recruitment: is the recruitment or use of children under the age stipulated in the international treaties applicable to the armed force or armed group in question or under applicable national law (Paris Principles 2007: 7).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (1990:2) defines a child as every human being below the age of eighteen years.

Values refer to the belief that something is good and desirable. Macionis (1997: 70-1) defines values as culturally defined standards by which people assess desirability, goodness and beauty, which serve as broad guidelines for social living. Values are statements about what ought to be. Values are abstract standards of goodness, in other words, beliefs are particular matters that individuals consider to be true or false. Cultural values are a core form of our personalities. We learn them from families, schools and religious organisations to think and act according to approved principles, to pursue worthy goals, and to believe a host of cultural truths while rejecting alternatives as false.

1.10   PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY

CHAPTER 1 provides a background and orientation to the study. It attempts to explain why the study is chosen, gives the statement of the problem, which challenges why child protection practitioners have to move beyond numbers to effectively identify appropriate community structures to sustainable reintegration. It raises five research questions, on the nature and type of children becoming child soldiers and community structures, which are used in the social reintegration, questions the capacity building programme to empower the community structures, questions whether the social reintegration is built on the resiliency of former child soldiers. The chapter provides tentative hypothesis guiding the research questions around community structures, community networks, capacity building and policy framework for community structures in post-conflict programming which will be investigated in the study to solve the research problem.

The chapter discusses the aims and objectives of the study, the research procedure and techniques used in the study. It also provides a justification and significance and an overview or scope of the study and limitations encountered.

CHAPTER 2 focuses on the theoretical framework on which the study is premised. It provides analysis why Structural-functionalism is the overarching theoretical framework. The chapter further discusses the application of the theoretical framework to sustainable

social reintegration of child soldiers. It highlights the key concepts of the theory advanced by different Functionalist theorists, which will be applied in the study, they include differentiated and interrelatedness, state of equilibrium, social control and internal coordination, shared values and articulated set of goals, social institutions and social systems, manifest and latent functions, integration, socialization and re-socialisation and child protection systems. These key concepts will guide the study.

CHAPTER 3 deals with the political context of the Liberian Civil war, giving a background to the conflict, how the different factions emerged, and how they involved children in the conflict. It asks the question: "What international and regional efforts were created to address the problem?" The chapter further reviews literature on causes of child recruitment and its effects put forward by different writers. The chapter further focuses on the frameworks that protect children in armed conflict, looking at both international frameworks where the International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law provisions therein are discussed. It also looks at literature on continental and regional frameworks in place and national legislations in Liberia and focuses on other programmatic policy frameworks on reintegration.

The chapter also reviews the literature on social reintegration, psycho-social care and support and on working with community structures.

CHAPTER 4 introduces the qualitative research method, explains what the method is, and its relevance to the study. It discusses the sampling frame of the study and why the purposive sampling was used. It provides details on the type and nature of the respondents in sample size that include, community leaders, child welfare communities, Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG) or child soldiers, NGO officials, government officials and UN officials. The chapter discusses the interview schedule that guides the study and details the key topics around which the questions are derived, to provide answers to the research questions. The chapter further discusses the method used in conducting the interviews with different respondents, which include focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

Focus Group discussions were held with community leaders, child welfare communities, Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG) or child soldiers; these are separate for boys and girls. Key informant interviews are held with NGO officials, government officials and UN officials. The chapter discusses research techniques used to enhance the validity and reliability of the research study.

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The chapter shows how the collected data is analysed. It also provides a presentation on the documentary data as secondary data and why it is important to review this.

CHAPTER 5 presents the analyses of the data gathering. Data is qualitatively categorized into 6 sections to be discussed and explained accordingly:

Section 1 presents findings that answer the first research question: What is the nature of children who were formerly associated with the fighting forces or child soldiers in Liberia?

The findings are discussed under the topics; how CAAFAG joined the rebel groups/armed groups, how their lives changed as a result detailing what they went through and how they were received in the community.

Section 2 presents findings that answer the following research question: What reintegration services are provided to CAAFAG, how do they foster the social reintegration process?

The findings are presented under the following topics; community structures, what they are, how they function, membership and coverage. Discussions on the reintegration options for CAAFAG, perception of the community structures by children and community members, relevancy of community structures, gaps in working with community structures and linkages of the community structures with other structures are included as well.

Section 3 presents findings on the following question: What community structures are used in the reintegration of CAAFAG in Liberia and how do community structures engage in the process?

This section will deal with the type of structures that are used in the reintegration process, the relevance of the community structures, membership, functionality, coverage, development and their relationship with formal and informal systems.

Section 4 presents findings on the following question: What are the mistakes identified in working with community structures in the reintegration process and how do they impact on child reintegration?

Some of the missing ingredients in engaging community structures for effective social reintegration identified in the study will be discussed. The focus is on existing structures and community coping mechanisms used in the reintegration process. Informal networks and the nature of programming are questioned as to how they will bring about sustainable social reintegration.

Section 5 presents findings that provide answers to research question: What capacity building programmes are developed for community structures to ensure sustainable support to former child soldiers?

The findings are presented under the following sub-heading; investment in community structures, training provided to community structures and the financial allocations to community structures in programming.

Section 6 presents findings that provide answers to the following question: What legal frameworks exist globally and nationally to support social reintegration of former child soldiers and community structures to provide sustainable support?

Sustainable social reintegration of child soldiers is based on international and national legal frameworks and is applied in Liberia according to proper legal justification. Whether national legal frameworks are to be instituted instead, is an option in the study.

CHAPTER 6 provides final conclusions, based on the findings in chapter 5 showing how the research questions are answered and affirms the hypotheses in chapter one. The chapter will conclude with final conclusions to solve the research problem and recommendations for future research**.**

1.11 CONCLUSION

The chapter introduces the background and orientation to this research study, laying the foundation to reach the research objective to investigate and discuss the creation of sustainable community structures for reintegrating Liberian child soldiers. Relevant research questions stemming from the research problem are stipulated and will be investigated during the course of the study to finally find answers and solve the social problem of reintegration of child soldiers and effective community structures in Liberia to sustain them.

This next chapter will elaborate on the theoretical foundation of the study which will underlie the research study.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Children participating in fighting forces are a world-wide phenomenon, especially in Africa. There have been previous efforts at analyses by various scholars and aid agencies and different explanations to understand the social problem. The main focus of this research study is to identify the type of community structures to successfully and efficiently reintegrate child soldiers into their former communities. The chosen theoretical framework of the study is an overarching Structural-functionalist perspective, based on the notion that social events, like DDRR programmes can best be explained in terms of the functions they perform or the contributions they make towards stability and continuity of societies where child soldiers are to be reintegrated.

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework on which the study is premised. It gives the definition of Structural-functionalism as put forward by different Functionalist theorists. It discusses the application thereof to social reintegration with reference to Liberian child soldiers and community structures. The focus is on exploring how key premises advanced by different Functionalists, explain interrelatedness and interdependency of social systems to ensure social equilibrium. Culture is an important aspect of social life and contributes to a patterned way of life through shared values, beliefs and norms. Socialization of these norms and values is an important aspect of child development and any interruption, like war could lead to re-socialization which can

reverse the originally socialized values and behavior in children in general and child soldiers in particular. For socialization to happen, the key agents of socialization like family, extended family members, neighbours and members of community structures have to be effectively engaged to ensure social equilibrium in the subsystems, or community structures created to provide sustainable reintegration of child soldiers.

The chapter further discusses the role of social networks in shaping attitudes and behavior in children, relating the social networks to sustainable social reintegration of child soldiers. The key concepts and premises of Functionalist theory are expounded, like culture and its role in creating social cohesion, norms and values, how they guide behaviour, contribute to shared values in social order, functional prerequisites to the functioning of the social system and how social stratification of communities is vital in creating social order in the social reintegration of children affected by war.

Since the study is grounded in an overarching Structural-functionalist framework, it includes some viewpoints of scholars such as Comte, Durkheim, Parsons and Merton.

2.2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND ITS APPLICATION

This research study recognises that there are several theoretical frameworks that can be used in analysing the topic. The most relevant to the study is the Structural-functionalist perspective. Structural-functionalism provides explanations for the interrelatedness of children as part of society, children as subsystems that are nested in the family and community systems, community structures as part of a social system to enhance social order, community as a place with shared goals and values which all should struggle to uphold and community structures having responsibility to address social deviance. Functionality and dysfunctionality of structures are pertinent to the study.

There are several definitions given to Functionalism or Structural-functionalism. Structural-functional perspective is defined as a framework for building theory that

envisions society as a complex system whose parts function together to promote solidarity and stability. The perspective begins by recognizing that social lives are guided by social structure, meaning relatively stable patterns of social behaviour. Social structure is what gives shape to society and its institutions like the family. Structural-functionalism seeks to promote social reintegration on the basis of consensus of shared norms and values as propagated by August Comte (1798-1857). Social structures are regarded as interdependent, working in concert to preserve society. This approach was championed by Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), while social solidarity is how societies "hang together", propagated by Emile Durkheim (1857-1917). It analyses societies and their component features, which focus on mutual integration and interrelationship (Macionis 1997:16-18).

The Structural–functional perspective organizes sociological observations by identifying various structures of society and investigating the function of each one (Haralambos and Holborn, 1990:8). It addresses social functions and various elements of the social system and in this case, community structures, performing with regard to the system as a whole. Functionalism relates these structures of society to the whole, and relates one structure to another, by seeing one as fulfilling a specific function, such as creating sustainable community structures to provide stability to integrated child soldiers which will benefit the whole Liberian society.

This viewpoint is underlined by Barnard (2000:61) who believes that patterned actions among individuals, the constraints imposed by social institutions on individuals, and relations between the needs of an individual and the satisfaction of those needs through cultural and social frameworks are pertinent. Structural-functionalism tends to be concerned less with individual action or needs and more with the place of individuals in the social order, or indeed with the construction of the social order itself, such as working with community structures to successfully reintegrate child soldiers in Liberia.

The following relevant key concepts of Structural-functionalism applied in this research study are highlighted in relation to the working with community structures to reintegrate child soldiers:

2.2.1 Differentiated and interrelated structures

Society is seen as a system consisting of differentiated and interrelated structures. Community structures as an institution of society helps to enhance the interrelatedness and bring harmony between the former child soldiers and the community (Trevino 2001: xxix). Society is conceived of as a system of interrelated parts in which no part can be understood in isolation from the whole. A change in any part is seen as leading to a certain degree of imbalance, which in turn results in changes of other parts of the system and to some extent to re-organise the system as a whole (Wallace and Wolf, 2005:17). The social system thus has a tendency to return to equilibrium, e.g. by successfully reintegrating child soldiers into community structures. These interconnecting structures fulfil specific functions for the survival of the whole as all structures re-organise to bring the social system back to an ideal state of harmony or equilibrium (Trevino 2001: xxix).

Structural-functionalism provides an explanation of the interrelatedness of children as part of their relevant societies, the community structures being duty bound to the establishment of stability and internal cohesion in the societal system, by making certain contributions through the fulfilling of specific functions, which enhance care and protection of children. Community structures as institutions of society are to help support the interrelatedness and bring harmony between the former child soldiers and the different Liberian communities.

This notion is seen as the manifest, intended function of this study. The research utilizes the ideas of functionality and dysfunctionality in Functionalist theory to explain reintegration of child soldiers in community structures and to create new structures to assist sustainable reintegration.

2.2.2   State of equilibrium

Structural-functionalism is concerned with the relationship of one part of the system to another, adopting an equilibrium perspective. In this equilibrium of social systems, those changes that occur are seen as doing so in an orderly, not a revolutionary way (Ritzer 1992:96). The changes in children due to their involvement in armed conflict are not orderly. Children lose their innocence in a manner that disorientates the equilibrium in society, which can be seen as an unintended latent function of both participating in fighting forces and the DDRR programmes. These programmes may have unintended, negative consequences that are generally dysfunctional when children do not adhere and adapt to the community structures after reintegration. Social reintegration is an attempt to balance the equilibrium in society, but programmes may only be functional for the aid agencies, while dysfunctional for child soldiers as some are rejected by their communities. Some children return to armed groups after being reintegrated with their families.

Since armed conflict disorientates children's roles in communities, they lose their innocence, which alters the relationship patterns, thus affecting the state of equilibrium. In most cases this has stalled and fractured child development, leading to strain in the social order. Community structures are important in restoring the social equilibrium through support for the reintegration of children associated with fighting forces.

2.2.3   Social control and internal coordination

Socialisation and social control are the main mechanisms that allow the social system to maintain its equilibrium. While modest amounts of individuality and deviance are accommodated, more extreme forms must be met by re-equilibrating mechanism to maintain social order (Ritzer 1992:106). Social reintegration programmes of child soldiers are viewed as a re-equilibrating effort by the community to maintain and enhance social order. Social reintegration alludes to some of the assumptions advanced by Parsons (in Larson 1993:43) where he argues that each system must maintain the

internal coordination of its parts and develop ways of dealing with deviance to keep itself together. The involvement of community structures is an attempt to empower communities to ensure social order by addressing deviance of norms resulting in children's involvement in armed struggles.

2.2.4   Shared values and articulated set of goals

Functionalists tend to use 'shared values' or generally accepted standards of desirability as a central concept. Value consensus means that individuals will be morally committed to society. The emphasis on values is the second most important feature of Functionalism. It emphasises the unity of society and what its members share (Wallace and Wolf 2005:18). Community structures involvement in the social reintegration is to preserve and transmit the community values to former child soldiers. Values are abstract standards of goodness, in other words, beliefs are particular matters that individuals consider to be true or false. Cultural values are a core form of our personalities. This is an important step in transmitting cultural values of the community in children, who have lost these important values as a result of being away from their communities.

Functionalists observe that behaviour in society is structured. This means that relationships between members of society are organised in terms of rules. Social relationships are therefore patterned and recurrent. Values provide general guidelines for behaviour and are translated into more specific directives in terms of roles and norms, which child soldiers have to adhere to when they return to their original or new communities after reintegration**.**

Ritzer (1992:100) argues that society needs a shared, articulated set of goals. If people are pursuing many unrelated goals, the resulting chaos would make society impossible. The reintegration process through community structures helps former child soldiers to the realization of attaining and maintaining societal goals for societal order. Trevino (2001: xxix) asserts that shared values are fundamental to society; they enhance social

cohesion and social order. Due to armed conflict the children have lost out on societal values, hence societal goals. Community structures support to social reintegration is to ensure functionality and upholding of social and cultural beliefs and practices of the communities where the children live. They are vital in transmitting the community held principles and goals.

2.2.5   Social institutions

Some of the key ideas in Structural-functionalism are that society consists of groups or institutions (economy, polity, judiciary and fiduciary which includes the family, education and religion**)**, which are cohesive, share common norms and have a definitive culture. An institution can be seen as a structure consisting of interconnected roles or interrelated norms (Trevino 2001: xxix). Community structures are social institutions viewed as instrumental in contributing acceptable norms and values, which enhance goals through sustainable reintegration of child soldiers in Liberian society**.** The need for community to reconstruct itself in supporting reintegration of child soldiers is important. This is in addition to the role of other social institutions, which contribute to the maintenance and survival of these societies. Parenting is a social responsibility bestowed to the clan, relatives, community members and parents to enhance children's protective environment.

2.2.6   Social system

Parsons (Larson 1993:32) argues that a social system of action has needs, or functional prerequisites (adaptation, goal attainment, integration and latency, which include pattern maintenance and tension control) which must be met if society is to survive. A number of institutions fulfil different needs or functional prerequisites for the social system, such as the economy (adaptation to environment), polity (goal attainment), judiciary (integration) and fiduciary institutions like the family and education (latency and pattern maintenance) function to meet those functional prerequisites. A stable and balanced

relationship exists between these different institutions or systems, maintaining themselves separately from other systems (Larson 1993:39). Community structures are present to support social reintegration and ensure continuity of a social system, where former child soldiers are seen as key components of the social structure.

According to Structural-functionalism, we see community as part of a social system to support the community interrelatedness and interdependence, aimed at preventing and responding to children's rights violations created by armed conflict. This helps restoring community values. Reintegration programmes are seen as a re-alignment of the social systems for children after a conflict situation. It represents a process of renegotiation, that is, of values, norms and attitudes which change over years of conflict.

2.2.7   Manifest and latent functions

Robert Merton (in Heine and Kaspersen 2000:230), expanded the understanding of social functions, when consequences of any social pattern are likely to differ. Merton introduces the concept of manifest and latent functions to social structures. The former is the recognized and intended consequences of any social pattern, relating to sustainable reintegration of child soldiers, while the latter is the consequences that are largely unrecognized and unintended when reintegration processes fail. Merton's third point is that not all effects of any social structure turn out to be useful. This is social dysfunction, which is an undesirable consequence for the operation of society. The most salient characteristic of the Structural–functionalist perspective is its vision of society as comprehensible, orderly and stable.

The intentional and unintentional recruitment of children in armed forces created consequences. Some were recognizable (manifest) such as unruly conduct, while social and psychological needs were not recognised (latent). A generalized assumption is that children participating in armed forces are only doing so because of coercion, brainwashing or innocence. International Aid agencies often rely on the assumption that the majority of child soldiers are abducted or involuntarily forced to join and that they are

all victims of mass trauma. According to Abatneh (2006:46) this notion leads to the agencies believing that all child soldiers are powerless and helpless victims with serious psychological and social trauma and dysfunctionality. This leads to inappropriate post-conflict rehabilitation and reintegration interventions. However, in some cases, children may be involved in political struggles as a reasoned strategy and justifiable option for participation. Some children do understand the complex political and social dynamics of their communities into which they are to be reintegrated (Abatneh 2006:65). Some came out of the conflict with certain resilience and advantages, such as maturity, pride and respect from their families and communities.

2.2.8 Social Integration

Structural-functionalism is a consensus model, one which supports programmes and processes that maintain social order, based on shared societal values. Wallace and Wolf (2005:20) refer to Durkheim's most important functional idea of integration or social solidarity. Social reintegration of former child soldiers is to enhance community cohesion, which is important for maintaining social equilibrium. Due to what they went through during the conflict, children developed psycho-social related problems. To enhance their resilience, social support is important. Proponents of Functionalism argue that society is dynamic, not static. The change or reintegration in children's lives should be orderly and evolutionary, rather than revolutionary or with dramatic structural breaks. External factors stimulate adjustment of child soldiers to integrate into new community structures. As change occurs, the various structures become more differentiated, adapting to new needs and integration problems. More complex, specialised community structures develop to perform new functions required to facilitate the reintegration of child soldiers. This process refers to adaptive upgrading.

Societal change created by armed conflict in Liberia was not evolutionary. It led to abduction, forced recruitment and grave violations, substantially affecting the lives of children. The norms and values and children's perception to life changed and new institutions have to emerge to assist in the integration process. Community structures

have to be upgraded to support the former child soldiers regain their positions in society as children. Social reintegration is an important prerequisite of re-socialisation of children. Involving community structures is an attempt to develop value consensus through learned values and norms, which integrate the different armed groups into society as basic consensus on values and value systems holds society together creating social solidarity (Neuman 1997:57).

2.2.9 Socialization and Re-socialization

From the reviewed literature on child soldiers, children of very young ages were involved in armed conflict, which meant interrupted child growth and socialisation. Giddens (1993:68) argues that deprivation of early family socialisation and kin attachments often produces behavioural disturbances of a lasting kind. A major function of the family is the socialization of young members. This contributes to the maintenance of society since cooperation of children largely depend on learned, shared norms and values internalised during early childhood (Haralambos and Holborn 1990:9).

Giddens (1993:68) argues that deprivation of those early attachments often produces behaviour disturbances of a lasting kind. He goes argue that there is considerable evidence to show that children without stable attachments during their early years show intellectual retardation, as well as experiencing difficulties later in forming close and lasting relationships with others.

Culture is viewed by Functionalists as assisting in socialisation of norms and values of cultural community structures to achieve stability when child soldiers reintegrate and to maintain the overall operation of society (Macionis 1997:86). The reason for stability of a cultural system, as Functionalists see it, is that core values anchor its way of life. Core values shape the processes, binding together members of society. Thinking culturally is identifying deviance and addressing it through social control. In culture, there is reason to support social reintegration by community structures to pass on the core positive cultural values which assist the process of socialization, where societal values are

transmitted from generations and internalized to form an integral part of the individual personalities of returning child soldiers.

After their involvement in armed conflict, the children went through a re-socialization process, which involved the disruption of previously accepted values and patterns of behaviour, since they had to adopt radically different ones (Macionis 1997: 80).   Where children's personalities were radically altered through deliberate manipulation by the commanders, the children's socialisation process was "thrown into a reverse" (Giddens 1993:81). Their socialized behaviour is stripped away and individuals experience similar anxieties to those of young children removed from parental protection, which effectively restructure personalities in relation to their experiences, since personalities are never simply fixed.

The socialization process starts afresh, where agents of socialisation have to be re-engaged to pass on the cultural values, attitudes and norms. The family and extended family members become vital pillars of the community structure to the realization of this new process during the reintegration period.

Macionis (1997:133) argues that the family is the most important agent of socialization because it represents the centre of children's lives. The family shoulders the task of teaching the children cultural values, attitudes, and prejudices about themselves and others. The family confers on children a social position, that is, parents not only bring children into the physical world, it also places them in society in terms of race, ethnicity, religion and class. Schooling, peer groups and mass media play an important role in children's socialization. In many cultures, especially in Africa, families constitute aunts, uncles and grandchildren who serve as caretakers for young infants. Children pick up ways of behavioural characteristic from their parents, others in their neighbourhood or community members (Giddens 1993:76).

Peers are a very important factor in socialization, especially among groups of child soldiers. A peer group is a social group such as child soldiers whose members have interests, social positions and age in common. Unlike the family and the school, the group allows young people to escape from direct supervision of adults by joining rebel groups in war-torn African countries. With this newfound independence members of peer groups gain valuable experience in forging relationships on their own and developing a sense of themselves apart from their families, especially in war situations where families have been killed. Peer groups also give young people the opportunity to discuss interests that may not be shared with adults or their commanders. In rapidly changing societies, peer groups rival parents in influence, as the attitudes of parents and children diverge along the lines of a generation gap. The primacy of peer groups typically peaks during adolescence, as young people begin to break away from their families and think of themselves as responsible adults. At this stage of life, young people or child soldiers often display anxious conformity to peers because this new identity and sense of belonging eases some of the apprehension brought on by breaking away from the family (Macionis 1997:135).

Giddens (1993:77-78) defines peers as friendship groups of children of similar age. He asserts in some cultures, particularly small traditional societies, peer groups are formalized as age-grades. Each generation has certain rights and responsibilities and these alter as members grow older. The word peer means equal and friendship relations established between young children. The peer relations among child soldiers are said to be more democratic than those between a child and its parents. Peer relations are founded on mutual consent, rather than the dependence inherent in the family situation, there is a large amount of give and take. Individuals may be members of the same social clique or fighting regiment and keep the same group of friends, for most or all of their lives. Acknowledging this reality will be important in exploring some of the peer networks formed during the conflict, and how these can be harnessed for social reintegration.

2.2.10 Child Protection Systems

The ongoing discussion on child protection systems strengthens the arguments that all systems are nested within other systems (Mizikaci 2006: 37). A given system has embedded within its boundaries other systems or subsystems which exist at various levels and are embedded within a larger system environment (Mulroy 2004: 77). Child protection systems exhibits nested structures as children are raised in the context of the family, which has a duty to protect their children. The family itself is nested within a broader family system, which is again nested within a local community (itself a system) and the wider social system (Stevens 2008:1320; Mulroy 2004:77). This notion refers to interrelated and interdependent roles and functions in Structural-functionalism. Involvement of community structures in social reintegration of child soldiers is a key step in strengthening systems for child protection. Externalities, such as war situations pose challenges to the protective factors related to the system, where the current structures and capacities are strained, thus changing the environment. Working with community structures in the social reintegration programme is an attempt to strengthen the system response to external reality created by armed conflict to children.

Children are part of a broader community where their relationships, engagement and roles deepen over time and take on increased significance (UNICEF 2010: 5). This can only happen if their growth is not interrupted, if interrupted, their growth must be regained. Social reintegration is exactly meant to do this, helping children regain their special status in the community to create social equilibrium once again.

Functionalism is also referred to as consensus structuralism because it emphasises the central role that the agreement on morals between members of society play in maintaining social order. Moral consensus creates equilibrium, which is a normal state of society. The dysfunctionality created in children by the armed conflict, is a compelling reason or manifest function for community structures to support the children to attain societal cohesion and equilibrium.

2.3 CONCLUSION

The chapter has detailed why Structural-functionalism is the overarching theoretical framework of the study. In it we see the interrelatedness of subsystems, working towards creating social order distorted by armed conflict. The manifest function here is to ensure that supporting legislation and community structures are created to attain sustainable social reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG) into their former societies, leading to social cohesion and stability.

The following chapters therefore will be viewed and analysed on the basis of Structural-functionalist theory. The next chapter will look at the historical background of the Liberian civil war and how the children got entangled, the consequences and what was put in place to protect them.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AND RELATED LITERATURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the political context of the Liberian Civil war, gives background to the conflict, explains how the different factions emerged and how they involved children in the conflict. The chapter also reviews literature on causes of child recruitment put forward by different writers, which range from economic, social and political causes as well as the need for personal protection. It discusses the effects of war on children, looking at the physical, social and emotional effects of the conflict and their reintegration into communities. To address these issues, the question is asked: **What international and regional efforts and policies were created to address the problem of sustainable reintegration of child soldiers?** It is necessary to focus on the legal frameworks that protect children in armed conflicts and discuss international frameworks where the International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law provisions, are stipulated.

The literature reviews social reintegration, the role of the community in the reintegration process, disengagement of children from their former commanders and social networks used in social reintegration. Psycho-social care, support and some of the documented literature on common mistakes made in working with community structures by the different actors are explained.

3.2 POLITICAL CONTEXT

Liberia enjoyed relative stability and modest progress until the civil war in 1989 ruined the economy and completely reversed the course of socio-economic development. A rebel incursion into Liberia by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) in December 1989 degenerated into a seven year bloody civil war that was characterised, among other things, by proliferation of warring factions that deliberately resorted to the recruitment of child soldiers (Frempong 2002: 3). It is on record that ten percent of the estimated 60,000 fighters in the first Liberian civil war (1989-1997) were children below the age of fifteen and another twenty percent between fifteen and seventeen years old (Human Rights Watch 1994: 2-3). From the two initial warring parties, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the NPFL, the war soon spawned several fighting groups including the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), the United Liberian Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) that soon broke up along ethnic lines into ULIMO-K and ULIMO-J factions, the Liberian Peace Council (LPC) and the Lofa Defence Forces (LDF). Each of these groups, at one time or another resorted to the use of child soldiers.

During the first Liberian civil war (1989-1997) regional interventions under the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) supported by the organisation for African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations (UN) led to 14 short-lived peace accords between 1990 and 1995 (Nyakyi 1998:1), which culminated in the signing of five sets of peace agreements that preceded the Abuja II accord.

The elections in 1997, which were won by Charles Taylor, did not bring about the much anticipated rehabilitation, recovery or the resumption of growth and development. Instead it created fertile ground for more conflict. Opposition to Taylor also crystallized at an international level, with the United States (US) and regional governments especially Sierra Leone and Guinea taking the lead in financing and providing bases for operations by anti-Taylor elements, which resulted in the formation of two new insurgencies between 2000 and 2002, the Liberian United for Reconciliation and

Democracy (LURD) and Movement For Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). The LURD movement emerged essentially from the ashes of the first Liberian civil war and the ethnic persecution that followed, particularly against ethnic Mandingos and Krahns after 1997 (Özerdem and Podder 2011: 53).

The unfavourable political climate, prevalent insecurity, and failure to create an enabling environment for growth and development, resulted in the renewed insurgencies that culminated into the intense war between the government and the rebels in 2003.

After fourteen years of civil war in Liberia the war ended following the Accra Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA), which resulted in the establishment of the United Nations Mission to Liberia (UNMIL) in October 2003. The Disarmament and Demobilization (DD) process was started in December 2003 and by the end of the formal disarmament process in December 2004, a total of 103,912 persons were disarmed and demobilized (UNDP 2006:8). Out of approximately 15, 800 CAAFAG, 11,780 (9,042 boys and 2,738 girls) were demobilised and 9,186 had accessed reintegration services (UNICEF 2007:18). A total of 99% of these demobilized children were reunited with their families (UNICEF 2007: 6). It is estimated that a total of 4,000 CAAFAG never went through the formal Disarmament and Demobilisation (DD) process. This was due to factors such as misinterpretation of the DD process by children and their families, inaccessibility, and manipulation of the process by commanders to benefit their own relatives instead of those who actually served under them. The issue of geographical inaccessibility was partly addressed through mobile demobilization efforts.

3.3 CAUSES OF RECRUITMENT

Child soldiers have become weapons of choice in contemporary wars because for those who recruit them, "children are cheap, expendable and easier to condition into fearless killing and unthinking obedience" (Africa Recovery 2001:10).

Stohl (2001:21) defines a child soldier as "any child - boy or girl under the age of 18 who is compulsorily, forcibly, voluntarily recruited or otherwise used in hostilities by armed forces, paramilitaries, civil defence units or other armed groups". This definition clearly emphasizes the modes of recruitment as well as the extent of involvement. To begin with the latter, child soldiers are recruited, not only by rebel groups but governmental armed forces as well. However, governments have used the issue of child soldiers as a powerful tool in the demonisation of rebel movements when their own practices may be equally brutal (McIntyre 2001:91).

The mode of recruitment may be forced, persuasive or "voluntary". The forced recruitment includes abduction and press-ganging as well as the *quota system* in which families or communities may be required to provide a specified number of recruits (McConnan and Uppard 2001:34). In the last instance, parents may hand over their children who are economically less important to the household than productive young men. Ironically, sending more children off to fight can be a way of securing local popularity. Again armed groups may abduct children as a weapon against the children's own families and communities. The persuasive mode includes the use of propaganda, offers of food, clothing or money, promises of better opportunities or the peer influence of those already recruited. Lastly, some children "volunteer" to join to seek economic livelihood, to seek personal physical security or the protection of family or community, to avenge atrocities committed against close relations and loved ones, or simply for lack of anything else to do (McConnan and Uppard 2001:36-37). This "voluntarism" however, connotes the loosest interpretation of a "volunteer" since the brutal circumstances leave very little room for a genuine choice. Again, the ability of children, whose opinions are unformed and uninformed, to objectively understand and evaluate the risks and advantages involved in bearing arms is too misleading to be considered voluntary, as opinions are not formed freely but by a manipulation of their emotional and physical immaturity. Indeed, in the harsh war situation, recruitment becomes the best available survival strategy.

Hepburn and Wolfram (2001:11-12) argue that children may join 'voluntarily' for their own protection and survival, the term 'voluntary' has to be used cautiously when discussing child soldiers. As joining is often the only option available to children, their actions are rarely 'voluntary' in any genuine sense. They further argue, children are recruited and used in armed groups around the world by both government and opposition rebel groups, because they are easier to abduct, subjugate and manipulate than adults. Children are more impressionable and vulnerable to indoctrination. They can learn skills and tasks quickly, and they can be fast and agile on the battle field. They are more willing than adults to take risks. They are seen to be more loyal and less threatening to adult leadership. Children are typically viewed as cheap and expendable labour; they require less food and no payment.

