



Milbank

**POLICY PLANNING CASE STUDY  
DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION, AND  
REINTEGRATION REFLECTIONS: LESSONS  
LEARNED FROM LIBERIA**

Prepared by the

**Public International Law & Policy Group**

**and**

**Milbank LLP**

December 2022

**POLICY PLANNING CASE STUDY**  
**DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION, AND REINTEGRATION REFLECTIONS: LESSONS**  
**LEARNED FROM LIBERIA**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Militarized Issues</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Reintegration of Ex-Combatants</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Rehabilitation of Vulnerable Groups</i>	<i>6</i>
<b>Roles and Implementation</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Lessons Learned</b>	<b>8</b>

## **Introduction**

This document has been developed out of a conversation with PILPG Senior Peace Fellow Axel Addy and is one in a series of expert interviews on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration processes with military and policy experts. These disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration case studies are part of a range of work products produced by the PILPG Security Sector Reform Policy Planning Ukraine Working Group. The full range of work product and more information about the Working Group is available [here](#).

Axel Addy is a PILPG Senior Peace Fellow who brings decades of insights into post-conflict reconstruction from his experiences advising the National Transitional Government after the conflicts in Liberia. Mr. Addy also served as the former Minister of Commerce and Industry of Liberia and was Chief Negotiator of Liberia's historic accession to the World Trade Organization. In 2018, former President of Liberia and Nobel Laureate Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf granted Mr. Addy one of the highest national honors of distinction, inducting him as a Grand Commander, Order of the Start of Africa, Grand Order of the Most Venerable Order of the Knighthood of the Pioneers of the Republic of Liberia.

Set out below is a summary of the key points that emerged from a discussion with Axel Addy on his reflections of the DDR process in Liberia. Mr. Addy's experiences in Liberia prove valuable in identifying areas that will require particular attention as Ukraine moves ahead with rebuilding post-war. The document is not a verbatim account but draws upon the insights of Axel Addy's experiences to highlight important reflections and lessons learned from the Liberian DDR process and potential takeaways for Ukraine.

## **Background**

Liberia endured two civil wars over a span of 14 years. The First Liberian Civil War began in 1989 and concluded in 1996 and the Second Liberian Civil War began in 1999 and concluded in 2003. An estimated 250,000 individuals lost their lives and thousands of Liberians were displaced internally, across the region, and internationally due to the conflict.

The Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement was the final peace agreement in the Second Liberian Civil War. The Agreement called for the establishment of a post-war two-year transitional government, the National Transitional Government

of Liberia. After the Agreement was signed in 2003 and the transitional government was formed, the new political institution of the Transitional Government brought parties together to work towards the 2005 election process. Part of that process led to the election of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and initiated the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (“DDR”) process in Liberia. The United Nations Secretary, the Special Representative of the Secretary General, the U.S. military, and local implementing partners, were all involved in various components of the DDR process.

## **Militarized Issues**

The conflict in Liberia began in 1989 with the invasion of Liberia by rebel forces led by the National Patriotic Front. The National Patriotic Front splintered into the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, led by Charles Taylor, and the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia, led by Prince Johnson. Charles Taylor and Prince Johnson, the heads of the two warring factions, were initially united but eventually split. The Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia had been formed through a surge of support and with the ultimate goal of removing Charles Taylor from power.

The fighting between the groups continued with the overarching interest in removing then-President Samuel K. Doe, who had attained power in Liberia through a coup and had overthrown the government in 1980. Concurrently, additional warring factions were created with their own leaders, prompting several varied conflicts between these groups.

At this point, the Economic Community of West African States (“ECOWAS”) intervened and brokered a ceasefire that led to the previously agreed elections. In 1997, Charles Taylor was elected into power and his party, the National Patriotic Party of Liberia, became the ruling party. Immediately after the election, a second civil war broke out, composed of warring factions and the Liberian government led by Charles Taylor, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, and the military army that transitioned into the Armed Forces of Liberia. Fighting was primarily against two major warring factions, Liberia United for Reconciliation and Democracy (“LURD”), led by Sekou Damate Conneh, and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (“MODEL”), led by Thomas Yaya Nimley. Fighting between these organizations and the government continued for another four years, until Charles Taylor’s resignation in August 2003, following international pressure and intervention. Charles Taylor fled to Nigeria, and the warring factions met in Ghana to negotiate a peace accord and ceasefire.

