Does a more participatory approach to reintegrating ex-combatants lead to better outcomes? Evidence from Sierra Leone and Liberia

Walt Kilroy
Institute for International Conflict Resolution and Reconstruction,
Dublin City University

Email: walt.kilroy@dcu.ie
School of Law and Government
Dublin City University, Ireland

This is the Accepted Manuscript for the article published in *Conflict, Security and Development*. Full citation and link to published version:

Kilroy, Walt (2014), 'Does a more participatory approach to reintegrating ex-combatants lead to better outcomes? Evidence from Sierra Leone and Liberia', *Conflict, Security & Development*, 14:3, pp 275-308. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2014.923151

Abstract

Programmes for the Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants are intended to support the peace process in which they are embedded. Yet their outcomes are not always clear. Calls for a more holistic approach with greater local ownership have often been made, but can be difficult to implement. This study of DDR in Sierra Leone and Liberia applies the concept of 'participation', which means genuinely involving intended beneficiaries in the process. It is based on semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders, and a survey and focus group discussions with ex-combatants. There is little indication of a participatory approach: ex-combatants reported serious problems with information, consultation, and input to decision-making. However, where greater participation is seen, there are statistically significant associations with better outcomes in terms of work, economic status, and community relations. The data illustrate how post-war social capital can be built up—or undermined—by the degree to which reintegration processes were participatory. Participation, social capital, and loss of faith in the process are seen to be significant in the way DDR can contribute to the wider peace process.

Peace agreements and ceasefires may be signed, but whether they hold is another question. Rather than being single events, they are embedded in a peace process, which often begins long before any signatures are added, and can continue even longer afterwards. Supporting this process, with all the scaffolding required for social, political, institutional and physical reconstruction, is what we now know as peacebuilding. And a key component in that task is dealing with the combatants who took part in the armed conflict, and whose existence and actions can contribute to the peace process or undermine it. Programmes for the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants have therefore come to be regarded as an essential part of the peacebuilder's toolkit. They have quite properly been described by the UN as often being 'at the nexus of peacekeeping, post-conflict peacebuilding and development'.[1]

[1] UN Secretary-General, 'Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration', 8.

Attempts to measure the immediate results of DDR have shown mixed results. Some studies indicate real benefits for those ex-combatants who took part in reintegration programmes, in terms of their social and economic well-being, for example in Liberia.[2] Others have failed to measure any significant benefit in Sierra Leone,[3] or have highlighted significant difficulties in trying to bring about social and economic reintegration,[4] especially for women. One of the difficulties with reintegration programmes is that they interact with a wide range of issues, from security sector reform[5] and transitional justice,[6] to political and economic reconstruction. Sometimes the boundaries and lines of responsibility are not clear. The need for a holistic, integrated approach has long been recognised.[7] However, putting this into practice remains a challenge.

DDR programmes come in a variety of forms, and some do not actually use the title. According to the review[8] of the 22 programmes underway in 2006, about a third come under the authority of national bodies, though nearly all rely on international funding. Most (16) include specific programmes for children. There are many obstacles to implementing a programme effectively, including security concerns, and lack of infrastructure or capacity in the immediate post-war environment. There may be an understandable desire to show quick results and 'keep the ex-combatants busy' at a time when tensions or spoilers could destabilise an agreement. There is a wide range of actors with different interests, from large international agencies and organised armed groups to disempowered communities or struggling national ministries. Perhaps the greatest problems have been the exclusion of girls and women,[9] and the question of ex-combatants failing to find livelihoods after they have gone through reintegration. This is hardly surprising, given the context of extreme poverty and economic disruption which may be associated with war; whether all ex-combatants[10] have found gainful employment is not a measure of success for a DDR programme, especially if the majority of civilians are similarly unemployed.

We are now at a point where the experience of DDR as a component within peacebuilding can be usefully assessed. More recently, 'second generation DDR' (sometimes known as '2GDDR') has been discussed, in which some of the lessons from earlier years have been applied.[11] This includes more flexibility in programming, and greater ownership by stakeholders. DDR can be seen as one of several initiatives among a broader range of stabilisation options.[12] The development of best practice and 'lessons learned' has generally recognised the importance of a sense of inclusion by the community and ex-combatants.[13] As part of this

[2] Pugel, *What the Fighters Say*.

[3] Humphreys and Weinstein, 'Demobilization and Reintegration'.

[4] Jennings, 'The Struggle to Satisfy'.

[5] Nathan, *No Ownership, No Commitment*.

[6] Cutter Patel, 'Transitional Justice and DDR'.

[7] Berdal, *Disarmament, and Demobilisation*; Colletta et al., *Transition from War to Peace*; Muggah, 'No Magic Bullet'; Özerdem, *Postwar recovery; Integrated DDR Standards*.

[8] Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Analysis of DDR programs*.

[9] Specht, *Red Shoes*; de Watteville, *Addressing Gender in DDR*; Bouta, *Gender and DDR*; and Brett and Specht, *Young Soldiers*.

[10] The term "ex-combatant" is used to mean all those who were associated with armed forces or fighting groups. It is not limited to those who actually fought, carried a weapon, or had a gun to ensure their entry to a DDR programme. It therefore covers those whose roles included cooks, porters, intelligence gatherers, and "bush wives" who may have been subjected to forced marriage with combatants or commanders. Also, for the sake of simplicity, the abbreviation "DDR" is used throughout this article to mean the programmes in general, even though it was known as DDRR in Liberia (where the additional "R" referred to "rehabilitation").

[11] UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, *Second Generation DDR*.

[12] Colletta and Muggah, 'Context matters: interim stabilisation'.

[13] UNDP, *Practice Note: DDR*; Stockholm Initiative on DDR, *Final Report;* CCDDR, 'The Cartagena Contribution to DDR'.

process, the UN's *Integrated DDR Standards* set out comprehensive guidelines, saying the process should be people-centred; flexible, transparent and accountable; nationally-owned; integrated; and well planned.[14]

What is participation and why does it matter?

Given the more sophisticated understanding of reintegration and the way it can relate to post-war reconstruction and development, it is appropriate to apply a concept from the discourse on development: participation. This signifies a great deal more than the act of simply taking part in something: it raises fundamental questions about the degree to which intended beneficiaries are consulted and involved in decision-making about projects. What is also fundamental to the idea of participation is that the power relationships involved in development are openly recognised. It covers the full project cycle, rather than just the implementation or monitoring phases: initiatives which are genuinely participatory require meaningful input and shared decision-making by all the stakeholders from the start of the project. Although this is frequently stated as an aspiration, it is rarely achieved. Where it is seen, it is generally in far more stable environments and communities that those found in the aftermath of war.

Since DDR is so closely intertwined with both peacebuilding and development, the concept of participation can be seen as helping to address some of the problems already noted in how reintegration programmes work out. These range from exclusion of certain groups, or resentment by communities where ex-combatants settle, to unintended outcomes, or short term results being followed by longer term disillusionment. Participatory DDR would, by definition, involve programming which is more relevant to stakeholders' needs, and it could also help to create the environment for better communication and reconciliation. Ultimately, it involves sharing decision-making and power, and is linked to the idea of local ownership. Yet the interaction between participation and DDR remains largely unexplored, with some exceptions.[15]

The concept of participation is more usually applied to communities which do not face the same challenges and instability found in the immediate aftermath of war. The way in which a reintegration programme might be participatory is different to a stable rural community with little population movement, for example. However the fundamentals remain the same, even though communication and shared decision-making apply to different kinds of programming. These aspects lie on a spectrum ranging from simply sharing information, to actually listening to the views of those affected, and ultimately the degree to which people have any input to important decisions. The accounts given by many ex-combatants indicate they had little sense of having much real input into the process. Participation may also be measured in terms of its opposites: perceptions about incorrect information (especially when seen as being the result of a deliberate strategy) are the very antithesis of a participatory approach. So is the corruption or diversion of resources. All our assessments, account must also be made for the operational circumstances, insecurity, expectations of stakeholders, communications problems, and impact of shortcomings in implementing the programme which was originally announced.

