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Social Capital Made Explicit: The Role of Norms, Networks, and Trust in Reintegrating Ex-Combatants and Peacebuilding in Liberia

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Abstract

Processes for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) are a fundamental component in peacebuilding. While disarmament can be relatively straightforward, reintegration is more complex and has varying degrees of success. Economic factors tend to be the focus, neglecting social reintegration in its fullest sense. This article draws on two sets of related field research data (collected in 2007, 2010 and 2011) in Liberia to highlight the role of social capital in shaping DDR outcomes. This is an important factor in the reintegration of ex-combatants, in terms of establishing and testing norms, engaging social networks, and building relationships and trust. These components of social capital are directly influenced by the reintegration experience, and in turn have a significant role in translating reintegration into peacebuilding. In addition, building on pre-existing social structures such as family connections, religious or community groups, and trading networks can in fact contribute to successful reintegration. When DDR initiatives fail, these structures are often the only way an ex-combatant has of reintegrating.

Keywords: social capital, reintegration, DDR, networks, peacebuilding, ex-combatants, Liberia

Introduction

The function of programmes for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants after a conflict can be understood in minimalist terms, focussing largely on the immediate security concerns of providing fighters with incentives and keeping them busy. It may also be seen in maximalist terms, where the main impact is its contribution to the longer-term social and political recovery and reconstruction of the society, and ultimately its

development.[1] The mechanisms through which the last part of this process – reintegration – supports peacebuilding have not been fully explored, even though the *raison d'etre* of the programmes is their contribution to this wider peace process.

The argument made in this article – based on extensive interviews, a survey, and focus group discussions with male and female ex-combatants in Liberia – is that social capital is an essential factor in the processes of reintegration. Social capital (whose various definitions are explored in more detail later) generally involves networks within society, norms, and especially trust, to enable collective action. Since reintegration (and peacebuilding) are essentially about rebuilding relationships, ways of working together, and a new social contract in the aftermath of war, trying to analyse reintegration without reference to social capital means that a fundamental part of the dynamic will be overlooked. Besides specific outputs such as training or livelihoods, social capital is important in explaining the longer-term outcome of social reintegration, which is more difficult to measure directly. The relationship between social capital and reintegration is theorised here as being significant but complex, in that it includes a feedback channel. Where a DDR programme increases social capital, this feedback loop can in turn help to enhance the reintegration process itself.

The relationship operates in two ways: firstly, existing social capital influences the way in which reintegration initiatives are perceived and how they operate. Ex-combatants' trust in outside interventions, in the various DDR agencies, and in the general community is a factor in how the initiatives are perceived. If there is little trust in the first place, a programme has to do much more to establish its credibility among ex-combatants and communities, who may have good reasons to be wary of those in authority. The norms which exist in the immediate post-war environment also have a bearing on both immediate and long-term effects of reintegration. How communities feel about ex-combatants, and the level of individual responsibility they bear (especially when it comes to those who were children) has a significant impact on the outcomes, as do the attitudes of the former combatants themselves to their roles in the past and in post-war society.

The remaining aspect relates to networks: like other elements of social capital at the end of a war, these are very much in flux, and affect how the vocational training, education, livelihoods, and social reintegration of ex-combatants proceeds. The networks and bonds between ex-combatants can in fact ease the process of reintegration, especially where there is a perception of stigma. Separately, the strength and nature of the networks and relationships linking ex-combatants and the receiving communities are fundamental to how the process will unfold, and the degree to which social reintegration and ultimately acceptance or even reconciliation may emerge. Social capital is an important factor in how reintegration progresses (or not).

Secondly, DDR and reintegration programmes specifically come with their own particular norms, networks, and requirement for trust, and also have significant potential to affect the

[1] The minimalist-maximalist spectrum is discussed in Kingma and Muggah, 'Critical Issues in DDR'; *Cartagena Contribution to DDR*; Muggah, 'Reflections on DDR'; Muggah, 'Critical Perspective on DDR'; and Muggah, 'Emperor's Clothes'.

level of social capital in these post-war environments. The programmes come with implied or explicit norms about moving on from past roles and helping ex-combatants to become useful, accepted members of society. The children's reintegration programmes in particular can emphasise to them that responsibility for what happened lies with their commanders. In terms of networks, one of the aims of DDR can be to disrupt the networks and the links with commanders, so that combatants cannot easily be remobilised. In trying create new roles for fighters – as students or potential workers with useful skills – their relationships with the community are being remade. At the level of trust, also, reintegration has significant potential to build or destroy ex-combatants' trust in government, the international community, and implementing agencies, depending on whether they feel the programme delivered on what they understood was promised. A programme which they feel did not keep its part of the DDR 'deal', by failing to deliver on specifics or leaving them in poverty with no useable skills, can profoundly affect trust and belief in the 'new dispensation' which is supposed to be created at this pivotal post-war moment.

The two-way nature of these causal relationships – in which social capital influences reintegration while reintegration itself can build or undermine social capital – does make it more difficult to explore how the processes operate. However, it is still possible to do this with careful and appropriate use of mixed methods and case studies. There are differences in timescales, which can help to separate them, and also distinct elements within social capital. While the complexity of the relationship may be unwelcome for researchers hoping for simple answers, it actually highlights the importance of the issue: reintegration programmes which undermine social capital are far from self-sustaining, while those which build the existing social capital can be much more effective in terms of the ultimate goals of DDR.