Children also join to bring back food for the family or other material goods to support them. War in some respect becomes an opportunity for a rise to prominence, something which pre-war Liberian society did not allow for youth. Becoming a fighter is also a form of freedom, since there was food, free drugs, alcohol, girlfriends; everything youth often did not, or could not have access to during the pre-war period due to low levels of education, high unemployment and economic dependence (Özerdem and Podder, 2010:57). Some children perceived that they and their families will be better protected from harassment if they were to join the fighting forces. Some girls joined in search for material luxury items such as make-up or shoes, or to join a relative that was already serving in the fighting forces. In addition to the conflict situation, the prevalence of gun ownership amongst males was accompanied by increasing incidence of rape.

Specht (2006:11) argues that it is striking in this case that explicitly "feminist" motives for enlisting were so widely cited. Girls interviewed gave two main feminist reasons for taking up arms: the first was to protect themselves and other women from sexual violence and rape and to avenge such violence by proving equality to boys (Specht, 2006:16). However, many girls willingly sought or were forced to form relationships with male combatants because they needed protection. Some girls stayed with a particular

male combatant after being raped by him, in some cases stating that the relationship was based on "love".

Some relevant extracts from the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (2009) summarize the involvement and recruitment of children in armed forces. It also shows the suffering children underwent during armed conflict, as follows:

- The use of Child Soldiers or CAAFAG by all the major warring parties in Liberia has been documented since the start of open hostilities in 1989. While the NPFL pioneered the systematic use of small boys recruited by force and trained as rebel fighters with its infamous Small Boys Unit (SBU), all fighting factions as well as government forces and affiliated militias have since widely used children (Liberia TRC 2009:54).

- For the period from 1989 to 1997, estimates of the number of children in the fighting forces range from a low of 6,000 to a high of 15,000. For the period 1999 to 2003, 11,780 children were demobilized, 9,042 boys and 2,738 girls. However, analysts suggest that several thousand children may have been left out of the process and that the actual number may rather be in the range of 15,000 to 21,000 (Liberia TRC 2009:54).

- Forced recruitment of children usually followed a similar pattern. Children were captured either when they were alone or forcefully separated from their parents. Then they were taken along by the armed group and with or without training sent into combat. The following account by then 13-year old boy from Monrovia is thus typical of many children:

"I was actually abducted by a group of militias…of the government forces and taken to [a base near the frontline]. Without training I was armed. I was afraid to go on the front because every day the LURD rebels were advancing and strong men were dying…One day a General…came and told all of us to go to the front.

LURD was in Clara and Vai towns, we were in Waterside. Anyone who refused to go was shot in his head or body or toes or leg."

- If the children themselves or their family members resisted abduction and forced conscription, they were physically abused or threatened to be hurt or killed. An 18- year old who was abducted and forcibly recruited by LURD in 2003, tells how he was coerced into joining:

"In February 2003, LURD fighters captured [the town] where I lived....we...saw ten LURD fighters. We were compelled to take arms. My friend Abu refused and the fighters cut his throat in my presence, so I accepted it..."

- Forced recruitment was deliberate, widespread and systematic by all fighting factions. Even government troops, who were supposed to protect the population, preyed on children and enlisted them by force, often systematically by selecting young boys and girls from schools or by raiding internally displaced persons (IDP) camps to forcibly enlist new recruits. International and local child rights organizations reported that in mid-2003 parents in Monrovia had stopped sending their children to school because children as young as nine years old disappeared on their way to school. The common practice was to forcefully recruit children right at, or near schools (Liberia TRC 2009: 55).

As discussed, many children were forced to join the fighting forces and more "volunteered" to join for a variety of reasons. The same problems that resulted in lack of supportive systems for children were also the causes for children joining the fighting forces. The large scale atrocities committed in communities during the conflicts, pushed children to join the fighting forces in search of food, protection, belonging, revenge but also excitement. These occurrences left profound damages and also heart-ache on children's lives and the effects of war, culminating in their reintegration into communities can be investigated over many years.

3.4   EFFECTS OF THE WAR ON CHILDREN AND REINTEGRATION

One of the most daunting challenges a country faces in the aftermath of war is the reintegration of those who entered the war as child soldiers and have become youthful war veterans. If their energies are not re-channelled, they would remain a time-bomb ready to explode at the least provocation. Unless children demobilized from armies are given alternatives to soldiering, they are likely to be re-recruited into armed groups. This falls within the broad principle that if the wounds that armed conflicts inflict on children are allowed to scar them for life, they cripple the very generations that must one day rebuild their devastated societies (Pearson 2000:3).

The long years of exposure to war resulted in multiple vulnerabilities of children. Family breakdown, separations and the collapse of infrastructures such as education, lack of economic opportunities for parents and older children have exposed children to serious problems. Child soldiers, or CAAFAG are used in different capacities and widespread abuse of drugs and alcohol are reported. The involvement of children in wars in Liberia is also linked to other conflicts in the region, thereby being a motive for cross-border movement and engagement of children in conflicts. The years children are involved in soldiering affect their future identity, because child soldiers are deprived of the normal cultural and moral values of socialisation gained from families and communities. They have to experience a process of re-socialisation.

Development of trust and allegiance among child soldiers results in lasting social networks and bonds flowing from wartime relationships, which in turn make re-recruitment and return more likely for a long duration. Recruits coerced to participate more often choose to escape or avoid re-recruitment (Özerdem and Podder 2010: 316). This assertion cannot be generalised, since some social networks depended on the dynamics of the post-war period for production, which could enhance social reintegration.

On their part, children often form strong attachments with their commanders and their sense of individual identity may become closely linked with the identity of their fighting groups and so when children demobilize, breaking this attachment can be painful even though the relationship has been abusive (Frempong, 2002: 20). This assumption that the relationship was always abusive will be investigated by the study.

Specht (2006:16) asserts, though the war in Liberia had ended and the girls had stopped fighting, it was unclear how their involvement with armed groups will affect their future lives. They face many challenges and adopt different methods of coping with life as civilians and possibly as mothers or wives. For many, the hardships faced in rebuilding traumatised lives in the context of peace and reconstruction proves just as difficult as the hazards of war.

The consequences of disruption of refugee children, resulting from armed conflict can be extremely serious. When a society's guiding and regulating mechanisms are lost, individuals find themselves deprived of their normal social, economic and cultural development. Separation from one or both parents, very often the father in circumstances of flight, can deprive children of an important role model (Bueren, 1998: 455-6). According to Kirsten (2009:3-4) child soldiers often have serious psycho-social problems, which must be addressed if they are to reintegrate successfully into the post-conflict society and contribute positively towards peace and development. If such problems are not dealt with, child ex-combatants may have a destabilizing impact on society even many years after a conflict ends.

Özerdem and Podder (2010:3) in their work on reintegration argue that on account of children's incomplete socialization and maturation process within family settings, in-group experiences are important processes which impact on the young minds, involving elements of identity transformation, and rebirth into the world of being a rebel or child soldier. Relationships with commanders and peers within these groups create a resemblance of regularity and stability in a world where every moment is insecure. These authors' literature does unfortunately not focus on the post-war relationship, which could be useful for sustainable reintegration.

Through its strategy of abduction and socialization of children, RUF denied many to be socialized by the norms and values of their villages, which are normally strengthened further when adolescents undergo initiation into the omnipresent secret societies. However, the rebel movement created new solidarities in which, after sometime a high level of solidarity was experienced by fighters (Özerdem and Podder 2010:87).

In their case study on Mozambique (Özerdem and Podder 2010: 238) argue that all the boys went through traditional ceremonies upon returning to their villages. In Mozambique these ceremonies date from pre-colonial times and are believed to be especially important when events, such as war and population displacement upset the normal course of life. It is thought that the spirits of the victims of war, or those slighted will bring bad luck or death, not only to the perpetrator but also to members of his extended family or community. The traditional ceremonies afford individuals a chance to be cleansed of their acts during the war and provide protection for the community from ancestral rebuke that may be brought on because of what the child had done. At the onset of reintegration, traditional cleansing ceremonies helped repair relationships with their families and communities, and to realign the boys' wellbeing with the spirit world. The rituals enabled these boys to deepen their sense of acceptance, and helped to ameliorate the degree of guilt and shame over past misdeeds. They also represented a form of protection for community members who worried about what these boys might do once they came home. These ceremonies can only be performed by cultural leaders who are important parts of community structures.

Becoming a soldier marks a transition away from the normal and accepted, hence returning to a prior set of rules can be a significant challenge, and may need traditional interventions, involving ritualistic cleansing and sacrifice in societies with strong communication visions of death, illness and healing to create a possible socially acceptable return (Özerdem and Podder 2010: 312-3). Returning to community, in an acceptable way, where community functions must be performed and for the community to provide mentorship, is a central role of community structures.

Awodola (2009:7) observes that the 2003 DRR programme paid diligent attention to cultural measures in addressing psychological and social problems. However, the ceremonies turned out to be nothing beyond symbolism, as they failed to provide the children with means of imbibing the morals, ethics and values of their societies. A deeper and more authentic engagement with the cultures and traditions of Liberian society would have benefitted the programme, and could have been carried out through greater community involvement in the planning and implementation stages.

The challenge lies in that, while disarmament and demobilization phases offer statistical references of numbers of weapons collected and persons disarmed, demobilised or reunited with families, reintegration remains essentially a process outside of numeric outputs. The greater part remains in imparting or supporting acceptable social values in the former child soldiers, which is a key role of community structures.

Özerdem and Podder (2010:314-315) cite a common criticism of community based approaches to reintegration, which relegate responsibility for integration to impoverished and incapacitated communities. If communities are provided with adequate resources and get support from the state and central government, and if they are able to identify, gauge and prioritize needs locally, then they will be able to respond to those needs themselves. This argument gives credence to the study on community structures, which advocates for the building of community capacity and eventual sustainable reintegration of child soldiers.

Child ex-combatants require *targeted assistance* in a post-conflict society. The reintegration phase of DDR comprises many aspects, among them are:

- The challenges of rehabilitating former child soldiers, both physically, socially and psychologically;

- The difficulties of tracing their families and convincing them to accept the children back. Reintegration is difficult due to loneliness and loss of families;
- The difficulties of creating viable opportunities for demobilised child soldiers in a post-conflict society;

- The community to which they return is an important aspect, because as a social institution the community must nurture the children back into society. Working with communities is an important protection technique that forms the foundation of sustainable effective mental health and psycho-social support (IASC 2010:15). The best place for reintegration of such children can only take place within a community setting. The reintegration process requires working with the family and community where the children will end up when resettled.

- Local circumstances must be taken into consideration by the DDR process. It must be carried out within the context of wider post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building, and has to address the needs of the entire community into which the child soldier is to be reintegrated (Gislesen, 2006: 4). Strengthening entire community structures is a step towards sustainable social reintegration.

- In Liberia and Sierra Leone many children have feared rejection by their families and stigmatisation by their communities if they participated in the programme, as it would label them as 'ex-combatants'. These children thus have often preferred to self-reintegrate. This has been especially widespread amongst girl soldiers, who feared that they would be labelled as 'used goods' with no prospects of getting married (Mazurana et al. 2002: 115). Their children, usually conceived as a result of rape, have often been branded as 'rebel children' and have been likely to suffer from stigmatisation and rejection similar to that experienced by their teenage mothers. To address the community stigma, working with community structures would re-assure them of their acceptance.

- Girls who have experienced sexual violence also suffer from shock, shame, and low self-esteem. In many instances, the effects of trauma do not become evident until several months or even years later. This is called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), characterised by a reexamining of the traumatic event through intrusive thoughts (Jareg and McCallin 1993: 14). Thus, an important part of the rehabilitation and reintegration process has been to re-establish their civilian identities.

- Further, child soldiers need to be taught to renounce violence and develop skills necessary for civilian life such as decision-making, coping mechanisms and peaceful means of resolving conflict (Jareg and McCallin 1993: 14). These actions will contribute to sustainable reintegration of Liberian child soldiers.

According to Wessells (1998:643) and Brett (2000:8) child soldiers are not just victims like other war-affected children. They have been made perpetrators of violence as well. They are trained to kill, inducted into drugs and made to experience events that are traditionally outside the realm of children. Thus, they have the ambiguous status as both victims and perpetrators in the eyes of their families and communities and they carry the stigma and scars of their violent past. Child soldiers, therefore, are located in a twilight zone, which embodies the contradictions and ambiguities of being simultaneously children and soldiers as well as victims and perpetrators. Separating the "child" from the "soldier" and the "victim" from "perpetrator," in my view, becomes a special problem that needs special attention.

There is no question that the war had terrible consequences on child soldiers, who had gone through unimaginable psychological, social and physical difficulties as a result of their participation, but children have proven to display remarkable resilience and resourcefulness in dangerous situations. Rather than depending on adults in times of despair, they adopt effective coping mechanisms while being child soldiers as well as being integrated, overcoming fears and anxieties and fending for themselves and younger ones, proving great resilience to survive (Abatneh 2006:68). The ability of child

soldiers to threaten post-war stability transforms them into key elements in the "calculus" of national security, and makes them key players in shaping the present as well as the future of the state (Ismail 2001:4), be it functional or dysfunctional.

Therefore, for integration to be effective, a critical step is to understand the local socio-cultural context the ex-combatants would encounter when they return - the remnants of the extended family networks, the ethnic mix, the traditional land tenure patterns and the community's ability and willingness to support and control its returning sons and daughters (Ismail 2001: 25). In this connection, the issue of stigma has to be handled carefully. When the community labels them negatively as illiterate thugs, conveyers of violence, crime and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and reject them, the community's fears may well become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Ismail 2001: 24)**.** The fact is that communities that mobilized their children for service in war should accept the responsibility for receiving and assisting them as demobilized ex-combatants. The role of NGOs and other interveners is to educate the communities and make available all-inclusive support projects that can help alleviate the initial community mistrust. These projects to protect child soldiers should be based on appropriate legal frameworks to facilitate their sustainable reintegration.

3.5 LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR CHILD PROTECTION

In order for reintegration of child soldiers to be successful and effective, it is critical to understand and analyse the different global, continental, regional and national legal and statutory frameworks in place for protection of CAAFAG. The standards to protect children involved in armed conflict are found in **International Humanitarian Laws, International Human Rights Laws, International Jurisprudence, UN Security Council resolutions, Regional declarations** and **National legislations and policies.**

 Although various regulations of these legislations overlap on child protection issues, only the relevant aspects are applied in this study to serve as basis for creating community structures to facilitate the reintegration process of child soldiers in Liberia.

These aspects confirm the seriousness to prevent recruiting, abducting, selling and trafficking of children into armed forces and how to create necessary community structures to enhance sustainable reintegration.

3.5.1 The International Humanitarian Law

International frameworks for CAAFAG have evolved over time, starting with the Geneva Convention which stretches from 1949 onwards and the related protocol therein. It looks at children caught up in hostilities, advocates for protection of vulnerable groups, including children. It defines a child as younger than 15 years of age. The optional Protocol 1 is more explicit on protection of children. It implores special respect for children and place responsibility to parties involved in the conflict to ensure their special protection. The optional Protocol 2 emphasises care and protection of children, reunification of those separated from their parents and highlights consent of primary care givers in matters of CAAFAG.

The **Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War** (1949) states the following relevant articles. This came into force on 21 October 1950.

> "Article 14: In time of peace, the high contracting parties and after the outbreak of hostilities, the parties thereto, may establish in their own territory and, if the need arises, in occupied areas, hospital and safety zones and localities so organised as to protect from the effects of war, wounded, sick and aged persons, children under fifteen, expectant mothers and mothers of children under seven".

> "Article 17: The parties to the conflict shall endeavour to conclude local agreements for the removal from besieged or encircled areas, of the wounded, sick, infirm, and aged persons, children and maternity cases, and for the passage of ministers of all religions, medical personnel and medical equipment on their way to such areas".

"Article 24: The parties to the conflict shall take the necessary measures to ensure that children under fifteen, who are orphaned or are separated from their families as a result of the war, are not left to their own resources, and that their maintenance, the exercise of their religion and their education are facilitated in all circumstances. Their education shall, as far as possible, be entrusted to persons of a similar cultural tradition".

The **Protocol Additional to the Geneva Convention** of 12 August 1949 relates to the protection of victims in international armed conflict (**Protocol No.1**) 1977. This was entered into force on 7 December 1978.

"Article 77:
1. Children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of indecent assault. The parties to the conflict shall provide them with care and aid they require, whether because of their age or any other reason.
2. The parties to the conflict shall take all feasible measures in order that children who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities and in particular, they shall refrain from recruiting them into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years the parties to the conflict shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest.
3. The articles goes further to advocate for special protection of children who fall under fifteen but find themselves amidst armed conflict and goes on to state that, death penalty for an offence related to the armed conflict shall not be executed on persons who had not attained the age of eighteen years at the time the offence was committed".

The Protocol Additional to the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 relating to the protection of Victims of Non-International Armed conflicts (**Protocol No. 2**) 1977, and entered into force on 7 December 1978, states that:

"Article 4 (3): Children shall be provided with the care and aid they require, and in particular:

a) They shall receive an education including religious and moral education, in keeping with the wishes of their parents, or in the absence of the parents, of the responsible for their care

b) All appropriate steps shall be taken to facilitate the reunion of families temporarily separated;

c) Children who have not attained the age of fifteen years shall neither be recruited in the armed forces or groups nor allowed to take part in hostilities;

d) The special protection provided by this article to children who have not attained the age of fifteen years shall remain applicable to them if they take a direct part in hostilities despite the provisions of the subparagraph(c) and are captured;

e) Measures shall be taken, if necessary, and whenever possible with the consent of their parents or persons who by law or custom are primary responsible for their care, to remove children temporarily from the area in which hostilities are taking place to a safer area within the country and ensure that they are accompanied by persons responsible for their safety and well-being."

The Declaration on the protection of women and children in Emergency and armed conflict (1974:443), prohibits any attacks to the group and calls for adherence to all provisions of human rights laws. It calls for the observance of the following:

1. "Attacks and bombings on the civilian population, inflicting incalculable suffering, especially on women and children, who are most vulnerable members of the population, shall be prohibited, and such acts shall be condemned.

2. The use of chemical and bacteriological weapons in the course of military operations constitutes one of the most flagrant violations of the Geneva Protocol of 1925, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the principles of international humanitarian law and inflicts heavy losses on civilian populations, including defenceless women and children, and shall be severely condemned.

3. All states shall abide fully by obligations under the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and the Geneva convention of 1949, as well as other instruments of international law relative to respect for human rights in armed conflicts, which offer important guarantees for the protection of women and children.

4. All efforts shall be made by the states involved in armed conflicts, military operations in foreign territories or military operations in still under colonial domination to spare women and children from the ravages of war. All the necessary steps shall be taken to ensure the probation of measures such as persecution, torture, punitive measures, degrading treatment and violence, particularly against that part of the civilian population that consists of women and children.

5. All forms of repression and cruel and inhuman treatment of women and children, including imprisonment, torture, shooting, mass arrests, collective punishment, destruction of dwellings and forcible eviction, committed by belligerents in the course of military operations or in occupied territories shall be considered criminal.

6. Women and children belonging to the civilian population and finding themselves in circumstances of emergency and armed conflict in the struggle for peace, self-determination, national liberation and independence, or who live in occupied territories, shall not be deprived of shelter, food, medical aid or other inalienable rights, in accordance with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and other instruments of international law".

The **Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court** (1998) is one single treaty that criminalises any violation of children's rights. It holds parties to the conflict liable for the violations.

Different Conventions constitute the **International Humanitarian Law**. They emphasise the need to protect civilians during armed conflict and the need to differentiate between

civilians and combatants, while CAAFAG are entitled to special respect and protection. Member states are called upon to take decisive and immediate action against persistent perpetrators of violations.

3.5.2   International Human Rights Laws

The **International Human Rights Laws** are also a set of laws that enhance protection of children involved in armed conflict. The main provisions are in the **UN Convention on the rights of the child** (1989), the optional **Protocol on children in armed conflict** (2000), **UN declaration of Human Rights** (1948), **International Covenant on Civil** and **political rights (1966), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (1966) and **Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman/degrading treatment/punishment** (1984), and **the International Labour Organisation Convention No. 182** on the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

The main highlights of all the conventions are prohibiting recruitment of children below the age of 15 years. The optional protocol rises the age of children directly involved in armed conflict to 18 years and voluntary recruitment to 16 years. According to the **International covenant on civil & political rights** no one shall be subjected to torture/cruel/degrading treatment/punishment and no one shall be held in slavery.

The other provisions for protection of CAAFAG are in the **International Jurisprudence**, which include among others, the law of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Rome Statute and case law of the International Criminal court and the case-law of the International Court of Justice.

3.5.3   United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC)

This is the single most important legislation, which has given prominence to protection of children. This convention has several provisions that focus on reintegration of CAAFAG. The UNCRC (1990:11) Article 38 prohibits recruitment of children before 15 years and Article 39 compels states to put in place appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of armed conflicts.

The UNCRC states the importance of traditional and cultural values of each person for the protection and harmonious development of the child. The conservation of the culture and the right to take part in a cultural life are recognised human rights. In line with the Functionalist perspective, on which the study is based, it is recognised that culture provides children with identity and continuity. By internalising the values and traditions of their culture, children learn how to fit into their families, communities and the larger society. Each society has a unique body of accumulated knowledge, which is reflected in its social and religious beliefs and ways of interpreting and explaining the world around them (Bueren 1998:455).

3.5.4   Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of children (CRC) in armed conflict

Recognising the need for more comprehensive provisions to strengthen the implementation of the UNCRC, the optional protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict came into force in 2002. The salient feature of the protocol is rising the age of recruitment into armed groups and armed forces to the age of 18 years. The optional protocol applies to non-state parties as well. Articles 3 and 4 raised the age of recruitment of children in armed forces.

3.5.4.1 Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

Articles 34 and 35 of the above protocol emphasise the need for governments to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse and take all measures possible to ensure that they are not abducted, sold or trafficked.

3.5.4.2 International Labour Organisation convention 182

International Labour Organisation (ILO), Article 3(a) (1999) lists forced and compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict as the worst forms of child labour.

3.5.4.3 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998: vii), which came into force in 1999, specifies recruitment of children into fighting forces a war crime. This provision is yielding results as several leaders of rebel groups are now confronted over war crimes in The Hague, Netherlands over the recruitment of child soldiers.

3.6 OTHER LEGAL PROVISIONS

The Paris Principles

This is a review of the **Cape Town Principles**. It states that any solution to CAAFAG should address the needs of these children and incorporates activities to develop and support local capacity to provide a protective environment for children. The interventions should prevent discrimination against girls, calls for long term commitment by all actors to prevent the unlawful recruitment or use of children, promote their release, protect them and support their reintegration.

The Paris Principles emphasise that the family, including the extended family, clan and the community should be actively incorporated in the development and implementation of interventions that relate to these children to participate in finding solutions. The Principle recognises reintegration as a long term process that requires long term commitment. The investment in communities is essential to address the process in finding solutions. Continuous advocacy to raise awareness of the criminality of recruiting children should be carried out (Paris Principles 2007:5). This awareness also refers to parents who "volunteer" the services of their children, as criminal.

Where there are formal disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes, special provision should be made for children. These formal processes should make linkages to relevant structures to ensure coordinated and comprehensive support to the reintegration of children and their communities of return (Paris Principles 2007**:**10). The majority of children should be returned to their families and communities or integrated into a family and appropriate community environment as soon as possible after their release from armed forces (Paris Principles 2007:33).

Efforts should always be taken to involve community structures in programme planning to ensure they are adequately supported to care for children released from government forces or rebel groups and to prevent further association with these groups from taking place (Paris Principles 2007:12). Reintegration programmes should link at the earliest possible with other development programmes and actors to build local and national capacity necessary to provide sustainable support to children in their communities.

Monitoring and following up of children are essential to ensure long term, sustainable reintegration for protection and upholding of rights and benefits, to prevent re-recruitment and respond appropriately to children who experience serious difficulties with reintegration. Local capacity should be supported or developed to provide long term monitoring support and intervention if children are felt to be at significant risk. The community should be involved in deciding at which point a child should be considered to be successfully reintegrated into civilian life (Paris Principles 2007: 43).

3.7 REGIONAL LEGISLATIONS

Regional bodies have attempted to develop regional frameworks that reinforce their commitment to protect children, such as the **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child**, developed by the African Union (AU), and the **Child Policy for the Economic Commission for West African States** (ECOWAS). Member states like Liberia have localised the UNCRC to apply to the Liberian context and Child Act has been developed to enhance protection of children in general and those affected by armed conflict in particular.

3.7.1 The African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child

The African charter on the rights and welfare of the child, Art 22 (1,2,3) (1999) calls upon member states to respect International Humanitarian Laws, prohibits any child below the age of 18 years to be recruited in armed forces and urges member states to provide care and protection to all those affected by armed conflict. It is stated as follows:

"Article 22: Armed Conflicts

1. Parties to this Charter shall undertake to respect and ensure respect for rules of International Humanitarian Law applicable in armed conflicts which affect the child.

2. Parties to the present Charter shall take all necessary measures to ensure that no child shall take a direct part in hostilities and refrain in particular, from recruiting any child.

3. Parties to the present Charter shall, in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law, protect the civilian population in armed conflicts and shall take all feasible measures to ensure the protection and care of children

who are affected by armed conflicts. Such rules shall also apply to children in situations of internal armed conflicts, tension and strife."

3.7.2   The ECOWAS Child Protection Policy

ECOWAS child protection policy calls for the interest of children, including those children affected by armed conflict, to be given priority for the benefit of everyone. The ECOWAS heads of state declared 2001-2011 a decade to promote the rights of the child. The policy aims to:

- ensure that children are protected from violence, and are not used as perpetrators of violence in the region,
- ensure at all cost that children are protected from recruitment into the armed forces or armed group,
- creating a conducive environment for sustainable peace in the region,
- develop a regional approach to protection of children during conflict and humanitarian challenges,
- adopt preventive and rehabilitative measures to address violent activities of children living on the streets and those who are members of gangs and cults and,
- Ensure the protection and reintegration into the society of children released from armed forces or armed groups.

3.8   NATIONAL LEGISLATIONS

Liberia as a nation has ratified several conventions, which provide a framework for protection of children in armed conflict. Below are some of the ratified instruments:

- Liberia ratified the UNCRC in 1993, making it legally binding. As a State Party to the UNCRC, Liberia is to submit regular reports to the Committee on the Rights

of the Child (CRC), which monitors the implementation of the UNCRC. Liberia's initial report to the CRC was considered in 2004 and the second report in 2009.

- Liberia ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, on June 28, 2007.
- It signed the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography
- It also ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts in 2004, and
- Ratified the ILO Convention 182 in 2001.

3.8.1 Children's law of Liberia

The Children's law of Liberia, part xi, sections 3 to 7 (2011) recommends establishing and creating child welfare committees in every community or town with an overall function to advance the acknowledgement of the rights of the child at the community or town level to provide sustainable reintegration processes for returning ex-combatants.

Section 4: sub-section 4.1-4.2 states that**:**

"The functions of a child welfare committee at the community or town level shall be to make recommendations to relevant public and other functionaries on the following:
- The promotion of awareness on child rights and their realization, including the elimination of any harmful practices;
- Guidance to children's representative forums working in the community for which the child welfare committee discharges its functions;
- The monitoring of the enjoyment of child rights within its jurisdiction;
- Prevention of domestic violence through awareness and educational activities;
- Rendering advice to children, parents and other community or town members to promote the best interests of the child;

- Drawing and presentation of child welfare plans to the local government authorities;

- Following up on the implementation of child welfare plans; and

- Any other functions that may advance the enjoyment of the rights of the child within the jurisdiction of the committee."

Section 5: 44 states that**:**

"The powers and functions of a child welfare committee shall be limited to advice, mediation, recommendations and representation and in no event shall a child welfare committee conduct a trial or pass a sentence against any person."

Despite the fact that the children's law of Liberia makes an important step in creating child welfare committees, it does not take cognisance of existing community structures, which have been in existence before this child law.

Article VI: Section 1-2, talks about the responsibility of the parents, teachers, members of extended family in providing guidance to children. This is important acknowledgement of the roles of other members of the community who form community structures. The guidance provided is to empower the child to become a useful member of the community and making useful contributions as indicated in section 3 of the same article, which states that subject to the child's evolving capacities, every child shall contribute towards:

a) Family cohesion;
b) Respect for parents and others
c) Diligence towards studies and work; and
d) Positive cultural values of her or his community or town.

Despite being a signatory to these major international and regional legislative instruments and the existence of national legislations for the protection of children**,**

Liberia continued to face declining social indicators in care of protecting children. These indicators were worsened by armed conflict that destroyed the lives of many children, either as victims, perpetuators or witnesses to the violence.

The Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, 2008 states clearly that the Liberian civil war, which ended in 2003, saw many children recruited in the fighting forces. The Liberian government conscripted or enlisted children into the national armed forces and used them to participate actively in hostilities against rebel forces who also recruited child soldiers under the legal age. More than 15,000 children were under the age of fifteen years, while perpetrators knew or should have known this fact, but still contravened various laws. This action took place in the context of international armed conflict.

3.9   THE SOCIAL REINTEGRATION PROCESS

According to the previous legislation discussed and explained, the recruitment of children into armed forces and rebel groups is a serious violation of human rights and is prohibited under international law (IDDRS 2006:1). The UN is mandated to ensure unconditional release of CAAFAG at all times, i.e., during open conflict, while peace negotiations are taking place and before establishment of a national DDR process. The UNCRC establishes 18 as the age for legal capability, but concepts and experiences of childhood vary significantly among cultures and communities.

Children cannot be recruited legally. Therefore, measures that aim to prevent their recruitment, or that attempt to reintegrate them into their communities, should not be viewed as a routine component of peace-making, but as an attempt to prevent or redress a violation of children's rights. This means that the child DDR is not the same as that for adults. It is a specific process with its own requirements, several of which are fundamentally different from adult demobilisation programmes. The child DDR should not wait until a mechanism for adult DDR is established. Efforts should be made to

ensure that child DDR is not contingent on adult DDR (IDDRS 2006:1). Since child recruitment into armed forces and rebel groups is illegal in international law, child demobilization (or release) and reintegration is a human rights issue and is not contingent on any other political negotiation (IDDRS 2006: 3).

CAAFAG are key stakeholders and must be carefully consulted when DDR processes are set up. To ease their return into civilian life, former child soldiers should be integrated into programmes that benefit all war-affected children (IDDRS, 2006). Child specific reintegration into community structures shall allow a child to access education, a livelihood, life skills and a meaningful role in society. The socio-economic and psycho-social aspects of reintegration of children are central to global DDR programming and budgeting. Successful reintegration requires long term funding of child protection agencies and programmes to ensure continuous support for education and training of children, and essential follow up or monitoring once they return to civilian life. Reintegration must be based on a broader community development process, since the whole community must benefit from a child's return.

Child DDR programmes must be community based so that adequate services are provided to communities to enable them to care better for children. Programmes must include all children in the communities to avoid stigmatisation of CAAFAG to build and reinforce community based solutions and capacities (IDDRS 2006:3). The long term success depends on the capacities of local actors and communities, which can be strengthened by, for instance, involving them in the prevention of child recruitment. Prevention of recruitment and the demobilization of CAAFAG are tools to achieve and ensure sustainable reintegration, which aims to prevent re-recruitment.