Although it has many manifestations, participation is most closely associated with Robert Chambers.[16] The idea is still sometimes regarded as an emerging and nebulous concept. This polyvalence can present a problem in the continuing debate: 'An infinitely malleable concept, "participation" can be used to evoke—and to signify—almost anything that involves people. As such, it can easily be reframed to meet almost any demand made of it. So many claims to "doing participation" are now made that the term has become mired in a morass of competing referents.'.[17]

[14] *Integrated DDR Standards*.

[15] Dzinesa, 'Participatory Approach to DDR'; Kilroy, 'From conflict to ownership: Sierra Leone'.

[16] Chambers, *Rural Development*; Chambers, *Whose reality counts?*

[17] Cornwall, 'Unpacking 'Participation'', 269.

The concept is not uncontested. Some authors see the term being used insincerely in a way which can amount to a new form of manipulation.[18] It is frequently questioned 'from within': the limitations, difficulties, and possibilities for tokenism are in fact highlighted and debated by those exploring how participation might be of use.[19]

These complexities have led to a number of authors developing scales or matrices to indicate the degree and nature of participation. One of these is Pretty's 'ladder of participation' which was built on earlier models and shows the range of possibilities on a seven-point scale, from manipulation by donors to self-realisation by communities.[20] His ladder is therefore used in this study as a way of analysing participation, as it effectively recognises the problems raised by critics of participation, and allows us to consider it as a matter of degree. His model is summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1. *Summary of Pretty's typology of participation (1995: 1252)*

Typology	Characteristics of each type
1. Manipulative participation	A pretence, where representatives (if any) have no power.
2. Passive participation	People are informed about decisions which have already been made, but their views are not sought.
3. Participation by consultation	There is consultation but there is no obligation to take these views on board. No sharing of decision-making.
4. Participation for material incentives	People contribute resources such as labour in return for material incentives, but have no stake in prolonging practices when the incentives end.
5. Functional participation	Participation helps to achieve project goals, especially reduced costs. Perhaps some shared decision-making, largely after major decisions have already been made by outsiders. May still only amount to co-option of local people for external goals.
6. Interactive participation	People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and building local institutions. Participation is seen as a right, not just the means to achieve project goals. More control over decisions and resources, so people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.
7. Self-mobilization	People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems. They engage with external institutions but retain control over resources allocation. This may or may not challenge existing distributions of wealth and power.

What is particularly useful about the ladder as an analytical tool is that it exposes key concepts that might otherwise be unexplored in aspirational language, and reveals the multidimensional nature of participation. This includes power (the exercise of which is more effective when it is hidden); power asymmetries; agency; communication and information-sharing; ownership; trust; and divergence of interests. The role of social capital in reintegration of ex-combatants is also relevant here, since the process ultimately involves rebuilding relationships in the context of peacebuilding. This has been usefully explored in relation to Rwanda.[21] Participation interacts with social capital, whose role in peacebuilding is increasingly recognised.[22] It can have a significant impact on the degree to which trust is rebuilt and norms are

[18] Cooke and Kothari, *Participation: the new tyranny?*

[19] Hickey and Mohan, *Participation: from tyranny to transformation?*; Kelly, 'Confrontations with Power'; Gaynor, *Transforming Participation?*; Edwards, 'The Irrelevance of Development Studies'.

[20] Pretty, 'Participatory Learning'.

[21] Bowd, *From Combatant to Civilian*.

[22] Cox, 'Reporting the greater odds'; Bowd, 'Burning Bridges and Breaking Bonds'; Paffenholz, 'Social capital in peacebuilding'*;* CCDDR, 'The Cartagena Contribution to DDR'.

established in the post-war dispensation, especially where exclusion and poor governance were at the root of the conflict.

The research question addressed in this research therefore is whether taking a more participatory approach has had any effect on the success of the reintegration programmes, using Sierra Leone and Liberia as case studies.

It may of course be asked whether there should be an enhanced, participatory DDR programme at all. Participation may be described not only in utilitarian terms, but as something which is intrinsically good, in the sense that empowerment and ownership brings benefits of a more fundamental nature to stakeholders who are more used to being treated as mere recipients. Some may ask whether ex-combatants therefore 'deserve' better treatment, given the reality of what happens during war. There is in fact some resentment in the wider community, where those who terrorised and abused civilians are seen as being 'rewarded' or given benefits which are not available to those who suffered at their hands. There are number of important points to make in response.

Firstly, it is indeed appropriate to make judgements about the overall nature of a fighting group or its leadership, some of whom undoubtedly preyed on the civilian population and committed appalling human rights abuses and war crimes. However, transferring this generalised assessment to every individual member of the group is a different matter entirely. Young men and women who found themselves within an armed group may have been there for a mixture of reasons—possibly including abduction, forced recruitment, or for survival. Even these various reasons are not correlated with degrees abuse: those who joined with the original intention of protecting their own community from attack may have gone on to carry out atrocities. Some of those involved were under 18 years old at the time, and are therefore regarded as children in the context of armed conflict, even if they are were young adults by the time of DDR.

Secondly, great care should be taken when applying the labels of 'victim' and 'perpetrator', especially at the level of a group of people. It is easy—and sometimes satisfying—to indulge in such judgements from afar after the event, with a degree of understandable moral outrage. In reality, these categories can be too simplistic; people may fall into both of them. Those who have first call on deciding which terms best apply to whom are the people and communities which emerge from the conflict, ideally in the fraught context of peacebuilding, transitional justice, accountability, and perhaps even reconciliation.

Thirdly, even if participation is seen as an intrinsic good which some 'deserve' more than others, it is not intended as a reward for ex-combatants. Besides its inherent value in terms of ownership or empowerment, this study points to its utilitarian value. A reintegration programme which is more participatory has better outcomes in terms of efficacy and impact. This has potential benefits for the whole community, given the possible risks posed by ex-combatants. As will be discussed, this is especially so when it comes to the way these outcomes (such as training or work) are translated into underpinning the peace process.

Having said this, there is always the potential for participatory processes to become a charade, and for stakeholders to learn how to adopt the required language and symbols in order to 'play the game' which donors want. Benefits can indeed be diverted by opportunists at many levels, as was noted by many ex-combatants interviewed for this study. Hence, participation must be dealt with as a matter of degree, measured using a tool such as the ladder of participation, distinguishing between a pretence and empowerment, and everything in between.

There are complex interactions and sometimes difficult choices when it comes to social reintegration, building civic trust, transitional justice, and reconciliation. Questions of ownership, timing, and sequencing arise, especially if these choices are understood to be part of a 'zero sum game'. The Cartagena Contribution to DDR offers some useful perspectives for framing these questions: 'Demobilized persons bear both rights and responsibilities in the reintegration process. They must be assured the opportunity to find a new place in

communal life, and supported in creating a peaceful livelihood. In return, they must commit to non-recidivism, truth-telling, submission to justice, and, where relevant, reparations.'[23] One of the things which ex-combatants can contribute to is the process of truth-recovery, in the context of transitional justice: they may have information which could help the relatives of those killed or abused during the conflict.

Methodology

The case studies for this research needed to be selected from programmes which effectively were completed some time ago, but recently enough that their impact was still apparent. Sierra Leone and Liberia were the most appropriate countries for a number of reasons. The wars they had endured for about a decade had ended in 2002 and 2003 respectively. They shared a number of useful similarities, quite apart from the fact that, as neighbours, their conflicts were related. One was the regional setting, which can affect arms flows and conflict dynamics. The other was the fact that both countries have enjoyed a reasonably secure environment and progress in post-war reconstruction, once final peace agreement was eventually reached. This meant that most of the DDR took place after the war had ended, in the context of peacebuilding and a gradually improving security environment.