It is essential to be aware that social capital is not being built from scratch in a post-war situation. Many elements of pre-conflict social capital will endure in some form. During the course of the war, these may have been damaged or transformed, while entirely new networks, norms and indeed trust may be built up as dictated by opportunity, survival or circumstances.[2] Whatever its origin or nature, the issue is how social capital interacts with the processes involved in reintegration.

Evolution of DDR as a concept

In its traditional form, DDR involves combatants voluntarily surrendering weapons, being issued with an identity card, and receiving some basic supports such as new clothing and reorientation in a demobilization camp. The process of creating a new identity and breaking up the command structure begins here, along with preparation for a new role in society through reintegration. The UN definition of reintegration describes it as a wide-ranging social and economic process through which ex-combatants gain civilian status and a livelihood. It has 'an open timeframe, primarily taking place in communities at the local level' and is part of the development of a country.[3] The ex-combatant chooses between training for a vocational

[2] The concept of 'conflict capital' (social capital created under conditions of violent conflict) is described by Cheng, 'Private and public interests', 70.

[3] UN Secretary-General, 'DDR', 8.

trade which they select, such as tailoring, hairdressing, or construction; support in setting up a small enterprise; or a return to formal education.[4] Children entering the demobilization camp are diverted into a separate programme with greater psychosocial support, where the emphasis is on negotiating a safe return to their community or family, along with support for education.

There has been growing recognition of the need to tailor DDR programmes to each particular context, and pay greater attention to social aspects of the programme.[5] The idea of 'second generation DDR' involves a wider range of options, to make programmes more responsive to the local context and to communities' input.[6] The ambitious nature of the process, the range of actors involved, and the difficult post-war environment should be borne in mind when critiquing how DDR has been implemented. It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of a long-term project such as reintegration, especially as there are few natural control groups for ex-combatants who did not go through reintegration and yet are not different in other respects as well. However, research from Burundi finds that those who went through reintegration had lower levels of poverty when compared with an equivalent group of ex-combatants, whose participation was prevented by exogenous factors.[7]

There is of course no guarantee that DDR will ensure the success of a peace process. Berdal describes 'an interplay, a subtle interaction, between the dynamics of a peace process' and how DDR is implemented.[8] In Mozambique (often regarded as one of the more successful programmes), DDR was described as having been 'critical in making the peace hold'.[9] DDR is of course not only linked to local recovery but to the wider peacebuilding project. The original conception of peacebuilding involved addressing underlying causes, preventing a relapse into war, and supporting local actors' ongoing peace process.[10] This conceptualisation of peacebuilding calls for social processes to be looked at alongside the political and economic aspects. Feminist scholars have also shown that the process is gendered, as women's perceptions of peace are often vastly different. Women are excluded from peace negotiations and other key aspects of the process, despite international policy shifts such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).[11]

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[4] Sometimes integration into state armed forces is an option. For a comprehensive overview of DDR see Knight, 'Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration'; for a review of early programmes see Rolston, 'Demobilization and Reintegration'.

[5] For example: Jennings, 'Struggle to Satisfy'; *Integrated DDR Standards*; Stockholm Initiative on DDR, 'Final Report'.

[6] Specht, 'Reintegration of Ex-Combatants'; UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 'Second Generation DDR'; Colletta and Muggah, 'Context matters'.

[7] Gilligan, Mvukiyehe and Samii, 'Reintegrating Rebels'.

[8] Berdal, *Disarmament and Demobilisation,* 73.

[9] Kingma, 'Impact of Demobilization', 241.

[10] For example, Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace*.

[11] Enloe, 'Feminist Thinking', 538; Pankhurst, 'Feminist Approach to Peace Building'; Anderlini, *Women at the Peace Table,* 10; Hudson, 'Gender Lens', 260.

The way in which DDR can frame ex-combatants primarily as a threat, without useful social capital of their own to contribute, can add to their stigmatisation.[12] This represents a missed opportunity. Alternatively, by seeing the ex-combatant as bringing a set of skills which can assist their reintegration, they can be encouraged to enhance their community and society. They should be seen as 'subjects' not as 'objects' by those running DDR programmes.[13]

Analyses exploring the evolution of post-war relationships are particularly relevant to this study. Utas and others have highlighted remarkably enduring networks of patronage, informal power, and personality-based alliances in West Africa which developed during war, and which persist after it. This valuable analysis exposes essential structures and dynamics within these post-war societies. With limited economic opportunities, and the distrust and stigma they face, ex-combatants may continue to function as a group for economic or other activities.[14] This underlines how DDR programmes do not deal with individual, atomised ex-combatants, but with groups of people in changing circumstances, who look to each other as well as wider networks, patrons, and 'big men' in the search for economic survival, status, and identity. Their situation calls for a relational analysis which goes beyond individual interests and perceptions.[15]

Social capital and reintegration

The term social capital has been used by many over the years, as noted by the author who is best known for exploring it, Robert Putnam. He defines it as 'features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions'.[16] In the various conceptualisations of social capital, the most significant aspects are relationships and trust. The concept has more recently been applied to peacebuilding,[17] including a proposed framework for understanding the way it can make a contribution.[18]

In the post-war context, the question is exactly whose interests are being promoted by this enhanced collective action, especially when there are understandable tensions between ex-combatants and the wider community. Positive normative overtones can be implicit in the term 'social capital'. It can also have negative aspects: a group can be enabled to act more effectively in its own interests, and against those of another group or society as a whole.[19] A useful distinction can be made between 'bonding' social capital (which strengthens the ties

[12] McMullin, 'Integration or Separation?'

