

## **The promise or pandemic of ex-combatants: The Donors' Conundrum in Liberia**

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This project is concerned with the collective health of two specific generations of Liberians who experienced neocolonial wars of mass destruction (N-WMD) and the policy of donors in regards to efforts of health repair that they sponsor. The term, "neocolonial", is used here as shorthand for all global resource extrapolation done by private profiteers not in partnership with affected populations. The author's assumption is that Liberians should benefit in proportion to the bounty of the natural resources within their land. The global economic paradigm that accepts and promotes the poorest people in the world to live astride the most valuable minerals in the world is replaced in this project with a simple acceptance of People's rights – the basis of human rights. The health and well being of individuals is impacted in a determined way by the health and well being of their collective.

Poverty, the product of shortsighted profiteering, generates ill health and social disorder, the precursors to chaos and war. The collapse of broad governance supports the looting of the national treasures by organized bands of interlocking interests and this is the life threatening blow suffered by the general population in Liberia. Restoration of health and well being ultimately requires the reorganization of the collective and a re-socialization of the individual to a viable national ideal. The citizenry has to engage full reparation with all the resources available. Other measures are required but insufficient if they do not include this one.

The formula for social well being is expansive. This project's scope of data, however, was narrowed to the above mentioned generations. The voice of the donors was extracted from available electronic documents (PDF) as sources. The source documents were selected publications of UNIMIL, UNESCO, World Bank, and USAID. A terminology frequency count within the documents was done in an effort to illuminate the direction and limits of repair efforts encouraged by these global management organizations. One assumption that we worked under was the expectation that between management organizations represented concerned business interests and were therefore valid voices for the major neocolonial interests classified here as, 'donors'.

Understanding the health challenges of the generations mentioned above requires a cursory review of Liberia and the forces that led to its two most recent civil wars. Then, through a tailored content analysis, select donor documents reveal remedies and concerns of the donors for Liberia's rehabilitation. The intended goals of the donors are juxtaposed to the goals of 'African leadership' and the latter's expressions of healthy redemption for African youth who comprise the bulk of the combatants suffering in NWMDs. For the voice of African leadership the documents of ECOWAS and the AU will be examined. This second phase will begin in the second round of funding. The ultimate goal of this project is to centralize information that can help proposal writers find a central resource concerning health repair efforts of donors for Liberian civil war generations.

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Liberia experienced two massive internal conflagrations referred to as civil wars from 1989 – 1996 and 1999 – 2003 respectively. During these periods of unrest and chaos much of Liberia's population was displaced. Liberians were seeking safety from their residential areas, which had become the battle zones. Some displaced persons left the country with their families and became refugees. Many others relocated to the rural areas in an effort to avoid the lethal skirmishes played out by competing militia forces. The flow of displacement was sometimes from the rural areas to the cities, depending on the location of war activity. Hundreds of thousands were killed and maimed and the Liberian government which emerged between the wars was considered a 'failed pariah state' by organizations like the United Nations (UN), World Bank, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The watch-words for these organizations are symbolized in an abbreviation expressed as DD-RRR (Demobilize, Disarm, Repatriate, Rehabilitate, Reintegrate<sup>1</sup>), a contemporary formula sought to repair the war torn territory. The abbreviation evokes echoes of a past remedial acronym called SAP (Structural Adjustment Program), which may be a cause to the current fratricidal warfare making West Africa so chaotic and unmanageable today.

The Liberian conflagrations jumped borders like an uncontrollable wild fire in a dry brush. The breadth of the Liberian 'civil wars' are connected to the historical depth of its inequities which have only been exasperated by foreign business interests.

The superfluous nature of West African political boundaries inherited from the European colonial era has complicated the global organizations' remedial approaches. To understand this dilemma background information is helpful. After the declaration of peace, following the Second World War, the African and Asian battles for liberation from colonialism were known as 'hot wars' which, often illuminated the 'cold war' between the ideological opponents of the day (the USA and the USSR). By the end of the 1970s, the overwhelming majority of the African and Asian territories had seemingly gained their political independence from Western countries. Nation building efforts hoisted upon the slogans of 'rapid development', 'equitable resource distribution', and 'cultural integrity' reflected an era of hope built on freshly obtained liberty. The nation states of Africa, however, proved to be non-viable in the global economy.