In terms of chronology, it is also important that DDR took place after more than a decade of growing experience internationally of such programmes. While institutional memory is often lost and staff turnover can be high, the growing experience within this field and the development of best practice meant that a slowly-maturing version of DDR was being examined.

Background: Liberia

The enabling environment for the outbreak of armed conflict in both countries lies in their experience of poor governance, political and economic exclusion of large sections of the population, and growing state failure in terms of being able to provide even the most basic services for their citizens.[24] In the case of Sierra Leone in particular, the exploitation of diamonds was significant in prolonging the war, and also in creating the earlier conditions of state capture by elites, rather than being a fundamental cause.[25]

The war in Liberia started in late 1989, with an uprising by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) against the Samuel Doe regime. The number of factions multiplied, and the NPFL also became deeply involved in Sierra Leone's conflict. The first phase of the civil war came to an end in 1996 and Taylor was elected president the following year, but the war had resumed by 2000.[26] In the end military pressure by the two main rebel groups forced Taylor's hand, resulting in a final peace agreement and his resignation in August 2003. As usual, the highest price was paid by civilians: it is estimated that the war in Liberia had cost more than 200,000 lives, along with massive displacement.[27]

The main DDR programme in Liberia started prematurely, and inauspiciously. This is significant in underlining the dangers of outside agencies failing to accept advice from national actors. Under pressure to show results quickly, the disarmament phase began as early as December 2003, just months after the peace agreement was signed, despite warnings that this was too soon. Many more combatants turned up at the demobilisation centres than expected, leading to chaotic scenes and violence, and the programme was suspended within a few days. After consultations with the rebel groups, it was restarted the following

[23] CCDDR, 'The Cartagena Contribution to DDR', 54.

[24] Cleaver and Massey, 'Liberia: A Durable Peace?'; Ellis, *The mask of anarchy*; Olonisakin, 'Liberia'; Keen, *Conflict and collusion*.

[25] Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Witness to the Truth, Vol 1*.

[26] Bekoe, *Implementing peace agreements*.

[27] Olonisakin, 'Liberia'.

April.[28] In all, 102,193 people entered the programme, though a proportion of these were not in fact ex-combatants. A total of 27,804 weapons were collected, representing one for about every four people demobilised.[29] The programme cost an estimated US$160 million, which is considerably less than the annual budget for the peacekeeping operation in Liberia. Of those entering DDR, 10% were children (i.e. under 18 years of age), while 24% were women.[30]

Background: Sierra Leone

The armed conflict in Sierra Leone started in March 1991 with an incursion from Liberian territory by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), whose broadly democratic rhetoric was quickly replaced by financial motives.[31] It was backed by Liberia's Charles Taylor, and soon took control of half the country, especially the diamond mining areas.[32] Further armed actors included a defence militia, the weakened and compromised state security forces, and West African and (briefly) British peacekeeping or intervention missions. By the time RUF was eventually weakened and the war had ended in 2002, an estimated 50,000 people had lost their lives, and more than two million people had been displaced.[33]

After several earlier initiatives, DDR began in earnest in 2001 as the war was coming to an end. This phase lasted just over two years, accounting for most of the 72,500 people in total who went through demobilisation. The final figure was considerably more than originally estimated, and 9.4% were children. In all, 42,300 weapons were collected, representing 0.58 weapons per person demobilised. The cost of the programme is estimated to have been US$45.2 million.[34] Of those demobilised, 6.5% were women.[35]

The standard DDR programmes in both countries were written into the respective final peace agreements in basic terms. They consisted of combatants voluntarily entering the disarmament programme, usually at a designated camp or cantonment area, by handing in a weapon if they had one. Having a weapon and being able to demonstrate one could dismantle and reassemble it became significant as an 'entry price' to the programme. Women or children who were not in possession of a gun could of course be unintentionally excluded, and weapons were in some cases gathered up by commanders to be used to allow non-combatants into the programme.[36] A brief demobilisation process would take place in the camp, during which the ex-combatants were screened and there were and briefings about future options. Children were diverted to a separate programme in a different location, which involved a longer period of rehabilitation before most were returned to their community and fulltime education. Adult ex-combatants would choose where to resettle, with the option of formal education, or else vocational training in a trade of their choice (during which a stipend was paid).

The programmes came under a National Commission for DDR (or DDRR in the case of Liberia – the extra 'R' being rehabilitation). This brought political buy-in at a senior level, and the Commissions had their own national staff responsible for aspects of the programmes. The voluntary disarmament was handled by UN peacekeepers, after which ex-combatants moved to the demobilisation camps. Those disarming who were under 18 were diverted at this point into a separate programme for children. They had to be held in a separate part of the camp, and be off the site entirely within 72 hours. The separate programme for children involved much more consultation and sharing of decisions about the reintegration into the community.

[28] Paes, 'Challenges of DDR'.

[29] Nichols, 'Disarming Liberia'.

[30] Caramés Fisas and Luz, *Analysis of DDR programmes*.

[31] Hough, 'A study of peacekeeping'.

[32] Ofuatey-Kodjoe, 'Sierra Leone'.

[33] Solomon and Ginifer, *DDR in Sierra Leone*.

[34] Caramés Fisas and Luz, *Analysis of DDR programmes*.

[35] Solomon and Ginifer, *DDR in Sierra Leone*.

[36] Human Rights Watch, *Youth, poverty and blood*.

A number of national, local, and international agencies, NGOs, and enterprises were engaged to implement parts of the programme, especially the vocational training at a local level. The experiences which ex-combatants can vary, depending on the nature, local credibility, and professionalism of the organisation delivering the training. A number of organisations which delivered the vocational training in Sierra Leone were later brought in to the same job in Liberia, sometimes leading criticism of a 'cut and paste' approach which did not take full account of the Liberian context. In both countries, later 'catch up' initiatives to deal specifically with those not catered for by the main programme show signs of being more flexible and participatory.[37] The differences between the various implementing agencies, some of which had different approaches and organisational philosophies, is a complicating factor when attempting to measure the impact of how reintegration was carried. It introduces additional 'noise' which can mask the signal. For example, in some geographical regions an important role was played by national or local NGOs with credibility and experience of working with the communities. In others, newly-established entities with less experience took on important tasks like vocational training. International organisations too vary in terms of their understanding of participation, while child-centred agencies have their own philosophy. There were many actors involved, and sample sizes in this study were too small to disaggregate by implementing agency, but this would be worthwhile question for future research to pursue.

Field work

The field work for this study was carried out in Sierra Leone and Liberia in three periods of up to a month each in 2007–10 using mixed methods. Data was gathered in the capital cities, regional towns, and rural areas, ensuring a variety locations and population groups was covered. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a wide range of stakeholders, including ex-combatants, members of the communities where they settled, and those who had worked on implementing the DDR programme for local, national, state, and international agencies. Focus group discussions with ex-combatants in varying locations were also conducted (six in Sierra Leone and five in Liberia), two of which were all-female. The saturation point, when no new themes are seen to be emerging from repeated focus group discussions, came surprisingly quickly in both countries, and corresponded with other data gathering activities.

A questionnaire for ex-combatants was used in Sierra Leone (32 respondents) and Liberia (95 respondents). The snowball sampling methodology was used,[38] based on several initial introductions in each locality, ensuring various different entry points to the target population. This type of purposive sampling, with the help of introductions, is in fact appropriate where respondents may be initially reluctant to be identified or who might regard outsiders with some caution. [39] The overwhelming majority of those saying they had become officers during the war were male (Table 2), and a significant proportion of those surveyed are estimated to have been under 18 at the time of demobilisation (Table 3).

Table 2. *Rank and gender (both countries combined)*

	Male	Female	Total
Rank			
Ordinary combatant	61	22	83
Non-commissioned officer (equivalent)	8	1	9
Officer	22	1	23
Not recorded	6	6	12
Total	97	30	127

[37] Molloy, *A Shifting Paradigm*.