[13] McEvoy and Shirlow, 'Re-Imagining DDR'.

[14] Maclay and Özerdem's study of ex-combatant youth in Liberia found that motorcycle unions were very important to ex-combatants for employment, peer support and membership of an association which helped them reconnect with civilian society. Maclay and Özerdem, ''Use' Them or 'Lose' Them', 353.

[15] Utas, 'Bigmanity'; Themnér, 'Former commanders'; Themnér, *Violence in Post-Conflict Societies.*

[16] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work,* 167.

[17] Cox, 'Dissent and militancy'; Micolta, 'FARC'.

[18] Paffenholz, 'Social capital in peacebuilding'.

[19] Nussio and Oppenheim, 'Anti-social capital'.

between *members* of a particular group) and 'bridging' social capital between *groups* (which is more likely to unite people across cleavages, and serve the community as a whole).[20] These are both forms of horizontal social capital, which define relationships among citizens and groups. (In contrast, vertical social capital describes relations between citizens and the state.) The sense in which social capital is used in this study is the more constructive type which helps to build social solidarity in general, rather than collective action by one group to advance its particular interests.

The concept has also been used to understand DDR by a limited number of authors. Social capital can make explicit some of the processes and factors which might otherwise remain unexamined, such as agency, power, and assumptions about others. The restoration of social capital is described by Colletta[21] as being one of the 'critical enabling conditions' for social reconstruction and sustainable development in the aftermath of war. The *Integrated DDR Standards* (IDDRS), which brought together many UN bodies to create a set of guidelines, notes there are several definitions of the term. Its own version refers to a particular 'set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that permit cooperation among them'.[22] Another conceptualisation pays more attention to the creation of networks and organizations:

> Shared norms, values, and social expectations, which are expressed through both behavior (such as trust and social engagement) and both formal and informal organizations (such as civic associations and social networks). Social capital is often treated as a property of civil society, but also may also describe the health of the relationship between society and the State.[23]

Social capital is also used to argue for a community-focused reintegration programme in Sierra Leone, on the basis that without such an approach that 'fosters new, and nurtures pre-existing, forms of social capital, ex-combatants will be less likely to secure sustainable livelihoods in post-conflict environments'.[24] Bowd has explored the interplay between social capital and social reintegration in a post-war environment, and how both of these can contribute to reconciliation and peacebuilding.[25]

Social capital highlights the role of reciprocity, especially where DDR is seen as a *quid pro quo.* This 'deal' can be kept or broken, with real consequences for ex-combatants' sense of ownership of reintegration and ultimately the whole peace process. DDR can be framed as a

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[20] Putnam, *Bowling alone.*

[21] Colletta, 'World Bank', 212.

[22] *Integrated DDR Standards,* 23.

[23] *Cartagena Contribution to DDR,* 5.

[24] Leff, 'Social Capital and Reintegration', 14. For a detailed examination of social reintegration and DDR see Özerdem, 'A re-conceptualisation'.

[25] Bowd, 'Burning Bridges and Breaking Bonds'. He notes that the strengthening of bridging social capital in particular can offset the strong bonding capital within those groups which were antagonistic to each other.

'new social contract' between the ex-combatants, the government, and international community.[26]

The purpose of this study therefore is to look at how social capital interacts with the processes of reintegration. To what extent is social capital a factor in how reintegration proceeds, and in how reintegration can ultimately contribute to peacebuilding? Social capital can be seen at the individual, community, and national levels of reintegration, where ownership, political buy-in and civic trust are all manifested in particular ways. The key elements of norms, networks and trust are all involved. These are drawn from the Putnam definition, and analysed individually. Norms are created, adapted, and reinvented in the process – both those made explicit in the model for a post-war society, and the 'real' ones which participants infer from the way this translates into practice. Networks of various kinds are also affected, and contribute to the way interests, power, and patronage are mediated. The underlying issue of civic trust is also built or diminished by the reality of how reintegration proceeds. Again, this operates in a variety of relationships, including trust between ex-combatants and receiving communities, or between citizens and those with state authority. The fundamental reality is that reintegration involves a rebuilding and reframing of relationships within society, and social capital is an essential way of analysing this process.

This study's particular contribution is that it disaggregates the elements within social capital and uses them to analyse reintegration in detail with the use of original data from West Africa, and provides a space for the voices of those most affected. It not only explores the ways in which social capital is a factor in how reintegration proceeds, it points to how social capital might explain the relationship between reintegration and the wider peace process. A successful DDR programme does not have a direct linear relationship with peacebuilding, as there are other variables, and indeed interactions between these factors. The link can be affected by the trust and norms which develop (or are undermined) during reintegration. Exposing these processes in both reintegration and its link to peacebuilding provides a framework for future research, and has specific policy implications.

Methodology

This research utilises a case study approach focusing on reintegration in Liberia. Although the generic term is DDR, the programme in this country was called Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (DDRR), and this abbreviation will be used for the Liberian context in this article.