Since reintegration of children is a long term process, DDR programmes for children are expected to extend over a period of five or more years, require sufficient funding in order to build capacity, especially in the community to which a child returns (IDDRS 2006:6).

The DDR programmes face a lot of challenges. The girls are invisible and normally neglected by the armed forces and rebel groups, as well as DDR planners. The girls fear to demobilise for several reasons that include shame and stigma. The programmes therefore must be designed to minimise shame and stigma and to maximise security. Girls normally do not come out to cantonment sites. Many prefer to just go back to the communities, while some decide to move to different communities. It is important that community programmes be designed, and specially women groups be identified and trained to support them. Some community members may be identified to provide care through transition. The identification should be made carefully.

The IDDRS is one comprehensive document that discusses reintegration of CAAFAG at great length. It emphasises social reintegration of CAAFAG as a right, involvement of communities as a must, reintegration of children not being dependent and long term, sustainable funding and broader community involvement. However, the document does not specify engagement of existing community structures and building capacity of community structures for sustainable social reintegration (IDDRS 2006:10-11).

Psycho-social interventions should draw on local methods of healing and strengths in the community, understand and address belief systems surrounding reactions to war experiences and avoid imposing models of psychological care that are mostly inappropriate to the culture and context.

In Mozambique, cleansing rituals played a critical role in reintegrating Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) fighters into communities where the healing process consisted of symbolic rituals designed to purify the identity of the ex-combatants in order to reintegrate him/her into local communities (Left, 2008:21). Supporting social cultural processes is especially important for the reintegration process. Social reintegration is a long-term process. It should build on local resources.

Community tension around reintegration processes will be eased if recipient communities are involved and prepared for returning ex-combatants. Recipient

communities, including local authorities, should be included in the public information, sensitization and outreach strategies and should have an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the reintegration process before ex-combatants return, including issues related to ex-combatant accountability. To facilitate community acceptance, they must be willing, involved and prepared to receive returning ex-combatants. Further, reintegration messages should be explained within the context of broader reconciliation and recovery, not just focused on a one-way message of accepting ex-combatants.

In Liberia it was found that the most important reintegration factor had to be a normal environment, a sense of forgiveness through religious and cultural ceremonies. In Northern Uganda, former child soldiers reported that traditional cleansing ceremonies are important so that the whole community understands they are "*decontaminated".* Similarly, in Angola programmes placed culture at the centre of addressing the psycho-social impacts of conflict, including traditional healing rituals for child soldiers. The rituals provided acceptance of the child, assuaged the ill-spirits associated with the child soldier's action during the conflict and reconciled the child with ancestral spirits. The psycho-social programme promoted community sensitization and provided training and support to the catechist network (Verhey 2001:17). Though there is an overarching recommendation to work with communities, there is limited literature on constructive engagement of community structures in social reintegration of CAAFAG, apart from detailing structures formed by NGOs in the process of reintegration.

3.10 DISENGAGING FROM FORMER COMMANDERS

The literature (UNICEF 2006:24) reviewed does emphasise the surrogate relationship formed between children and their former commanders and describes it as the "*proximity of demobilised children to their commanders".* The association of children with their commanders appears to continue when children are geographically close to their commanders. This was especially the case when children served under their parents, siblings or relatives.

The disengagement or disassociation of children from their commanders is a central part of any demobilisation process for children. At the initial stage, disassociation of demobilised children from the fighting forces and groups was identified as a major issue that would have to be assessed with respect to determining the possibilities of successful reintegration of children with their communities. Children also formed their own networks of young people during the conflict. However, the literature is silent about these relationships, or whether these could be vital structures in the reintegration process.

According to the DDRR framework document, "combatants will be 'civilianized' as soon as they have handed over their weapons." This assumed that after the process of disarmament, children would discontinue contact with their commanders. This issue and the process of breaking the line of command was not fully appreciated or understood at the time of the programme planning. For example, no occasions were created in which the commanders could officially and formally tell the children that they were no longer under their command. It is generally perceived that there was no significant disassociation of the children from their commanders. This posed a serious challenge to the demilitarisation of children and their social reintegration into former communities (UNICEF 2006: 24).

How a child first became associated with the fighting forces has a critical impact on how a child will deal with the process of dissociation. During the evaluation, a number of reasons were given as to why children first became child soldiers. According to some, during the war there had been a widespread practice of abductions into the fighting forces. At the other extreme, surrogate relationships between children and commanders had developed over time in cases where children had, for various reasons, become separated from their families (UNICEF 2006: 24).

Diverse causes for joining the armed forces were given. According to one report, which is contrary to interviews received from abducted children, very few children were forced to join the armed forces. Most children joined for reasons relating to social status, e.g.

being seen as powerful and grown up, or in order to prevent other rebel soldiers from harassing them and their families. Others sometimes joined to avenge atrocities on family members.

Regardless of the diverse causes for joining the fighting forces, many children spent their formative years in an environment of conflict under the influence of one or various commanders. Relationships between commanders and the children subordinate to them were based not only on military responsibilities, but also on bonds created over a long-term surrogate relationship. In many cases these relationships served developmental purposes in terms of fulfilling basic needs, providing protection, support and guidance for the children, and resemble their bush war families.

In order to have a better understanding of the dissociation process, the evaluation team developed an operational definition which states that disassociation from the fighting forces is "a process where children are assisted in breaking away from formal or informal command structures; redefine their individual and group identities; go through a process of behavioral modification to help them adapt to norms and values of their communities; and help them to rethink alternative and realistic aspirations" (UNICEF 2006:19-20).

3.11 THE ROLE OF COMMUNITIES

Given that the physical and social environment into which child soldiers return has been affected by intangible, invisible changes, as both the host communities and the returnees must re-socialise the principles of community living. Hence reintegration involves the whole complex series of interrelated processes, correlating with the underlying functionalist perspective of the study, through which people who have experienced different things and developed different conceptions and attitudes, must renegotiate, adapt and rebuild identities and livelihoods (Özerdem and Podder 2010:6) to attain stability through sustainable reintegration and societal consensus on norms

and values to eventually establish order and stability in war-torn societies. This notion advocates the interrelatedness and interdependency of communities.

Community acceptance is essential for a child's reintegration, but preconceived ideas and expectations about children coming out of armed forces or groups, or the scars of violence committed against families and/or communities could severely limit community support. To prevent reprisals, communities have to be prepared for returning children through awareness-raising and education, which can start with sensitization of community leaders, strengthening of local child protection networks, peace and reconciliation education, and events aimed at encouraging a lasting reintegration of children. Cultural, religious and traditional rituals can play an important role in the protection and reintegration of girls and boys into their communities, such as traditional healing, cleansing and forgiveness rituals. The development of solidarity mechanisms based on traditional and cultural practices through moral consensus and the use of proverbs and sayings assist in social sensitizing and mediation activities.

Care should be taken to ensure that religious beliefs serve the best interests of the child, especially in areas where religion or cultural values may have played an important role in recruitment. Reconciliation ceremonies can offer forgiveness for acts committed, allow children to be 'cleansed' of the violence they have suffered, restore cultural links and demonstrate children's involvement in civilian life. Such ceremonies increase the commitment of communities to the children's reintegration process. Children should contribute to the creation of appropriate reintegration mechanisms to improve their sense of belonging and capacity. However, it is also essential to understand and neutralize community traditions that are physically or mentally harmful to a child, which could be dysfunctional in the reintegration process. Particular attention should be paid to the information circulating among communities about returning boys and girls, so that harmful rumours and misconceptions, e.g., about real or presumed rates of HIV/AIDS among them, can be effectively countered and a nurturing environment created to receive children, especially those who really are terminally ill (IDDRS 2006: 26).

3.12   PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT AND SPECIAL CARE

Many children have serious social and psychological problems when they re-enter their communities, because of the tremendous effort required to adapt to the environment in which they used to live. The problems they experience result from anxiety and uncertainty, idleness, stigmatization, fear of being rejected, poverty, lack of livelihood among others (IDDRS 2006: 25).

Psycho-social support should be offered instead of individual therapy to help children develop new patterns of behaviour to improve their self-esteem, develop their capacity to make decisions about the future and enable them to express emotions should they want to do so. Children and communities do, with support, have the capacity to cope with the distress caused by war. Psycho-social support activities build upon a child's natural resilience, family and community support mechanisms and encourage coping and positive development, despite the suffering children have experienced. The more children are supported within and through their new reintegration environment, the more reintegration is likely to succeed (IDDRS 2006: 25).

Children are the main actors in their reintegration. They have their own internal resources, or resilience, which help them cope, confront difficult circumstances and recover after stressful experiences. To develop their resilience, children need reliable, positive adult role models outside of the military and a sense of cohesion and being useful to and responsible for others (e.g., by fulfilling roles that benefit the community). They also need to be capable of making important choices, e.g. they should participate in making decisions that affect them.

Communities also have resilience and support programmes should take this capacity into account and reinforce it, in particular communities' capacity and desire to protect their children. Gallopin (2006) argues that resilience is the capacity of a system to respond. It is the system's ability to adjust to disturbances, moderate potential damage, taking advantage of opportunities and cope with the consequences of the

transformation that occurs. Psycho-social reintegration is based on a community approach that does more than provide individual therapy by supporting families and communities, schooling or learning opportunities, integration in youth group activities, healing and reconciliation (IDDRS 2006: 25). Some children may need specific assistance to overcome particularly negative or harmful experiences during their stay with an armed force or belligerent group. Injured and disabled children and the terminally ill, in particular, need care that is specifically adapted to their needs. The aim of child-based reintegration is to offer children a participatory support programme that has been specifically designed for their needs and gives them a viable, long-term alternative to military life (IDDRS 2006: 26).

3.12.1 Preparation of communities

The range of the atrocities committed by some CAAFAG in their communities of origin makes the preparation of reintegration into these communities an essential component of any DDRR programme. To facilitate the reintegration process immediately following DD, dialogue with communities to accept demobilised children is a priority. The process of children returning to their communities is complex and requires a great deal of technical preparation, advance planning, repeated visits and adequate resources.

The agencies involved in implementing DD programmes reported that preparations were impossible as budgets were not allocated in advance. Communities were therefore not engaged in discussions relating to their role in accepting the children, or possibilities for initiating reconciliation mechanisms, such as traditional curative or cleansing ceremonies. These events would have strengthened the reintegration of demobilised CAAFAG, providing a mutually beneficial support process for the children and their communities (UNICEF 2006: 14-15).

Prior to implementation of DD programmes, the nature of support systems that exist in children's communities must be assessed, supported and strengthened to the utmost extent possible. In the Liberian situation, this was not immediately possible as the

security situation on the ground did not permit to work with communities. Consequently, communities were not adequately prepared for the DD or for receiving their children (UNICEF 2006:25).

According to the UNICEF report on the DD referred above, there is limited level of engagement programmatically in bringing on board the community structures for Disarmament and Demobilization.

3.12.2   Community and Community networks or structures

The issues of child recruitment and social reintegration of former child soldiers have gained prominence among child protection practitioners and academics, while the area of working effectively with community structures has received very limited focus. There has been limited analysis of why community structures have to be engaged, which community structures and how to engage the community structures. The "why", "what" and "how" of the community structures are investigated in the study.

The community structures that are involved in the reintegration programmes are in the same geographical area, with same norms and values, shared problems with a great sense of social cohesion (Hawley 1950:180; 258). Typically, the word community is used to refer to the idea that there is something that is common to a group or section of the population, with significant elements of common life, as shown by manners, kinship customs, ethnic traditions and modes of speech. Community refers to the structure of relationships through which a localized population provides unity. Communities may be based on geographical areas or localities ranging in size from streets through estates, neighbourhoods, wards, other administrative areas such as school catchment areas and parishes, villages, towns, districts, counties to nations and group of nations. There are however, other characteristics that form communities**.** These include, age, gender, ethnicity or nationality. There are also other common bonds that can create a sense of belonging to a community, for example having a shared social problem such as the reintegration of returning child soldiers.

Greater community structures have characteristics of local communities, such as members having certain social interactions, common needs, problems, interests, visions and dreams which bind them together (Dunham 1970:92). Members have the experience of belonging to a group with common interests and structures are good at providing community care. The community is essential to children because adults are important in their day-to-day instruction and protection. The community is also the support system for the extended family. When children have been used as soldiers they need amnesties, demobilization and rehabilitation as do adult soldiers. After a civil or intrastate war, extra efforts at community reconciliation may be necessary for these children to be accepted back to have eventual stability in community structures (Bueren 1998:463-4).

Communities are actively constructed by their members, rather than merely arising from local circumstances (Gilchrist 2009:4). Informal networks enhance people's ability to cope with difficulties and disaster by keeping hope alive and enhancing well-being, even during long-term social exclusion, as in the case of child soldiers and sudden crises of necessary reintegration. Community structures provide informal support to community members as part of the wider social system. Social networks contribute to the interrelatedness and interdependence of the social system and supply informal care and a sense of belonging (Gilchrist 2009:15). As institutions of the social system, social networks or structures have a responsibility to support the interrelatedness to maintain social equilibrium, according to the Functionalist perspective. They exist as semi-permanent social structures in all cultures, in cities as well as villages, among people of every class. Their importance for social order and integration may increase rather than diminish as societies become more complex after reintegration. Networks of informal relationships in a geographical proximity are some of the most vital bridges between the individual and the environment (Collins and Pancoast, 1976: 28-9; Barclay Report 1982:199).

Although an important feature of a community is the capacity of networks of people to mobilise individual and collective responses against adversity, some communities into which child soldiers are reintegrated are not prepared to receive them. Helping and controlling resources available to children in adversity is not easily attained. Personal relationships are at the heart of informal care, but they are not always a mainstay of local social relationships. In general, the majority of children in trouble would turn first to their own families for support, but this viewpoint is debatable when it comes to the case of child soldiers. If family support is lacking or insufficient, there is the possibility to turn to wider kin, friends or neighbours, because seeking help from such informal networks is culturally and socially acceptable in African communities and seen as less of a blow than approaching officialdom (Barclay Report, 1982:108-111).

Sharley (2000:101-102) cites that practitioners need to support or complement the existing networks. Workers should not simply consider the persons concerned, their problems and the available services when designing care packages. They should take full account of the support network and knowledge and determine if the network type can assist with planning of services, such as efficient reintegration of child soldiers.

3.13   WORKING WITH COMMUNITY STRUCTURES

There is consensus among child focused organisational practitioners about the social reintegration of CAAFAG that effective community structures are crucial to successful and sustainable social reintegration. Creating community based child protection networks for care and protection are important for prevention of recruitment and re-recruitment. They need to create a vigilant environment that protects all children from recruiting into the fighting forces.

Communities are very important in handling reintegration processes for children, but especially for girls. They face great challenges in being accepted back into their families and communities, with girl mothers and their children experiencing the highest levels of rejection and abuse upon return. The environment in the community must be supportive

to girls' reintegration. They must be assisted to adapt and should be encouraged to reintegrate into communities with greater economic opportunities like towns, where they could find employment.

According to Wessells (2009:27) community-based child protection mechanisms are at the forefront of efforts to address child protection in emergency, transitional, and development contexts worldwide. The mobilization of such grassroots groups has become a common programming response in many settings, particularly in areas affected by armed conflict or displacement. International agencies are a favoured approach in places where local and national government is unsuited or unwilling to fulfil children's rights to care and protection.

Community-based child protection groups are vital means of mobilizing communities around children's protection and wellbeing. When organised with care and in a contextually appropriate manner, they make it possible to identify, prevent and respond to significant child protection risks. They mobilise communities around child protection issues and provide a base of local support and action that can be taken to scale through contact with other community groups together with national child protection systems (Wessells 2009: 32).

Creating community structures are useful because they interconnect different levels of national child protection systems. In many post-conflict countries, like Liberia, the national governments are unable or unwilling to fulfil their obligation to protect children and fulfil children's rights. Governments lack presence and capacity in many areas needed to protect children. Therefore, community structures are important in very strong societies to support collective dialogue, reflection and decision making in the change process. Community structures help to mobilise communities which are natural units for collective planning and action and can draw on community resources, helpers and practices that can potentially support child protection.

When engaging communities' sense of agency, their values, and their own human, physical and natural resources, it is possible to mobilise communities for child protection

and to create contextually appropriate, sustainable supports that outlive the life of externally funded projects (Wessells, 2009: 10).

Commins (2007**:**3) argues that involvement of community structures enhances accountability of public, private and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to the people. Engaging community structures in delivery of services has a potential to be responsive to the needs and priorities of former child soldiers, leading to allocative efficiency**.** Commins (2007:3) further argues that involvement of communities reduces levels of bureaucracy and has better knowledge of local costs, leading to productive efficiency. He however raises a counter argument that it simply amounts to shifting the burden of service delivery to potential beneficiaries. Care needs to be taken of the demands on community time and the cost to beneficiaries.

There has been scaling up and creating of more community based programmes through expansion of numbers and type of activities implemented in the reintegration programme. There is a glaring gap in the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the programmes. The Liberian Reintegration evaluation shows that a total of 714 community structures had been formed, up to 299 of these were not active, with total of 4,759 members (2,161f, 2,598m) not trained out of the 10, 734 members of the different community structures(UNICEF 2007: 16).

Slaymaker, Christiansen & Hemming (2005:4) provide additional analysis in working with community structures especially in service delivery. They advocate for the following:

- **Problem identification**: There is broad agreement that community-based approaches have the potential to be more responsive to the needs and priorities of beneficiaries (allocative efficiency). However, communities are generally less well equipped to identify solutions. This applies to communities into which the CAAFAG return. The community is equally affected by conflict, and protective environment is equally weakened.

- **Identifying solutions** to problems experienced at community level generally require additional external technical support to facilitate informed decision-making. Important issues surround designing an appropriate 'menu' of service options, which balances the needs and demands of beneficiaries with the constraints of the operating environment. Identification of some reintegration options for CAAFAG requires external support from which the community structures benefit.

- **Public goods and optimum level of provision**: Community level priorities may not always be consistent with broader societal goals e.g. equity, efficiency and sustainability. While community-based approaches may improve allocative and productive efficiency, public goods, for example sanitation, are often undersupplied. Important questions surround subsidiarity, which refer to levels at which decisions are made and different components of services are provided. Community structures may respond to limited reintegration needs of CAAFAG, as they may not have broader perspectives, such as policy frameworks of what it takes to adequately reintegrate children.

- **Maintaining minimum standards**: It is important that community-level interventions are complemented and guided by a larger system of norms and standards to ensure quality and equity in services provided. Community-based approaches have the potential to improve targeting in general, but major challenges surround targeting vulnerable groups within communities. Failure of the communities to identify the marginalized members of the community and those at risk is detrimental. Similarly, are some harmful cultural practices that negatively impact on children. These may not be consistent with international standards for care and protection.

Wessells (2009:18) also presents 4 major typologies of community engagement approaches, which are applied to community structures in Liberia:

- Category 1: Refers to direct implementation by the agency as service provider; community members are beneficiaries. This is a very common approach for the reintegration process, where communities are at the receiving end, as in Liberia.
- Category 2: Refers to community involvement in agency initiative where the agency is a promoter of its own initiative, a planner and a trainer and community members are volunteers and beneficiaries. This typology represents the CWCs in Liberia. The created CWCs had some limited partnership and low to moderate levels ownership. Communities were requested to contribute volunteers to the programme and nothing beyond this.
- Category 3: Refers to community owned and managed activities mobilized by external agency. This agency is a catalyst, capacity builder, facilitator of linkages and a funder after community ownership has developed. The community members are analysts, planners, implementers, assessors and beneficiaries. This level, though desirable to enlist high participation, which was not the case in Liberia.
- Category 4: Refers to community owned and managed activities initiated from within the community. The agency is a capacity builder and funder and community members are analysts, planners, implementers, assessors and beneficiaries. The typology does not apply to the Liberian reintegration process.

3.13.1 Protection of the protective shield

A situation of mass causalities challenges both the reality and the perception of what is called the protective shield (Bell, Flay and Parkkoff, 2002: 17-39); (Pynoos, Steinberg and Wraith, 1995: 72-95). This is especially critical for children, whose well-being is largely based on the belief that their parents and the social institutions that they interact with (e.g. schools, the police) will make them safe. A protective shield is constituted by a web of resources that the family and culture naturally provide to children in safe circumstances. It is certainly a perceived shield, but such realities are very much reality–based. These resources are in part material (e.g. food, clothing) and in part

condition (e.g. safe schools, safe streets) resources. The rings of protection are broken as a result of the conflict, exposing children to effects of conflict, which negatively impact on their social and psychological development.

Pynoos and Nader (1998: 445-473) and Bell and McKay (2004: 5-22) and Bell et al., (2002: 17-39) have suggested that the adult protective shield for children is critical for sustaining resilience in communities that have been ravaged by disaster and war. The adults' protective shield promotes a sense of safety and security vital to the initial response to mass trauma (Hobfoll, Horsey and Lamoureux, 2008: 157). They further argue that some resources for support may be damaged during mass trauma; others are likely to be available. Children resources are families and institutions.

Because children are especially susceptible to resource loss through disruption within the family, special attention needs to be paid to their access to resources in response to disasters. Children need special attention from parents to reinstate lost resources such as social networks (Hobfoll, Horsey and Lamoureux, 2008: 158). They further argue that re-establishing the protective shield will include rebuilding the village, providing access to health care, improving bonding, attachment, and interrelated dynamics within the community and between stakeholders, improving self-esteem, increasing the social skills of target receipts, and minimizing the residual effects of trauma.

The involvement of community structures will include ecological environment, family environment, peer support environment and school environment. These are vital social structures for social cohesion and integration. Establishment of the protective shield is vital for re re-socialisation process for the CAAFAG.

3.14 ROLE OF NGO'S IN SOCIAL REINTEGRATION

Even more complicated is the fact that the perceived 'closeness' of local Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to local communities and their better understanding of their cultures do not always bear out in Liberia. In practice, the local NGOs exploit

ownership of local culture as a defensive mechanism. In many cases, the local NGOs behave in equally patronizing, dictatorial and bureaucratic manner towards the villages they represent. What is more 'localness' is rendered useless since it means different things to different people and is used differently by the same people depending on their audience (Mohan 2002:143). This action refers to dysfunctionality in the reintegration process.

The general perception of target groups about NGO projects is one of ignoring the specific concerns of beneficiaries and lack of accountability (Bayat 2000:22). This manifests in NGO's top-down internal organization and their relationship with major beneficiaries. Internally, a few people take major decisions with rare participation of the office staff and extension workers (Bayat 2000:22). NGOs also perceive their beneficiaries more as recipients of assistance "than participants in development" and for these "favours" the NGOs often expect loyalty, support and service and not to question the adequacy and quality of services. Again, because NGO beneficiaries are not necessarily its members, beneficiaries cannot hold NGOs accountable; sometimes demanding accountability of NGOs is interpreted as interfering in NGO affairs. (Bayat 2000:22-24). Generally, then, there is little or no established mechanism for assessing and evaluating the satisfaction of beneficiaries with the programmes of the NGOs (Alam 1998:141). Rather, NGOs have shown a tendency to impose their own interest in determining what assistance to provide and how (Colletta, Kostner & Weiderhofer 1996: 30). The programmes were imposed on the communities; they had limited choices if any. The communities were on the receiving end and had to be grateful for what was offered to them.

3.15   CONCLUSION

At every stage of the civil conflict different factions in the Liberian Civil war used children to fight the war of adults. Different regional initiatives were established to address the Liberian crisis. The one with the most lasting solutions was the 2003 Accra accord, which led to the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

Children in the conflict were recruited to fight and where children joined "voluntarily" there were compelling factors, which made them join, such as joining to avoid sexual abuse, avoid being killed and lack of food in the community. Children had little choice than to join rebel forces. However, many children were abducted against their will.

The war had diverse effects on children in Liberia as the social growth and development of children were interrupted, children lost their innocence as children and they took on roles and functions of adults. Children were psycho-socially affected due to the atrocities they witnessed and those they were made to commit. As a result children developed negative coping mechanisms to cope with situations, like drug and alcohol abuse. The parent attachment was replaced by commanders, some of whom negatively impacted on the children. The girl children were very vulnerable, they were sexually exploited, which resulted in pregnancy in some of the cases.

There are relevant international legal provisions in International Humanitarian Laws, International Human Rights Laws, international Jurisprudence, UN Security Council resolutions, Regional declarations and National legislations and policies to protect children. International standards for social protection are well spelt out in the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards and the Paris Principles. The Liberian Children's Law attempts to institutionalise community structures into law.

The literature reviewed highlights the key elements of community structures, where community structures are seen as social support systems that enhance social interaction among its members. Community structures are also viewed to provide informal support that enhances the interrelatedness and interdependence of its members.

The next chapter will focus on research methodology used in the study and explain why the qualitative method is chosen. It will explain who were interviewed, why and how were they interviewed, what issues were raised, how the collected data was analysed.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter provides insight into the research design of this empirical study, target population, sample selection and research instruments. It introduces and explains the qualitative research method and its relevance to this study. The research techniques are based on the theoretical perspective of the study as theory directs the research to find answers to the research questions stemming from the research problem and to find solutions. Theory broadens the awareness of interconnections between community structures in societies where child soldiers are reintegrated. The techniques employed to gather data on the creation of new structures for sustainable reintegration of child soldiers in Liberia are:

Focus group discussions
Semi- and unstructured in-depth interviews
Documentary sources

4.2 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

This Sociological study adopts a descriptive and explanatory qualitative methodology to investigate working with and creating community structures to reintegrate child soldiers in an effective, sustainable way in Liberia. Different related research techniques, also called triangulation are used referring to a combination of mainly qualitative methods of data collection and analyses. Focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and documentary sources have different complementary strengths which are more comprehensive when used together. The negatives of one method are negated by the positives of the other method (Neuman 2000:125) to eventually describe and explain specific details of social reintegration and different relationships in community structures.

The research design is shaped by technical, ethical and practical considerations. The practical considerations shaping the study are the budget and the purpose of the study. Ethical considerations are based on the sensitivity of child soldiers in the community, ensuring their protection and avoiding opening up healed wounds. The technical consideration involves using the right sampling method, designing the right questions and triangulating the information (De Vaus 2002: 58) to describe and explain situations in community structures and events in the integration process.

Qualitative research is conducted among war-effected young people and communities, particularly in five counties in Liberia, namely Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Bassa and Montserrado. The sampling frame for the study provides details on the type and nature of the respondents in the selected sample that include community leaders, child welfare communities, Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG), or child soldiers, NGO officials, government and UN officials. The interview schedule that guides the research details the following key topics around which the questions are derived:

- The functionality of the community structures that existed before the DDRR and those formed during the programme, as well as the relationship of the structures with the demobilised children at each process of the DDRR.

- The extent to which positive social networks formed during the war (former commanders and peer groups) are investigated during reintegration, and

- How the different international conventions, protocols, treaties, national legislation and policy frameworks enhanced functionality of the community structures.

The research procedure is used in order to obtain answers to the stated research questions and to verify hypotheses. The questions in the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews are designed to answer the research questions posed in this study.

Focus Group discussions are held with community leaders, child welfare communities and with CAAFAG or child soldiers. These are separate for boys and girls. Key informant interviews are conducted with NGO officials, government officials and UN officials. A total of 63 respondents were interviewed.

Research methods are used as measurement techniques to enhance the validity and reliability of measurement in the study. Validity is the degree to which an instrument or technique measures what it is supposed to measure, while reliability refers to the consistency of the measurement when similar information is supplied when measured twice by the same instrument. The analyses of the collected data and the presentation and importance of documentary or secondary data are discussed.

4.3   WHY QUALITATIVE RESEARCH?

Qualitative Sociological research encompasses a variety of designs and methods, focusing mostly on human experiences and people in their natural settings and the production of descriptive and explanatory data. Data is described and explained by substantiating it through verbal responses and anecdotes of personal experiences and

is therefore rich in context. Babbie (1994:280) believes that qualitative research is especially appropriate to study attitudes and behaviour within natural settings and in unpredictable, ongoing processes, such as community structures supporting reintegration of child soldiers in Liberia. Qualitative data-gathering is a continuous process and cannot be predicted in advance as it generally plays out in specific circumstances and communities. Empirical evidence of the lives of child soldiers in Liberia is described and understood as data are in the form of direct quotations, words, sentences, paragraphs and observations gathered during focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

De Vaus (2002: 5) argues that qualitative methods are often regarded as providing rich data about real life people and situations and being more able to make sense of behaviour within its wider context. The study is mainly qualitative, meant to provide rich data about real lives of the former child soldiers' experiences during bush wars and thereafter, as well as how community structures are utilized to support their social reintegration.

The research study endeavors to understand how community structures could be effectively utilized for sustainable reintegration of CAAFAG. It examines community values, opinions, behavior and social context in which the children are reintegrated. It investigates the different levels of relationships of the CAAFAG and the community members, the CAAFAG's individual experience towards community values and norms and how the CAAFAG related among each other. To understand these relationships and to describe individual experiences, norms and ways of life of the CAAFAG, qualitative research is identified as the most appropriate method to explain the social dynamics mentioned above.

It is through qualitative methods we can explore the human side of the CAAFAG, their behavior in the community, their opinions, emotions and relationships with others in the community. There are no fixed responses regarding individual CAAFAG on any of the above mentioned social phenomena, because open-ended questions and probes in the

qualitative study were used in enlisting the appropriate responses. Though a limited number of CAAFAG are involved, the depth of information generated helped to understand how different actions contributed to the reintegration of CAAFAG. Qualitative analysis is specifically employed for non-numerical investigations and interpretations of social reintegration for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships (Babbie 1994:G6).

The findings of the research on CAAFAG, like most qualitative findings cannot be generalized, they can nevertheless be transferable for demobilized children who go through the same process and situation to inform programming for future engagement with community structures.

Although qualitative findings are not statistically generalizable, they can be `theoretically generalizable' (Barbour 1999:155). This refers not to some rarefied abstract theoretical knowledge base, but to explanatory frameworks or typologies developed from the data, or mechanisms identified which have applicability beyond the immediate context of the study. Barbour (1999:155) argues that instead of using the term `generalizability', it is more useful to talk about `transferability' of qualitative findings. This relates to their relevance for understanding similar issues and processes involved in other situations, other specialties, and other types of consultation.

Since qualitative research values data as intrinsically meaningful and organized around theorizing, researchers are concerned with generating new concepts and new community structures. Thus, grounded theory is used as an inductive research strategy, which means that theory is built from data during the data gathering process (Neuman 1997:328; 334). Data often contain rich description, detail and unusual events of child soldiers collected by semi- and unstructured questionnaires and in-depth interviews, instead of being formal and neutral like in quantitative research where theory is tested, based on numbering and statistics.

4.4   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study uses different qualitative data collection techniques, thus triangulating the information gathered. The techniques include focus group discussions, semi- and unstructured in-depth interviews and key informant interviews. All participants are interviewed in person, individually or in-group. Documentary data is also reviewed to substantiate findings. Anonymity of respondents is guaranteed at all times.

Each interview uses semi- and unstructured questions to obtain basic information on how community structures are supported to work with former child soldiers. Audio taping and note taking are used. The latter is mostly used considering the sensitivity on issues around child soldiers. Where audio taping is used, data is transcribed following each session to ensure continued analysis of data. The transcripts are reviewed regularly to ensure constant comparative analysis to generate categories and concepts and identify themes as espoused by proponents of grounded theory. This method is related to the qualitative research strategy, which is inductive. This leads to the tentative hypotheses which guide the research questions to be answered to verify the hypotheses.