[38] Fink, *How to Sample in Surveys*.

[39] One complication in accessing the target population was a concern in some regions of Sierra Leone that outsiders asking questions about the conflict may be connected with criminal prosecutions. The Special Court for Sierra Leone has prosecuted leaders of both the main factions, leading to resentment and anxiety among some former members.

Table 3. *Those under 18 when demobilising, by country*

	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Total
Under 18 when entering DDR			
Adult	62	27	89
Child	29	3	32
Not recorded	4	2	6
Total	95	32	127

As an indication of how representative the survey sample in Liberia is, the proportions of sub-groups in the sample (by age, gender, and faction) have been compared with the figures for the total population who registered for DDR.[40] Table 4 below shows that the proportions for gender are similar; the survey sample appears to over-represent those who were children at the time of demobilisation; and membership of fighting groups matches some but not all factions.

Table 4. *Sub-groups within survey sample, compared with total figures for those who participated in DDR in Liberia*

	Survey sample		Total DDR population
	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 and AFL	56	59%	27%
Other	0	0%	27%

The survey contained questions identifying independent variables which reflect the degree to which a participatory approach was taken, such as information being received, consultation taking place, and having a say in how the programme was implemented. The first two independent variables were measured on a dichotomous scale, where respondents indicated Yes or No (with the possibility also of Don't Know):

- Was official advice was given about the reintegration programme
- Were the ex-combatants asked for their opinion

The remaining independent variables were measured on a Likert scale of between three and five points, resulting in ordinal scale data:

- To what extent reintegration was explained
- Whether the ex-combatants' views were listened to
- Did the organisers know the ex-combatants' needs

[40] As reported in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Analysis of DDR programs*, 121-122.

- Did anything the participants said have any effect on the programme
- Was enough information given
- Was it accurate

Dependent variables were operationalised in questions relating to employment, economic well-being, and relations with the community. Employment status was measured on a four-point scale (ranging from a full time job to no work at all), and they were also asked how many days they had worked for themselves or someone else in the last month. They were also asked to rank their own economic living conditions on a four-point scale. Social reintegration was assessed by asking ex-combatants how they felt they were seen by the community (selecting qualities from a list of suggestions), and coding these answers subsequently. Overall, these measures were aimed at assessing the degree and impact of participation, rather than repeating earlier assessments of the success of the reintegration programme as a whole.

Results

The degree to which the programmes were participatory is reported in detail elsewhere[41], and is not the main focus of this study, which looks instead at the effect of such an approach. In summary, there were significant problems with even the most elementary steps in taking a participatory approach, namely the provision of information. This relates to the very bottom rungs on the ladder of participation, and precedes any question of consultation or shared decision-making. The problems with information do not relate so much to the clarity or amount, which many felt was adequate in as far as it went, but with its perceived inaccuracy. The nature of this inaccuracy is important to consider, as it arises from the discrepancy between what was believed to have been promised, and what actually came about. This discrepancy can be due to incorrect information being given (deliberately or otherwise); to poor communication or unrealistic expectations; or because information given in good faith turned out to be inaccurate when programme implementation did not go according to plan. There were many actors, and those who explained the programme to ex-combatants were not always the same people who implemented it. However, faith in the process and a sense of ownership were seriously undermined by significant problems which ex-combatants saw with the information.

The discrepancy between what was understood to have been promised and what transpired was sometimes attributed by ex-combatants to deliberate deception, showing the depth of feeling involved. The opportunity provided by DDR to rebuild relationships and social capital can be seriously undermined by this experience. Ex-combatants learn from actions rather than words—or indeed the gap between them—about the nature of the new dispensation. The issue of corruption and misappropriation of benefits also was a major concern, which arose spontaneously throughout the data-gathering exercise without any prompting. It profoundly coloured the perception of many about how the 'rules of the game' would work.

A small proportion of the participants in the focus groups attributed problems of accuracy to lying or deceit:

> *Up to now we are in great darkness, so for that particular training I will not tell you that I have been trained. You have been trained, [but] there is nothing to show like a certificate. I think they just came to fool us in the bush.*[42]

That perceived deception was given a very blunt name by some:

[41] Kilroy, *From conflict to ownership: Sierra Leone and Liberia*.

[42] Participant 3, Focus Group J, Lawalazu, Lofa County, Liberia.

> *The people lied to us. The people lied.*[43]

> *So really the disarmament process did not go down well [with us], because they cheated us: what was meant for us was not given to us. But since we are lovers of peace, we do not have problems with it, we have forgotten about it.*[44]

The survey contained a number of open-ended questions, including some on how they would run a DDR programme themselves. There was much less focus on the specific benefits and outcomes of the programme, and instead a clear emphasis on the process itself and its integrity. When asked what they would avoid doing, corruption and theft surfaced as the main pre-occupation, although this had not been mentioned in any of the questions. The next most frequent category of response was that they would avoid false promises, lying, and creating expectations:

> *Do not create high hopes and expectations.*
>
> *Building up false hopes.*
>
> *Avoid empty promises.*
>
> *Lying to people, false impression.*
>
> *Making bogus promises.*
>
> *Avoid deceit.*[45]

While ex-combatants did not hold back when describing problems with DDR, they were strongly in favour of such a programme in principle. Some were in fact working in the trade for which they had been trained, such as tailoring or plumbing, and many others had returned to education with the support of the programme. Endeavouring to run a DDR programme in a participatory way presents many challenges, especially in a complex, fluid and difficult post-war environment such as Liberia and Sierra Leone: capacity constraints, population movement, security concerns, and pressure from donors all militate against it. There can also be understandable resentment in the wider community that ex-combatants are being 'favoured' by having a DDR programme, when the general population is not given the same opportunity for training or education.

Being heard

Moving a little higher up the ladder of participation, the matters of being consulted or actually having a say in the process again show a very negative view. The experiences reported by respondents to the survey in Sierra Leone were more negative than Liberia: substantial majorities in Sierra Leone said they had not been listened to, and that their opinion had not been asked. Further problems with participation—seen in both countries—emerge when it comes to ex-combatants' sense that those running the programme did not know their needs, and that views they expressed made no difference at all to the process. Substantial majorities in both countries were very negative on these questions.

The matter of shared decision-making shows a similarly negative perception. Respondents were asked if anything they said had had any effect on how things were done[46]. It should be noted that adult ex-combatants could choose between education and vocational training, and if opting for training, a choice of trades was on offer. whether they would return to education or receive vocational training, in which case they would select which trade they would learn from a range of options. But at the broader level of how the

[43] Unidentified participant, Focus Group M, Monrovia, Liberia.

[44] Participant 1, Focus Group A, Bo, Sierra Leone.

[45] Selected responses to Question J3 in survey.

[46] These questions do risk conflating the matter of being heard with that of whether specific needs were met, but qualitative data confirm that it is not simply a matter of being dissatisfied with the benefits they received.

programme was run, those who felt that what they said 'definitely' had an effect were outnumbered almost 11 to one by those saying it had no effect 'at all'.