The study is based on two datasets. The first was collected in 2007 and 2010 using a mixed methods approach, including five focus groups (two of them all-female) and a survey with 95 ex-combatants in several locations. These included the capital, Monrovia, as well as semi-rural and rural areas in Bong and Lofa counties (Voinjama, Gbarnga, Lawalazu and Zorzor). Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with community members, and international, national, and local agencies involved in DDRR. Purposive sampling, including snowballing, was used in these locations to find participants for all the data collection. The focus groups

[26] Knight and Özerdem, 'Guns, camps and cash', 504.

and surveys were conducted by Liberian researchers, under guidance from one of the authors. The second dataset was collected in 2010-11 using qualitative methods and focussed mainly on the views of women. Fifty-nine female ex-combatants were interviewed twice, and 12 focus groups conducted with female and male ex-combatants and community members.[27] The semi-structured interviews took place in eight locations in and around Monrovia and also a more rural location in Tubmanburg, Bomi County. A further 25 semi-structured interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, including a number of local women's groups.[28] The data collection team was headed by one of the authors and consisted of two local female researchers from a Liberian NGO, the National Ex-Combatant Peacebuilding Initiative (NEPI). Another member from NEPI arranged the interviewees within the communities selected. Table 1 shows a summary of the research participants.

First Data Set (2007, 2010)	
Survey	95 ex-combatants (male and female)
Focus Groups	5 (including two all-female)
Key Informant Interviews	20
Second Data Set (2010, 2011)	
Interviews	59 ex-combatants (female)
Focus Groups	8 (female ex-combatants) 2 (male ex-combatants) 2 (community members)
Key Informant Interviews	25

Table 1: Data gathering in Liberia for this study

Liberia was selected as an appropriate case for several reasons. By the time the programme was designed, there had been a decade or so of DDRR initiatives. Practices were developed based on experiences in earlier programmes, especially neighbouring Sierra Leone. As a result, the programme had a stronger reintegration element, which was largely completed by the time the data were collected. Furthermore, there was a gender mainstreaming mandate.

The DDRR programme was extensive and had two phases: disarmament and demobilization from December 2003 to November 2004, and reintegration and rehabilitation from November 2004 to June 2008. A small supplementary reintegration programme[29] was added from July 2008 to April 2009 for 7,000 people who had not received reintegration assistance in the

[27] The focus groups took place in Monrovia, Red Light, Amagashi, Bannersville, Buzzi Quarter, Logan Town, Tumatu, Duala, Waterside, and Tubmanburg.

[28] While the second dataset focused primarily on female ex-combatants, it is beyond the scope of this article to conduct a full gender analysis. For an account of gender mainstreaming of DDRR see Basini, 'Gender mainstreaming unraveled'.

[29] This was the 'Reintegration Assistance to the Liberian DDRR Residual Caseloads', or the residual caseload program, for short.

original DDRR.[30] In all, 102,193 people entered the programme, though a proportion of these were not ex-combatants.[31]

The programme was run by the National Commission for DDRR (NCDDRR), and included the warring factions as well as the government. The Joint Implementation Unit (JIU) looked after delivery of the programme, with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) taking responsibility for disarmament and demobilization. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) organized rehabilitation and reintegration with assistance from national and international agencies. Once the fighters had handed over any weapons and registered, they passed into one of eight demobilization cantonments for approximately five days where they received basic supports, food, health screening, and civic education/counselling. From here they were given a reinsertion package offering immediate practical support, and returned to the community of their choice while waiting for their reintegration options of formal education or vocational skills training.

Limitations on the generalizability of this study arise from the sampling methodology. Perfect random sampling was not possible within the constraints of the study, however the interviews, focus group discussions, and the survey were deliberately carried out in a variety of different urban and rural locations. The range of different participants is shown in Table 2, indicating an appropriate mixture of ages, fighting groups, and genders, when to figures for the DDRR programme as a whole.[32] The main discrepancy is that those under 18 at the time of demobilization are over-represented in the survey sample. Those describing themselves as ordinary combatants came to 79 per cent, with the remainder saying their rank was the equivalent of an officer.

[30] Tamagnini and Krafft, 'Strategic approaches to reintegration'.

[31] These non-combatants who entered DDR were termed proxy cases and resulted from relaxed entry restrictions in 2004. They were not in fact entitled to take part.

[32] Figures for the DDRR programme as a whole are given by Escola de Cultura de Pau, *DDR 2008,* 121–2.

	Survey		*DDRR programme*
	Number	%	%
Gender			
Female	28	*29%*	*24%*
Male	67	*71%*	*76%*
Age at DDR			
Child	29	*32%*	*11%*
Adult	62	*68%*	
Fighting group			
LURD	34	*36%*	*33%*
MODEL	5	*5%*	*13%*
Govt of Liberia or other	56	*59%*	*54%*

Table 2: Breakdown of participants in survey, compared with the DDRR programme as a whole.

In terms of operationalization of the key concepts of norms, trust, and networks, most of the data which is relevant for this study is qualitative in nature, and was gathered originally to understand better the ex-combatants' experience of the reintegration programmes and their social relations. However, social capital and its elements emerged quickly as an essential concept. In most cases the qualitative data was reviewed and analysed for references to these concepts, rather than attempting to operationalize them directly. In fact, several survey questions did relate directly to relationships, trust, and other elements in social capital. These included one asking how they felt their community looked on ex-combatants, whether they faced problems being accepted, and dealings with the community during resettlement.

Findings from Liberian data

Trust in the programme

Analysis of the relationship between reintegration and social capital is based on the key themes of trust, norms, and networks. Trust is a defining feature of social capital, and it arises in several ways in DDRR. Disarmament itself involves an act of faith: voluntary surrender of weapons, in return for short-term assistance and a return to education or vocational training. The discrepancies between what they expected from the programme – especially the ability to earn a living – and the results leads to trust being undermined. Further on, the process of social reintegration also involves building trust with the communities where they were to reintegrate. These relate to vertical and horizontal social capital respectively.