The interviews were conducted in Liberian English, which is a language widely used and understood by most Liberian. The translation was done by social workers based in Monrovia.

4.4.1   Selection of the Study Area

The study is conducted in 5 counties of Liberia, namely Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Bassa and Monteserrado, out of the 15 counties. The counties are purposively identified because they have high numbers of children, who are formerly demobilized. They cover areas where most of the reintegration activities take place. Each of the four regional areas of the country is included in the coverage, which is the Eastern, North Central, South Central and Western part.

NB: The local administrative structure for Liberia is as follows; Counties are larger administrative units, followed by statutory districts comprising of several districts, cities, townships and then villages.

4.4.2 Purposive or Judgmental Sampling and Sample Size

Sampling is a process of systematically selecting respondents for inclusion in a research study. In social research a sample is drawn from a target population and is representative when it represents the distribution of relevant variables in the target population, such as being a child soldier who participate in the reintegration process, as well as being community members working with the integration of child soldiers. The respondents are purposively selected, using a snowball sampling method where people are selected because they are connected to one another as a result of a direct linkage or the same social problem (Neuman 1997:207). One participant in the event recommends another for interviewing, while each of the subsequent participants is asked for further recommendations. Purposive sampling is a method where the researcher uses his own judgment in sampling selection and this is also called judgmental sampling. Purposive or judgmental sampling is based on the fact that respondents, or child soldiers are hard to find and that anyone available is selected. It selects respondents with the specific purpose of the study in mind, namely to have participated in the reintegration process (Neuman 1997:205, 206).

The NGO staff members who worked on reintegration programmes were firstly interviewed. Then they identified persons working in community structures assisting children, who again helped to identify child soldiers who were in the reintegration programmes (Patton 1987:51-56). In snowball sampling, the researcher uses the initial few interviewers (often recruited opportunistically), to recommend other potential participants who fit the inclusion criteria or specific purpose of the study (King and Horrocks 2010:34). In this study the criteria was those who participated in the reintegration process, either as beneficiaries (CAAFAG), or facilitators of the

reintegration process which included both primary (NGO staff member) and secondary facilitators (community structures).

The snowball sampling method was the most appropriate, because the NGO staff members were on the ground and they knew who the members of the child welfare committees were. The Child Welfare Committee members in turn knew the children who had participated in the programme.

Sample size in qualitative research may refer to numbers of persons, but also to numbers of interviews and observations conducted or of events sampled. People are certainly central in all kinds of social inquiry, but they enter qualitative studies primarily because they have direct and personal knowledge of a specific event, such as creating community structures for social reintegration of former child soldiers.

A common misconception about sampling in qualitative research is that numbers are unimportant in ensuring adequacy of a sampling strategy. Yet, inadequate sample sizes could undermine the credibility of research findings. Sandelowski (1995:179) is of the opinion that "Adequacy of sample size in qualitative research is relative, a matter of judging a sample neither small nor large per se, but rather too small or too large for the intended purposes of sampling and for the intended qualitative product". Therefore, to determine an adequate sample size in qualitative research is ultimately a matter of judgment and personal experience in evaluating the quality of information to be collected against the uses to which it will be put (Sandelowski 1995:183). The particular research method and sampling strategy employed will determine the research product intended, namely to give a rich understanding of the social phenomena under study.

4.4.2.1   Limitations of the method

Purposive sampling has proved effective in qualitative studies where in-depth information is required from a section of the population, it is however not free from bias of the researcher. The respondents in the study were mainly drawn from the projects

implemented by UNICEF and its partners, while a small percentage of CAAFAG who were handled by other partners like Save the Children were not drawn in the sample size. The CAAFAG drawn in the study were conveniently identified due to access, leaving out those that were in the interior and hard to reach.

4.4.2.2   Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was received from participants before they took part in the study. They knew exactly what was being asked and what the risks entailed before they agreed to take part in the research study.

Former child soldiers were consulted to participate in the study. The researcher did not rely on the consent provided by the guardians only. No incentive was given to induce the children to participate. The children were informed of the right to withdraw from the interview if they felt like doing so, even during the interview. Anonymity and confidentiality was maintained. No names were taken from the children during the interview and the information provided was kept confidential.

Considering the sensitivity of some of the issues especially with girl participants, female social workers were brought on board to ensure the girls expressed their views freely and were able to bring out gender related issues. Care was also taken to minimize the risk of awakening emotional distress the children went through. The use of social workers ensured support was provided to those who exhibited the need for additional psycho-social support after the interviews.

4.4.3   Respondents

The researcher recruited 63 participants, who represent a variety of positions in relation to the research topic, like those that have knowledge and experience on the topic under study (King and Horrocks 2010: 29-30). These include staff members from NGOs and United Nations, members of community structures involved in the reintegration

programme and former child soldiers in Liberia, who are beneficiaries of the reintegration programme.

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Data are collected from a total of **11 Focus Group discussions** comprising of 44 respondents, 19 females and 25 males.

- 6 Focus group discussions (FGDs) of child soldiers (4 discussions for girls and 2 for boys), comprising of 16 girls and 6 boys
- 3 Focus group discussions for 12 NGO staff members, 1 female and 11 males,
- 2 Focus group discussions with 10 members of child welfare committees, comprising of 2 females and 8 males.

Key informant in-depth interviews were conducted with 19 respondents: 10 females and 9 males:

- Key informant interviews were held with 5 child soldiers,
- 9 staff members and heads of non-governmental organisations at county and national level,
- 2 government officials, and
- 3 members of the Child Welfare communities.

FGD's and Key informant in-depth interviews were conducted with a **total of 63** respondents.

The following tables will substantiate information regarding the respondents participating in the FGD and in-depth interviews:

TABLE 1: Number of Focus Group Discussants by category

FGD CAAFAG				FGD CWC			FGD NGO& Agency staff			GENERAL TOTALS
SEX	F	M	Total	F	M	**Total**	F	M	Total	**TOTAL**
FGD	4	2	6	2		**2**	3		**3**	**11**
Respon dents	16	6	22	2	8	**10**	1	11	**12**	**44**

TABLE 2: Number of Respondents in Key Informant Interviews by category

	Key Informant Interviews CAAFAG		Key Informant Interviews CWCs		Key Informant Interviews NGO/Agency Staff		Key Informant Interviews Government Staff		General TOTAL respondents
SEX	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
Respond-dents	2	3	2	1	5	4	1	1	**19**
Total	5		3		9		2		**19**

4.4.4   Unit of analysis

From the above selection of respondents, it is clear that the unit of analyses in this study represents groups, i.e. child soldiers and people in community structures as groups who have participated in the reintegration programmes. The unit of analyses flows from the research problem and tells the researcher where to collect data. It is based on the theory examined and the researcher's concern (Neuman 1997:114). In this case, it is working with community structures for sustainable reintegration of child soldiers**.**

4.5 QUESTIONNAIRES

Different categories of semi- and unstructured qualitative questions are designed in the interview schedule for the research study. These questions permit an unlimited number of possible answers, while respondents can answer in detail and clarify answers. Unanticipated findings are discovered in complex issues and give richness in detail (Neuman 1997:241). These questions included:

- Background or demographic questions, questions about personal characteristics of the participants which a researcher needs to be aware of in the analysis.
- Experience or behaviour questions, e.g. to ask the Child Welfare Committees on how they feel about the CAAFAG's behaviour in the community.
- Opinion or value questions on participants' views on specific topics.
- "Feeling" questions is another category of questions, like emotional experience of the participants on how they feel about the situation of reintegration.
- Lastly, knowledge questions, where factual information about the topic is asked (King and Horrocks, 2010:37).

The total number of questions varied per category of respondents. A total of 45 questions were asked to CWCs, CAAFAG boys were asked 32 questions, CAAFAG girls were asked 45 questions and NGO/agencies and government officials were asked a total of 47 questions**.**

4.5.1 The main topics of the questionnaires

The questions focused on the type of community structures pre- and during the DDRR, looked at the membership, the role, relationship with other structures and community perception on the structures. The functionality of the structures and the frequency of the meetings and rules and regulations of these structures were also investigated.

The research investigated the different reintegration services provided to former child soldiers, community involvement in the programmes, training provided to communities during reintegration periods and what could have been done better to enhance services of children.

The investigations also focused on the nature and quality of capacity building programmes to community structures by the NGOs. It looked at the tools developed to support community structures and how sustainability of community structures was addressed in the programme design and implementation.

Questions were also raised on how positive social networks formed by children, with fellow children and former commanders during captivity were investigated in the reintegration programmes.

To former child soldiers the following areas were added to the questionnaire:

- personal information,
- their history on engagement with the fighting forces,
- information about their biological family,
- their relationship in captivity, post-war with community and other children,
- Reintegration services that were accessed and what post-reintegration support they were accessing.
- To the girls, additional specific questions were raised on the sexual abuse against them during captivity.

4.6   FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Mainly qualitative research techniques are employed in this study, such as focus group discussions. These discussions are seen as similar to an interview context, which is run according to an interview schedule with mainly open-ended questions where a small

group of people in terms or purpose, size, composition and procedure is investigated (Babbie 1994:250). It is a carefully planned discussion to obtain perceptions of a defined area of interest in a non-threatening environment. Since people are a product of their environment and are influenced by other people, it is pertinent that beliefs and attitudes are recorded to clarify answers.

Focus group discussions have several advantages. Peers, friends and colleagues share experiences and knowledge on the issue under debate. Illiterate respondents can participate in discussions and clarify answers. The flexibility to discuss unanticipated issues makes a huge contribution to the data gathering process as focus group discussions are inductive, context-based and narrative (Neuman 1997:253). The technique is easily understood and participants discuss issues freely. It is also a time saving technique, inexpensive and it provides speedy results. Focus group discussions have high face validity, with the researcher being able to read facial expressions and gestures (Babbie 1994:250). This feature made this research technique an indispensable part of the research methodology for this specific study.

Like all research techniques, focus group discussions also have disadvantages. It is not easy for the researcher to control participants from steering away from the topic and discuss irrelevant issues. These groups also have their own characteristics and could be uninterested in the topic or very excited about the interviews. To arrange for people to be at a certain place at a certain time is usually a problem and it is prudent to plan well in advance (Babbie 1994:250).

In this study focus group discussions were administered to a group of respondents, who ranged from three to five members. The group comprised of homogeneous members of the population in terms of sex, age and function in the community. The focus group categories were for girls and boys who were former child soldiers.

Focus group discussions were also held with NGO staff members who participated in the DDRR programmes. These were from both local and international organisations.

Focus group discussions were also conducted with members of the child welfare committees. The criteria for inclusion were to have participated in the DDR programme.

Focus group discussions were important in obtaining additional data, leading to methodical rigour to gather data from in-depth, face-to-face interviews or questionnaire data (Fontana and Frey 1993: 23-4). King and Horrocks (2010:62) argue that focus group discussions are phenomenological. The data collected may be the only source of information, potentially providing detailed insight about specific phenomena and experience. This was true in this study, as some of the data collected on child soldiers was new and not documented anywhere in other studies.

4.7   INTERVIEWS

The advantage of conducting in-depth, face-to-face interviews is a high response rate. Interviews are flexible as researchers control the sequence of the questions and can use necessary probes, as well as nonverbal communication and observe the surroundings. Contingency questions can be asked at a later stage as the researcher knows who the respondent was (Neuman 1997:252-253).

The disadvantage of in-depth interviews is that it is expensive. Travelling to the interview site can be costly. Interviewer bias is also a problem as a respondent may not communicate well with the researcher, which could affect answers (Neuman 1997:253).

4.7.1   Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews were mainly used to interview staff members of non-governmental organisations, who participated in the reintegration programme of child soldiers. The answers were based on their experience and knowledge of programme implementation. The interview method facilitated two-way communication between the

researcher and respondents. Detailed information and richly expressive quotations were obtained.

4.7.2 Semi- and unstructured interviews

Semi- and unstructured interviews were conducted, where open-ended questions were administered to relevant target groups in the community. Probing questions were also used to enlist in-depth opinions and perceptions on the topics. Interview guides outlining the main topic regarding creating community structures to reintegrate child soldiers in a sustainable manner were used in a very flexible way. The phrasing of the questions and the order in which they were asked allowed the participants to lead the interaction in an unanticipated direction.

Separate interview guides were developed for child welfare committees, girl child soldiers and boy child soldiers, the UN, NGO and Government officials. The method generated in-depth information on the topics presented to the different categories to be analyzed.

4.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF INSTRUMENTS

Reliability and validity in social sciences is achieved through the use of specific verification strategies. Validity is the degree to which an instrument or research tool measures what it is supposed to, ensuring it measures soundness and effectiveness of research techniques (Neuman 1997:138). To ensure validity in the study, multiple related qualitative techniques or triangulation is used through focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and documentary sources, giving meanings of social events, such as working with and creating community structures for the reintegration of child soldiers, which can be re-checked when data analyses is done. Reliability is enhanced by consistency of both the process and the product of the research. Triangulation is used to compare data obtained from related techniques to ensure consistency. Thus,

reliability is a technique applied repeatedly to the same situation and gives similar results each time. Reliability is also seen as dependability of techniques, while validity is seen as trustworthiness.

In qualitative research issues of validity should be linked not to "truth" or "value" as they are for positivists, but rather to "trustworthiness", which means that the researcher made those practices visible and therefore, "auditable", thus leaving a decision trail to track and verify the research process (Sandelowski 1986:28). A study is seen as trustworthy if the reader of the research project judges it to be so. Individual judgment of the appraisal of a research project is thus based on experience and insight, rather than on explicit predetermined criteria and is suitable for this study on social reintegration and working with community structures in Liberia.

4.8.1 Triangulation

To enhance the validity and reliability of the research study, data collected was triangulated using a variety of data sources. Similar questions were asked across different respondents. Methodical triangulation, where different methods were used to address the same research problem, focus group discussion and key informant interviews were conducted to enhance both reliability and validity (King and Horrocks, 2010: 164).

Triangulation is advocated for in qualitative data because it increases the sophisticated rigor of the data collection and analysis, making data methods more public or open to scrutiny. It also does reveal the richness and diversity of social settings. Qualitative researchers do not assume there is a single view of reality, but believe in different methods, reveal different perspectives. Data collected on the same social event, collected by different methods, different researchers, or at different times may not converge into one consistent picture (Neuman 1997: 336).

The triangulation of data strengthens research and has the following benefits:

- additional sources of information often give more insight into a topic,
- inadequacies found in one-source data is minimized when multiple sources confirm the same data,
- multiple sources provide verification and validity while complementing similar data,
- more comprehensive data is obtained,
- data and information is supported in multiple places/types of research, which makes it easier to analyse data to draw conclusions and outcomes and
- Inconsistencies in data sets are more easily recognized.

4.8.2 Probing

Three types of probes were used. Elaborate probes, which were used to encourage participants, to talk more about the topic in order to get more information. Clarification probes were also used to elicit more information about the situation. Lastly, completion probes, where incomplete stories were provided, probes were used to elicit more information to complete the story (King and Horrocks 2010:53). The probes were used to clarify information provided by respondents by asking questions of the evidence to see how well the concepts fit the evidence and create new concepts by abstracting from the evidence. Additional evidence is collected to address unresolved issues (Neuman 1997:427).

4.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative interviews and focus group discussions conducted with Liberian child soldiers and other community respondents were analysed according to certain data put into thematic categories. Thematic data analysis was done by drawing categories and developing patterns of themes across the full data set, which involved categorizing the

data into themes and sub-themes in relation to the research topic. These categories were arranged rationally into major themes subdivided into sub-themes. Concepts and quotations of significant remarks were grouped according to relevant categories or themes.

4.10   DOCUMENTARY DATA

Documentary data, also seen as secondary data, was reviewed to substantiate the qualitative study. Qualitative content analysis was done on some quantitative information obtained from the reviewed literature and included as background information. Data was reviewed around the key thematic areas such as community structures, reintegration, national and international child protection frameworks and on research methods. The documentary sources of information were NGO reports, UN annual reports, evaluation studies and the UNISA library. The method helped in summarizing what was known on the major thematic areas, it also helped in refining the tools and reinforcing some of the analysis.

4.11   CONCLUSION

The chapter has explained why qualitative methods were used as research methodology. It explained why the purposive sampling was deemed suitable, why the respondents who answered the questionnaire in interviews and focus group discussions were included. These were community members, key informants and reintegrating child soldiers. It discussed the main topics of the interview guide that was used to provide answers to the semi- and unstructured questionnaires or interview schedule guiding the research. The reliability and validity of research techniques were also discussed. It was explained how data collected was qualitatively categorized into thematic aspects to be analyzed in Chapter 5.

The next chapter will focus on the analysis of the data collected in the study. The findings will be presented in six sections in conjunction with the stated research questions in Chapter 1.

CHAPTER 5

KEY FINDINGS OF DATA GATHERED

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Since it is imperative that all empirical research studies are based on theoretical frameworks, it is necessary to analyse the findings according to the Structural-functionalist perspective of the study. The data gathered were analysed to eventually answer research questions to refute or confirm the tentative hypotheses to solve the research problem. This chapter presents the empirical findings from the focus group discussions and key informant interviews as given by the 63 respondents. By means of the data gathering techniques, the research questions and tentative hypotheses held are addressed in an attempt to provide answers to the research questions stemming from the research problem.

The key findings will be discussed under six major sections:

Section 1 will answer the first research question:

- **What is the nature of children who were formerly associated with the fighting forces, also referred to as child soldiers in Liberia?**

In answering this question, the chapter will look at who these children were, how they joined the armed groups, what experiences they went through individually and as a

group while in the bush with the armed groups and the process of disengaging from the rebel groups.

Section 2 will answer the following research question:

- **What reintegration services are provided to CAAFAG, and how do these foster the social reintegration process?**

Section 3 will answer the following question:

- **What community structures are used in the reintegration of CAAFAG in Liberia and how do community structures engage in the process?**

In answering the above two questions, the chapter will deal with the type of structures that were used in the reintegration process, the relevancy of the community structures, membership, functionality, coverage, how they evolved, how the structures linked up with the formal and informal systems and community perception of the structures. The different community structures established after reintegration will be highlighted.

Section 4 will answer the following question.

- **What are the mistakes identified in working with community structures in the reintegration process and how do they impact on child reintegration?**

The section highlights some of the missing ingredients in engaging community structures for effective social reintegration identified in the study. Whether existing structures and community coping mechanisms were used in the reintegration process was investigated. The chapter also looks at whether informal networks were explored and the nature of programming, and how it fostered sustainable social reintegration.

Section 5 will answer the following question:

- **What capacity building programmes are developed for community structures to ensure sustainable support to former child soldiers?**

Capacity building programmes in the structures and how they strengthened support systems in the social reintegration programme are discussed to investigate gaps in the different community structures.

Section 6 will answer the following question:

- **What legal frameworks exist globally and nationally to support social reintegration of former child soldiers and community structures to provide sustainable support?**

Sustainable social reintegration of child soldiers is based on international and national legal frameworks and is applied in Liberia according to proper legal justification.

The answers to these six questions emanate from the focus group discussions and key informant interviews held with child soldiers, community members and NGO officials during the study. The data collected is qualitatively analysed to bring out the children's voices by quoting their individual responses to substantiate the arguments put forward.

5.2 RESPONDENTS

A total of 63 respondents (29 female, 34 male) participated in the research study. 19 Key Informant Interviews (10 female, 9 male) and 11 Focus Group Discussions (19 female, 25 male) were conducted, as explained in chapter 4.

In total 27 CAAFAG (18 female, 9 male), 21 NGO staff (6 female, 15 male), 13 CWC members (4 female, 9 male) and 2 government officials (1female, 1male) took part in

the study. The CAAFAG had all gone through the reintegration programme. The 13 members of the Child Welfare Committees and social workers had also implemented the reintegration programme. The following qualitative table elaborates and substantiates numbers of respondents involved. The table does not represent quantitative analysis of any kind.

TABLE 3: Total Number of Study Respondents by Category

	CAAFAG FGD and Interviews			NGO and Agency staff			CWC members			Government officials			GRAND TOTAL		
SEX	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	**TO-TAL**
Respon-dents	18	9	**27**	6	15	**21**	4	9	**13**	1	1	**2**	29	34	63

All interviews were recorded to ensure continued analysis of data. The transcripts were reviewed regularly to ensure constant comparative analysis to generate categories and concepts and identify themes as espoused by proponents of grounded theory. Consistent with a grounded theory approach, data from each participant was analysed, to ensure an in-depth analysis of emerging issues of theoretical relevance. Relationships between concepts or variables were analysed.

5.3 MAP OF THE STUDY AREA: BONG, GRAND BASSA, NIMBA, LOFA AND MONTSERRADO

The study was undertaken in the counties of Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Bassa and Montserrado.
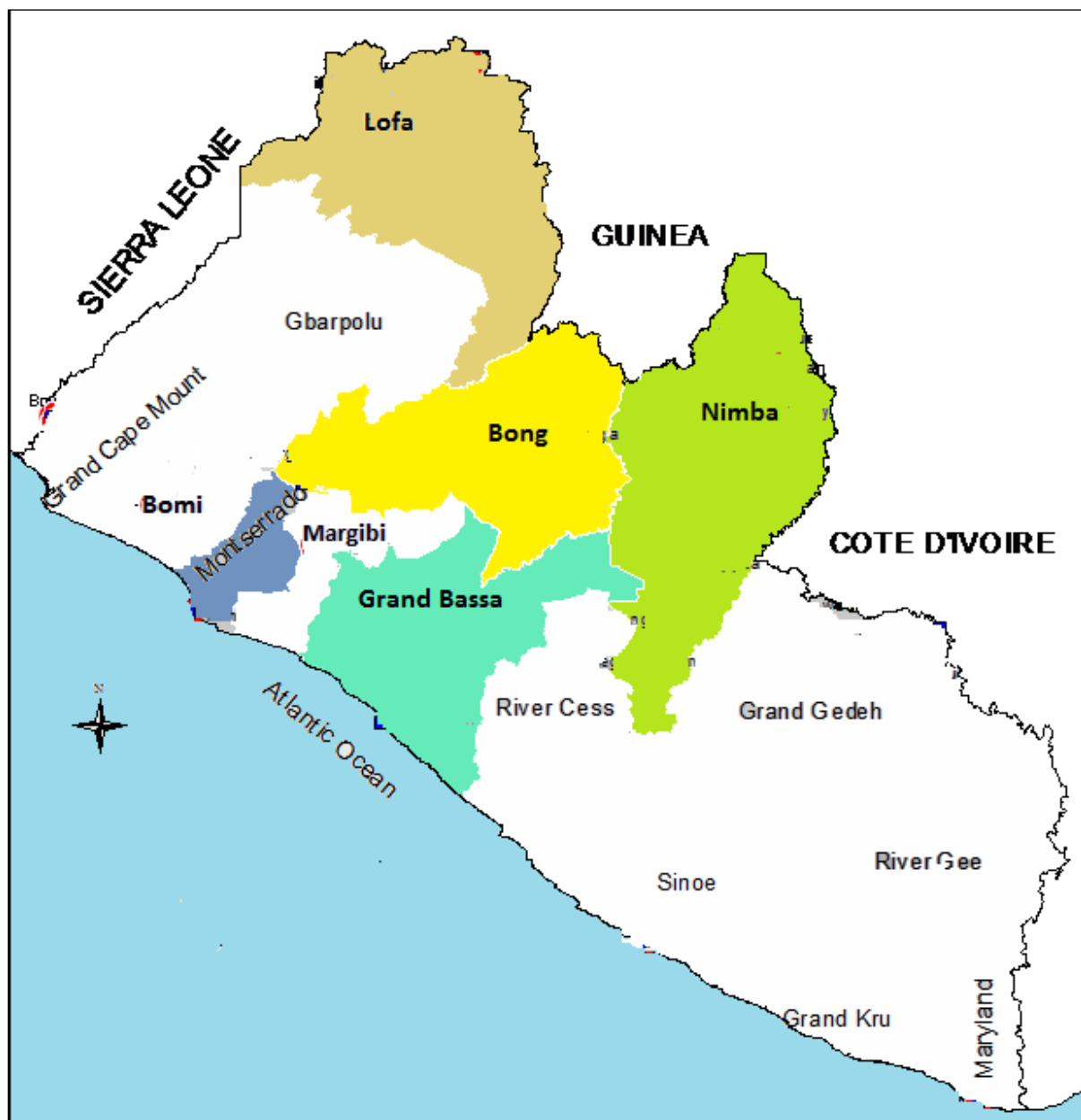
These 5 counties represented the highest number of demobilised children in Liberia.

TABLE 4: Showing numbers of demobilised children by County

County	Boys	Girls	Total
Bong	808	222	1,030
Grand Bassa	649	211	860
Bomi	1768	631	2399
Cape Mount	163	106	269
Gbarpolu	274		274
Monrovia	1662	305	1967
Zwedru	745	154	899
Nimba	1153	389	1542
Lofa	1097	601	1698
Harper	666	119	785
Runaway	57		57
Total	**9,042**	**2,738**	**11,780**

Source: UNICEF, 2005

Note: This table is given here for qualitative explanation to substantiate the number of children per county and not for quantification of data.

5.4   DATA ANALYSIS: SECTION 1

The following research question will be discussed and analysed:

- **What is the nature of children who were formerly associated with the fighting forces, also referred to as child soldiers, in Liberia?**

5.4.1   How They Joined the Rebel Groups

Each child goes to war for his or her own reasons, which often become obscured in the process of co-option, because fearing for their lives can turn them into ruthless fighters and killers (McIntyre 2005:2). Children in Liberia found themselves with the armed groups for varied reasons, which ranged from conscription to joining voluntarily. A section of the children interviewed alluded to the fact that they were encouraged by their

peers. Others joined to avoid harassment from soldiers especially the girls. While others were conscripted by the armed forces and armed groups. The other reasons advanced for joining were, self-defence to save themselves after the death of their parents by the armed groups, were encouraged by adults who were close to them while children also joined out of total frustration of life by then, they had lost everything to the armed groups, ranging from close relatives, property and food. The children were picked up from hiding places, on their way to markets, in their homes, in the gardens, no place was safe for them then. The qualitative responses below are the voices of children who were interviewed on how and why they joined the fighting:

"I joined to save myself; they killed my father, mother and brother. I looked for the rebels myself."
"We were at the farm, we were captured by LURD forces, me and my sister, and I was just 12 years".
"I was in the kindergarten by then, we were hiding, my brother, mother and I. They took me and my brother. We were many small children; they took us to Bomi hills".
"They beat my grandmother and they took the only rice we had, that is why I joined the rebel group".
"My mother's husband was a general with MODEL, he convinced me to join".
"I was sleeping at 4.00am, they opened the door and took me with them, and I was 15 yrs. by then".

Children of all ages joined the armed groups; some were as young as 6 years old. They joined various armed groups that included the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and the government forces by then. In some cases children joined as a group, as neighbours, peers or were captured in a bunch.

Children's roles changed on joining the armed groups. Their social status changed, they took on adult roles and lost their innocence. The roles they emulated were of a dysfunctional society, where society has lost it equilibrium and social disorder prevailed.

As clearly reported by the children, they were compelled by the prevailing situation and the situation dictated. It was not out of free will. According to the Liberia TRC (2009:55-56) forced recruitment was deliberate, widespread and systematic by all fighting factions. Even government troops, who were supposed to protect the population, preyed on children and enlisted them by force, often systematically by selecting young boys and girls from schools or by raiding internally displaced people's (IDPs) camps to forcibly enlist new recruits. International and local child rights organizations reported that in mid-2003 parents in Monrovia had stopped sending their children to school because children as young as nine years old disappeared on their way to school. It was a common practice of recruiting children right at or near schools.

The government which is a primary duty bearer in ensuring and providing a protective environment where children are well nurtured, instead was at the forefront of creating social disorder, by ensuring children ceased being children.

However, not all children were openly abducted by force. Although this was probably the case for the largest number of child recruits, a much broader set of motivations compelled young boys and sometimes girls to join. It would be wrong to conclude, however, that even those children who apparently joined armed groups 'voluntarily' did so out of their own free will. Children who found themselves in a context of war, violence, and the breakdown of social ties cannot be considered exercising free choice. Their world has been turned upside down and thus children made decisions in the context of a broad range of war-related pressures – political, economic, social and cultural. The following statement from a child summarised the predicament the children found themselves in:

"Whenever the rebels would come, we were running. I decided it was too much running, I decided to join".

Economic reasons were also advanced as a motivation for children to join the armed forces (Liberia TRC 2009:56-58). Often, children's motivations to join armed groups seemed rooted in the inequalities inherent in Liberian society, where rural youth were caught between a lack of educational and economic opportunities in rural areas and a deep feeling of marginalization by those from underprivileged social or ethnic groups. In such an environment of deprivation and desperation, young boys in particular seemed to have developed a certain admiration for soldiers and the fighting forces as potential channels for empowerment and social mobility. Consequently, a number of former child soldiers reported to have joined armed groups voluntarily, often because they wanted to emulate soldiers, to whom they looked up and who seemed to embody a sense of freedom and empowerment that was otherwise sorely missing from their lives.

There was a shift in community values and norms, where role models were not the respected people in the community but those who held instruments of coercion. The children were re-socialised to respect those who could terrorise others. Giddens (1993:80) argues re-socialization may happen, which is marked by the disruption of previously accepted internalised values and patterns of behaviour, followed by the adoption of radically different ones.

War and violence generated their own social and economic dynamics and, often, produced yet more war and violence. Children, who by nature of their age and dependency on their families are generally in a more vulnerable position, thus often resorted to joining armed groups as a coping strategy in a radically changed environment shaped by the power of the gun. In this context, motivations for children to join the fighting forces thus ranged from displacement and the loss of their parents or guardians to suffering economic hardship and taking revenge being recruited by their own family members. Abuse by one armed group could compel children to join an opposing armed faction, just to feel safe from the previous abuse. The children joined as a way of coping with the prevalent situation.

UNICEF (2006:22) summarised that the reason for recruitment in Liberia in times of conflict, when social support structures had broken down and normal attachments to family and community were severed, children were more easily attracted to join the fighting forces. They perceived that better opportunities existed with the fighting forces and that they would be more able to fulfil their social and psychological needs by joining the conflict. They believed that such engagement would satisfy their need to be seen as a worthy individual with access to resources and power. Engagement with fighting forces tends to provide the opportunity for being perceived as "masculine," which is glorified among peers and has its roots in the process of socialization.

According to Functionalist theorists, the situation above presented a break-down of social systems, where there was no social control and parents and community members did not control the situation. There was lack of internal coordination of the social structures, which resulted in role reversal. Children had to adapt to a new environment by coping negatively, to acquire some form of social equilibrium in a chaotic environment.

5.4.2 Experiences of Children While in Captivity

The children took on different roles while in the armed groups; they are those who were involved in direct fighting, with very limited training, ranging from 2 days to one week. Others carried ammunitions, while others did the cooking, washed dishes, fetched water, carried guns and ammunitions. Many girls served as wives of commanders while some young children were made to fetch water. These roles are seen as unconventional, irregular warfare roles, but needed in the rebel groups they have joined.

The children went through a lot of suffering while in the bush, some were shot at but managed to survive, while some were not so lucky, they died. They witnessed the death of their colleagues. The children reported seeing a lot of wicked things while in the bush, watching their colleagues being raped, killed and amputated.

Especially girls went through a lot of abuse, they were sexually abused and some were harmed due to having multiple relationships in the bush.   The quotes below from the children gave some of the experiences the children went through.