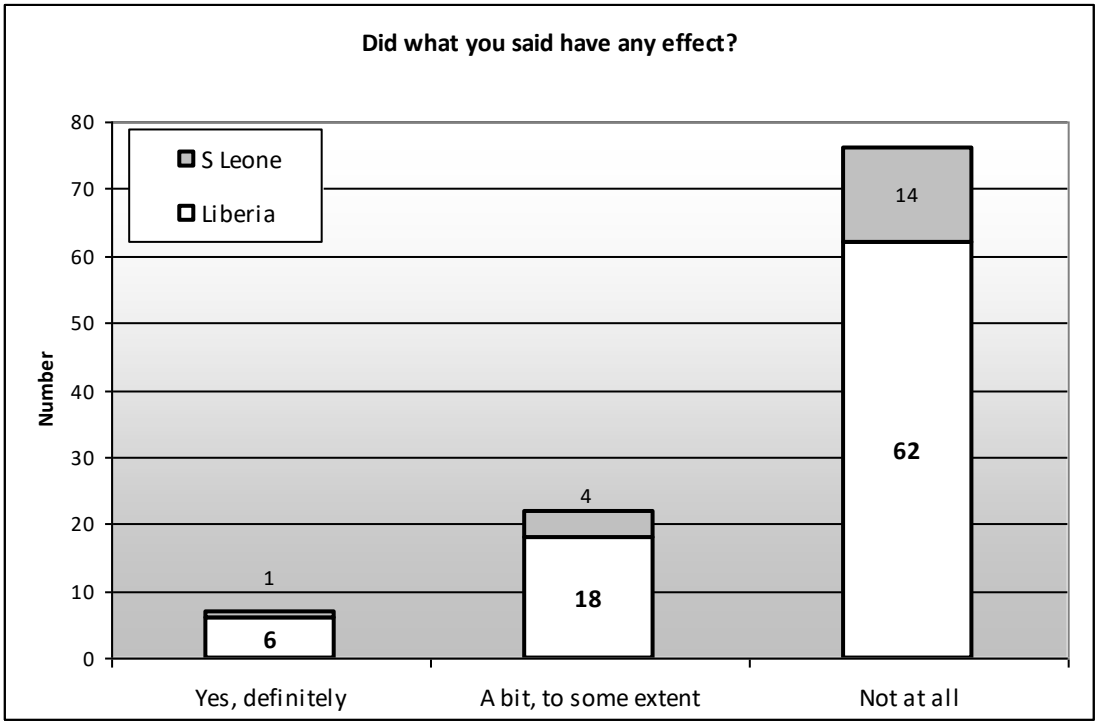

Figure 1. Responses to the question: 'Did anything you said have any effect on how things were done?'

The more detailed explanations in the focus groups and open-ended survey questions indicate that this is not simply a function of poverty or dissatisfaction with benefits, as discussed in the section on endogeneity. There is a real understanding by ex-combatants of the power dynamics at play. The main perception was one of unfairness, of broken promises, and of a 'deal' not being honoured. The effect of this on trust in the process and renewing social capital during peacebuilding is clear.

Implications of a more participatory approach

The question of an association between greater levels of participation and the programme outcomes are explored using the survey data. Clear evidence emerged which is consistent with the idea that a more participatory approach is associated with better outcomes in terms of employment, relations with the community, and economic well-being. In testing for this, the independent variables relate to the ladder of participation, such as whether information was received by ex-combatants, or was clear or was accurate. Moving a little higher up the ladder, the matter of consultation is raised through questions about whether their views were sought or were known by the organisers of the programme. In terms of shared decision-making, respondents were also asked whether their views had been listened to or indeed had any effect on the way the programme was run.

The dependent variables related to work, perception of living conditions, and relations with the community—the factors which reintegration is supposed to improve. Employment is measured as the reported number of days worked for oneself or someone else in the last month, reflecting the variety of employment situations in a largely informal economy. Respondents were also asked where they were on a four-point scale ranging from full-time employment to having no work at all.[47] Respondents similarly ranked

[47] For both of these measures of employment, those who had opted to return to formal education rather than vocational training were excluded, as the inclusion of those still in education would have skewed the results.

their own living conditions on a scale from 'excellent' to 'terrible'. Community relations—another area which reintegration is supposed to improve—were assessed by asking how their community now looked upon ex-combatants. Seven options were provided, and those selecting 'with acceptance' or 'with respect' were then categorised as experiencing good community relations.

Participation and the work of post-war reconstruction are complex and multifaceted activities, so creating a single measure or index to represent such complex mechanisms would be open to challenge. None of the above variables on their own is a perfect measure of participation or programme outcomes, in terms of validity. They must therefore be considered as a whole, and also seen in the light of the qualitative data. The relationships between them were tested using regression, logit, and ordered logit, depending on the type of measure involved. As a parallel process, chi square or Fisher's exact test was also used. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used where the number of days worked in the last month was being compared between discrete groups.[48]

Statistically significant relationships ($p<0.05$) are seen between the six independent variables listed below and the dependent variables of employment, community relations, or living conditions. In all cases, greater participation was associated with better outcomes in one or both countries:

- Official advice was given
- Reintegration was explained
- Were asked for their opinion
- What they said had an effect on programme
- Enough information was given
- Information was accurate

The outcome measure most strongly linked to the participatory indicators was the number of days worked in the last month, which was associated with all six of the above variables. Work status (measured on a four-point scale from full-time employment to having no work at all) was associated with four of the variables. Positive relations with the community and reported living conditions were each associated with two of the variables. No statistically significant relationship was detected for two of the independent variables: having one's views listened to, and whether they felt the organisers knew what their needs were.

It is not surprising that that only some of the variables show a definite relationship, given the relatively small sample sizes ($n=32$ in Sierra Leone), and the fact that the survey questions are not perfect measures in themselves of what are complex and multi-dimensional phenomena. They must therefore be taken as a whole. The data from the two countries has been analysed separately, as there was a number of differences between them. The Liberian sample was larger, allowing for a comparison to be made between the urban population (interviewed in Monrovia) and those outside the capital. This revealed a number of marked differences, making it necessary to control for urban versus rural location. The differences were likely to introduce 'noise' and bring about spurious results, since those in the capital were better off economically. They were more likely to be in employment, and worked for more days in the previous month ($p<0.0005$ for all of the above). They were far more likely to have moved from where they grew up (94%), compared with just over half for the rural sample. They were also less likely to have been a child at the time of demobilisation ($p<0.0005$) or to have chosen education rather than vocational training as their reintegration option ($p<0.0005$). All of these factors reflect a different process of reintegration, and a distinct economic and social environment, which could affect the analysis. It was therefore necessary to disaggregate the urban and rural sub-samples, even though this further reduced the sample sizes ($n=35$ and $n=60$ respectively). Due

[48] The full anonymised dataset from the survey is available, as well as the log files and do files from the analysis. The statistical package used was Stata. In this article the p value is generally reported exactly as returned by Stata. In some cases, this is $p=0.000$ or $p=0.0000$. In fact, due to rounding, the figure may not actually be zero. These should be read respectively as $p<0.0005$ and $p<0.00005$.

to the smaller sample size for urban respondents, together with the fact that in several cases there was insufficient variation on the independent variable, the same statistical tests could not be performed for certain pairs of variables. One variable pair showed an association which was significant (p=0.010, Fisher's exact test): those who felt reintegration had been explained also ranked their current living conditions as being better, pointing to a positive association between participation and well-being.

For the rural sample in Liberia, all 12 significant associations show a correlation between more participatory approaches and better programme outcomes. (The question on current living conditions had been dropped from the survey in rural areas). The results are shown in Table 5:

Table 5. *Measures of association for participatory and outcome variables (rural Liberia)*

LIBERIA (Rural)				
		DEPENDENT VARIABLES		
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	***Test***	**Days worked** (excl education)	**Work status** (excl education)	**Positive community view of ex-combatants**
Official advice was given	*I*			Favourable**
	G			
	F	Favourable**		Favourable***
Were asked for your opinion	*I*			
	G	Favourable**	Favourable**	
	F			
Views were listened to	*I*			
	G			
	F			
Organisers knew your needs	*I*			
	G			
	F			
What you said had any effect on programme	*I*			
	G	Favourable**	Favourable***	
	F		Favourable**	
Reintegration was explained	*I*			
	G			
	F			
Enough information was given	*I*			
	G			
	F			
Information was accurate	*I*			
	G	Favourable**		
	F	Favourable**	Favourable**	Favourable***
CONTROL VARIABLES which were significant		Rank*		Child status*
Group which had better outcomes		Officers		Children
Test used		*Regression/ ANOVA*	*Ordered Logit/ Fisher's exact*	*Logit/ Fisher's exact*
Significance levels	**** = p<0.01* *** = p<0.05* *Blank cells: No significant effect observed*			
Key to tests used	*I: Individual regression analysis (variable on its own, with control variables)*			
	G: Grouped regression analysis (together with all other dependent variables)			
	F: Fisher's exact test, or in the case of Days Worked, analysis of variance (ANOVA)			

The details of the regression are shown for employment status (Table 6) and number of days worked (Table 7).