Trust can therefore be built or undermined by the way a programme is perceived to have 'delivered' on the 'deal' of DDRR. It is important to note that this perception can arise because of heightened expectations, which may be caused by poor communication, impressions created by those who were not implementing the programme (such as commanders), or shared beliefs in the social imagination of ex-combatants. Discrepancies

between expectations and outcomes may arise because of communication problems, or because of shortcomings in how it was implemented. Providing jobs after vocational training was beyond the scope of the programme, but was often understood to have been part of the deal. Many ex-combatants mentioned their belief that a workshop would be set up after training so they could make a living together from their new skills. At its worst, the disappointment was expressed in terms of the programme having been a deliberate deception, by implementers who had lied or cheated.

The complaints about shortcomings included non-payment of stipends during training, problems with the training itself, failure in some cases to provide toolkits to enable them start practising their trade, or not provided the certificates to prove they had completed the training. These problems came up repeatedly in the focus group discussions:

> People said they were going to open a [work]shop where they can group us and work, and you know, to gain money for ourselves that we won't be a waste to the community. But it was not done, it was just a saying, and did not come to reality.[33]

> Yes, it was explained to [us], but it was not implemented.[34]

> Some received money, and some did not. Even those that received money did not get their tool kits. They didn't get their certificates, and you know, those are things that would qualify you tomorrow, that will show you have gone through the process, and also to show that you are a graduate.[35]

For some, it was not simply that the programme had failed to deliver; it was seen as deception:

> Some of it was lies because what they told us, some was true, some was not true. They told us that during the training we would be given soap money [stipend]. As for me, the place I took my training, they didn't give a cent for soap money.[36]

The ex-combatants also had problems regarding start-up toolkits or graduation certificates. Without them, they felt they could not find work or start their own small business. While the toolkits had practical importance, comments about the certificates underlined their symbolic value, as proof that they were taking on a new role in society and overcoming the stigma of being a combatant. They were clearly a means of building horizontal social capital with the local community.

[33] Participant 2, Focus Group H, Gbarnga.

[34] Unidentified participant, Focus Group J, Lawalazu, Lofa County.

[35] Participant 3, Focus Group J, Lawalazu.

[36] Participant 4, Focus Group K, Lawalazu.

> (…) they did not give us a certificate, they did not give us nothing. They promised to bring the certificate but they never brought it.[37]

> I will not tell you that I have been trained... there is nothing to show like a certificate. I think they just came to fool us in the bush.[38]

> The people told us that when we go through the nine months' training and graduate, we will be able to get benefit which included machine to start life. But after I went through the process I never got anything, I felt bad.[39]

Many female ex-combatants also felt their specific needs were not met, with few options for childcare or opportunities to repeat the vocational training if they became ill or pregnant. Some felt they had wasted their time, because of these issues. This is surprising given the specific mandate to gender mainstream the programme by the UN. However, this gender mainstreaming was more successful in the disarmament and demobilization stages, and where resources are constrained, the gender elements resulted in tokenistic efforts rather than attending to broader structural gender inequality issues.[40]

The perception of having been given false information – which was backed up with specific details – has a marked impact on how people perceive the way this new post-war Liberia will operate. It is particularly potent when it is seen as being the result of deliberate deception, rather than simply a failure of the programme to deliver effectively. This is why perceived shortcomings of the programme are significant for the whole peacebuilding process, when seen through the lens of trust and social capital. People very quickly infer what the 'real' rules of the game are, as opposed to the official discourse about the new Liberia. It can be argued that the disaffection and disillusionment felt towards those running the programme could be transferred towards the new governance arrangements.[41] Söderström found that ex-combatants felt disappointed three years after the 2005 elections that once again there had been evidence of corruption through vote buying, and that their expectations were unfulfilled, resulting in feelings of abandonment. This could be seen as mirroring some of the disappointment with reintegration.

Corruption

Trust was also undermined when it comes to perceptions of corruption, especially when benefits were seen to be retained by those implementing DDRR, or were given to others who were not ex-combatants. The issue of corruption came up repeatedly in the survey, focus groups, and interviews. This was spontaneous, and had not been prompted in any way, yet it generated strong feelings. It was not simply a matter of resources being diverted or not meeting expectations. There was a strong sense of unfairness and inequity.

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[37] Participant 6, Tubmanberg, Bomi County.

[38] Participant 3, Focus Group J, Lawalazu.

[39] Focus Group, main programme, Tubmanberg.

[40] Basini, 'Gender mainstreaming unraveled', 552.

[41] Here we refer to governance of the state in general, rather than specific institutions like UNMIL or the NCDDR.

Allegations of corruption extended to other ex-combatants. Some commanders were said to have collected weapons which were then given to non-combatants so they could gain entry to the DDRR programme, in return for a share of the benefits. Children and women could easily be excluded in this way, as highlighted by one female ex-combatant:

> Then some of our commanders took our arms and gave them to civilians who went to disarm, and gave them the money. That was what they were doing. ... They liked money business. ... Because of that, most of us did not disarm. Plenty of us [were] left behind.[42]

The salience of the issue is clear from open-ended questions in the survey. Ex-combatants were asked what they would *avoid* doing, if running a DDR programme themselves. Categories summarizing these answers were created, and the responses were placed in as many of the categories as applied. The results in Table 3 show that the most frequent behaviour they would avoid related to corruption and theft, followed by issues of false expectations and truthfulness.