"The girls could be raped in my presence".
"One of the commanders killed a pregnant woman and removed the foetus, and cut it into two".
"We were denied food whenever we got lost. We were made to roll in dirty waters and our clothes would get torn. Whenever you would complain to the commander you would be harassed more".
"If a girl is found loving several, they would shave hair and undress her".

The Liberian government had a group of very young boys' units, which were with the NPFL, and were trained to terrorise people. They were nicknamed as "worse" (meaning worst at meting out atrocities to their victims). These were young and short boys, who had a common method of torture where they would torture adults, by ensuring they are within their range of reach in terms of height to inflict pain to sensitive body parts. They referred to this as making adults to come up their (small children) level. This was very painful.

Most children adopted bush names that signified how dangerous they were. The names they adopted included the following; general pussy machine, commander women panty, commander dangerous among others.

"I was called commander dangerous. My small boys were very dangerous".
"I was commander woman panty; I could hardly spare any girl".

UNICEF (2006:8-9) states that child soldiers were largely perceived with fear in Liberia because the way they terrorized communities. As children, and often under the influence of drugs, negotiation with them by victims was not possible, and perpetrations by the children could often be of disproportionately violent extremes. In addition to the

drugs, these harsh behaviours were attributed to factors such as the use of magic charms which were believed to make them immune to attacks, thus reducing fear, and to the fact that they were young and less socialised, leaving them highly susceptible to peer pressure and other manipulative influences. These circumstances turned them into killing machines unaware of the moral implications of their actions (McIntyre 2005:1). One of the interviewed boys said:

"If you move lovingly from one person to another, they would cut your hands or legs. They heard my friend was moving with another man, they cut her leg. She now uses crutches. I witnessed several rape cases, my sister was raped by more than 5 soldiers, and she died in the process".

The atrocities meted out at the victims by the armed groups corrupted children's minds, it left them in fear if they did not follow the instructions, and they would meet the same fate. As a result children were compelled to carry out atrocities out of fear. The response below says it all;

"At times they could tie the enemies behind the car and drag them along. Sometimes they would cut throats of the enemies, or cut their body parts until they finish up the person".

Children witnessed a lot of atrocities being committed by the adults. Many were compelled to commit atrocities as well. The Liberian TRC (2009:65) states that there is no doubt that children were at the receiving end of some of the worst atrocities, but also were involved in committing brutal acts of killing, and torture against civilians. Some of the child rights violations were even committed by children on children. In many instances, the violation of child rights and their committing crimes are closely linked, in that children were first forcibly recruited, physically and psychologically coerced into submission, and then asked to commit acts that are equally heinous to those they experienced themselves against other civilians (Liberian TRC, 2009:65).

Armed groups committed crimes of sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage against girls, some of them ten years of age or younger. Liberian girls suffered immeasurable physical and psychological pain and trauma from sexual violence and rape that was widespread and systematically committed during the war (Liberian TRC, 2009:96-97).

According to the Liberian TRC, (2009: 83-4) children experienced some of the worst atrocities imaginable and endured severe hardships. They saw family members and friends killed, raped, and tortured and often fell victim to acts of brutality themselves. These experiences have left deep scars on Liberian children's psyche, and it is still too early to fully measure the extent of the trauma and the long-term effects it might have on a generation of young Liberians.

Many children also returned to the same communities or neighbourhoods where they have to interact with their tormentors. They are constantly reminded of their ordeals and many times have to live next to former perpetrators and be still threatened.

The response from the interviews showed the children's way of life changed as a result of the war. This was seen in the unorthodox way of behaving, where force was the only way of life. The skills to negotiate, bargain and live in harmony were not there. Politeness was negatively construed, which is an indication of interrupted socialisation, child growth and development.

One of the former child soldiers said:

"I had a girlfriend in the bush; we separated when I returned, because she cannot make business. The girl's behaviour was not good. She does not know how to talk to people. The parents said she was never like that before she went to the bush. The things she used to take like grass and beer spoilt her".

Force was the more acceptable way of doing things. Applying force became a way of life to CAAFAG.

"My colleague is in prison, he tried to make love to a girl, and she refused. My colleague went at night and cut the girls arms. He was arrested; he has now spent 12 months in prison".

The response below coming from one of the children who went through the demobilisation and disarmament processes acknowledged that children had changed behaviour afterwards. However, their testimonies in the interview still indicated their lack of knowledge of what is morally acceptable.

"I used to behave funny, abuse and jump on people. After the DDRR, I left all those behaviour. I now concentrate on taking palm wine".

Some acts done and atrocities committed by the rebel commanders were aimed at subduing the children to commit crime. The commanders did outrageous things which made children live in constant fear and submission.

The CAAFAG lived under constant fear. The girl CAAFAG observed;

"We joined 15 children. 5 died in the fighting, 3 were boys and 2 were girls. I was very scared; I did not have the way out. Any thought of running away, I would risk being killed. I was very scared of the commanders. I was not feeling good. I was just moving behind the commanders. Whenever, I would go with them, they start killing people, I would feel bad".

Children found themselves as both victims and perpetrators during the war. Children were routinely coerced and manipulated by commanders to commit brutal acts in violation of international law against the civilian population, including their family members and other children. These acts included abductions, killings, torture, rape and

other forms of sexual violence, pillage and the destruction of property. Children were exploited and manipulated through repeated physical and psychological means and frequently drugged to be able to commit these crimes. They were socialized into committing abuse, the routine use of violence and the power of the gun as the central norms that ruled their lives (TRC, 2009:96).

The involvement of children in the fighting and the experiences they went through using the Functionalist lens, presented a major step in the re-socialisation process. Due to a breakdown of community structures, children were introduced to new environments of violence. They had to shed off the norms and values acquired before the conflict and learnt new values to enable them cope with the situation. The social system had fractured and new form of social equilibrium had to be re-established. The children found themselves submerged between different roles as victims and as perpetrators, where they had lost their innocence and taken on roles as abusers which are normally assigned to adults, instead of only being normal carefree children.

The experience children went through is summarised by Giddens (1993: 81), who argues what seems to happen in critical situations like armed conflict, is that the socialization process is "thrown into reverse". The socialized responses are stripped away and the individual's personality is then effectively restructured.

5.4.3 On Returning

Most children reported being well received on returning from captivity. Some did not have any communication with their parents since their abduction. They had been assumed dead and for some children the parents were even shocked on seeing them return. One child, who had been reported to have died, narrates his ordeal as such;

"When I came home and my parents saw me, they just started running away from me; they thought it was my spirit they were seeing. I started to run after them, I caught up with them, and I told them I was the one. Tears of joy rolled in their eyes as we hugged".

Parents slaughtered animals, such as pigs which signified the importance of the occasion. In many communities in Liberia, it is an important and significant animal. For other children it was a white rooster signifying purity on return. For others it was a goat. It was an opportunity for the families and neighbours to sit and do merry making. It was a moment of joy and tears of happiness. The return ceremonies signified acceptance.

Most of the CAAFAG interviewed on their return, reported that they were well received and were staying with their biological parents. Only one child was in independent living, others were with other relatives like grandparents, sisters and uncles. The children with both parents reported having received a very warm reception on return. This is an important aspect for social reintegration as families provided a first line of support. Some communities were reported to be very supportive of the children. Some children reported being supported with transport fees to government hospitals when they fell sick, while others were supported to buy exercise books to go back to school. The communities were supportive to children.

This nature of support is alluded to by Veale and Stavrou (2003: 46) as they assert that in the African settings, rituals are performed for cleansing children, who go through such problems. Communities have a number of rituals, which are aimed at removing the spirits, the ceremonies of forgiveness, healing and restoration. These activities are performed by people of a given strata in community, not just anybody. This alludes to the Functionalists' theory where society is stratified, but working together to achieve social solidarity (Macionis, 1997: 236).

It was also observed that some of the children who were received by extended relatives were motivated by the 300 USD Transitional Safety Net Allowances that the CAAFAG received. The love for these children ceased after the money was over and spent.

From the testimony of the children, it was evident that the parents required support as well. Some of them had lost hope of their children being alive. Seeing them return was

like seeing a ghost. They needed support both over the assumed loss of their children and managing of their anxieties on return.

A girl observed that,
"My family was surprised to see me. They thought I had finished by dying".

The acceptance of children back into the community is a major step in starting the journey to re-socialisation. It is an important step for the CAAFAG to learn the values they lost over time. Macionis (1997, 133) argues that the family is the most important agent of socialization because it represents the centre of children's lives. The family shoulders the task of teaching the children cultural values, attitudes, and prejudices about themselves and others. The family confers on children a social position, that is, parents not only bring children into the physical world, they also place them in society in terms of race, ethnicity, religion and class. Schooling, peer groups and mass media play an important role in children's socialization.

5.4.4   Children's changed lives

Despite the good reception, the children's way of life had radically changed due to the experiences they had gone through. The children had taken on to drinking, smoking opium and cigarettes and their behaviour were not very good. Some were very abusive and aggressive too. They acknowledged that they were quick to harm anybody if annoyed.

A former girl CAAFAG observed; *"We, who fought, are quick to harm somebody"*.

Some community members were very negative towards these children. Many believed that they had committed a lot of atrocities. They had lost their innocence as children in the eyes of the community. Some children said they had no respect for their parents because of the long absence from them. However they missed the bonding of parent-

child relationships. Some said they considered their fathers and mothers like brothers and sisters. They did not feel the parenting in them.

A girl CAAFAG confirmed this by saying:
"I consider my Pa (father) as a big brother and my Ma (Mother) as big sister".

The attainment of adulthood was preceded by various socialisation procedures. Values and norms of behaviour that communities expected from children, specifically adolescents, were communicated to them in various ways. However, in war-affected communities, this process of acquiring social values was more difficult. Efforts to attain adulthood were frustrated by the lack of opportunities and personal attachments (UNICEF, 2006: 21).
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UNICEF (2006: 23) notes as a result of children's engagement with the fighting forces, new social values emerged. For instance, harassing and killing elderly persons, or raping and looting, became more acceptable practices that led to the satisfaction of certain needs. Child soldiers came to be dreaded by communities due to their excessively aggressive behaviour and disregard for community values and norms. The engagement of parents, relatives and siblings having joined the fighting forces tended to make fighting more tolerable and normal in the eyes of the children. In many cases, the role of parents/adults and children were reversed, with CAAFAG holding a significant amount of power over adults. This shows clearly there was a change of roles; the parents' roles were substituted by the commanders and their peers who seemed to have a lot of control over the CAAFAG.

On return, the children presented deviant behaviour due to the re-socialisation process they had gone through at the hands of the commanders. They had lost the community shared values and two of the four Functional prerequisites for the survival of society became apparent, namely there was a degree of adaptation, where the social relations between CAAFAG and the environment at the time had to take place, while integration

took place when the CAAFAG had to adjust to the social system at that time (Haralambos and Holborn 1990:773-4).

5.4.5 Disarmament & Demobilisation Process

The DD programme began on 7th December 2003 and ended on 31 December 2004. By the end of the programme a total 103,019 adults and children had been disarmed. Of this number 11,780 children (9,042 boys and 2, 738 girls) were formally registered (UNICEF, 2006: 9).

After disarming at the cantonment sites, children went to Interim Care Centres or Drop in Centres (DIC). The Interim Care Centre (ICC) is defined as a residence to provide temporary care, services and protection for CAAFAG and other separated children while family tracing and reintegration activities are on-going. The children stayed at the centre for a period of 4-6 weeks and should never exceed 12 weeks (UNICEF, DD Evaluation 2006:61-2). However, the children who had returned to their communities before the official DD came at the DIC. UNICEF (2006:74) defines a DIC as a facility where CAAFAG and those who had participated in the disarmament and demobilisation process could access case management services and psycho-social care and support closer to their homes. Most of these children accessing these facilities will have already reunited with their families prior to their participation in the DDRR and therefore do not need the family reunification services and overnight facilities offered in the ICCs. At this point the process of tracing for their parents started. The social workers supported the children. At the ICC is where the first batch of their demobilisation package, the Transitional Safety Allowance (TSA) was paid out.

From the children interviewed, some of them did not go through the formal demobilisation process. This was acknowledged by the children and CWCs. Several reasons were advanced, which ranged from fear of being blacklisted not to travel to America which they treasured highly to find new opportunities. There are a number of Liberians in America and it is a dream of most Liberians to go to America. They felt if

your name appears as CAAFAG, your chances to go to America would be significantly reduced. Some children were very far from demobilisation centres and also lacked materials or proof to present, like bullets or a gun to qualify for demobilisation, since some children were not involved in direct fighting. Many children were actually left out of the formal demobilisation.

UNICEF (2006:14-16) indicates that there was a lack of understanding by the people who the boys and girls supposed to demobilise actually were, although the Liberian DDRR programme strategy does clearly state who were child soldiers according to the Cape Town principles. The report goes to state that most Military observers (MilObs) found the inclusion of boys and girls without weapons confusing and subject to changing orders by superiors. Some MilObs expressed their opinion that it was wrong to include children who did not know how to operate weapons into the DD programme. This was on the premised opinion that children, who did not know how to use weapons and inflict damage, were not a security threat. Determining the age of children was yet another challenge. Some eligible children were turned away due to the dispute of their ages, as birth records were not issued in Liberia.

Some of the former commanders, on realising there was payment to CAAFAG, submitted the names of their relatives, who were not even involved in the fighting to ensure that they accessed the financial resources. The information flow was equally poor especially for children who were in rural areas.

From the interviews with the children, it was clear there are many children, who did not come forward for formal demobilisation. They just returned to the community. Over half of the children who were interviewed acknowledged having friends they knew who never disarmed. One girl said:

"We were six in a group (5 girls, 1boy) three of the girls were very small, including me. Out of three girls, it is only me who disarmed. Others did not have the materials as proof to disarm".

The community members and CWCs also confirmed that many children in the communities never came up for formal demobilisation. One CWC members said:

"*I am new in Tappita community; I know at least 10 that never went through the DD. In Central Tappita and other communities, I know close to 8 who never went through the DD*"

One boy said: "I had five friends, four never disarmed".

The community members interviewed observed that children who did not go through the formal DDRR had more challenges than those who did. This is affirmed by the Liberian TRC (2009: 97) which observes that while it is considered largely successful for those children who rightfully went through the process, numerous gaps still remain. The TRC found that a significant number of CAAFAG who testified before the TRC never went through the DDRR process. Some former CAAFAG who never went through the DDRR process had difficulties reintegrating into civilian life and were particularly vulnerable to exploitation and homelessness.

The community and the children asserted that there was a remarkable difference between those that disarmed and those who did not. Those that did were able to be rehabilitated and were able to acquire a skill. The DDRR process helped them to stay with the community peacefully. It linked them to community members, who in the end acted as a source of support. The CWC members interviewed, observed that the children who never disarmed, hardly came for community meetings. They never liked cooperating with CWCs.

Some community members however observed that even those that went through the DD, required more time to recover. Some had not abandoned their behaviour they had in captivity. There were still a few cases of crime committed by these former CAAFAG in the community. One CWC member said:

"I at times say there was no need to train CAAFAG. A group of 13 boys started singing war songs. They ended up singing abusive songs. I followed up some of their parents about their behaviour; they are spoiling our children who were not part of the war."

Neither the community structures nor the social workers made a deliberate attempt to include the excluded in the programmes. The first criteria to access the programmes especially for the skills training, was a formal demobilisation identity documents (ID), which they did not have. The situation was compounded by the fact that some CWCs thought that when children never demobilised, they were not part of their mandate and did not train them any skills.

One of the criticisms of the DD process is highlighted in DD evaluation (UNICEF 2006:14-15), considering the atrocities committed by some CAAFAG in their communities of origin. The preparation of the communities ought to have been a very important component of the programme. There was however, no functional allocation of funds to mobilise the communities. The communities were therefore not engaged in discussions relating to their role in accepting children or the possibility for initiating reconciliation mechanisms, such as traditional curative or cleansing ceremonies. These ceremonies would have strengthened the reintegration of the CAAFAG, providing mutually beneficial support by the community. The lack of these roles and functions fulfilled in the reintegration process by community members lead to the dysfunctionality of the process.

Functionalists see conflict as a temporary disturbance in the social system. These disturbances are quickly corrected as society evolves (Haralambos and Holborn 1990:9-10). The disarmament process was an important attempt to re-engage the social institutions which include the formal (government) and informal (community structures) in reconstructing children's lives. The government as a defender of children rights ensured the children were back in the rightful positions, where their social development took place. The community which includes the clan, extended relatives, neighbours and

other community members started to pass on some of the cultural values to children that are vital for survival and maintenance of society and sustainable reintegration.

5.4.6   Relationships with Former Commanders and Peers

The pattern of recruitment made some children bond together in the bush. The armed groups would raid a village and abduct children there, or there would be a wave of abductions across villages at a given time. The children were either neighbours or they belonged to the same swamp. They were recruited as a group and in most cases they stayed together in small groups. After the war, when the children returned, they remained as neighbours. Some even continued going to the same school. While others had a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship, most of these did not last after the war. Some of the girls were wives of commanders and when the war ended, most moved to areas where the commanders went. In Grand Bassa county it was reported most of the girls there, went to Grand Gedeh because the commanders were from there.

Some of the commanders had a good relationship with the children; as a result the children became attached to them. However, some of them were known to the children even before the bush interaction. The following responses from the children interviewed show the relationship children had with commanders and their colleagues:

"The bullet hit me in the face. The people thought I was dead. The commander picked me up and treated me. The commander used to be my father's friend. When the war came down small, he took me home. My parents gave the commander a goat for saving my life".

UNICEF (2006:20-21) confirmed to the fact that the dynamics of the children-commander had changed due to the long term surrogate relationship. Children still reported maintaining contact with their commanders or the wives of commanders, because they had good relationships with them. According to the same report, some parents and villagers are reported to refer the children who misbehaved to their former

commanders for disciplinary action. This acknowledges the community realisation that previous relationships could play an important role in the reintegration process.

The relationship between the CAAFAG and former commanders continued to present a challenge on return to reintegration programmes. There has been a lot of focus on disengaging of CAAFAG from their former commanders. However practitioners forget that former commanders have become part of the social system in the lives of the CAAFAG, with a great influence in CAAFAG's lives. Considering the role peers play in socialisation process, there is also need for a deeper analysis of the networks formed by the peer groups during the bush period and how this could continue to influence the lives of children during the reintegration process. Re-engaging positive networks formed by peer groups could lead to a more positive re-socialisation process as a CAAFAG reported:

"I met with one of my former friends in the bush at school. We are now friends again, we do assignments together".

5.5 SECTION 2: REINTEGRATION OPTIONS

The sections will analyse the two major reintegration options offered to CAAFAG during the integration process**.** It will also answer the second research question, namely:

- **What reintegration services are provided to CAAFAG, and how do these foster the social reintegration process?**

5.5.1 Reintegration Options

Two reintegration options were offered to formerly demobilised children, namely vocational skills training and apprenticeship for those over 14 years old, as well as support to formal education through the Community Education Investment Programme (CEIP).

5.5.2   Community Education Investment Programme

The CEIP was designed to support the reintegration of school-aged demobilised children by providing them access to formal primary education in government, community and private schools. Assistance was targeted at the school level and not the individual child. Demobilised and other children in the community who attended schools that accepted CEIP benefited from the support that came through CEIP, thus enhancing the overall education level and minimising the stigma against returning demobilised children in the community and promoting their reintegration (UNICEF 2007: 13).

The goal of education in the reintegration programme was to enrol former CAAFAGs into schools so that they are engaged in routine and constructive activities towards a better future (UNICEF 2007: 15-16).

There were a total of 4,295 (3,295 male, 1000 female) in programme. This was in 582 elementary schools implementing CEIP, 329 public schools, 208 private schools and 45 community schools. It is important to note that the original thinking was that CEIP was to be implemented in public schools. However many private and community schools came on board (UNICEF, 2007: 15-16).

In areas where there were CEIP schools the conditions at the schools in terms of provisions of psychosocial care and support and educational materials improved. In addition, in areas where CEIP was implemented the level of participation of ex-CAAFAG was high, especially in recreational activities.

Provision of formal education was key to the social integration of demobilised children. The CEIP contributed greatly in creating a supportive environment to formerly demobilised children in school. This eventually increased the formerly demobilised children's self-esteem and self-value. The enrolments in formal education led to children rediscover the lost opportunity of the war era.

One of the CAAFAG observed,

"I was very clever in class before I was recruited in the fighting. I would get 85% and above in the class. When war came to the end, I chose to go back to school. I chose the academic programme. I am even doing better".

On-job training was provided to teachers to enhance their capacity to provide psycho-social care to children in a learning environment. This training was important in contributing to a child friendly and supportive environment for the formerly demobilised children. The teachers were able to identify children with learning difficulties and provided basic psycho-social support to them. The peer support system among teachers was established to enhance the teachers' capacity to deliver psycho-social support to the former demobilised children in the school setting.

The programme provided scholastic materials to schools that implemented the programme. This was in lieu of any school fees or charges. The materials were a pull factor for the schools to accept the formerly demobilised children. The materials targeted the whole school and this contributed to reintegration of the students because they were not being singled out for support. Most of the scholastic materials provided by many agencies targeted public schools, provision of the materials to private and community schools were important in retooling the schools to provide the most needed service to the formerly demobilised children.

Community structures were a very important component in the Community Educational Investment programme. Child Welfare Committee members were trained to provide psycho-social support to children in communities. Children's club members provided on the job training in child rights and protection issues. Youth members were trained in life skills activities, child and youth participation programmes. These structures enhanced children's social reintegration in many aspects such as provision of psycho-social support, mobilizing children into the reintegration programmes. The structures enhanced acceptability of the formerly demobilised children into the community.

5.5.3 Skills Training and Apprenticeship Programme

The skills training programme was designed with the understanding that a lot of ex-CAAFAG have lost the opportunity for education during the time of their engagement with the fighting forces (UNICEF 2007: 13). This programme sought to empower young people with basic skills to enable them socially to reintegrate and earn a livelihood. The specific objectives of the programme were to increase opportunities for employment through self-development of the children, in the current weak labour market to provide trainees with basic literacy, numeracy and basic small business management education and to support social reintegration with follow ups and psycho-social care. Some of the trainees were placed into apprenticeship programmes, where trained ex- CAAFAGs were placed for on-job training. Demobilized and other war affected boys and girls above 14 years of age were eligible for the programme. Special attention was placed on girls who were child soldiers, but were not formally demobilized. No child was required to relocate from their respective homes for the sole purpose of accessing the programme. Overall, 5,136 children (3,628 boys and 1,510 girls) benefited from the UNICEF supported skills training and apprenticeship programmes (UNICEF, EU Donor, Report, 2007: 4).

It was acknowledged that the Child Protection Agencies (CPAs) supporting the disarmament and demobilisation of the children did not have the capacity to provide skills and apprenticeship training. UNICEF then identified and commissioned 14 training organisations to implement the project. The main roles of the training organisations were to mobilise the children from their respective homes or communities, verify and register them, identify the most central locations in a community to establish the training centre, provide the training and identify apprentices to participate in the programme and follow up the trainees after graduation (UNICEF, EU Donor, Report 2007:5).

Most of the children interviewed were happy with the training they had received. Below are the statements to affirm this;

"I did cosmetology (hair dressing); money from the trade is helping me supplement family income"

"The training brought many things in my life. People look at us good (happy with us). . We are assisting the community"

"I made 3,400 Liberian Dollars (LD) during the festival season. I pay 1,600LD every year for private school"

"I learned pastry. I make some money. I have now saved 1,500LD. At times I pay my own school fees"

"I trained in masonry. I am now moulding blocks. I get between 500-600LD per week. I feed and clothe myself"

The CAAFAG benefited from the various trades. From the trades many were able to earn an income. They felt they were offering a good service to the community, which has improved their self-esteem. They can supplement the family incomes while other children can afford to pay for their education in private schools. Some of the trades were paying during the festive season such as Christmas when the demand is high. More important is that some CAAFAG have stayed together and are doing business together. They are utilising the networks established to enhance their social reintegration to be sustainable.

One CAAFAG boy observed;
"Those who did not disarm, they have no skills they learnt. They cannot show anything they just lecture (meaning they only talk)".

Attached are photos to substantiate the data gathered regarding Skills training for CAAFAG.

Skills Taught to CAAFAG

AGHRA APPRENTICESHIP SKILLS TRAINING- PLUMBING

AGHRA APPRENTICESHIP SKILLS TRAINING- MASONRY

CAP SKILLS TRAINING - POULTRY

MADET SKILLS TRAINING – CARPENTRY

MADET SKILLS TRAINING – MASONRY

MADET SKILLS TRAINING - METAL WORKS

MADET SKILLS TRAINING – TAILORING

DBH SKILLS TRAINING- CANE WORKS

COHDA SKILLS TRAINING – CARPENTRY

COHDA SKILLS TRAINING - PASTRY

SAMARITAN'S PURSE SKILLS TRAINING - AGRICULTURE

SKILLS TRAINING SAMARITAN'S PURSE- COSMETOLOGY

SAMARITAN'S PURSE SKILLS TRAINING – TYRE REPAIR & AUTOMECHANICS

5.5.4 Business Development Skills

The Business Development skills (BDS) programme was a response of reintegration evaluation taken after the reintegration process. It showed that the formerly demobilised children, upon completion of skills training were confronted with the harsh reality of a depressed market and vigorous competition from older and more experienced professionals. In addition, some of the students had low level of determination, pressure of responsibility from their children or siblings, weak supportive environment, unworkable business ventures and a general lack of entrepreneurial competencies. In effect, skills training are not leading into sustainable jobs to cater for the large number of unemployed youths. Given time, these young graduates could develop business skills to cope with this situation. Otherwise, they may revert to menial and risky coping roles for survival. To counter this possible bleak future and outcome for reintegrated child

soldiers the BDS programme was instituted to assist and prepare them economically. The BDS was to provide business advisory services adequate to strengthen the capacity of business skills trained to CAAFAG and to ensure the capability of graduates to organize and run successful businesses. The ultimate objective Business Development Skills (BDS) was to improve Small Enterprise (SE) performance, as a means to achieve higher economic growth and employment, reduce poverty and meet social objectives. Better BDS is only one means to these ends. Improving SE performance required many ingredients, such as a policy environment conducive to enterprise competitiveness, access to financial and non-financial services and expanding markets for small scale enterprises products and services. In this regard, more concerted and sustained effort is required to train CFF effectively.

A critical outcome targeted by the UNICEF (2008:4) project was that skills training lead to sustainable jobs as it has already been recognized that "If adolescents fail to gain vocational and life skills, they risk becoming caught in a cycle of dependency, delinquency, aggression and, or depression and hopelessness. They may turn to, or be forced into, military activities or prostitution either because they are in search of basic sustenance, or because they lack sufficient protection to avoid being pressed into such activities.

Young participants of skills training programmes faced reintegration difficulties in their communities, including high competition, low level of determination, weak supportive environment, unworkable business ventures and a general lack of general business savvy. In effect, the skills training did not lead to sustainable jobs to cater to the large number of unemployed youths (UNICEF, 2008:4).

The CAAFAG were reported to have been enthusiastic about the reintegration programmes. Many saw it as a big opportunity to rebuild themselves. Below are the extracts from NGO staff;

"Many of the CAAFAG are going to school and are thirsty for knowledge. They are demanding for more information".

"Children are trying to ensure they attach themselves to people with work. As a result they are being helped".

The social reintegration options above were vital in supporting the CAAFAG become productive members of the society again. They helped the children re-discover their place in   the community. It helped in re-establishing social order, with CAAFAG taking on children's roles. The community structures were empowered to play their roles as duty bearers in bringing up children. The social reintegration process was about empowering social institutions to play their role in the community to ensure a social state of equilibrium.

5.5.5. Post-Reintegration Structures

The children who were interviewed had undertaken skills training in various trades. This included agriculture, carpentry, cosmetology, masonry, pastry, plumbing, poultry, tailoring, tyre repair, food processing and blacksmith training. Some of the children were practicing their different trades and were making a saving from what they were doing. Some were able to combine practising the skills learnt and going to school. Some of the trades were very useful during festive seasons. Here the graduates reported making good savings, as many customers came. This was particularly the case for those involved in cosmetology (hair dressing).

The CAAFAG who had done masonry seemed to have done extremely well. This is what one boy said;

"I trained in masonry; I have got a lot of jobs in Ganta, which I can show you. The training brought many things to my life. People look at us good. We are assisting the community. NGOs should help other children get the same skills."

Another CAAFAG had this to say;

> *"We have maintained our group of 6 boys. We are currently building a house to give a key (contracted to finish the house). We charge 5000USD for the work".*

One of the parents in Nimba County observed;

> *"It is better a child learns skills. My son is paying his school fees. I am only paying for copy books and feeding him. But he is paying his tuition. I am going to send his brother for mechanics training as well".*

The children reported using the money they make on a variety of things, which ranged from paying school fees, feeding themselves, clothing, looking after their babies for those who were girl mothers. Some children interviewed indicated they put their learnt skills into good use, mainly during festive seasons when the demand is high. The children interviewed acknowledged having benefited from the training. However, some of the children interviewed were doing completely different trades from what they trained for, which as an indication that beyond their skills children had to adapt to different realities in their new environment.

It was important to note that the children interviewed, doing masonry work and carpentry were still working in groups. This helped them to get contracts. However, some were working as individuals. Some of the children who felt they still wanted to master their skills further were still with artisans. This was the case with two boys I came across during the interviews.

The skills acquired by the CAAFAG have helped in the transformation of the young people's roles as perceived through the eyes of the community people. This has been an important part in the re-socialization and social acceptance process.

The CEIP option did not generate income. Some of the children who could not afford pay school fees after the CEIP programme dropped out. One of the CAAFAG observed;

"After CEIP support, I paid school fees for the 7th & 8th Grades from motorcycle riding. The owner of the motorcycle took it away, I could not continue with my studies"

The above interviews indicated most of the children had regained their status in the community and they were viewed as productive members of the community. The interdependence and interrelatedness with the other structures of the community had been gained to sustain a functional reintegration.

5.6   SECTION 3: COMMUNITY STRUCTURES

The section looks at the type of structures that were used in the reintegration process, the relevancy of the community structures, membership, functionality, coverage, how they evolved, how the structures linked up with the formal and informal systems and community perception to the structures. This section will answer the following research question:

- **What community structures are used in the reintegration of CAAFAG in Liberia and how do community structures engage in the process?**

5.6.1   What are community structures?

Community structures are those units/networks/institutions/sections of the community either individually or jointly, which provide care and protection to vulnerable children and families in the community. They include extended family, kinship structures, peer groups, youth groups, neighbours, traditional leaders, chiefs, women and men groups, self-help support groups, religious groups, elders, emotional support groups and community based child protection groups. They are informal sections of the community

which provided care and support at different social levels. They are societal structures and community mechanisms for child protection which draw on community initiatives, community resources, values and practices that potentially can support vulnerable children and families. Their initiatives and support is usually socially and culturally grounded.

Wessells (2009:9) argues that community mechanisms are an essential component of wider child protection systems. Strategically, community level mechanisms, such as child protection committees, are useful in part because they interconnect different levels of national child protection systems. The strengthening of community-level mechanisms of child protection can be an important step in developing effective national child protection systems.