## **Objectives**

*“The biggest success in any Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration program is when a country does not go back to war in the first decade.”*

Objectives of DDR in Liberia included disarming and demobilizing over 100,000 people. The Armed Forces of Liberia was dissolved as part of this process, and a new military was created by the United States military.

The DDR process in Liberia sought to provide basic life skills training to ex-combatants. Retraining was offered by vocational training providers, teaching former fighters to take on jobs in construction, vehicle maintenance or other skilled occupations. The economic dimension was important. There had to be efforts to support the transition of former combatants into opportunities in the civilian economy to sustain these individuals after the fighting had concluded. Planning for these economic components of reintegration as part of a DDR was necessary to ensure retrained individuals did not become mercenaries or guns for hire, whether domestically or internationally. In some instances, this required offering incentives such as immunity from prosecution:

*“The key is to identify the economic interests of these stakeholders, these actors, and make them an offer that is hard to refuse.”*

Mr. Addy also considers community infrastructure, like libraries and education systems, an important priority for DDR, as well as an inclusive disarmament process that clearly communicates and incentivizes disarmament.

The related security sector reform process, implemented with the involvement of the National Police, involved improving law enforcement, building police capacity, and providing necessary equipment, hardware and training for the National Police to maintain the rule of law.

## **Stakeholders**

There were certain stakeholders who were involved in the DDR process as transition partners but also as beneficiaries of the DDR process' initiatives.

### *Reintegration of Ex-Combatants*

The transition of ex-combatants into a post-war society was one of the complexities of DDR in Liberia. Those involved in designing and implementing the process were tasked with providing reintegration assistance but struggled to

identify the best course of action. It is difficult to determine what form of assistance can be provided to military personnel who were part of former fighting forces. Some Liberians were sent abroad for training so that they were physically separated from the conflict zone, but 99% of the training was carried out locally.

Mr. Addy recommends a whole-of-government approach to DDR in this context, as the economic pillar is equally important as the demobilization aspect. Many of the initiatives in Liberia centred around job skills training, vocational training, and job placements for ex-combatants. It would be useful to have other government institutions involved in this process, such as the Ministry of Education, in procuring school furnishings, and implementing apprenticeships and training in particular sectors.

The networks between stakeholders are also important in terms of implementing DDR programs, so that targets for demobilization can be identified and the different stages of the process can be carried out seamlessly.

#### *Rehabilitation of Vulnerable Groups*

Many other groups faced trauma in the aftermath of the civil wars in Liberia. These groups included the elderly, the disabled, and those who suffer from mental health conditions. Many suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. There simply were not enough monetary and institutional resources, nor human capacity, to address the needs of all victims that endured trauma. Many ex-combatants, and particularly child soldiers, were vulnerable to developing post-traumatic stress disorder or associated traumas. The shock of losing everything, and the need to start their lives once more, contributed greatly to the civilian experiences in the post-war reintegration process.

Gender-based violence also had a devastating effect in Liberia during the years of conflict, and continues to this day. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission had been set up to tackle some of the decades-long issues that affect women who were subjected to wartime violence. There was also a Ministry of Gender, but possessed limited resources at the time.

### **Roles and Implementation**

Regional involvement in the conflict in Liberia first came through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), when the entity's intervention brokered the first pause to the civil war before Liberia fell back into conflict.

In a subsequent effort to broker a peace in 2003, the actors involved in the war came together in Ghana to negotiate a ceasefire with the government of Liberia, the Armed Forces of Liberia, and the various other warring factions. Mr. Addy served as one of the advisors to the reintegration process at this time. The negotiations produced the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which aimed to provide certain benchmarks, provide new transition arrangements within the structure of the transitional government, and initiate a DDR process within Liberia.

An interim government was subsequently created. Within this established government, each party had some form of representation so as to minimize the dominance of any one particular faction. The head of the Labour Action Party, Gyude Bryan, was selected as Chairman of the Transitional Government, and Wesley Johnson was selected to serve as Vice-Chairman. It was this Transitional Government that led Liberia through its DDR process. In 2005, an elected government took its place under the leadership of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

The Transitional Government set up an entity called the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration, which was chaired by Gyude Bryant. This structure worked with partners to implement a comprehensive framework for a DDR process. A Trust Fund was also established and its management was within the purview of the United Nations Development Program. The Transitional Government worked with the United Nations Development Program and local implementing partners to manage the Reintegration and Rehabilitation process.