Table 6. *Regression analysis for employment status ex-combatants in rural Liberia (excluding respondents who had opted for education rather than vocational training)*

Work status									
VARIABLES									
Gender	-0.309	0.162	0.427	0.131	-0.535	0.158	0.165	-0.326	
	(1.052)	(0.994)	(1.023)	(0.992)	(1.112)	(0.986)	(1.011)	(1.057)	
Child during DDR	0.592	0.300	-0.204	0.268	-1.142	0.368	0.244	0.309	
	(1.072)	(1.055)	(1.107)	(1.071)	(1.274)	(1.076)	(1.108)	(1.058)	
Rank	-0.0752	-0.122	-0.708	0.0120	-1.241	-0.0530	-0.371	-0.453	
	(0.640)	(0.642)	(0.781)	(0.655)	(0.801)	(0.674)	(0.680)	(0.671)	
Official advice	1.525								-3.678
	(1.004)								(2.781)
Asked for opinion		0.0829							**4.504****
		(0.809)							(2.227)
Views listened to			0.143						-1.405
			(0.405)						(0.859)
Knew your needs				0.423					**-2.558***
				(0.534)					(1.443)
What you said have any effect					**1.090***				**5.328*****
					(0.625)				(1.965)
Reintegration explained						-0.148			-1.618
						(0.547)			(1.055)
Enough information							0.0960		-0.348
							(0.662)		(1.056)
Information accurate								1.055	**4.828***
								(0.873)	(2.547)
cut1									
Constant	1.146	-0.206	-0.710	0.682	-1.495	-0.432	-0.520	1.079	10.50**
	(2.551)	(2.542)	(2.477)	(2.573)	(3.022)	(2.362)	(2.471)	(2.726)	(4.576)
cut2									
Constant	1.499	0.119	0.509	1.024	-1.073	-0.106	-0.174	1.431	13.64***
	(2.556)	(2.537)	(2.477)	(2.572)	(3.005)	(2.356)	(2.468)	(2.726)	(5.243)
cut3									
Constant	2.572	1.098		2.052	0.299	0.882	0.898	2.575	
	(2.596)	(2.537)		(2.600)	(3.010)	(2.360)	(2.471)	(2.772)	
Observations	26	26	22	25	23	26	25	25	24

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 7. *Regression analysis for number days worked in the last month by ex-combatants in rural Liberia (excluding respondents who had opted for education rather than vocational training)*

Days worked										
VARIABLES										
Gender	-3.912	-3.912	-5.136	-7.343	-5.568	-3.923	-5.230	-5.140	-3.418	
	(4.337)	(4.337)	(4.566)	(5.245)	(4.454)	(4.639)	(4.259)	(4.577)	(4.773)	
Child during DDR	1.858	1.858	2.794	5.482	3.229	7.467	1.815	2.224	2.673	
	(4.374)	(4.374)	(4.542)	(5.333)	(4.615)	(4.960)	(4.518)	(4.872)	(4.500)	
Rank	3.399	3.399	2.992	4.549	3.162	**5.821***	1.833	2.751	3.777	
	(2.645)	(2.645)	(2.761)	(3.379)	(2.932)	(3.091)	(2.899)	(2.964)	(2.901)	
Official advice	-5.331	-5.331								9.117
	(3.820)	(3.820)								(8.518)
Asked for opinion			1.443							**-14.31****
			(3.966)							(5.437)
Views listened to				-1.420						3.946
				(2.063)						(2.469)
Knew your needs					-1.606					8.733
					(2.664)					(5.035)
What you said have any effect						-4.510				**-13.78****
						(2.708)				(5.300)
Reintegration explained							2.764			**5.643***
							(2.557)			(2.938)
Enough information								1.810		1.168
								(3.610)		(3.987)
Information accurate									-4.578	**-18.29****
									(4.084)	(7.546)
Constant	27.62**	27.62**	20.38	24.36*	26.10**	24.07*	19.70*	20.51*	29.86**	59.87***
	(10.36)	(10.36)	(12.31)	(12.59)	(11.69)	(12.73)	(10.40)	(11.52)	(12.02)	(15.17)
Observations	23	23	23	18	22	19	23	22	22	20
R-squared	0.324	0.324	0.256	0.326	0.248	0.464	0.296	0.252	0.293	0.716

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The overall set of relationships for Sierra Leone, where the sample size was smaller, is seen in Table 8. All the relationships once again show a positive association between more a participatory approach and better programme outcomes.

Table 8. *Measures of association for participatory and outcome variables (Sierra Leone)*

SIERRA LEONE					
		DEPENDENT VARIABLES			
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	*Test*	**Days worked** (excl education)	**Work status** (excl education)	**Positive community view of ex-combatants**	**Living conditions**
Official advice was given	*I*				
	G				
	F				
Were asked for your opinion	*I*				
	G				
	F				Favourable**
Views were listened to	*I*				
	G				
	F				
Organisers knew your needs	*I*				
	G				
	F				
What you said had any effect on programme	*I*				
	G				
	F				Favourable**
Reintegration was explained	*I*	Favourable**			
	G				
	F	Unclear**			
Enough information was given	*I*	Favourable***	Favourable***		
	G				
	F				
Information was accurate	*I*				
	G				
	F			Favourable**	
CONTROL VARIABLES which were significant			Gender*		
Group which had better outcomes			Men		
Test used		*Regression/ ANOVA*	*Ordered Logit/ Fisher's exact*	*Logit/ Fisher's exact*	*Logit/ Fisher's exact*
Significance levels		**** = p<0.01* *** = p<0.05* *Blank cells: No significant effect observed*			
Key to tests used		*I: Individual regression analysis (variable on its own, with control variables)*			
		G: Grouped regression analysis (together with all other dependent variables)			
		F: Fisher's exact test, or in the case of Days Worked, analysis of variance (ANOVA)			

Example of strong correlation: information accuracy

By way of illustration, the links between participation and programme outcome for ex-combatants are seen especially in the number of days worked (for oneself or someone else) in the last month, in rural Liberia (see Figure 2). This is intended to be a more subtle measure of economic well-being, in what is still a largely informal economy where many are officially unemployed. Those who reported having received advice from officials about the reintegration process had more work ($p<0.05$, Fisher's exact test). The same pattern was seen for those who felt the information was 'more or less' accurate, compared with participants who felt it was 'not at all' accurate ($p<0.05$). (None in rural Liberia reported it was entirely accurate). Ex-combatants' perception of the accuracy was seen repeatedly to be an important factor when assessing participation and their sense of whole DDR project.