The community structures used in Liberia were Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) Children's Clubs (CCs), Children Resource Centres (CRCs), youth groups and DICs. These were formed and received capacity support to augment the social reintegration of CAAFAG in the community. They were to follow up reunified children and provide a psycho-social support in communities (UNICEF 2007:13). They were to support the whole DDRR programme in a situation where limited government presence was at available.

Involvement of community structures enhanced the collective meaning of the children's experience of what they had gone through. This was very vital for child reintegration into the community (Veale and Stavrou, 2003: 49).

Wessells (2009:10) argues that the main rationale for developing such community groups or structures is that, in many contexts, local and national governments are unable or unwilling to fulfil their obligations to protect children and fulfil children's rights. For example, following an armed conflict that had divided a country, the government may lack the presence or capacity in many areas that is needed to protect children. He

further argues that these groups can be useful in changing community social norms and values.

5.6. 2 Community Structures in the Liberian Context

In Liberia most community structures were formed at the onset of the reintegration process. Some structures were formed around existing women groups and elders groups. By the end of the reintegration process a total of 714 community structures had been formed. These include 293 CWCS, 228 CC and 193 youth groups (UNICEF 2007: 16). Most of the CWCs, CC and youth groups had some training on general child protection. The structures were able to mobilize former child soldiers in child related programmes. In many places the structures were reporting cases of child rights violations.

5.6.3 Child Welfare Communities

By the end of the reintegration programme, a total of 293 CWCs had been formed and 217 of them were active (UNICEF, 2007:16). CWCs are community based structures that are designed to ensure that the rights of children are protected through monitoring and follow up of the situation of children in their localities. At the same time, the CWCs also serve to lay a foundation to institutionalize community level child protection (UNICEF 2007:16).

The CWCs sensitised the community on key issues on child protection. Some activities where the communities were involved, included intervention in child rights violations by reporting and referring cases to the committee, taking actions to address community vulnerability, like stopping phonograph shows in town, stopping children to go to video clubs during class hours, and also provided mentoring to children's clubs by taking children that dropped out of school back to school.

The CWCs observed;

"*We have followed up 10 children who dropped out of school. This is because some cannot buy copy books, uniform and shoes*".

5.6.4 Children's Clubs

During the reintegration programme a total of 228 children's Clubs were formed, 163 of which were active. These were formed to enhance child participation in the reintegration programme. They were mainly active around recreation activities. They were also used as a channel of communication for vital child protection messages to children. They advocated for rights of children as well and served to ensure that there are forums for participation of children. The clubs presented children with opportunities for associating with other children and provided some level of direction. Children's clubs and youth groups had remarkable potentials to address individual developments of children, while contributing to the overall reintegration of children. Many children's clubs were formed and trained.

5.6.5 Youth Groups

These groups included young people above the age of 18 years. They were mainly focussing on organising play activities. In Nimba County the structures was very useful in engaging the youth in activities and monitoring re-recruitment of their peers.

From the discussion, it was reported that this structure had limited focus compared to the CWCs and CC. The figures presented by UNICEF (2007:16) that 193 youth groups were formed in the DDRR programme but only 35 were active, confirms the field findings of the structures not being very engaged in the reintegration programme.

5.6.6 Children Resource Centres

The CRCs provided space for recreation, they were a source of information to children and a point of referral for children who felt their rights were violated or threatened. It was considered a safe haven for children, where children came to resolve their conflicts or address their grievances. The centre presents a higher participation of children into their own affairs. The two Children Resource Centres that were formed evolved from Children's Clubs.

The community structures discussed above were very vital in supporting the CAAFAG re-negotiate their way back in the community. They supported established relationships of the CAAFAG with the rest of the community considering the atrocities they had committed. They were also vital in addressing deviance among the CAAFAG and passed on shared values which were important in re-establishing a social equilibrium and enhanced social cohesion in the community which is vital not only for sustainable reintegration but also sustainable peace.

5.6.7 Discussion of Community structures used in the reintegration process

Community support is an irreplaceable resource in social reintegration. It is widely known that human lives and lifestyles are culturally determined. Any meaningful intervention should be a partnership to strengthen this resource. Most of the community structures for reintegration of former demobilised children were formed in 2004. The concept of community structures was introduced during the disarmament and demobilisation (DD) period. The structures were formed purely to support the formerly demobilised children, who were returning to the community at the time. The organisations that were involved in the DD were:

Children Assistance Programme (CAP), Christian Children's Fund (CCF), Save The Children United Kingdom (SCUK), Don Bosco Homes (BDH), World Vision Liberia (WVLI), International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Samaritan's Purse (SP).

When reintegration programmes started in 2005, more partners were brought on board to support the reintegration programmes. The process was led by UNICEF as a main funder to the programmes. A few programmes were implemented by Save the Children UK, International Rescue Committee and Christian Children's Fund. The UNICEF supported programmes were implemented mainly through NGOs that included:

Action Aid Liberia (AAL), Action for Greater Harvest (AGRHA), Children's Assistance Program (CAP), Christian Children Fund (CCF), Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS), Community Human Development Agency (COHDA), Don Bosco Homes (DBH), EQUIP Liberia (EQUIP), Helping Hand Liberia (HHL), Mano Training and Development Foundation (MADET), National Adult Education Association of Liberia (NAEL), National Foundation against Poverty and Diseases (NAFAPD), Peace Building Resource Centre (PBRC), Project New Outlook (PNO), Sustainable Development Promoters (SDP), Special Emergency Activity to Restore Children's Home (SEARCH), Special Emergency Relief for the Elderly (SERE), Solidarity Movement Inc. (SM.), Samaritan's Purse (SPIR), Women Aid Incorporated (WAI), West African Network for Empowerment Project (WANEP), World Vision Liberia (WVL), Young Men's Christian Association Liberia (YMCA).

TABLE 5: Showing structures formed during reintegration

Structures	Status of structures		Trained members		Untrained members	
	Formed	**Active**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**
Community Welfare Committees	293	217	1,499	1,040	591	574
Children's clubs	228	163	1,805	977	1,033	926
Youth Groups	193	35	413	241	974	661

Source: UNICEF 2006. Protection Annual report

UNICEF Child Protection Annual report, (2006) showed that 293 community welfare committees were formed, 228 children's clubs and 193 youth groups to support the social reintegration of CAAFAG. Some of the structures were not very active. Of the total 3,704 CWC members, 2,539 CWC were trained while 1,165 (46%) were not trained. 4,740 children were involved in children's clubs, 2,782 were trained while 1,958 (41%) were not trained. A total of 2,289 youth group members were in the programme, only 654 (29%) were trained. The majority 1,635 (71%) were untrained.

In terms of functionality, 74 % of the CWCs were active and functioning, while 26% was not, 71% of the CC was active, while 29% was not. Only 18% of the youth groups were active.

All the organisations involved into the reintegration programme had to work through community structures. Under the leadership of UNICEF as a lead child Protection organisation, Child Welfare Communities were formed in all the counties.

 The role played by the community structures was a functional prerequisite. The CAAFAG coming out of crises had certain basic needs or requirements to get back community life. They had to usher in the CAAFAG to the re-socialisation process since without culture; social life could not be possible.

Guidelines were developed for the formation of these structures:

5.6.8   Child Welfare Committees

These were the mostly used community structures in the demobilisation and reintegration process. They were the most visible structures at the community level. It was meant to be community owned and led in enhancing the welfare of children in the communities.

TABLE 6: Guidelines for Child Welfare Committees.

Guidelines on formation of Child Welfare Committees

Introduction:
A Child Welfare Committee (CWC) is a community based structure that has been identified to be important in enhancing the reintegration of demobilised CAAFAG. There are several support structures in communities; the CWC is a structure that will focus on child welfare. It is important to note that the CWC is community owned, and is to be used by all development partners promoting improvement of child welfare.

Key components of CWCs

A: membership
Closeness to the Community: Should be close to the community as possible to enable the members to monitor closely those problems that affect children.

Community ownership: A CWC is to be owned by the community. It is a community structures and a vehicle for other development programmes. This is important for sustainability.

Inclusiveness: Should represent the diversity of a given community, in terms of religion, clan, tribe and any peculiarity identified in the community.

Mobilisation capacity: The members should be able to mobilize for the children in that community.

Acceptability: The members should be acceptable, respectable and be able to provide leadership on children related issues in the community.

Residence: Should be residing in that community and knowledgeable on the issues that affect children.

Gender sensitivity: At least third of the members should be women. In all its deliberations, gender consideration should be a guiding principle.

Volunteerism: The members should be willing to work as volunteers.

Willingness to work for and with children: Should be able to work for and with children. At all times should involve children in planning and implementation of programmes.

B: Operations

Community driven: The community should plan when to have meetings and where.

Flexibility: The Committees should be flexible in all its operations to enable the members to meet.

Involving children: Should gather, respect and implement children's views at all times.

Regular meetings: Conduct regular meetings at least once a week.

Monitoring: Closely monitor those programmes for children at community level and continuously assess and document the factors that increase child vulnerability in the community.

Reporting: Ensure regular sharing of information with the Child Protection Agencies operating in the area and report to established Child protection structures in the area of operation.

> *Coordination: CWC members should take cognizance of other community structures operating in the community, such as women groups, youth groups. And ensure sharing of information with these structures.*
>
> *Mentoring: Should provide the guidance and support to children's clubs, where they exist.*

The average number of CWCs were 15 members, however this tended to vary from organisations and the geographical locations. It was reported that there was a lot of interest shown by the communities when the structures were formed in 2004 and 2005. The CWCs would meet regularly in the beginning, but as years went by, the participation went on dwindling. During the reintegration programmes, there was replacement of the members of the CWCs, who dropped out. Despite the replacements, few members remained active. One NGO staff member observed:

"In Saclepea, there was a constant dropping and filling up of structures with new people. Unfortunately the new people never received training. There is need for regular training programmes to fill up the gap".

TABLE 7: Substantiating the findings regarding dwindling participation in CWCs, illustrating the need for training in Saclepea and Ganta:

Saclepea CWC

2005	2006	2009
• 34 Members trained	• Chairman resigned, a new leader was elected	• Only 3-4 members were active

Ganta CWC

2004	2005	2006	2007	2009
• 34 Members trained	• 3 of them dropped and were replaced	• 4 dropped and replaced	• 5 dropped and replaced	• 7 of the 10 members were active

The above scenario casts doubt on the sustainability of created community structures and calls for revisiting of the notion of voluntarism.

It was observed that in some urban settings like Ganta, in Nimba County, the CWC in urban settings seemed complicated. Each village formed CWCs, these then came together to form a presentation to form zonal CWCs. Creation of another layer between the Village and the zone made the structure detached from the children. The distances became long and the geographical coverage was too big, presenting different dynamics in operationalizing the concept.

It was also noted, in some townships in Buchan County, CWCs covered several townships, for example Yarpah town, which had 8 townships under one CWC, and Wrobpney Town, which had 5 townships. These however, were smaller than in Ganta town. It was argued by the CWCs, that this type of setting had advantages in that children's issues could be mirrored within wider geographical context.

Acknowledging the support in terms of training given to some communities and the level of mobilisation to these communities, it acted as an impetus for the neighbouring communities. Here NGOs were called in to facilitate the formed community groups. One of the NGO staff members observed in the FGD that:

"In Bgbolay the CWC structure was formed on the request of the community. The neighbouring community that had been trained, we trained them".

Some NGOs argued that new structures were necessary and other argued that even the existing structures had to be re-focused. Where existing structures were used like Bassa Women Development Association (BAWODA) in Buchan County, which were predominately focusing on women issues, they had to be refocused to take on child related issues. The community structures in this case did not take on the name of CWC, as the existing structure was used to promote children's agenda. These women remained active even after the reintegration programme.

CWC were reported to be effective in mobilising children to reintegration programmes and following them up during the reintegration programme. In some areas both CWCs and Children's clubs became prominent structures, and were used by other organisations as well. In Rivercess County, it was reported UNDP and Handicap International worked with them in the rehabilitation programmes.

Some of the respondents interviewed said that CWC can be effective if they remained as a pressure group on children's issues. If facilitated, they can do a good job in mobilising for children. The CWCs at the onset were reported to have been embraced by the communities.

5.6.9   Functionality of CWCs

The CWCs created awareness to the community on its role in the reintegration of formerly demobilised children. The positive attitude by the community, despite the atrocities CAAFAG committed was attributed to them. One NGO staff member said:

"You do not hear things like child soldiers in the community. This is a great achievement of the structures".

The community structures were a good community resource on child protection issues. They were able to identify cross-border issues, like recruitment on the Liberia-Ivory Coast border, in Nimba County. The structures were embraced in many communities.

At the demobilisation stage, many parents were only interested in the money given to children for demobilisation. They could not focus on the broader aspects of the child's wellbeing. The CWCs were able to explain to the parents the importance of sending the children to school and advocated against violence against children. They were great advocates for the formerly demobilised children, as they did not want them to be re-recruited. The CWC in one community pleaded and said:

"At times we have pleaded with school authorities to allow children in school despite having no school requirements."

Some communities were very silent on cultural practices that violated children's rights. The CWC were a good source of support in highlighting the same harmful practices like the cultural Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practice in plural societies.

The structures were said to be relevant because the children need to know that someone is watching them. The community lacked the knowledge on how to handle these children. The CWCs were useful in establishment and mentoring of children's clubs. CWCs were viewed as a group that brings children together and encourages them to go to school. Beyond providing counselling to children and their parents, CWCs encouraged and supported children to start businesses for those that went for skills training.

In one of the communities along the border with Guinea, the CWC was reported to have gone across the border to engage the community leaders in Guinea, where a former CAAFAG had sold the resettlement tool kit provided to him to implement the learnt skills. The CWC leader recovered the tool kit. Some of the CAAFAG, due to the urge of

getting quick money, wanted to sell their tool kits. The CWCs did a lot in sensitising the communities against buying the tool kits from the CAAFAG. This helped the CAAFAG to concentrate on the trades they had learned. They CWCs became a big source of support to children during the post reintegration period.

The CWC were in some cases engaged in activities beyond DDRR. They looked at other child protection concerns like street children and general child rights violations. It is argued that in some cases it assumed on the role of social welfare institutions. The statement below from a staff member of one organisation observed that;

"CWCs in Menekone are paying school fees for vulnerable children"

This created a lot of demand for the CWCs to deliver. In other communities they went beyond child protection to mobilising the community to do community work, like road cleaning and ensuring school attendance.

One of the major criticism of the approach adopted in DDRR was the formation of new structures, when there existed community structures before the war that could have been utilised in the reintegration programme. There were community groups, which existed in Liberia before the war. Even during the war some of the structures were a source of support to community members. Eighty per cent of the population in Liberia are Christians with church groups all over the country. Cultural groups also do exist in every community. Each township in Liberia has a person appointed by the community as a "town crier", who does mobilisation for the community. These groups could have been refocused to address children's issues.

Sustainable social reintegration takes long. The funding to RR programme lasted for only two years. The children required follow up during the post-reintegration period. Most of the structures formed for the RR ceased with the end of funding to these programmes. Their support to children was short-lived and not durable or sustainable.

5.6.10   Membership of CWCs

From the interviews, some respondents noted that some community structures were a one man's show. It was the chairman who was the CWC. Other members would only come up whenever there was training or a function. Few members were committed, although the functioning of the CWCs was about commitment.

The following viewpoint differed regarding membership. One CWC member interviewed said:

"Too many members have made a committee less functional, there is limited participation".

Some of the CWC members hold very high status in the community. Chiefs or traditional leaders and children fear to approach them because of their status. Some community members felt that distinction must be made between those who should be members and those to play an advisory role. It was also argued that assessment of what individuals' roles and engagement with children should be is important before people are brought on board as members of the community structures.

The above argument resonates with Functionalist theorists, like Macionis (1997: 236) who argues that social stratification refers to a system by which a society ranks categories of people in hierarchy. Social stratification is characteristic of society, not simply a reflection of individual differences. Social stratification persists over generations and culture, while it is universal, but variable. Social stratification involves not just inequalities but beliefs systems. Haralambos and Holborn (1990:29) refer to Parsons who argues that stratification is an inevitable part of all human societies. Communities in Liberia have defined roles for each strata of their society, understanding these dynamics will contribute to social stability. In a FGD it was reported:

"Try to find out what the CWC members were involved in before they are brought on board. When NGOs come to form community structures, some community members talk of things they have even never done before".

It was observed that structures with high numbers of women on the committee, tended to be very active, compared to those with more men.

Utilising existing structures would not only enhance the capacity of the community institutions, but also ensure passing on shared values and norms of the given communities. Haralambos and Holborn (1990:773-4) argues that value consensus forms the fundamental integrating principle in society. If members of society are committed to the same values, they will tend to share a common identity, which provides a basis for unity and cooperation, which is key for sustainable social reintegration.

5.6.11   Supervisory and technical support

The CWC members interviewed, observed they never received adequate supervisory support from the NGOs. The few monitoring visits to the field were focused on the chairman. They would hardly meet other members of the committee.   This created a lot of suspicion, within the committees. The monitoring visits were more like courtesy visits. They were not aimed at empowering or providing on job support to CWCs to function better. The NGOs lacked the monitoring tools for the community structures. One NGO staff member said:

"There is need to move from visiting community structures to monitoring".

CWCs were not sufficiently trained on dealing with communities. A lot of focus was put on training on child protection. There was limited empowerment by the NGOs to the structures. The failure by the organisations to review the performance of CWCs during programme implementation was a big programming gap. This would have helped in

closing up gaps identified in these structures. The functionality of the CWCs was said to be dependent on the follow-up by the organisations and the level of engagement.

5.6.12   Geographical coverage and ethnicity

The CWCs were criticised for being established mainly along the highways or main roads, with limited access in the very rural areas. In some situations, one CWC covered several townships making it very difficult to serve the townships effectively due to the distances between them. Even in one village, the tribal differences in some communities made functioning of CWCs difficult. The Madingo and Loma tribes in Lofa County could hardly agree on doing anything together as each wanted services to be delivered differently.

One NGO staff member observed:

"Work of CWCs became difficult when there was tribal tension. Madingo and Loma in Lofa county, wanted services to be provided differently".

5.6.13   Children's clubs

Each CWC was encouraged to form a children's club. The children's clubs were very instrumental in promoting child participation in the community. They were very useful in involving both community and demobilised children. The children's clubs were eventually useful in Truth and Reconciliation Processes for children. They were able to narrate their experiences.

Children's clubs were used to mobilise children for sporting activities through football and kick balls. There was peer support through children's clubs; this helped in bonding the community and the formerly demobilised children. Where the children's clubs were active, children stood up for their rights, children reported cases of abuse by parents

and children were resisting being sent to the bush societies for initiation ceremonies that violated their rights. There were few children's clubs compared to CWC because some of the CWCs did not clearly grasp their role in mentoring children's clubs. Moreover, some of the NGOs who were brought on board for skills training did not focus much on children's clubs. The organisations which implemented Community Education Investment Programmes were keen on creating and promoting children's clubs.

One staff member of the international Organisations observed:

"Children's Clubs did a wonderful job in tracing of children who had separated. They encouraged children to share experiences between villages".

The children's self-esteem increased due to their participation in children's clubs. They were now taking up leadership roles. An NGO staff member noted;

"One of the boys is leading a peer group. There are some cases of CAAFAG that have excelled".

Recreational activities not only engaged children but re-introduced routine in the lives of children. They became an important institution in instilling self- esteem and hope among children. They showed children had interrelated role in striving to achieve social harmony in society.

5.6.14   Youth Groups

Youth groups were another structure formed. These were mainly formed along the borders, to enhance border monitoring activities for the reintegrated children. The children and youth required peer education to address some of the sticky issues like teenage pregnancy. This structure, although highlighted in the implementation of the programme, received very little attention. The reason was that the youth were very pre-occupied with survival, with very limited time to attend programmes organised.

Secondly, many of the NGOs lacked the skills of working with youth. It is not surprising that very few youth groups were formed and trained. One social worker had this to say:

"The youth groups were very instrumental in prevention of recruitment along the borders".

"Football teams have created a structure for control among the young people".

5.6.15 Perception of the Community Structures

There was a mixed response on how the community structures were viewed by the different groups of people. Generally there was a realisation that they had significantly contributed towards the social reintegration of children in the community. Seen from a Functionalist perspective, they played a re-equilibrating role in recreating social order in the community.

5.6.16 Community Perception of Child Welfare Committees

Most of the community members interviewed had very positive comments for the CWCs. They viewed them as important in providing support to the CAAFAG. Though appreciated by most as being very useful, some community members viewed them with suspicion. Some saw them as people making children big-headed, while others saw them as supporting children who did bad things, like killing people. Some communities in Liberia were closed from outsiders and they felt involvement of CWC exposed community secrets to the public. NGO staff member interviewed in Nimba observed:

"CWCs were resisted in Diamplay, Nimba County because the community thought they were going to expose the community's hidden secrets".

Some community members observed that while the CWC taught about rights of children, they fell short of highlighting children's responsibility to the community.

CWCs became a very good community resource in some areas. The NGOs hired them as staff members. This was the case in Nimba where EQUIP, one of the organisations that were involved in the CEIP programme hired 5 CWC members (1 in Belgaly, 2 Zorgey and 2 in Sacleapea).

5.6.17   Children's perception of Child Welfare Committees

The children interviewed emphasised that the community structures were still useful to them for a number of reasons:

- The CWCs helped them in the community to market their skills to community members.
- The CWCs assisted them to negotiate for business space in the community.
- The CWCs were a source of recommendation to many people in the community who still doubted whether the CAAFAG had actually been rehabilitated.
- After the end of the RR programmes, the CWCs took over the role the social workers played at the community level.
- In some communities in Lofa County, the children were linked to Community members, *"trusted persons"*, where they would keep their little savings since there was no banking services in their communities. This was a community structure explored and utilised by children.

5.6.18   Link of CWC with Other Structures or Groups

There was limited attempt to institutionalise the linking or connection of other structures. The linking depended more on the NGOs and the local leader in a given community. It was not systematically done in the RR programme. The linking of structures was more

evident in Nimba County than any other. Some NGO linked or connected with other partners on the ground. One NGO in Nimba County observed;

"We have linked up with other women groups like New Tappita Women's group. Whenever we hear of a meeting on the radio, we go there and explain our position".

"We go to the Gender Officer to explain problems of the children. She is able to intervene in some cases".

The local leaders were receptive in some areas, especially where attempts were made to explain the programme. One NGO staff in Nimba observed;

"The statutory District Superintendent and the town major, we explained to them what we are doing and he was very supportive".

In Nimba County, other institutions like the judiciary recognised the work the CWCs were doing. There was good collaboration with institutions practising legal issues and justice for children programme. The following observation from an NGO staff member confirmed the collaboration;

"CWCs are working in close collaboration with Liberian National Police (LNP), following up cases up to court. In some cases the courts have referred cases back to them for arbitration. They have so far referred 3 cases".

The frustration of lack of clear coordination and linkage between institutions or structures was expressed by many child protection agencies. The failure to target other structures in the training of the CWCs denied the structures the complementarities and interdependence they would have received. The NGO staff had this to say;

"The establishing of the Child Protection Agencies helped in raising the profile of child protection. The main concern is that there is no person to carry the issues forward".

"The CWCs were not linked with other structures. The local authorities in some places saw them as replacing the local authorities, the linkage was very limited".

"The CWCs do not belong to the community and not even the Government. They are hanging".

The NGO staff members interviewed acknowledged some structures like church groups which were very useful in providing counselling. Liberia is a soccer loving country, with most villages having soccer teams and the team leaders command a lot of respect in the community. Mothers' clubs exist in Liberia and these were trained by Forum for African Women Educationist (FAWE). These structures are functional, but were not used in the reintegration process, because the approach to community structures was based on forming new ones.

This is one of the weaknesses of the DDRR programme in Liberia. It did not build on the existing community structures, but replaced community structures contrary to the best principles of working with community structures.

Any solution should address the needs of all children affected by armed conflict and incorporate activities to develop and support local capacity to provide a protective environment for children. The family, including the extended family and the community should be actively incorporated in the development and implementation of interventions and activities, and they in turn should participate in finding solutions (Paris Principles, 2007: 5).

Every town has a "town crier", whose role is to mobilise community members. This important structure was also not brought on board during the DDRR. There are a number of cultural groups in the communities. These were also not utilised. In most situations, NGOs failed to link the CWCs to these very important community structures and they were not sufficiently linked to unification Town Chiefs who covered 5-10 towns,

statutory superintendent (takes charge of two political districts) and the county superintendent were important to reflect the work they were doing and more important to provide support to the programme. The CWC structures as a result remained as hanging structures.

5.6.19   Relevancy of community structures

CPAs who were in support of creating new community structures observed that community needed this structure to oversee what the children were doing. One NGO staff member noted;

"The CAAFAG needed to know somebody is watching them".

To improve on the efficiency of the structures, the focus should shift to empowering the right holders to demand for the services. This is summarised in the quote below from an NGO staff.

"Communities need to be trained/sensitized on the role of CWCs so that they demand for accountability. The CWCs need to report to the community".

Considering the experiences the children went through, highlighted in the previous chapter, the limited financial support for reintegration programmes, the inaccessibility of some of the areas, the community structures became extremely relevant to ensure sustainable reintegration.

The proponents of CWCs argue that the new structures were extremely important because the structures that existed had no focus on children. The women groups only focused on women issues, while village councils who only comprised of adults focused on issues of adults. They further argued that there was need to have a structure with specific focus on children. Below is an observation by one of the NGO staff members:

"In Saclepea, there existed youth groups and women groups to address public health issues, child protection was not an issue here".

5.7   SECTION 4: GAPS IN WORKING WITH COMMUNITY STRUCTURES

The section highlights some of the missing ingredients in engaging community structures for effective social reintegration identified in the study.
It answers the following research question:

- **What are the mistakes identified in working with community structures in the reintegration process and how do they impact on child reintegration?**

5.7.1   Failure to use existing community networks or resources

Despite the existence of community groups such as church groups, mother unions, football groups, and cultural groups mentioned above in the Liberian communities, the DDRR programmes opted to forming new community structures without studying the already existing structures. Thus, hampering the efforts of the existing structures in supporting children.

Each township in Liberia has a person appointed by the community as a **"town crier"**, who does mobilisation for the community, but this community resource was not utilised at all. Building on this resource would have strengthened these structures to support the CAAFAG instead of forming new structures.

The only organisation, which attempted to use the existing structures, was Bassa Women Development Association (BAWODA) in Buchan County. They never formed CWCs as they instead used the women groups that they had formed before.

Approaches developed in social reintegration should work with the communities and not for the community, where the latter just replaces the existing system (Chesire 2005)**.** There needed to have been a continuous community engagement with a more coherent and continuous commitment to using local structures, supporting local capacities, and building on them through advocacy development, training and capacity building. The statement below by a community member summarised the nature of engagement of the community structures:

"The CWC ended up working for agencies and not for communities".

A CWC member in Buchan observed:

"At the start of the formation of CWC, we were left out. We decided to come in by ourselves. We have provided counselling to the children and their parents".

5.7.2   Failure to build on community resources or coping mechanisms

The study noted that, even where training for children was organised, the community values were not used as a starting point. Failure to integrate the community's own values, showed not only limited community involvement, but lack of understanding and appreciation of working with community structures in the social reintegration. One NGO staff member said:

"We bring programmes to them; we need to collect programmes from them (community)."

They never collected or learned good cultural values from them.

In some situations, the community structures were hijacked by the rural elite who comprised of teachers, nurses, village level community workers. The genuine

community members were left out. These rural elites were only active in the presence of NGOs. One NGO staff member observed:

"The rural elite tend to be very active in presence of NGOs, whenever the NGOs are not here, they withdraw".

In some cases it was reported to be a one man's show. The chairman was from the CWCs. He was the committee member and he was the community. One NGO staff observed;

"Some CWC structures were not viable. It was a one man's show. It was the chairman who was the CWC. Other members could only come in whenever there was a meeting, which required many to attend".

Sustainable partnership with community structures is important for sustainable social reintegration of child soldiers. Participation of community members should be beyond the most vocal in the community, the most influential, singing and enrolling on the communities. It should be based on careful analysis of community power dynamics and trust.

The CWCs were mainly formed along the main roads. There were few CWCs structures in the rural areas. These were the areas where the NGO officials could access easily and CWCs could easily be supervised. The failure to reach out to the rural areas by the social workers gives credence to rather use existing community structures, since they existed in all areas, accessible or inaccessible, instead of creating new ones.

The other challenge noted, was that in some situations the CWCs structure saw itself as an outcome in itself, without looking at the outcomes for children. They were more pre-occupied with existence as a structure, without focusing on what they have done to address the plight of the CAAFAG in the community.

They became an institution like NGOs, with limited accountability to the community. There was very limited reporting to communities on what they were doing. There was instead more reporting about their own meetings than meetings with the community. There was very limited accountability to the community. One NGO staff member observed that;

"CWCs were working for the NGOs/agencies and not for the community".

Some CWCs members had very high expectations which were not addressed in the beginning. They became pre-occupied with demanding for allowances, but when this expectation was not met, they dropped out. One of the NGO staff noted that;

"They dropped out because of financial expectations. Others wanted identification. The situation became frustrating because they would come to the meeting and nothing is given as transport refund".

Existing community structures had always survived without external facilitation. They would always be around; they did not require donor support.

The CAAFAG involvement in the armed conflict was a social dysfunction, what they did was not desirable. The lives were supposed to be rebuilt by the social structures to enable them to acquire a stable pattern of social behaviour (Macionis 1997: 16-18). However, social structures constrained individuals in parallel ways, setting limits on what we could do as individuals (Giddens, 1993: 718). These social structures had culturally grounded social norms and values to be adhered to, but which were sometimes dysfunctional for reintegration processes.

5.7.3   Relationships formed in captivity

The reintegration programmes did not explore social networks that could facilitate the reintegration process. They worked hard to de-link formerly demobilised children from

the former commanders. There was limited attempt to explore the positive peer groups that were developed during the bush, using them as peer support in the reintegration process. Many children acknowledged being in touch with former colleagues, who they had met during the fighting. Some were constantly in touch with up to 5 former colleagues, while others were living together. There was limited attempt to use good relationships built in the bush as an aspect for successful reintegration. The study noted, while it was good to de-link children from their former commanders, there was little understanding of the dynamics in the community. The relationship with some of the children was not commander–junior relationship, but employer-employee relationship. CWCs in Nimba observed:

"There were some commanders who were good and tried to support children while in captivity. Some knew children before. There is one who has mobilised around 20 former demobilised children. He has got children into a group that are now getting contracts, they brushed the road, and they bought football. They now have a football team. The CWCs appreciate his efforts".

The community structures were not given the same profile. CWCs received considerable focus and investment. This did not apply to children and youth groups. The desired child participation was limited to few children's clubs and youth groups. Some of the CWCs did not understand their roles as volunteers, because in some instances, others required payment to undertake monitoring of children in the community.

5.7.4   Poor programme focus

The programmes were from top to bottom. One social worker from Monrovia County noted that:

"Programmes for CWCs were from the top down. We take programmes to them. We do not take programmes from them".

The programmes did not build on community initiatives; instead they replaced the community initiatives. The structures needed to be linked more tightly to the community and be more accountable to the community than to the NGOs. They needed to work more with the parents of the CAAFAG, since little was invested in this area.

The CWCs at times took on more than they could handle, as they moved beyond focusing on supporting reintegration of former demobilised children to wider child protection issues. Some instances were used by multi-agencies, leading them to lose focus. Some of the CWCs focus was only on the children who went through the DD. There was very limited attention to the children who did not go through the DD.