Mr. Addy worked in this commission as one of the consultant advisors. His role involved looking at ways of improving the monitoring of implementing partners in order to support the transition process of ex-combatants into employment, training, social skills development, and ultimately, back into society. Mr. Addy's involvement included monitoring the reintegration assistance package that came with this process, as well as monitoring the implementation of training programs by local partners to ensure that they met target benchmarks and provided the necessary skills to transition ex-combatants.

In the related and interconnected process of security sector reform (SSR), the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Liberian interim government, and the United States worked together to reform and transition the police and military. The efforts of this SSR process included re-training and recruiting the armed forces and police, as well as providing both hardware and software to instill the rule of law. There were also efforts to reform the military by

transitioning the former Armed Forces of Liberia and building a new military force.

## **Outcomes**

The ability of the different warring parties in Liberia to come together in Ghana, agree to a ceasefire, and enter into a peace accord, was the first step toward a years-long process of rebuilding Liberia's political institutions. One of the successes of the ceasefire agreement was the full participation of all the warring factions in the interim arrangement and incentivizing the establishment of the Trust Fund to fund the DDR process.

When the Armed Forces of Liberia was dissolved as part of the demobilization process, a new military was created by the United States. To this day, there remain challenges in Liberia to provide sufficient assistance to former members of the military who were not supported in a clear transition to economic opportunities following the fighting. Furthermore, individuals who were internally displaced had to slowly become a part of their communities once more. Others were able to build new lives in the new communities that accepted them. Many had to restart their lives entirely. One especially difficult experience of reintegration concerned child soldiers, who faced additional challenges to reintegrate into society as normal citizens.

The process of dissolution also required plans for managing the previous military's weaponry. A program for demilitarization by way of weapons collections was established, although it was not heavily funded.

## **Lessons Learned**

Mr. Addy expects the reintegration and rehabilitation of Ukraine to be much more complicated than in Liberia. Ukraine is a country that is defending state territory, and is united as a country against a common enemy. With the complex layers of politics and the dynamics of power in Russia, it is almost impossible to predict any potential outcomes of this war. It will also be difficult to anticipate how Ukraine will react as a state once the common enemy disappears.

In Liberia, diplomats were able to negotiate a ceasefire in what could be considered a win-win situation. However, the reason that Liberia's conflict continued for so long was that the different warring factions continuously broke the peace agreements. In Ukraine, there have been massive losses and parties will have to find a way to safely reach a diplomatic solution that results in an enduring



ceasefire. If there is not sufficient thought given to structuring the peace and transition process, a state can easily be faced with domestic challenges.

The elements of the power relationship between the existing government in Ukraine and the many militia groups operating within Ukraine's borders, are a particular challenge. The post-war government will need to consider new arrangements to incorporate these factions into Ukraine's new post-war reality, and find ways to ensure that war and instability within Ukraine does not become commonplace, as it did in Liberia following the failed peace talks.

The widespread proliferation of arms is a commonality shared between the conflicts in Ukraine and Liberia. In Ukraine, the weaponry is highly sophisticated. There will be a great financial burden involved in collecting and disposing of such sophisticated arms, not to mention containing hazardous materials in war zones such as Zaporizhzhia. Without a strong incentive, whether economic or otherwise, there is a high risk that demilitarization will fail as people choose not to partake in the process should it not serve their economic interests. There is a very real risk that some of the weapons from the conflict in Ukraine will be sold on the black market and enter into other states. Such new socio-economic realities come as part of a ceasefire, as there will be some factions within the country that may not be entirely receptive to a peace process if they do not see the immediate economic benefit of that process.

In Ukraine, the military is stable and organized in that the fighters on the front lines report to generals who supervise them. It is through these pre-existing hierarchies that the transfer of arms can be implemented and documented through the official channels of the military. Mr. Addy cautions, however, that this process should be inclusive and carried out fairly. Demobilized individuals should be provided with economic incentives to participate to safeguard against their leaving to fight as mercenaries in other conflict zones.

Empowering a lead agency that works directly on women's issues would also be beneficial in Ukraine, given how the displacement of women and children has carved a division in society that will impact the psychological and social development of the post-war society.

Any movement towards external engagement as part of a DDR process, such as through the European Union or NATO, must be secondary to domestic issues. There is much attention from the global community on Ukraine at present, but Mr. Addy warns of waning engagement and the shifting of relief funding to other conflict zones as the world moves forward. Any DDR process that is designed for

this transition has to be sensitive to local complexities and make sure that it is inclusive of all stakeholders, whether local or abroad.