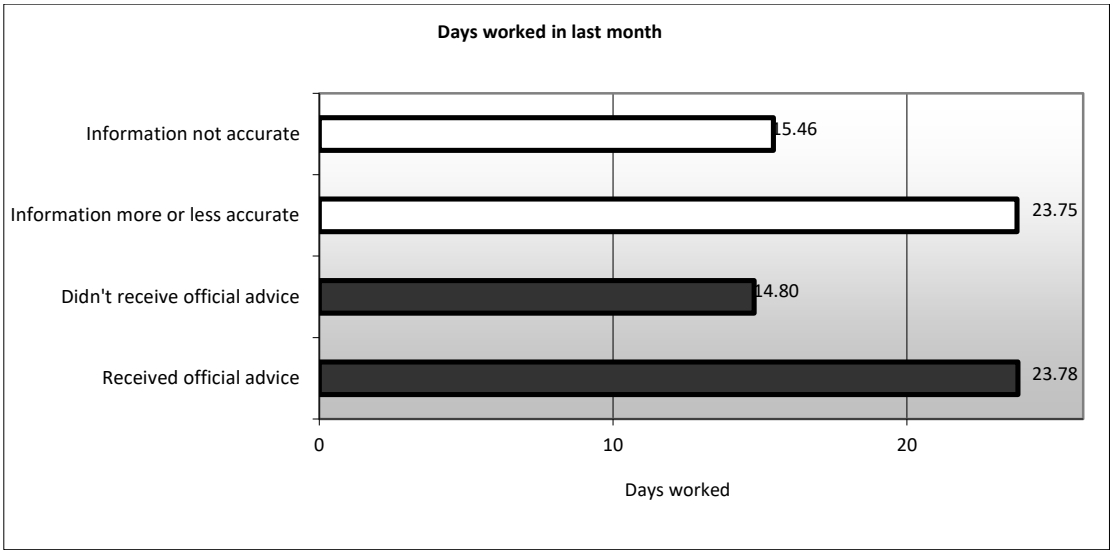

Figure 2. Days worked in the last month (excluding those opting for education) in rural Liberia, according to accuracy of information provided and whether official advice was received on reintegration ($p<0.05$ for both).

Information accuracy is also significant when it comes to community relations. Ex-combatants who found that the information was more accurate also reported that the community where they reintegrated views them more positively (see Figure 3).

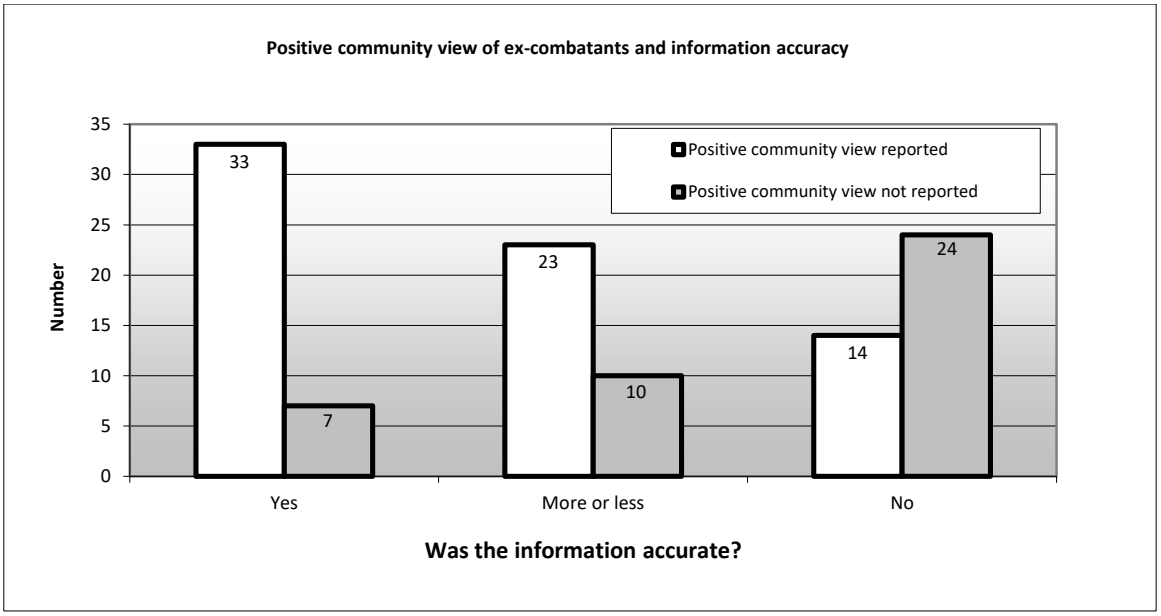

Figure 3. Number of ex-combatants reporting the community had a positive view of them, compared with whether the information about reintegration was accurate. Data is for both countries combined ($p<0.01$). The relationship is also significant for each country when tested separately ($p<0.01$ in rural Liberia and $p<0.05$ in Sierra Leone).

Overall, there is strong evidence of a positive correlation between more participatory approaches and better programme outcomes in terms of employment, living conditions, and community relations, despite the relatively small sample sizes.[49]

Endogeneity

In all the relationships listed so far, the question of possible endogeneity must be dealt with. While the results are largely consistent with more participation leading to better outcomes, the data could also be pointing to a causal relationship in the opposite direction. This would apply to subjective assessments which the ex-combatants are asked to make, such as the amount or quality of information they received, or the degree of input to decisions. These perceptions could in theory be coloured by subsequent experiences: those out of work or unhappy with their circumstances could be more negative in their assessment than those who were doing well. This counterfactual is therefore proposed as a hypothesis: that ex-combatants' views about reintegration are a result of their current circumstances, leading to a generalised, non-specific negativity about the programme when it comes to those who are faring badly.

This hypothesis is can be tested directly. Of the dependent variables, the most suitable one is reported work status. Participants bring a degree of subjective assessment to the question—leaving it open therefore to influence by generalised disaffection—since the respondents were asked to choose one of four options ranging from fulltime employment to having no work at all. The test is made using a series of short questions which appeared as group in the survey. They were asked one after the other, and without other issues being raised, which might have changed the focus or context. They can therefore be compared with confidence. Respondents were asked in succession if, when being told about reintegration, the right language was used; whether the language was clear; if there was enough information; and was it accurate. The responses for the whole survey show clearly that they were able to differentiate between the questions asked, and there was no sign of a generalised tendency to see things positively or negatively. The information was seen as being clear and explained in the right language, but not accurate. What is significant is that this also holds for those with no work: the overwhelming majority were able to say the language was *clear*, for

[49] The results for all statistically significant associations are reported in more detail in Kilroy, *From conflict to ownership: Sierra Leone and Liberia*.

example, even though its accuracy was a problem. This pattern holds true regardless of whether there is any disaggregation: it is seen when all respondents are compared, and also when it is broken down by urban status, by country, and by both. No statistically significant association was seen between work status and the language or its clarity. The association was however highly significant when it came to the amount[50] and accuracy[51]. The data, therefore, force us to reject the hypothesis that poor circumstances lead ex-combatants to give a generalised negative account of reintegration.

The pattern is seen quite clearly in the following bar chart (Figure 4) showing those who reported having no work at all. It is for both countries, with the results shown as percentages, in order to make the proportions clearer. The divergence in their responses is of course statistically significantly (p=0.000, Fisher).

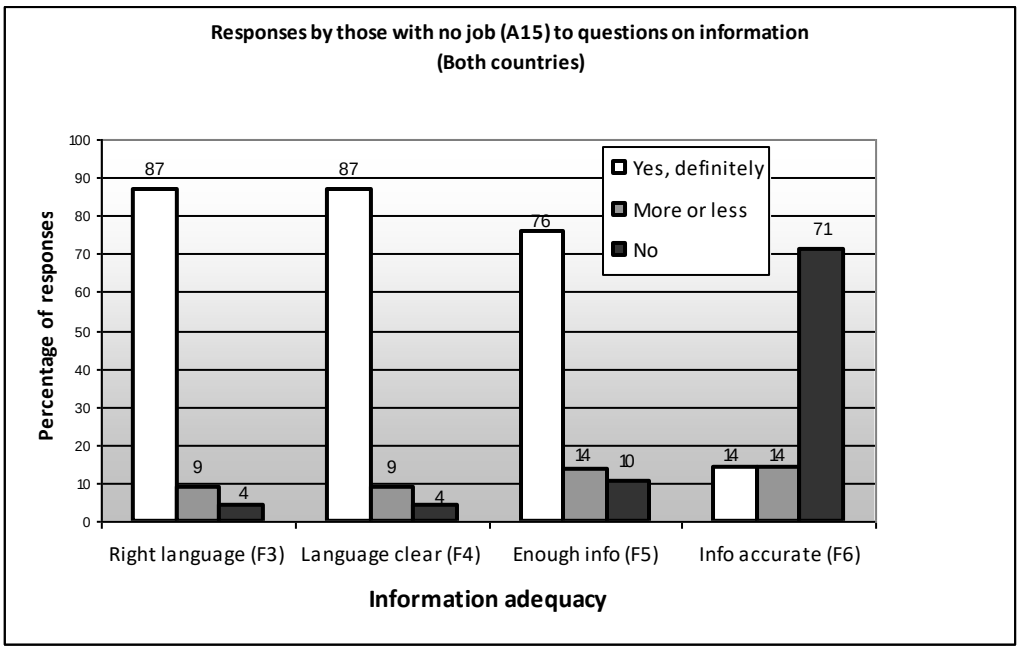

Figure 4. Responses to four separate measures of information received about reintegration, for those who are not working.