Corruption and theft by programme implementers	25
Creating false expectations	18
False promises, lying	13
Short duration of training	12
Excluding ex-combatants from benefits	11
Other	10
Unqualified trainers, poor training	6
Preventing people from expressing views	5
Ignoring people's views	4

Table 3: What ex-combatants would avoid doing, if they were running a DDR programme

In the category of corruption and theft, examples of what they would avoid doing included 'corruption and theft by programme implementers' and 'I would avoid corruption' (a phrase used by five different survey respondents). Lying or the creation of false expectations was the second most significant category for this survey question. The responses included 'false information' and 'lying to people, false impression'. In the data from the final phase of the programme – referred to as the residual caseload – a number of female ex-combatants said there was clear evidence of corruption around vocational skills training. Some women described how trainers did not turn up, or sold off the equipment:

> They said there were no tools for us. They [the trainers] had machines but the people used to bring trucks and take them to Monrovia. After the training Ellen [the president] called all the things that were made in the programme to

[42] Participant 7, Focus Group M, Monrovia.

> the pavilion for people to buy in an exhibition. They gave the money to the head but they stole the money from the goods that were sold.[43]

> They didn't give it [tools] to us. I am sure that the funds came to the people who were controlling the centre but they didn't give it to us.[44]

It is important to note that this is not simply ex-combatants making generalized complaints in order to maximize benefits when talking to outsiders. The key issue was the breach of trust, rather than the amount of the stipend they received during training. In the first set of focus groups, the transcripts were coded in detail for problems with stipends. The issues of non-payment, reduced amounts, and delays in payment were all mentioned. However, although a 'node' was created for complaints about the *amount* of the stipend (around US$30 a month), the issue was never raised. This means the criticisms cannot simply be explained away as inflated expectations or a desire to extract additional benefits. It was about the sense of broken promises and a breach of trust, all of which has a significant impact on the rebuilding of social capital.

Trust in the community

Turning to the trust involved in social reintegration, rebuilding this aspect of people's relationships with the wider community (as opposed to those implementing the programme) is a key factor in the whole process. A number of approaches were taken by the ex-combatants. For example, there was some evidence that the ex-combatants spoke positively of joining community-based organizations:

> People trust me. Sometimes, you know, even in the house I am living in they call me the second landlord. I collect the rent. Even in the community organization, I am the treasurer. I am a spokeslady in the community.[45]

The importance of rebuilding relationships with the community and the role of trust, especially when so many suffered at the hands of armed groups, is reflected in the stigma which endures. In the survey, nearly two thirds said they felt the community looked at ex-combatants 'with acceptance' (64%). However, a quarter said they were regarded 'with fear' (27%) or with anger (11%). An attitude of being 'watchful or distrustful' was attributed to the community by 40% of those surveyed. Most of the survey group (72%) were not in the same community as where they lived before joining their faction. This can of course be for economic or other reasons, given the large-scale displacement and move towards urban areas. It is also consistent with ex-combatants seeking a new beginning where their past is not known. The processes at work are suggested by responses to another survey question about contacts with the community before settling there. Those who had a chance to talk to the community and found it useful were asked why it was helpful. Their open-ended responses were subsequently categorized, indicating that acceptance, trust, or forgiveness were the most frequently-mentioned aspects, as shown in Table 4.

[43] Participant 12, Tubmanberg.

[44] Participant 2, location 4, Monrovia.

[45] Participant 11, Tubmanberg.

Acceptance, trust or forgiveness	8
So they knew I had changed	6
For me to get information about resettling or reintegration	4
Living in peace together	2
Other	2

Table 4: Why it had been useful for ex-combatants to talk to the receiving community before settling there

Those responses in the category of 'Acceptance, trust or forgiveness' included being promised protection and acceptance by the community; that people accepted them as a friend or brother; and because they were forgiven for bad things the combatants had done. Receiving a certificate after training (or not), and of having a trade they could practice with pride, had a significance far beyond having an income. It relates to their self-image, identity, and being seen to have a productive role in society transcending the stigmatized label of 'ex-combatant'. Some felt that being poorly trained as builders, they would do an unsatisfactory job and end up in trouble. This undermined their sense of self-worth and attempt to create a post-war identity:

> For someone to even trust you, it was hard. [For community members] to even call you to say, I have a job, it was hard. Because they feel that, if you go [and] work for them, you [will] likely harm them, so we just learn and just sit down, nothing doing.[46]

Trust is also a two-way process, with both ex-combatants and the receiving communities exploring how much they can trust each other. These issues of rehabilitation, and having a role in the new Liberia, are directly related to horizontal social capital, and its function in whether reintegration ultimately makes a contribution to peacebuilding.

Norms

In the aftermath of armed conflict, societal norms become significant for rebuilding relationships and ways of living together. For ex-combatants, these norms can be useful to facilitate reintegration at many levels, and can help create social capital. One way in which a norm is created during reintegration is the question of governance: more representative and accountable institutions, which do not exclude significant sections of society, are supposed to be an answer for state failure and the alienation felt by many, which often helped to create the enabling environment for war in the first place. Peacebuilding by definition includes augmenting the capacity to settle conflicts without resorting to violence, which touches on norms of governance. Not all norms, of course, contribute to reintegration: some may constrain or marginalise particular groups, along lines of gender or youth, for example. This has to be borne in mind, in the same way that bonding social capital may benefit a particular group rather than the community as a whole.

[46] Focus group H, Gbarnga.