One CWC member noted:

"The children who did not go through the DD are no longer our mandate. The youth structures may be where they fall. The ministry of youth and sports will take the responsibility; the CWCs will do the link".

The study noted that the community members were not empowered by the RR programmes to demand accountability from the CWCs. The CWCs needed to acknowledge that they were accountable to the community. One social worker recommended:

"Community members should be trained to demand for accountability from CWCs"
Another one from Voinjama County observed:

"There should be a board at the community level to which CWCs could report".
Community accountability would be important in enhancing the capacity of CWCs".

Social reintegration services should aim at having a community that has social supporters, where there is a loving relationship, friendship, a sense of emotional

security and belonging. The community should be a place of belonging where people find their identity. The demobilised children should be able to live in society as a young people and re-establish trust with others. The community should be able to provide a strong ring of protection. This means having a strong community structure, which is active and supportive to children. The community should provide the warmth to be able to belong to**.**

Wrong approaches to working with CWCs derailed the structures in achieving their goals. One NGO in Lofa County was reported to have made an attempt to empower CWC through IGAs. The CWCs did not only lack the skills to run the business but it shifted their focus completely from children. The NGOs staff member said;

"They were supported to run a lodging project. The NGO bought for the CWC a freezer, bed sheets and beds. The CWC did not have any management skills. The project collapsed".

Failure to gauge the capacity of the CWCs by some NGOs affected the performance of the structures.

5.8   SECTION 5: INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY STRUCTURES

This section will analyse the investment and capacity building in community structures by the different organisations at the planning, implementation and monitoring level. It will analyse the financial input and capacity building programmes to the structures and determine to what extent they contributed in strengthening support systems in the social reintegration programme. The following research question will also be answered.

- **What capacity building programmes are developed for community structures to ensure sustainable support to former child soldiers?**

5.8.1   Training and Capacity Building

It was noted from the study, that organisations which implemented CEIP, created integration options that supported children in formal education and were mainly traditional child protection organisations. These provided training to CWCs in child protection, peace building, human rights and CWC involvement with children. However, due to the high number of formerly demobilised children, other organisations with expertise in vocational skills, which were not originally involved in child protection, were brought on board. These organisations, also involved CWCs in their work, but never provided them any training.

Despite getting no training on how to support the children in the skills training programmes, the CWCs were expected to play a key role in supporting the children in the Reintegration and Rehabilitation (RR). From the interviews conducted, below is the assessment of the trainings provided to CWCs.

TABLE 8: Assessment of Training to CWCs by RR implementing organisations in Nimba County

Organisation	RR option	Aspects trained in
Trainings received by CWCs in Tappita in Nimba county		
IRC	CEIP	Trained in leadership
SEARCH	CEIP	Child Protection
SERE	Vocational Skills Training	Never trained CWCs
MADET	Vocational skills Training	Never trained CWCs
Trainings received by CWCs in Saclepea, Nimba county		
Organisation	**RR option**	**Aspects trained in**
IRC	CEIP & skills training	Small business Management
EQUIP	CEIP	Child protection
YMCA	Skills training	Never trained CWCs
MADET	Skills training	Never trained CWCs

The qualitative, explanatory table is to substantiate the data gathered from NGO staff members and CWCs during FGDs and interviews.

One of the observations noted that in the whole reintegration programme, even where the training was done, no assessment of training needs was done before training was offered. The training to these structures was not based on an informed capacity gap analysis. There was need to define what knowledge existed in the community structures. Where training was done, it was limited to the reintegration process. In some situations it also never exposed the structures to comprehensive child protection issues. The limited training greatly affected the performance of structures as a result some never understood their roles well. No proper community referral mechanism was developed with other structures in the community.

The Evaluation of the DDRR (UNICEF 2007: iv) acknowledges the fact that ex-CAAFAG reported benefiting from a wide range of support systems that extended beyond their parents to grandparents, friends and other community members. They also identified former commanders as friends and a source of support. All these structures needed to have been strengthened.

It was observed from the study, to make the structures effective in enhancing a protective environment for children, the following areas should have been emphasised;

- Community prevention on child rights abuse
- Monitoring community level child rights violations, with clear community monitoring indicators
- Promotion of child rights participation in children's clubs
- Developing community own solutions for identified problems
- Role of the community structures in enhancing social reintegration of formerly demobilised children and child well-being in general.

There was a uniform voice from most respondents that CWCs, if well trained, were a good structure to champion a cause for children and other young people. Training of CWCs, would go a long way in empowering them to work with CAAFAG, and in the end will reduce crime committed by the children. The structures that existed before, mainly for the elderly were not inclusive of young people, let alone focusing on children.

5.8.2   Monitoring

It was evident from the interviews conducted that the CWCs did not receive the on-job support that would have come through the monitoring visits. It was observed that the NGOs, agencies and government never prioritised monitoring as an important aspect of the programme. An NGO staff member observed;

"Whenever the NGOs came to the field, they were visiting and not monitoring. They never empowered the CWCs to do their work".

The visits were mainly focused on the chairman of the CWCs and even then only CWCs along the main roads were visited. It is important to recognise that programme monitoring can be an important component in enhancing the capacity of the community structures.

The failure for the Ministry of Gender to own up to the community structure was cited as another challenge. The poor performance by CWCs in some areas was attributed to lack to technical support to the structures. The CWCs were required to follow up children who have been reintegrated, but they did not fully understand what to look out for during the monitoring.

The work of CWCs lacked a clear programmatic focus. One NGO official observed;

"Nobody reviews the work of the CWCs. Not even the community. The community should demand for more accountability from CWCs".

5.8.3 Financial Planning and Allocations

Analysis was done on the financial planning for both reintegration options. This was derived from the interviews with NGO and UNICEF officials. The analysis focused on how much funds was allocated for the community structures in each of the options.

- **Community Education Investment Programme**

The study also analysed the financial investment in the community structures in both Community Investment Programme and the Reintegration programme. In CEIP the financial investment in the capacity building of CWC, was very minimal. The unit cost varied between organisations and between programmes. For the CEIP, the average the organisations spent was up to 15USD to train a member of the community structure. When the training was provided it was once-off. The table below illustrates the point:

TABLE 9: Cost for community structures in a few sampled CEIP implementing organisations in 2007

Organisation	Total cost in USD	Cost Community structures	% of cost structures or the total cost	Total number to train	Unit cost for one community member
CAP	106,099	8,300	8	720	12
CESP	55,735	7,660	14		
PBRC	79,875	8,335	10	570	15
CCF	223,009	21,150	9	1095	19
SEARCH	97,084	11,460	12	720	16

Note: This table is to show the amount of money spent on community structure compared to the total cost of the Community Education Investment programme. It is not for quantitative analysis.

- **Skills training programme:**

The investment in community structures in the skills training programme was even lower than in the CEIP programme.   Yet, the structures were required at different levels of the programme at the mobilisation of the CAAFAG into the programme, following them up during the programmes and follow up support after the training. The training provided did not cater for levels of support by the CWCs.

The NGOs expressed very limited support from agencies like UNICEF, to support development capacity of community structures. Equally UNICEF expressed limited donor support in this area. The table below shows the funds committed by one donor to support the skills and apprenticeship programme. Only 2.3% of the total budget was committed, to support community structures in the whole budget. For meaningful support to community structures, the donor percentage contribution to community structures needed to be stepped up.

TABLE 10: Budget For Skills Training And Apprenticeship For Disarmed And Demobilised Children

Item	Budget in U$	% of the Total	Budget in Euros	Comments
Skills training	2,430,000	87.9	2,015,928	2,700 CAAFAG to be supported
Support to social re-integration	62,500	2.3	51,850	Support to CWCs & Children's Clubs
Technical support & Monitoring	272,179	9.8	225,800	Specialist International technical support
Total	**2,764,679**	**100.0**	**2,293,578**	

Source : UNICEF, EU Donor Report: 2007

Note : This qualitative table depicts the amount of money allocated to community structures in the skills training programme. It is not for quantitative purposes.

- **Role of Ministry of Gender**

The study noted that the Ministry of Gender in Liberia, where the docket for child protection lay, could play an important role in capacity building of community structures for enhanced child well-being. The Ministry's focus was more on women than children; child protection in the Ministry should be given the same profile. The same Ministry would take responsibility to create awareness to other stake holders on the roles and potential of the community structures.

An NGO staff member observed;

> "*The Ministry of gender seems to be more focused on women related activities. The children section does not receive high profile. The ministry needs a better strategic response to children programmes*".

Recognising community outcomes expanded government roles beyond "service delivery". Government's role in communities ultimately required learning – new attitudes of government as a partner and facilitator, not just a "provider". Community capacity consisted of networks, organisation, attitudes, leadership and skills that allowed communities to manage change and sustain community-led development as government could and did influence community capacity. A "technical assistance" approach where services and programs were "delivered" into communities could limit local capacity. Yet, government could also develop community partnerships that foster community capacity (Cavaye 2000:15). The government had a key role to play in building community capacity. This could be by designing training of the community structures and support identification of positive community practices which could be scaled up to enhance a protective environment for children.

Cavaye (2000:4) further argues that Government needed to develop a multiple response to the changing situation of communities. A response that not only improved the delivery of services and adjusted policy, but also included a greater government role

in helping communities build their capacity to manage change, was needed. Government was well placed to develop this additional role. However, it demanded a redefinition of " real work" in the public service, the management of dual roles, greater coordination between agencies, fostering local community relationships and developing new skills, attitudes and culture in the public service. This additional role did not diminish the need for efficient service delivery. Yet, as pressures increased the need for communities to develop their capacity became evident. It is time for the Liberian government to address how it can best contribute to community capacity.

5.8.4   Failures, Challenges and Possibilities of working with Community Structures.

One of the main challenges of the organisations working with community structures was the approach to community structures. This was perhaps the most important element in the process and functioning of the community structures. The social workers had to ensure that they used good community entry skills and they had to make several visits to the community to understand existing community structures, as to how they were working. There might be no need to form other structures if existing ones can be strengthened to take on care and protection of children.

The social worker had to understand the power structures within the community, identity resources within the community, especially human resources such as teachers, community health workers, religious leaders, youth leaders, women groups and self-help groups. It should be established who the opinion leaders were as these could be both useful or problematic, what kind of services are already existing in the community and who the services providers were and how the community accessed these services, or if they did not, tried to understand why.

As a result of the prolonged conflict in Liberia social services were completely destroyed, so there was a danger that the community structures sometimes turned into social services in the village and started trying to sort the problems affecting children

themselves, instead of mobilizing the community and community resources to respond to children in need of care and protection.

The Child Welfare Committees were formed at the lowest level of an administrative division, which is referred to as the village in Liberia. The reason for this was that in the village everybody knows everyone and so they would also know the children and their situations, for instance they would know which families have orphans, how many families are struggling to make ends meet. The community members will definitely know more and care more about the children in their midst as these are their children. This meant that they would be more willing to work for their children. Of course, the lesson learnt is that this was most applicable to the rural areas where communities are still somehow close-knit. It was much more of a challenge to get this concept working in larger towns, where people from different ethnic groups have come to live together. Generally, they have difficulties in forming or developing viable community structures in towns.

It is also advantageous to form the community structures at village level, because the members will not have to travel far distances to hold meetings or to consult each other as they live so close to each other. The study found that there was one agency whose community structures were formed on a regional basis and the members had to travel long distances and so they started asking for motorcycles and bicycles. Since the agency could not supply these, the Child Welfare Committees were not effective as they became tired of walking for long distances to go to meetings.

The bigger the Child Welfare Committee, the less effective it was. As usual, not all the people attended meetings and so it was always difficult to plan interventions or even to make decisions on what needed to be done. This was especially true when at each meeting there were different people and so there was no continuity.

Existing community structures needed to have been identified and engaged appropriately. The communities had structures like football teams; kick ball clubs,

mothers' clubs, youth groups and social clubs for girls amongst others. The CWCs needed to have engaged these structures, because society is regarded as a system, and a system is an entity made up of interdependent and interrelated parts. Each part will affect the other (Haralambos and Holborn, 1990:9-10). The shared values will help the children and adults to blend together to create appropriate community structures for sustainable reintegration of child soldiers.

Culture of a society is a way of life of its members, especially African societies. It is the collection of ideas and habits which people learn and share, and is transmitted from generation to generation (Haralambos and Holborn 1990:3). Human behaviour is based on what is socialized. For any society to operate effectively, but specifically for a war-torn society like Liberia, these guidelines must be shared by its members. Culture is built on norms, values, language, symbols and material objects (Macionis (1997, 67) and child soldiers must re-socialize into their former cultures. These cultural values and norms propagated by the various Functionalist theorists can best be transmitted by the existing community structures, where specific categories of people in a society have defined roles in passing over these shared values, hence creating social order.

Social control by existing community structures to stop children from re-recruiting into armed forces and belligerent groups can be the key in enhancing social reintegration by discouraging deviance and maintaining social order in Liberian societies (Haralambos and Holborn (1990:773).

5.9 SECTION 6: LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS FOR SOCIAL REINTEGRATION

To address issues of the effects of war and protection of children, the question is asked: **What legal frameworks exist globally and nationally to support social reintegration of former child soldiers and community structures to provide sustainable support?** It was necessary in this study to focus on the legal frameworks

that protected children in armed conflicts and discussed international frameworks where the International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law provisions, were stipulated.

It has been highlighted that the standards to protect children involved in armed conflict are to be found in relevant international provisions in International Humanitarian Laws, International Human Rights Laws, International Jurisprudence, UN Security Council resolutions, International conventions like the UNCRC, optional protocol to the CRC of children in armed conflict and the International Labour Organisation Convention 182. There are also continental and regional legislations like the African Charter on the rights and Welfare of the Child and the ECOWAS child protection policy.

There are also international standards like the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards and the Paris Principles that spell out best practices for social reintegration programming for CAAFAG.

At national level the Liberian Government enacted a children's law which provides a framework for future social reintegration, this was passed in 2011 after the recently concluded DDRR programme. The Children's law of Liberia (2011: part xi, sections 3 to 7) recommends establishing Child Welfare Committees in every community or town with an overall function to advance the realization of the rights of the child at the community or town level.

This law, however, does not take cognisance of the existing community structures which have continued to play a fundamental role in care and protection of children. Further still the Liberian Children's law, Section 5: 44 states that**:**

"The powers and functions of a Child Welfare Committee shall be limited to advice, mediation, recommendations, and representation and in no event shall a Child Welfare Committee conduct a trial or pass a sentence against any person."

This runs contrary to the role of community structures as social institutions, which are supposed to play a role in addressing deviance in society to maintain social order and social cohesion. The legalistic provisions do not empower the community structures to support CAAFAG in the socialisation process.

Beyond the inclusion of the structures in the Liberian children's law 2011, there was very limited evidence to the inclusion of social reintegration in the post-conflict programmes. The quote below by one of the NGO staff, illustrates the status of Child Welfare Committees",

"The CWCs do not report to government, neither the community. They are just hanging".

It was reported in Nimba County that with introduction of Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), the counties were required to report according to relevant pillars, such as the rule of law and governance pillar amongst others. The structures did not know to which pillar to report to and were confused. This is what one NGO staff member observed:

"*There are changes of reporting at county level. We are required to report according to pillars. We do not know in which pillar the CWCs fall"*.

The failure to link or connect community structures to government institutions and programmes, partly explains why there was limited policy focus on CWCs and social reintegration as a whole, in the post-conflict planning.

5.10   CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that all six research questions were addressed and answered in this research study. It explicitly showed that tentative hypotheses have been confirmed through data gathering, thus building theory regarding community structures in Liberia. It was proved that children of all ages in Liberia were recruited by armed groups and

armed forces, since it was found that they were not passive, innocent observers of war and political change, but resilient participants. The children joined the fighting forces for a number of reasons, which ranged from social, economic, political, desperateness, and self-protection against abuse. The study findings showed children went through very difficult experiences, they watched and supervised over violence. The war disoriented children's lives. They acquired or socialized values that were not acceptable when they returned. The children copied negative behavior and had to rely on a constructed community that composed of commanders and other child soldiers. The pattern of relationships continued even after their return to the communities, among peers and with commanders.

In some situations they returned to dysfunctional communities, without adequate support systems. The return was to the extended relatives like uncles, aunties, grandparents and a few resorted to independent living. Their lives were disrupted, they could not continue with education as others returned without legs and arms, while others had been wounded. The physical trauma on children was a profound effect of the war on the children.

The findings showed a great number of children who were formerly demobilized, accessing one of the two reintegration options, namely to go back to school and have formal education or to receive skills training to equip them to work for themselves.

The Child Welfare Committees that were formed at the onset were the mainly used reintegrating structure. There was very minimal involvement of other structures in the community itself. The programmes were mainly run by the NGOs. This denied the children to be key community actors in the reintegration process. There was no connection with community structures to assist, while there was very limited linkage or connection with local government structures in the counties to support reintegration of child soldiers.

The structures formed with reintegration mostly ceased to operate when funding stopped towards the programme. The coverage was limited in scope, as most CWCs tended to be situated along the main roads, with limited presence in the interior of the counties. The training that was received was not structured and it was once-off, without a clear training needs assessment done beforehand to establish real needs of children during and after reintegration.

The findings pointed to a very limited capacity building of the structures and limited funding and training were given and received. There was no sufficient investment in the structures to enable them to operate efficiently after the reintegration programme. The Liberian Children's law, Section 5: 44 promulgated in 2011 did not make provision or take cognisance of the existing community structures which have continued to play a fundamental role in care and protection of children. The situation seems bleak for Liberian child soldiers as their support systems are not supportive any more.

The next chapter will focus on the final conclusion and final recommendations in an endeavor to rectify these problems.

CHAPTER 6

FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

By answering the relevant research questions, the study has challenged former information regarding creation of community structures for social reintegration of child soldiers in Liberia. The overarching functionalist perspective is based on the notion that social events, such as reintegration with the support of community structures, are best explained in terms of the functions these structures perform or the contributions they make to the stability and continuity of the reintegration process in Liberia.

This chapter presents a discussion and summary of findings to draw final conclusions and make recommendations. It provides answers to the research questions raised in chapter 1 of this study. The specific aim of this study was to investigate and find out how to work with and create community structures to reintegrate child soldiers in a sustainable way into communities in Liberia.

6.2 DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

In this qualitative study the research questions stemming from the research problem and posed in chapter 1 had been answered. Because of this, all tentative hypotheses underlying these questions had been confirmed. To summarize these research questions they would be briefly discussed here, namely:

The **first** research question was: "**What is the nature of children who were formerly associated with the fighting forces, also referred to as child soldiers in Liberia?**"

From the study, the war had several effects on children in Liberia as the growth and development of children were interrupted, children lost their innocence as children and they took on adult roles and functions. Children were psycho-socially affected due to the atrocities they witnessed and those they were forced to commit. As a result, children developed negative coping mechanisms to cope with situations, like drug and alcohol abuse. The parent attachment was replaced by commanders, some of whom negatively impacted on the children. The girl children were very vulnerable as they were sexually exploited, which resulted in pregnancy in some of the cases.

The involvement of children in the fighting forces and the experiences they went through was seen through the Functionalist lens as presenting a major step backwards in their socialisation process. Due to a breakdown of community structures, children were introduced to a new environment of violence. They had to shed off the norms and values acquired before the conflict and learnt new values to enable them to cope with the war situation. They were now in a process of re-socialisation. The social system had fractured and new forms of social equilibrium had to be re-established. The children found themselves submerged between roles, as victims, where children are meant to be children and as perpetrators, where they had lost their innocence and taken on adult roles as abusers. In answering the above question, the study confirmed the tentative hypothesis that:

- **Child participation in armed conflict reverses their socialisation process**. The experiences during the armed conflict forced the CAAFAG to put their socialisation process in reverse gear as argued by Giddens (1993: 81). The community norms and values they had previously internalised were stripped off.

The study answered research question **two**: "**What reintegration services were provided to CAAFAG, and how did these foster the social reintegration process?**"

The study answered the question by providing in detail the two reintegration options that were provided to the CAAFAG or child soldiers, which were:

- the Community Education Investment Programme (CEIP) that focused on formal education, and
- The skills and apprenticeship training which was aimed at children above 14 years of age, who could not get back to formal education.

The study showed that organisations involved in the CEIP programme provided some training to community structures, while the ones that implemented the vocational skills projects never provided any training to the community structures. They however, worked with the community structures on assumption that they had been trained in child protection, which was wrong. The level of community involvement was more casual than meaningful.

Examples provided in the previous chapter showed that the structures were only involved in the RR and not the DD. Where monitoring visits were conducted by the NGOs to the structures, the visit was only to the chairman of the CWCs and not to other members of the committee or community members.

It was found that during the DD, the community involvement was very limited. The community structures came on board during the reintegration process and were to play a vital role all through this stage. As argued earlier, the engagement of the community structures was rather casual. The study further observed that not all levels of community structures received the same focus. The CWCs received more focus than Children's Clubs; while the involvement in youth clubs was limited, save for some areas along the borders with Ivory Coast, where they became important structures for monitoring child recruitment.

Failure to engage the existing structures, led to the failure in transmitting social norms, which were consistent with a state of social disequilibrium. The bonding of children became a challenge as the necessary structures for social reintegration were differentiated and disconnected, leading to a dysfunctional system.

The answer to the question of engagement of community structures in the reintegration process, confirmed the tentative hypothesis that:

- **Formal and informal education regarding reintegration services and post reintegration services were offered to former child soldiers in Liberia.** However, there was minimal engagement of the community structures in the whole planning, implementation and monitoring cycle of the programme**.**

The **third** research question was**: "What community structures were used in the reintegration of CAAFAG in Liberia, and how did community structures engage in the process?"**

The type of structures that were used in the reintegration process, the relevancy of the community structures, membership, functionality and coverage, how they developed and how the structures linked up with the formal and informal systems and community perception to the structures were described and explained.

The community structures used at the onset of the reintegration process included: Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), Children's Clubs (CC), Children Resource Centres and youth groups. Some structures were formed around existing women groups and elders groups. By the end of the reintegration process a total of 714 community structures had been formed. These included 293 CWCS, 228 CC and 193 youth groups (UNICEF 2007: 16). Most of the CWCs, CCs and youth groups had some training on general child protection. The structures were able to mobilize former child soldiers in child related programmes. In many places the structures were reporting cases of child rights violations. They were successful in providing care and protection to children in the short

run. However, several failures to use existing community structures and poor programme focus were reported. In answering this research question the study confirmed the hypothesis that:

- **Creating of community structures does not necessarily lead to effective social reintegration of CAAFAG.** A comprehensive analysis was required to the type of structures that could be engaged in the reintegration process.

The **fourth** question was**: "What were the mistakes identified in working with community structures in the reintegration process and how did this impact on child reintegration?"**

Several gaps and mistakes in working with community structures were reported, such as failure to build on community resources and coping mechanisms, to use existing community resources, acknowledgment of relationships formed in captivity and poor programme focus. The structures formed for reintegration purposes mostly ceased to operate when funding stopped towards the programme. The coverage was limited in scope, as most CWCs tended to be situated along the main roads, with limited presence in the interior of the county**. Training received was unstructured and once-off, without a clear training needs assessment.

The structures were project-based. Most expired when the reintegration programme ended. The commitment to the project values was dependent on availability of funding. The lack of funding of community structures stifled the capacity to deliver a sustained support to the demobilised children to reintegrate efficiently.

The CWCs approach tended to bring all categories of people together without analysis of the power dynamics of a given community. The structures comprised of elders, teachers, nurses, local authorities, religious leaders, children, women leaders and youth. This approach greatly contributed to the distortion of the existing community structures and community dynamics.

Communities in Liberia were stratified, with each stratum or class playing a different role towards social order. The acceptance of these layers in communities, and each knowing its role towards social order was what contributed to social equilibrium. Ganging up different categories of people in itself was dysfunctional.

In some situations it was observed that the rural elites, like teachers hijacked the CWCs. Structures ceased to represent the interest of the people, but represented the interests of the most vocal members of the community, which were not necessarily community interests. This had been highlighted in the previous chapter where one NGO staff member observed;

"The rural elite tend to be very active in presence of NGOs, whenever the NGOs are not there, they withdraw".

This denied the reflection of views of the different segments of Liberian society. The interest of the most marginalised members of the community, including the CAAFAG was overshadowed by the few vocal elitist voices.

Structures created were not owned by the communities, but more often associated and referred to as structures for the organisations or agencies implementing the reintegration programmes. As a result, there was limited community accountability through the structures to the community members, referring to the dysfunctionality of community structures.

To some extent, the structures disintegrated children from their communities. Some children paid a lot of allegiance to the organisations and not the community. As a result, children took long to re-establish the links with the community. The structures created did not strengthen the social institutions, such as extended families and existing social groups who are pertinent in the socialization process.

The structures created did not complement existing community structures, but replaced existing community structures. This stifled the efforts of the existing community structures in supporting children and ran contrary to principles of good programming, where social reintegration had to build on communities' own resilience.

Participation was limited to identification of members to join the structures, training and presentation of songs whenever there were visitors or donors. The level of participation of the communities was not meaningful as communities were not involved in all key stages of social reintegration, which would have been important for confidence building, building a sense of trust and eventual realisation of the sense of belonging. This concurred with Wessells's (2009:10) argument that external agencies did not always follow a careful rationale in supporting the formation and mobilisation of community-based child protection groups. Using the existing community structures would demystify this assertion as the community handled these children the same way as those children with other problems in the community. This would have assisted the reintegration process and patterns of social relations in an attempt to stabilise communities.

Where community led structures seemed to deliver some results, development organisations overcrowded them with so many programmes. This adversely affected the performance of these structures. Wessells (2009: 81) also argued that the arrival of large amounts of money undermined community ownership, by marking the project as external and diverting attention from a community's sense of responsibility and their mobilisation of their own resources.

The study acknowledged there were social networks formed by children with their peers or commanders in captivity that were never regarded as to enhance the reintegration process. This relationship continued even after the reintegration process. Some were living together, going to the same schools, formed groups together and were involved in income generating activities as indicated in the previous chapter. However, these networks, which were positive, were not identified to harness the social reintegration process. It was observed in Nimba that some former commanders were instrumental in

supporting children, but the programme failed in analysing some of these positive social connections for social reintegration. Where they occurred, they were not encouraged.

The literature reviewed, focused a lot on disengagement of children from commanders as an important step in the DD and RR processes. There is limited literature on positive networks formed by children and their peers and other commanders who continued playing a parental relationship to the children in the post-reintegration stage. This former fighting community was socially constructed, which could be very useful in enhancing social order. This finding was controversial and a departure from most data in the literature. It specifically confirmed the notion that positive networks formed by children and commanders during the bush wars could be effective later in enhancing social reintegration of children.

In answering the above question, **both** of the following two hypotheses were confirmed, namely;

- **Creating of community structures does not necessarily lead to effective social reintegration of CAAFAG.**
- **Building of community networks is key in releasing community energies towards enhancing social reintegration of children. Positive networks formed by children during the bush war can be effective in enhancing social reintegration of children.**

The **fifth** question was: "**What capacity building programmes were developed for community structures to ensure sustainable support to former child soldiers?**"

There was limited investment in developing the capacity of the created community structures by most organisations. Where the training was done, it was once-off. The training was more on child protection and limited in scope.

There was no capacity gap analysis during the reintegration programme, or to identify the training needs of the structures. The limited training that was provided, was not informed by an assessment, it was haphazard.

There was no community profiling or assessment done by the implementing organisations, resulting in assumptions that communities were homogenous, that a structure designed for one community would apply to all others. The organisations applied a one-size-fits-all approach. The approach did not consider the community diversity, which was important for the reintegration of CAAFAG. They did not look at what values existed in the communities.

From the interviews held with NGO staff members, it was reported that agencies or NGOs would just go to a community and introduce the concept, with little reflection of what structures existed in the community and what training they had received previously. There was very limited financial allocation to support the community structures, which also hampered the capacity development of the community structures, for example, members were not reimbursed for travel allowances to attend meetings.

Monitoring visits that would aim at building the capacity of community structures by the government officials and NGOs were mainly centred on district and county headquarters. There was very limited interaction with the community structures. This would have been an excellent opportunity for on-job training and getting the right information.

There was no baseline or specific standards to measure the outcomes of the NGO programmes. The NGO interviewees reported that the reintegration programmes were more pre-occupied with numbers of children they have handled, which focused more on the output and process indicators. The programmes did not focus on outcome indicators. The requirement for higher level results could have pushed the NGOs to demand more community training to attain these higher results. However, there was limited focus on how many children were earning a livelihood as a result of the skills

training, or how they were interacting with peers in the community. There was need to move from process and output indicators to outcome indicators to acknowledge the changes in children's lives after the reintegration process.

If a system were to persist in its current form over time, then certain structures had to be present and certain processes, such as capacity building had to take place to correct the distorted system. Due to conflict, the social system had fractured. Capacity building was important in setting the social institutions back into motion to transmit the shared values, which would in the end, contribute to social order and lasting peace.

The answer to the research question on capacity building confirmed the following hypothesis:

- **The capacity building programmes by child protection practitioners for community structures, has not been comprehensive**. Where training had been conducted, it had been haphazard and once-off. There had been a narrow engagement on the nature of capacity building programmes by all the actors involved in child reintegration programmes, which had limited the functionality of community structures.

The **sixth** research question was: "**What legal frameworks existed globally and nationally to support social reintegration of former child soldiers and community structures to provide sustainable support?**"

The study analysed the different global, continental, regional and national legal and statutory frameworks in place for protection of CAAFAG. The standards and regulations to protect children involved in armed conflict were found in International Humanitarian laws, International Human Rights Laws, International Jurisprudence, UN Security Council resolutions, regional declarations and national legislations and policies.

It concurred that international and regional frameworks existed to protect CAAFAG. It spelt out the Geneva Convention, the additions thereto, the International Jurisprudence, the criminal tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda, special court for Sierra Leone and the Rome statute of the International Criminal court. The study analysed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its optional protocol, the optional protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the ILO convention 182. It considered international instruments that enhanced standards like the Paris Principles that are a review of the Cape Town Principles and the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards. The study further considered regional instruments and conventions, specifically the African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child, ECOWAS child Protection Policy. The national level frameworks specific to Liberia were the Liberian Children's Law and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia.

There are adequate legal frameworks to protect CAAFAG, and the standards for social reintegration are also well laid out in the Paris Principles and the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards. The 2011Liberian Children's Law did not integrate CWCs within the law. However, it committed the same mistake of not looking at other existing structures and not addressing issues of children at the community level.

There were however, limited policy reflections of community structures to give guidance on how community structures should be engaged. The other challenge was how to translate some of these international pronouncements and declarations into programmes that strengthened community structures in supporting social reintegration. These vital institutions that had to reorganise the fractured social system back to social equilibrium and transmit the community nested values for social cohesion, had not received adequate programmatic attention.

The study showed that though community structures were formed, they were not linked to other programmatic intervention or institutions of government. Where a very limited attempt was made, there was failure to institutionalise this linkage or relationship.

The above answer confirmed the following hypothesis:

- **Positioning reintegration services as a stand-alone service for post-war recovery programmes led to a lack of a systematised legal institutional framework for response at national and lower levels of government**. There is need to move beyond ratifying and ascending to international and regional conventions and treaties to ensuring sufficient policy provisions at national level. Reintegration programmes need to be mainstreamed within the national planning frameworks. Community structures need to be linked to formal systems of government for effective support. This is important in making the structures more accountable and also a sense of re-cognition that they are appreciated. Their contribution at the lower level would greatly enhance government programming at the district and national level.