A similar pattern was seen when the responses of those describing their own living conditions as 'terrible' were analysed. An overwhelming majority were able to say that the correct language was 'definitely' used, and also that it was clear. They were just as emphatic about it not being accurate, however. This shows that they could make either positive or negative assessments depending on the specific question asked, regardless of unhappiness with their personal situation. In addition, the data from the transcripts of the focus group discussions also leads us to reject a hypothesis suggesting that the participants were simply interested in maximising the benefits they might receive from international projects. There were repeated complaints about late, missing, or diverted payments of the stipend during vocational training. However, despite the fact that a 'node' had been created in the coding framework to record complaints about the *amount* of the stipend, this was never raised by the participants. What mattered far more to them was the sense of unfulfilled entitlements and broken promises.

[50] Amount of information: all respondents, p=0.007; Liberia p=0.008 (Fisher's exact test).

[51] Accuracy of information: p=0.000 for all respondents, for all Liberians, and also for rural Liberians (Fisher).

Table 9. *References in focus groups to problems with stipends due to be paid during training*

Types of reference to stipends paid during vocational training	Number of references	*Number of groups in which it was mentioned*
Amount or adequacy	0	*0*
Non-ex-combatants receiving benefits	5	*4*
Non-payment or different to stated amount	23	*7*
Categories within 'non payment' (if further details were given)		
Early cessation or no final payments	*5*	
Complete non-payment	*3*	
Delays in payment	*3*	
Reduced stipend	*1*	

Conclusions

This research provides clear evidence that the way reintegration programmes for ex-combatants are run does matter, in terms of measurable outcomes such as work, economic well-being, and relations with the community. It is also argued that DDR's contribution to broader project of peacebuilding—which is the ultimate *raison d'être* of the programmes—is also profoundly affected by the approach taken and the experiences of those going through it. The idea of a participatory approach is an important analytical concept in revealing what is actually going during these key moments of post-war reconstruction, and what new norms are being created. More specifically, Pretty's ladder of participation[52] is a valid and useful tool for exposing important factors which might otherwise remain hidden. These include agency, power, interests, communication, and ownership. Although participation is a multidimensional concept, it is not intangible: when a variety of methods are carefully used together, with sensitivity to the data, it can be measured.

The results show that in general, there was little evidence of genuine participation in terms of shared decision-making about how the programmes were run, although it should of course be noted that ex-combatants were able to choose their vocational training from a number of options. Only the lowest rungs of the ladder of participation are reached, yet these are often missing or (even worse) not reliable, as far as the ex-combatants were concerned. At the lowest points on the ladder, the amount of information was not generally seen as a problem, but its accuracy definitely was a major issue. This perception can arise for many reasons, including difficulties with how the programme was implemented in sometimes challenging conditions. However, the perception was at its most potent when inaccuracy was attributed to deliberate deception. The evidence shows the overriding concern was with the fairness of the process, keeping promises, and sticking to a deal, rather than maximisation of benefits.

The issue of corruption was particularly significant in both salience and effect. It arose spontaneously in 10 of the 11 focus groups, and also repeatedly in the open-ended questions in the survey, where it was again entirely unprompted. Perceptions about corruption, which were often backed up with specific details, are significant in terms of the credibility of the programme, and belief in the peace process.

Evidence of better outcomes for participatory approach

At the level of causal inference, there is quantitative and qualitative evidence that those who experienced a more participatory approach were faring better in terms of employment, economic well-being, or relations with the community. The small sample size and sampling methodology of the survey must be borne in mind: some caution is required when considering the degree to which we can generalise this finding. However,

[52] Pretty, 'Participatory Learning'.

even with a small sample and using a wide range of measures, significant differences were apparent in both countries. The survey results were also notable for their coherence with the qualitative data, where saturation was achieved without any difficulty. The focus groups in particular suggest the depth of feeling and the underlying causal processes through which ex-combatants ended up identifying with—or rejecting—the reintegration process. Since there are difficulties in operationalising measures of a complex phenomenon like participation, the survey questions must be taken as a whole rather than interpreted literally.

Link to peacebuilding and the implications for social capital

The qualitative data suggest that the effects of a participatory approach go beyond immediate programme outcomes like livelihoods and social reintegration: it affects how DDR itself contributes (or not) to the overall peacebuilding project. It is proposed that participation and a sense of ownership can be seen as having a multiplier effect: even where specific programme outcomes are positive for an individual, these experiences can be turned into disillusionment if the 'multiplier' of participation is a negative number. Alternatively, mediocre results can give a larger return in terms of an individual's sense of 'buying in' to the post-war statebuilding process, if the person has a sense of inclusion and fairness. The reintegration process, which continues in the context of the community long after education or vocational training has finished, is ultimately about rebuilding relationships, which were often profoundly affected by the war. An essential part of the process is the restoration of social capital, in which networks, norms and trust can grow and facilitate collective action for the common good. Social capital can be seen to be a result of greater participation, and also a means through which DDR programmes support peacebuilding.

Policy implications and further research

In terms of policy implications, recognition of the importance of how programmes are run (already noted in a number of best practice initiatives) should be embedded in the planning and evaluation processes. Programme cycles focus on specific indicators of success which can be measured, often at the quantitative level. Additional indicators or ways of understanding what is going on are needed, if the underlying processes are to be considered as well as the immediate outputs such as training or education. Capacity building of implementing agencies and of donors can increase sensitivity to participatory processes. Some of these may need to be adapted or made more explicit for the particular environments where DDR is used. The obstacles and pressures in these situations have already been noted. Specific training, in advance, in appropriate participatory methodologies and effective communications could help to deal with the reality of pressure to implement programmes quickly and produce early results.

Further research could replicate the survey of ex-combatants with a larger sample size using random sampling. Follow up programmes to cater for those who did not complete the original DDR can offer an interesting comparison, as these do not suffer from the same time or security constraints and can be done in a more participatory way. A longitudinal study of ex-combatants as they go through a reintegration process could provide interesting insights into the micro-dynamics at work. Focus groups would also reveal further insights into the causal mechanisms if carried out earlier on in the process, not only with ex-combatants, but with receiving communities and those implementing the programme at various levels.

We have always had ex-combatants, for as long as we have had armed conflict. DDR is one way of facilitating a process of reintegration—a process has often happened in the past with little explicit support[53]. At the end of the day, it is not something which is 'done to' someone, and it takes place in and with the community. But reintegration is fundamentally about building relationships, and this research underlines that the way DDR programmes are run matters in the long run on many levels.

[53] I am indebted to Irma Specht of Transition International for highlighting this perspective, through the training courses run by her organisation jointly with International Alert.

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Biographical statement

Walt Kilroy is Associate Director of the Institute for International Conflict Resolution and Reconstruction (IICRR), at Dublin City University (DCU). He previously worked in development and in journalism.

Acknowledgements

The support of the Irish Research Council through the granting of a postdoctoral fellowship is gratefully acknowledged, as is the earlier support for the research by the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice and by Trócaire.