The creation of a new social contract – which included norms and values – was encouraged systematically in DDRR, with clear expectations about ex-combatants changing their behaviour. It relates to both vertical social capital, in terms of how the state and the citizens relate to each other, and also horizontal social capital – especially bridging social capital between ex-combatants and the receiving communities. As one female ex-combatant explained, behavioural norms were promoted:

> The counselling process taught us how to conduct ourselves in the community, whenever we heard about some things we should mind our business and avoid getting involved in gossip and live in the community with good conduct.[47]

Their support structures were able to advise them on appropriate behaviour and promote them as a 'reformed character'. Many women also engaged in a type of personal reform which helped them to conform to social expectations. Simply being polite, respectful and neighbourly helped to improve others' perceptions of them. Women spoke of proving they had changed by conforming to 'traditional female behaviours' such as subservience and humbleness. The difficulty with such personal reform is that it is highly gendered, but in many cases these women simply wanted to forget about their time fighting and resume a peaceful existence. They were prepared to embrace pre-war gender norms and power relations, despite the strong women's movement and changes in gender laws.[48]

Similarly, taking cues from the community, or through joining a religious group was mentioned frequently by interviewees. Christian beliefs allow ex-combatants to attribute their actions during war to Satan, and 'rebirth' within Christianity can afford greater social acceptance:

> Yes, for now they trust me. Because I am a born again Christian and they see me going to services on Sunday and all of the activities at church I am part of them.[49]

The importance of demonstrating that they had undergone personal change also featured in the survey responses. When asked why talking to the community before moving there had been important, the issue of personal transformation was in fact the second-most frequent type of response, as illustrated by these examples:

> Because since I talked to them they got to know I am a changed person
>
> For them to know my transformation.[50]

[47] Focus group, main programme, Tubmanberg.

[48] There were some examples of women who were contesting these social norms however most expressed the view that they were glad that they had more rights now.

[49] Participant 1, location 1, Monrovia.

[50] Selected responses to question H5 in survey.

These changes in behaviour showed the community that they were serious about reintegration and wanted to embrace societal norms to fit in. Furthermore, it had the effect of widening support structures beyond family and friends, and provided a new status and identity. These were powerful motivators for change.

Networks

Networks are a key element in social capital, and also arise in a number of respects in social reintegration. The first of these is the networks of ex-combatants themselves. In several cases the ex-combatants still associated with each other. In the second dataset, most said they did not help each other out, as they wanted to move away from the associations and their lives during the war. However, in a small number of cases, factional support was used for daily existence. For example, a friend from the conflict brought the ex-combatant to live with her family, who helped her to train in hair dressing:

> I fought with her. After the war she found her people. We were close in the war so I followed her and lived with her parents. She is my sister now. I watched one woman through her and learned to fix hair and I lived with her until I found work and made a shop to fix hair.[51]

Also, a female ex-commander she said that every night she fed at least one or two of the women who had been under her command. Networks are also perpetuated by former commanders or 'Big Men', and the networks can be used to further their political or economic agenda. Former combatants who are used to working collectively can be employed by these Big Men to provide personal security, to form a political force, and for economic ventures.[52]

For ordinary ex-combatants, social networks were also significant for their reintegration. These networks included family members, partners, their ethnic group, faction, sponsor, religious group, and friends. In all, 78.5 per cent of female ex-combatants in the second dataset who completed DDRR said they found it easy to reintegrate. They frequently used their social networks to navigate the post-war environment and help foster trust and counter stigma, by having their networks vouch for them.[53]These networks provided economic support while they waited for their reintegration training or education. However, family assistance extended beyond finance, often providing women with options for emotional and medical assistance:

> My husband died and I was suffering. I could not pay school fees. Since then I [*am*] alright. My family people put their hands around me and helped me so my living conditions are alright.[54]

[51] Participant 1, location 10, Monrovia.

[52] Themnér, 'Former commanders'; Utas, 'Bigmanity'.

[53] 90.5 per cent said that they felt trusted by the community. This mirrors comparable studies with ex-combatant women: Annan et al., 'Civil war in northern Uganda'; Pugel, 'What the Fighters Say'.

[54] Participant 14, Tubmanberg.

In focus group discussions with community members, acceptance by family members was explained this way:

> Really at the beginning everybody were afraid but…we have to accept them because they are our brothers, they are our sons, they are our nieces and nephews.[55]

Therefore, the importance of networks for successful reintegration is clear, as they can help to foster social cohesion. Those without such networks found it more difficult to successfully reintegrate, and often experienced more stigma. Women with no networks often found reintegration challenging, especially with the extra responsibilities of childcare:

> As for me, I can't lie to you. I'm on the streets now because my mother is not around here, I don't have a stable place. Anywhere night grabs me, I sleep there [*I sleep wherever I find myself when night falls*].[56]

Overall, the building and repairing of social networks supported reintegration, despite the stigma, fears and trauma suffered during the war. Despite the problems with reintegration, ex-combatants were in fact generally very positive about DDRR in principle. Their complaint was with *how* it was run, rather than the fundamental idea. They were keen to suggest specific improvements – many of these relating to trust, communication, and ownership. Even more positive was their advice for someone entering a DDR programme. They frequently said that participants should take it seriously, attend all the training, and try to get the most from the opportunity. This underlines the importance of DDRR as a bridge to a new identity and role in society. Research in other contexts shows the possibility of genuine local ownership of the process, often through innovation and initiatives by the community itself.[57]