6.3   FINAL DATA CONCLUSIONS AND INTERVENTIONS

In reflecting on the observations made in this study regarding working with and creating community structures, a major conclusion is that unless the social dynamics, cultural and reintegration mechanisms were improved, rectified and understood, initiatives for sustainable reintegration would be rhetoric and unusable in Liberia. The recommendations for working with community structures in Liberia in a sustainable way are premised on the research questions studied, which are based on the overarching Functionalist perspective of the study.

The key interventions have focused on understanding community dynamics, defining the level of community engagement and approaches to community engagement, roles

of external groups, effective community presentation and accountability, examining post-war networks, capacity building, role of government in community capacity building and policy issues around community structures.

6.3.1　Understanding community dynamics

The social workers have to understand the power structures within the community, identity resources within the community especially human resources, such as teachers, community health workers, religious leaders, youth leaders, women groups and self-help groups. They should establish who the opinion leaders are, as these could be both useful and problematic. These would be very useful in defining who you bring on board and what role they could play in programme implementation. The analysis of the nature of community structures is extremely important to understand the power dynamics of the specific society, as most Liberian societies are stratified in a way that each stratum has specific roles in child upbringing and passed on different community values and norms nested in the community.

6.3.2　Levels of working with community structures

Different sectors ranging from economic and social sectors have advocated for the use of community structures in performing their work. Community structures could be utilised at different levels of programme implementation.

Were (1990) discussed the different levels of working with community structures to enable communities to build capacity on their own and not to receive programme content and details worked out by other people. Some levels had nothing to do with the capacity building of the community.

For an effective community structure engagement, where structures are expected to pass on the community shared values and beliefs and to ensure functionality of social

systems, the following two levels referring to community decision involvement and community empowerment are seen as the preferred levels of community engagement:

The first level of involvement referred to, is:

- **Community decision involvement;** local needs are assessed or performed with the community or communities that are assisted to develop significant skills in problem identification and analysis, defining alternative strategies and choosing the action path. The communities start asking challenging questions, such as: "what is the problem, why are we poor, what can others do to support the community?" This level has more capacity building potential, if not stampeded. It could empower communities if provided with adequate resources.

The second applicable level is:

- **Community empowerment;** communities become aware enough to eventually assume control of the development process. The questions to be addressed are now being addressed by the community itself.

Communities should be engaged in identifying their problems and answering the following important questions:

"Who are the community key providers of child protection services, and what capacity do they have?"
"What are their training needs?"
"What are some of the positive cultural values in the community which could be used in supporting CAAFAG?"

Together they could be supported to develop a plan to build capacity of the structures and support the CAAFAG in Liberia.

6.3.3 Community engagement approaches

Wessells (2009:18) in his presentation of a typology of community structures presented different approaches to community structures, for a constructive situation that promoted articulation of the set of community goals and values and for mutual integration and interconnectedness. The two approaches are:

- Community owned and managed activities mobilized by external agency and,
- Community owned and managed activities initiated from within the community, have to be prerequisite for social reintegration.

Social reintegration goes beyond numbers of children reintegrated; it has to do with passing on community values and norms for community acceptance, which requires community rooted approaches. This could be done by community resources such as healers, chiefs, elders and women groups. The structures are community created, led, owned, managed and sustained by the community. The roles of passing on these values are bestowed upon them by the nature of the position they hold in society.

This approach identifies the community as primary duty bearers. An intervention to demobilised children is to fill the community capacity gaps to enable the community members to fulfil their obligation in providing for vulnerable children. It builds on the community values, beliefs and traditions. The "we feeling" of the community that symbolises the oneness was retained (Barton and Mutiti 1998: 49).

Culture determines the values held by a social group, as well as the norms and social controls which ensure that such values are upheld to ensure stability and equilibrium in households and society and to fulfil the functional prerequisite of pattern maintenance. This includes a societal approach to the raising of its children. Each social group has its particular norms and values concerning who takes care of children, what they were taught at which stage, what is expected of children, how they should be disciplined, and what should be done when things go wrong, such as when children are abused or neglected, or their parents are unable to care for them (Bueren 1998: 455).

The community led structures have a high degree of ownership, because they feel they had a responsibility to shape demobilised children to be responsible and respectable human beings. In engaging in discussions with these structures references to words like "our children", was common. This shows a sense of belonging and interrelatedness.

In the community led structures, cases are handled not by a single structure, but by the different structures depending on the nature of the problem. The women groups would tend to address the issues that were more women related in nature, while the clan would focus on the issues that affected the community welfare. This is the way community operated and organised itself. It is a realisation that the needs of the community are not homogenous, affirming that society consist of differentiated and interrelated structures working together for the well-being of the whole society.

Identification and involvement of existing community structures is extremely important in the social reintegration programmes. They enhance community social cohesion. Formed community structures may lead to short-term gains, but for sustainable outcomes for children, existing community structures would be vital in passing on community values, belief and norms in children whose lives have been interrupted and negatively impacted by the armed conflict. The social support by the community structures would be important in attaining social order, where it is extremely important that new community structures have to be formed. There has to be a deliberate attempt to link, or connect them with the existing community structures to ensure community values are reintegrated within the programmes.

6.3.4   Roles of External Groups

The role of the NGOs has to be redefined as there is a need to build constructive contacts with community structures. There has to be more meaningful community participation in the NGO programmes to ensure more proactive engagement, which requires moving from consultation to facilitation of community led development.

Understanding working with community structures should not only be desirable, but an obligation. NGOs should shift from providers to partners and facilitators.

A common challenge in post-conflict settings is striking an appropriate balance between the need to rebuild institutions quickly and the desire to reform them to ensure longer-term sustainability in-service provision. Experience shows that the success of community-based approaches ultimately depends on establishing a responsive framework of support institutions. This takes time. If the objective of strengthening local governance is to be acknowledged, then there is a need for gradual or conditional disbursement, which allows time for beneficiaries to learn how to defend their rights and hold leaders and service providers to account. Unfortunately this requirement often runs counter to short-term funding cycles and the desire to see 'quick impacts', especially in post conflict settings.

Slaymaker, Christiansen & Hemming (2005:40) explores the way in which aid is delivered and the impact this has on the 'enabling environment' required for Community Based Approaches (CBA) especially in aid-dependent environments. The way the aid actors behave and external flows are delivered is not always conducive to the development of the systems and structures that support community-based approaches. There are discussions on how to relate externally-financed activities more effectively to national systems and policies which were relevant to difficult environments and service delivery. The main concern was to 'do no harm' while also not legitimising authorities in situations where there was serious concern or ongoing conflict. However, the emerging recommendations in this area go against entrenched current practice and will require substantial efforts and commitment by all actors to make them successful.

The research concurs with Slaymaker et al, (2005:40) that an enabling environment is important, which could provide information to support communities with their problems, identification of appropriate solutions, decide on the optimum level of provision, ensure maintenance of minimum standards and responded flexibly to changing demand for services over time. With actors like government being able to play a facilitating role and giving the communities a bigger picture of what lies ahead, these calls for a partnership

with the nested communities are to be important ingredients to enhance social systems at community level.

There is need for a more constructive engagement with donors so that the support provided did not stifle community structures, which are important for social reintegration, or otherwise, it may do more harm than good. It may lead to a dysfunctional society without social cohesion, which was rightly argued by Slaymaker et al (2005: 40) who explored the way in which aid (read support) is delivered, and the impact this has on the 'enabling environment', especially in aid-dependent environments, which could lead to dysfunctionality of societal systems.

6.3.5   How community structures should function

Community participation should encompass all segments of society (Commins 2007:4) to establish useful intervention. It should not be a preserve of the most economically powerful, should include the excluded, minorities and most disadvantaged. Working with community structures entails identification of key stakeholders, the excluded and accelerating or establishing systems that enhance community engagement. What constitutes community depend on the internal dynamics and identities (religious, ethnic and gender) in Liberian communities.

Building the capacity of the community only addresses one half of a dialogue. The decision makers' capacity to listen to the community completes the cycle. Effectiveness of the community structures will depend on clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. The community should be seen as local partners with resources they bring to the table. The community contributes social capital by organising itself internally, including conflict resolution by having representation on the various committees or projects.

Communities need cohesion to enable them to initiate pro-active partnerships with NGOs. This kind of organisation may rely heavily on external support in the initial stages, but a cohesive community can be in charge of innovations and interventions.

6.3.6   Composition of community groups

The Rural Community Network (2002) argues to always ensure the community group or committee have an effective mechanism to redress any imbalance and ensure that all interests are represented effectively, e.g., quotas, co-options. If the membership of a community group or committee is not representative then action will need to be taken to address this. This can be done in a number of ways:

- Individuals can be targeted to become members of the community group or committee to address the imbalance. This process is often known as co-option. The number of co-options allowed may be limited by the constitution of the community group or committee and this should be checked before any action is taken.
- The structure of the community group or committee can be established to ensure that appropriate representation is gained from all sections of the community by laying down certain rules in the constitution, which establish quotas, for example, 50% men and 50% women. In addition places on the community group or committee can be reserved for certain interest groups, for example, farm organisations, disability forums, etc.
- Under-represented groups in the community group or committee can be targeted.

The study does agree the community structures should be representative of the underprivileged such as disabled, elderly, single parents and the rest of the community as a whole. Avenues have to be explored to bring on board the different members of the community without compromising the stratification of the community, which is important for social equilibrium of Liberian society. In the strata are defined community roles meant to specific groups to ensure the societal values are upheld and transmitted.

These approaches or interventions form the basis of the final analysis of data in this empirical research study.

6.3.7 Community Representation

Community involvement is essential for community support and the development of a community group or committee in their area. The community group or committee must have a structure that will facilitate two-way communication with the community. The community group or committee needs to decide on the most appropriate ways to facilitate the exchange of information or communication. The community group or committee needs to be effective in its actions, but also accountable to the community to which it belongs. There are a number of ways in which this can be effectively achieved and these will develop over the lifetime of the community group or committee. For example: public or events meetings, Annual General Meetings, information events or meetings, such as hosting a "road show", publicity materials or newspaper articles, needs analysis and community auditing, and community notice boards or other focal points and Community news sheet or magazines.

Two-way communication is important in enhancing community accountability. Existing community structures do not have written rules, but they normally have regular community meetings for their members where they provide feedback.

6.3.8   Post-War Social Networks

Disassociation of children from their former commanders is important for demobilisation and disarmament. However, as noted from the study, some positive networks have been formed by children with their peers and in some situation positive engagement identified with former commanders, where they have become important in supporting

the CAAFAG in the social reintegration process. Social reintegration processes should identify these networks and utilize them to support children's social reintegration.

6.3.9   Important aspects to consider in working with communities

Membership has to be representative, balanced and area presentation, male or female, young people or older people, religion, ethnic group, geographical spread, able-bodied or people with disabilities, single-parents and unemployed. Effective mechanisms to redress any imbalance and ensure that all interests are represented effectively have to be undertaken. This may be through education of all community members, who are encouraged to participate, for their inclusion of quotas or co-option systems. Participation should not be limited to the chairman, the most vocal of the rural elite. The contribution of community members has to be valued too.

To facilitate structures for a two-way communication with the community as part of the normal practice, information communicated outside the group and mechanisms for the group have to be enabled. To act on feedback from the community and the members of the wider community, will enable participation in the life of the group and the decisions it makes on their behalf. The committees identified to run the community structures must have the knowledge on the needs of the local community.

It is important to note that if one holds a position representing a community organisation or committee, it is important to keep in mind the following issues to:

- Act in the interests of the common good as opposed to narrow self-interest;
- Be accountable to those being represented;
- Have appropriate structures by which they are accountable to those they represent;
- Ensure effective two-way communication channels are in place with those members represented.

6.3.10   Capacity building

The community structures must be provided with training informed by a training needs assessment. The training should integrate community values for effective social reintegration. The training should be phased and not once-off. It should run through all the stages of social reintegration, starting with community mobilization, and support to reintegration programmes, monitoring of the children to post reintegration support.

In the areas visited, it was observed there was no visual material to support the reintegration process. The organisations implementing programmes should provide adequate visual materials to compliment what has been learnt and enable them pass on learnt messages or information.

Some of the concluding aspects point to:

- Failure to analyse the existing community structures will lead to incomplete social reintegration.
- Societal values will not be passed on as most structures will end with donor support.
- Capacity building must not be once-off. Capacity building programmes should make community structures robust social-cultural institutions,
- Inadequate community capacity building will lead inadequate referral.

Social reintegration of children should enhance the community interrelatedness with the society or community to which they return, making them part of the whole to establish community social equilibrium. The community structures should be able to pass on the community values and beliefs to ensure continuity of social systems. Communities should be able to push for durable solutions for children.

6.3.11 Role of national government in community capacity building

The government left the role of building capacity of community structures to NGOs. Only in Nimba County did the government at least take on a coordinating role. There is need to place the structures within a wider social economic reconstruction programme of the country. The children were called upon to give individual testimonies of their experience to the TRC. It was important for the community structures to determine whether such testimonies could not expose the children to further harm as some of the testimonies were very sensitive and incriminating to some members of the community to which the children returned.

The community structures could be a very good vehicle for peace and reconciliation activities. They would be very good for sustained support of children to service providers and would help identify the children who do not report for formal DD, as it is well-known that a number of children never reported for the formal DDRR process. The focus on women based structures will remain vital, especially to support girls, many of whom are said to avoid formal DDRR processes, because of the stigma attached.

Atkinson and Willis (2006:2) refer to Community Capacity Building as basically referring to 'local solutions to local problems' which enable communities to deal with problems, ultimately without relying on external resources. To take a simple but flexible definition of Community Capacity Building (CCB), we can see it as a series of grassroots processes by which communities organise and plan together, develop healthy lifestyle options, empower themselves, reduce poverty and suffering, create employment and economic opportunities to achieve social, economic, cultural and environmental goals together.

Community capacity building (CCB) could be seen as a way of encouraging the development of more 'healthy' or 'active' communities. The pooling of skills and resources as well as the identification of key local problems that many want to see

addressed through common action could provide a springboard for effective action in a number of areas.

CCB has also been effectively used to identify and address community health problems (e.g., high local rates of smoking) or to promote greater community safety (e.g. car accident rates). CCB has also been linked to effective programs that have reduced local crime rates (such as housebreaking). More specifically CCB could be employed to build capacities like:

- Levels of trust, connectedness, resilience and enterprise, including the ability to join together in common crisis, civic engagement, local and political participation, the strength of local networks, pride of place and self-worth, presence and role of community leaders, use of community facilities, public amenities and open spaces e.g. parks, respecting difference, political advocacy and conflict resolution and willingness of those better off to assist and those who are worse off, or in crisis (Atkinson and Willis, 2006: 3).

Evaluating approaches to building community capacity, indicators of capacity such as levels of trust, reciprocity, communication strategies, changes in skills bases, political and local participation and altruism could be assessed through multiple methods.

Atkinson and Willis (2006: 3) go on to argue that the key stages implicated in pursuing CCB are:

- understanding who the community is and what needs it has;
- implementing community-identified programs and actions that will address these concerns and;
- Measuring the outcomes of these efforts to see whether these actions are effective in practice.

Goodman, Speers, McElroy, Fawcett, Kegler, Smith, Sterling & Wallerstein (1998: 258-278) have argued in evaluating a community's social networks, that one could consider structural characteristics, such as the size or number of the relationship among network members, like the frequency and intensity of the contacts, the benefits members receive from their network ties, such as a motional or tangible support and access to social contacts. There is a lot that constitutes the community structures or social networks to enable them to perform as social systems. These need to be analysed for effective social functionality.

Goodman et al (1998:258-278) assert that consequences of strong network ties often produce a "sense of community". The concept has a long-standing place in community studies. Sense of community is characterized by "caring and sharing" among the people in a community, mutual respect and produce desired changes. Existing community networks should be identified and engaged in the social reintegration. They transmit these values of caring and sharing inherent in the structures for social cohesion.

Argument by McMillan and Chavis (1986:6-23) gives more credence to the need to exploit existing community structures, they propose four elements of characteristic of a strong sense of community;

- membership, or feeling of belonging;
- Influence, or a feeling that the individual and community matters,
- Fulfillment of needs or a feeling that members' needs will be met by resources received through membership,
- Emotional connection or the belief that members share common experiences and history.

McMillan and Chavis (1986:6-23) further argue that the sense of community is connected to other dimensions of capacity, including participation (active membership), collective norms and values (influence), resources (fulfillment of needs), and history (emotional connection). Community members can display a sense of community in

various ways, such as by providing social support, tangible assistance, or information. The CAAFAG in social reintegration, if linked or related to community structures will benefit the social support from the community.

Reintegration does not appear in a vacuum and is not isolated from previous experiences of recruitment and involvement in armed groups. Focus on individual outcomes cannot be unrelated to the recovery and reconstruction efforts of war-torn communities. Although social and communal dimensions of conflict are routinely overlooked in the international responses and donor strategies, the successful individual return to civilian livelihoods and can be located only within the broader matrix of community support and acceptance. Here the CAAFAG will be viewed as a subsystem that must adjust to other subsystems to attain a social equilibrium.

Sustainable reintegration will be dependent on the level of community capacity to enhance the former child soldier's capacity to positively cope and adapt, which calls for working towards empowering community structures through the key stakeholders.

6.4   POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Where community structures like Child Welfare Committees were formed, there was limited recognition of adapting to existing structures. This is seen from the Children's Law of Liberia (2011:7.2: 45), where the composition of the committee is prescribed as follows:

- a traditional leader nominated by the head of the community or town;
- a man and woman representing parents and elected in a community or town gathering;
- one female child representing children and another representing male children;
- two representatives, female and male of non-governmental organisations or community or town based organisations;

- three local members from various faiths, at least one of which should be female; and

- It goes on to state that a Child Welfare Committee shall elect a chairperson and secretary from within its membership.

Involvement of the community structures in the social reintegration of CAAFAG is highlighted by both government and humanitarian organisations. However, no policies are developed to strengthen and consolidate these structures. There should be a deliberate attempt to move beyond ascending to international treaties, conventions and charters to programmatically operationalize international standards into national policies and programmes for social reintegration that promote social values and norms of society, which enhance functioning of social systems important for social order and lasting peace.

6.5   RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the conclusions, it is evident that the intended manifest functions of the DDRR programmes and reintegration objectives for sustainability of reintegration processes of child soldiers in Liberia were not fulfilled and that integration was eventually dysfunctional in most cases. Therefore, to rectify this situation, it is recommended that:

- Working with existing community structures not only strengthens community capacity but promotes lasting solutions for rehabilitation and recovery of CAAFAG. The successful social reintegration into the communities can be healing to children and the community as it promotes social order and community interconnectedness and interdependence.

- Engaging in community structures calls for analysis of the role which informal child protection systems play in social reintegration of CAAFAG and enhancing a child protection system as a whole.

- Ensuring a critical analysis of existing community structures before thinking of forming new community structures for social reintegration programmes.

- Investing in existing community structures is important in building social institutions that are vital for the re-socialisation processes of children, who have lost the community values due to the breakdown of social norms and values due to war.

- Ensuring comprehensive capacity building programmes to social structures to support the social reintegration process.

- Existing community structures take cognizance of community dynamics which are important for social stability and order. They are vital for passing on community values, through socialization and re-socialisation processes. They also promote community oneness which is vital for community cohesion and interrelatedness.

- Sustainable outcomes for CAAFAG reintegration are important for security, stability and recovery. Reintegration programmes should be positioned within a wider recovery or a post-war programming agenda.

- Developing policy and programmatic frameworks strengthen community structures for sustainable social reintegration and link them to wider post recovery planning frameworks.

6.6   AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has shown process and the output of engaging community structures in the reintegration process of child soldiers in Liberia. It has also shown the gaps in creating community structures for sustainable reintegration. Another study is needed to search for indicators to work with community structures to provide an in-depth programmatic guidance and focus to practitioners involved in social reintegration programmes in Liberia in particular and Africa in general.

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ANNEXURE 1

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE OR GUIDE

Topic: Creating community Structures for sustainable social reintegration of child soldiers in Liberia.

In handling the topic, the study will analyse;

- The functionality of the community structures that existed before the Disarmament Demobilisation Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) and those formed during the programme. The interface of the structures with the demobilised children at each process of the DDRR.

- The extent to which positive social networks formed during the war (former commanders, peer groups) were explored and utilised during reintegration.

- How the different international conventions, protocols, treaties and national legislation, national policy frame works enhance functionality of the community structures.

- The extent to which sustainability of community structures was addressed in the DDRR design; that is during the planning, implementation and monitoring.

- How the different reintegration options, contributed to social reintegration. And analyse how the lack of services inhibited sustainable social reintegration.

- What opportunities existed in strengthening systems at the community level to enhance the well-being of children associated with the fighting forces?

- How reintegration processes were mainstreamed within the other government programmes and structures to ensure sustainability.

Assumptions

Engaging community structures alone is not sufficient in achieving sustainable social reintegration. But the investment in the community structures through capacity building

which may entail training and having the necessary tools will enhance the functionality of the community structures to promote sustainable social reintegration of formerly demobilised children.

No single structure is sufficient for enhancement of social reintegration of demobilised children. A blend of structures will deliver sustainable social reintegration. This entails working with structures that existed before reintegration, those formed during reintegration and positive networks formed by children during and after the war.

Positioning reintegration services as standalone services for post war recovery programmes has led to lack of a systematised institutional framework for response at national and lower levels of government. Social reintegration structures are not main streamed within the structures of government.

Respondents:

Focus Group Discussions

1. Community leaders (CWCs, women groups)
2. Children's Club members

Key Informant Interviews

1. NGO officials, UN agencies involved in DDRR,
2. Government officials (county and National level), NCDDRR
3. Former demobilised children (in independent living, living with parents, living with Peers, heading households, child mothers, child commanders)

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A: COMMUNITY LEADERS (CHILD WELFARE COMMUNITIES, WOMEN GROUPS AND CHILDREN'S CLUBS)

Establishment of community structures

1. What types of structures exist in the community? What structures existed before the current ones were formed?
2. How were these structures formed?
3. Who are the members of these structures? How diverse is the presentation?
4. What roles do the structures play?
5. How have these roles changed over time?
6. What is the coverage of these structures? How close are they to the lowest administrative unit?
7. What is the relationship of the structures with external groups? (Probe: NGOs)
8. How is the structure viewed by other members of the community?

Functionality of the structures

9. How often do the community structures have meetings?
10. When do they meet (day, time of the day?)
11. What rules govern the community structures? Are they documented?
12. Who formulated these rules?

Linkage of community structures with other structures

13. How do the different structures in the community relate to each other?
14. How do the structures relate to the community members?
15. How do the structures relate to government institutions?

16. What are those things that create cohesion and commitment for the community led structures?

17. What information is shared with other planning/administrative structures of government?

18. Who are the others actors that use the community structures in their work?

Reintegration services /Programmes

19. What was the nature of demobilisation in your community (official, self-demobilisation?)

20. What programmes exist/existed for demobilised children in your community for each of the category above? What are those programmes that are community initiated and supported?

21. How is/was the community involved in these programmes? (Planning, implementing, monitoring & evaluation)

22. How best can the community be involved in the programmes?

23. What training was provided to the community to implement these programmes?

24. (Type, frequency, content)

25. How adequate were the programmes in contributing to their reintegration.

26. How the DDRR did programmes support children who demobilised themselves and decided to remain outside a formal DDR?

27. What was done well during the reintegration process of formerly demobilised children during the DD and RR?

28. What could have been done better to improve the services for children during the DDRR process? (Probe: At government level, community level)

29. What communication message was given to the community?

Capacity building programmes

30. What types of training have the community structures received?

31. How often community structures are monitored by the NGO, local government officials.

32. What tools have been developed for the community structures to do its work? (Probe: training materials, monitoring tools)

33. What tools are there for community structures to enable them support reintegration programmes for children.

34. How are the community structures advocating for child vulnerability in general.

Sustainability

35. How can community structures that work with children be sustained.

36. How can they be made to function better?

Link with other social networks

37. How do the children relate to their former commanders?

38. How do they relate to their peers?

39. How has the community used the social links developed by the children to enhance their social reintegration? (Probe: before & after)

40. What opportunities existed in the community for children's social interaction?

B: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS

i) BOYS FORMERLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE FIGHTING FORCES

Information about yourself

1. Where are you from? (District, county)
2. How old are you now?
3. How old were you when you joined/got involved with the fighting groups
4. Were you going to school at the time you joined the fighting groups?
5. If you were going to school in which class, were you then?

Information about your family

6. Who were you living with before joining the armed forces?
7. Are your parents living? Who of your parents are you staying with?
8. What was your relationship with your family/groups?

Involvement with the fighting groups

9. How did you get involved with armed groups?
10. What time did you spend with armed groups?
11. How many other children were with you in the fighting?
12. What was their? (Number: boys & girls)
13. What was your role in the in armed group? (Probe: any leadership role)
14. What are some of the worst experiences you had while with the armed conflict?

Relationship with other people

15. What was your relationship with other children?

16.   What was your relationship with the girls in the group?

17. What was your relationship with the commanders in the armed group?

Returning to the community

18.   How did you leave the armed group? (Probe: Escaped, Demobilised)

19.   Demobilised - which organisation received you? How long did you take at the cantonment sites/transit centres and what can you mention was good during the demobilisation process?

20.   What do you think about the demobilisation process?

21.   What threats did you have upon return?

22.   How were you received by your family, community, friends on return?

23.   What reintegration Services did you receive? (Probe: Education, skills training)

24.   Did you receive any psycho-social support on return or in the community?

25.   What are you doing currently (going to school, doing business)?

26.   What should be done to help you reintegrate totally?

27.   What relationship do you have with other children who were in the fighting forces?

28.   What relationship do you have with community members?

29.   What is the relationship with your former commanders?

Post-reintegration support

30.   What help do you still get from the community or members of your family

31.   What type social relationships do you have you with your peers in the community?

32.   What type of support do you require to be settling in the community?

ii)   GIRLS FORMERLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE FIGHTING FORCES

Information about yourself

1.   Where are you from? (District, county)
2.   How old are you now?
3.   How old were you when you joined/got involved with the fighting groups
4.   Were you going to school at the time you joined the fighting groups?
5.   If you were going to school in which class were you then?

Information about your family

6.   Who were you living with before joining the armed forces?
7.   Are your parents alive? Who of your parents are you staying with?
8.   What was your relationship with your family/groups?

Involvement with the fighting groups

9.   How old were you when you joined the fighting groups
10.   Were you going to school at the time you joined the fighting groups?
11.   How did you get involved with armed groups?
12.   What time did you spend with armed groups?
13.   How many other children were with you in the fighting?
14.   What was their Number (boys & girls?)
15.   What was your role in the armed group? (Probe: any leadership role)
16.   What are some of the worst experiences you had while with the armed conflict?

Relationship with others

17.   What was your relationship with the commanders in the armed group?

18. What was your relationship with the girls& boys in the group?

19. What was your relationship with the commanders in the armed group?

20. What was the role of other girls in the armed group?

21. How were they treated?

Abuse against girls

22. What was the nature of abuse directed towards yourself and other girls?

23. How many girls in your group were married to adult fighter/commander?

24. Do you know where these girls are today? If yes, what are they doing?

25. What is the relationship between the girls and the former fighters/commanders today?

26. Are there any recurring effects of abuse, which happened to you during the fighting that you experience today?

27. Who and where is the father of your child?

Return to the community

28. How did you leave the armed group? (Probe: Escaped, Demobilised)

29. Demobilised- which organisation received you? How long did you take at the cantonment sites/transit centres, what you can mention was good during the demobilisation process.

30. What do you think about the demobilisation process?

31. What threats did you have upon return?

32. How many of your former colleagues in the armed conflict demobilised formerly?

33. How many of your former colleagues in the armed group never came forward for formal demobilisation?

34. How were you received by your family, community, friends on return?

35. What reintegration Services did you receive? (Probe: Education, skills training)

36. Did you receive any psycho-social support on return or in the community?

37. What are you doing currently (going to school, doing business)?

38. Whom are you staying with? Who are your former colleagues (girls) staying with currently?

39. What difference is noticeable between the girls and boys who formally demobilised and those that never demobilised?

Post-reintegration support

40. What help do you still get from the community or members of your family

41. What type social relationships do you have you with your peers in the community?

42. What relationship do you have with other children who were in the fighting forces?

43. What is the relationship with your former commanders?

44. What should be done to help you reintegrate totally?

45. What relationship do you have with community members?

iii) UN, NGO & GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Establishment of community structures

1. What structures did you work with during the DDRR?

2. What structures existed before the ones you formed?

3. How were these structures formed?

4. Who are the members of these structures? How diverse is the presentation?

5. What roles do the structures play?

6. How have these roles changed over time?

7. What is the coverage of these structures? How close are they to the lowest administrative unit?

8. What is the relationship of the structures with external groups? (Probe: NGOs)

9. How is the structure viewed by other members of the community?

Functionality of the structures

10. How often do the community structures have meetings?
11. When do they meet (day, time of the day?)
12. What rules govern the community structures? Are they documented?
13. Who formulated these rules?

Link of community structures with other structures

14. How do the different structures in the community relate to each other?
15. How do the structures relate to the community members?
16. How do the structures relate to government institutions?
17. What are those things that create cohesion and commitment for the community led structures?
18. What information is shared with the structures, your organisation and other planning/administrative structures of government?
19. Apart from your organisation, who are the others actors who use the community structures in their work?

Reintegration services /Programmes

20. What programmes of the DD were you involved in?
21. What programmes of the RR were you involved in?
22. How have these programmes contributed to reintegration of formerly demobilised children?
23. What programmes targeted girls & boys who were left out of the formal DD process?
24. How was the community involved in your programmes? (Planning, implementation, monitoring & evaluation)
25. How best can community involvement be enhanced in your programming?

26. Were there community initiated programmes in your project area to support the DDRR?

27. What was done by your organisation during the reintegration process of formerly demobilised children during the DD and RR?

28. What could have been done better to improve the services for children during the DDRR process? (Probe: At government level, community level)

29. What communication message was given to the community?

Capacity building programmes

30. What training did you provide to the community to implement these programmes? (Type, frequency, content?).

31. What type of training did your staff receive to implement DDRR programmes?

32. How effective were the training in supporting them to do their work?

33. How often do you monitor community structures?

34. What monitoring tools do you have for community structures?

35. What tools have your organisation developed for the community structures to do its work? (Probe: training materials, monitoring tools)

36. How can community structures be empowered to advocate for child vulnerability in general.

Sustainability

37. What mechanisms did your organisation put in place to ensure sustainability of the support to the former demobilised children?

38. What mechanism did your put in place to ensure the functionality of the community structures after your programmes?

Link with other social networks

39.   To what extent did your organisation explore working with other informal structures in the community and those formed by children during and after the war?

40.   What relationship do the children you worked with have with their former commanders?

41.   How have the communities supported children to fully integrate in your community?

42.   What are some of the peer support programmes that your organisation has supported?

43.   What opportunities existed in the community for children's social interaction?

Post-reintegration support

44.   What post-reintegration support does your organisation/institution continue to offer?

45.   What are some of the lessons that you have learned overtime that could enhance the post-reintegration support.

46.   How is the reintegration programme linked to the government planning frameworks for post-war reconstruction?