Discussion of Findings

The data presented here show that the key elements of social capital – norms, networks, and trust – arise repeatedly in the microdynamics of the reintegration process, and are significant factors in how it proceeds. At the same time, they are themselves a product of how DDR was experienced by both ex-combatants and the wider community. This experience may have been very different than what was intended, especially when reintegration programmes did not go smoothly in the post-war environment, or when expectations or communication were problematic. This applies particularly to the question of trust, and when expectations were not met. Furthermore, the way ex-combatants speak about their relationships with the community, and their identity and role in the post-war society being formed, is very revealing. This is particularly relevant in the context of stigma and resentment, and the uncertain role for female ex-combatants in the social imagination. Social capital as a whole (and not just its parts) is intimately bound up with the dynamic process of how relationships are formed and changed. The hopes, fears, and frustrations highlighted in this case study are in no way unique to

[55] Focus group, community, location 1, Monrovia.

[56] Focus Group, WAFF, Monrovia, Feb. 2010.

[57] Kilroy, *Reintegration of Ex-Combatants,* 196.

Liberia, which suggests that these findings may be generalizable to reintegration programmes as a whole. It is worth returning to the UN definition of social reintegration as an open-ended process which mainly happens locally and within communities, rather than in a training workshop or a camp.[58] It should be noted that social capital is relevant to both reintegration programmes on paper, and also how they are carried out in practice.

This article therefore proposes a refinement of the existing theory on reintegration, by identifying social capital as an essential factor in shaping how the process unfolds, while also being a product of reintegration. By making explicit this process of evolving societal relationships, we can attempt to look inside the 'black box' containing the causal mechanisms which are assumed to be at work. Assumptions about what lies inside this box are too often left implicit and unexamined. A 'theory of change' is required, to help explain how 'inputs' like a reintegration programme are supposed to lead to 'outcomes' like a more stable post-war environment. While it might be tempting to posit social capital as simply a cause of effective reintegration, or as a dependent variable, the reality is that it is both. We are dealing with causal complexity. But that fact does not make social capital any less relevant, and the potential for a feedback loop actually underlines its potency.

This does not just apply to whether and how reintegration achieves its immediate goals: it is now argued that social capital is significant for how DDR programmes contribute to the peace process as a whole. It is one of the ways in which reintegration can be seen to relate to accountability, inclusive governance, and other classic elements in peacebuilding. The aims of peacebuilding – whether locally-owned or not – are to address underlying causes, build capacity to deal with conflict in non-violent ways, and avoid a return to war. DDR can help to change the conflict dynamic, while reintegration can make a contribution to the overall peace process. But there is not a simple, linear relationship between reintegration and peacebuilding. One of the key elements in mediating how it can help (or undermine) the rebuilding of relations is social capital. Due to the complex causal environment and multitude of other variables, it is difficult to test this hypothesis. However, as a starting point, the least which can be said is that social capital is a significant tool for analyzing how reintegration and peace processes are connected.

Conclusions

This research has explored the ways social capital is a factor in how reintegration proceeds, and ultimately contributes to peacebuilding. Using Putnam's definition of social capital, it exposes how trust, norms, and networks have influenced the reintegration experience of ex-combatants in Liberia. It is helpful in analyzing these processes and mediating the relationship between reintegration and peacebuilding. The degree of trust ex-combatants have in the programme can have an impact on their perceptions of how the country is being rebuilt. If they felt the DDRR programme was corrupt, that they had been lied to, and their expectations were not met, it is argued that they are less likely to have confidence in the new state. Poor governance, exclusion, and state capture by elites helped to create the conditions for war in Liberia in the first place. Similarly, the trust which ex-combatants experienced within the

[58] UN Secretary-General, 'DDR', 8.

receiving communities was significant for building peaceful relations. The new norms or social contract being built in Liberia in the post-war period were also significant for reintegration. Ex-combatants also used networks (an essential part of social capital) to aid their reintegration, through economic and social support. Using the classic definition of social capital, the 'collective action' which these networks and trust facilitate is in fact the task of reintegration and peacebuilding, where the capacity to deal with future conflict in non-violent ways is increased, underlying issues are addressed, and the risk of reverting to war is reduced.[59]

There are very real challenges in implementing a complex programme like DDR in volatile post-war environments, and it is easy to make facile assessments from afar. As emphasised by the ex-combatants, reintegration should not be dismissed as a whole. What is proposed here instead is a more developed, relationship-based conception of DDR, consistent with what has variously been termed integrated, holistic, or transformative reintegration.[60] The transformation is not just for individual ex-combatants, for the communities they settle in, or society as a whole: what matters also is that relationships *between* and *within* these groups are also transformed. Such a reintegration process prioritizes relationships, self-image, trauma, and the role of citizens in post-war society. It recognizes gender and youth inclusion, since exclusion can arise or be replicated unintentionally. This conceptualisation explicitly works towards the broader goal of facilitating the long-term project of peacebuilding. It cannot ensure success on its own, of course, but it supports the creation of Galtung's 'positive peace'.[61] It aims (at the very least) not to undermine the difficult and important processes of transitional justice which may be getting underway. Elements of such reintegration may be found in positive practices in a number of locations, and future research can identify and assess these using the framework provided by social capital and the model proposed in this article.

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[59] Definition of peacebuilding as proposed by Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace,* 22.

[60] Transformative reintegration is described by Jennings, 'Struggle to Satisfy'.

[61] Galtung, *Peace by peaceful means,* 31–3.

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