African nation-states emerged in a time when economic viability required a critical mass of population with the appropriate skill sets and resources. Prior to classical colonialism's demise Africa was administered by fewer than ten administrative centers. Upon the evacuation of colonial governments the evictees convinced the liberated that the splintering of previous administrative centers was in the interests of the new independent states. For expediency, African nation states accepted the border proliferation encouraged by the ex-colonial powers. The legacy of this choice has retarded the development of a beneficial African political union. Secondly, the African nation-states

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<sup>1</sup> Other 'r' words are added to this list according to agency describing the strategy.

were led by elites that were culturally addicted to Western models of governance and economic interests. This was the case of Liberia.

Liberia, from its birth as a nation-state, was infected with the biases of its ruling elite. Cultural alienation and a vertical social-class structure made protracted mass upheavals inevitable. Liberia's early ruling elite was deeply entrenched with the mores of antebellum plantation slavery and hyper-American patriotism. The initial Liberian nation-state was a product of the American Colonization Society and served two purposes of American policy. First, Liberia was to serve as a repository for African freed persons that resided in the USA. The groups of free persons of African descent were seen as a contentious segment of the African population in the USA. Eight ninths of the African population in the USA was enslaved. The freed one ninth of the African population was seen as a spoiler for the system of plantation slavery which was integral to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Southern USA economy. Liberia's significance to the USA had a more important sub-text meaning in the twilight of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 1884-85 conference held in Berlin was a symbolic gathering of colonial powers conferring to divide Africa among spheres of commercial control. The USA was still too young a nation and unprepared to take part in the colonial carve up of the African continent by the European powers. Liberia offered an inroad to the African continent that would later prove useful to USA business interests. All of this would come at a great cost to the languishing autochthonous populations governed by African Americans – identified as Americo-Liberians.

At first, the coastal-dwelling Americo-Liberians were content with controlling the trade of the other populations residing in the Liberian territory but as the European empires sought an ever increasing control over West Africa a more definitive relationship had to be established. The Americo-Liberians nearly lost their control of the Liberian territory during the European imperial rush to carve up African territory in the latter part of the nineteenth century. With little regard to the Americo-Liberian claim, Britain and France forcibly seized some of the declared territory, which they saw as an intrusion of the USA. Liberia's ruling elite demonstrated so many America cultural trappings that the assumption of the European predators was understandable. Frantically seeking allies, the Americo-Liberians rushed to assimilate portions of the indigenous inhabitants. A middle-class, creole population was germinated allowing the Liberian state to assert itself beyond the Atlantic coast and the capital city of Monrovia into the hinterland. Utilizing this process, along with the cunning diplomacy of feigned defeat, the Americo-Liberians were able to secure a viable peace over a reduced territory. This peace, however, sowed the seeds of discontent among Liberians who became infected with expectations of equitable treatment and services implicit of citizenship.

Liberia's productive capacity made it a liberated territory in political form only. The intent to provide a more equitable standard of living for all Liberians may have been sincere but the country's productive capacity did not allow it to deliver on its promises to its populace. As a provider of raw materials and without the ability to produced finished goods for export the country was at the mercy of industrialized countries. Liberia

became the USA's first major recipient of 'aid' in Africa, in other words Liberia became the first major debtor to USA financial institutions.

As mentioned above poverty led to conflict and conflict led social unrest resulting in failed states morally if not literally. There is new leadership in place but they are still threatened with simmering attitudes of unsatisfied generations comprised of ex-combatants.

### **The DD-RRR process**

As we begin to review the documents of the donors it became clear immediately that a formula had been set in place as a minimum approach to the post war scenario. These terms were seen as a precursor to any other terminology, including health specific terminology. These terms are explained below:

**Demobilize** – This term speaks to the effort to stop the movement of the militias as a first step to quieting the fighting spirit of the armed organizations. Secondary terms related to this process are:

**Disarm** – This term address the removing of the technical implements of war – weapons. Secondary terms related to this process are:

- munitions,
- small arms,
- ordinances,
- ammunition,
- artillery.

**Repatriate** – This term is the name of the active movement to return the residents, combatants and civilians, which fled the war zone. Secondary terms related to this process are:

- internally displaced persons (IDPs),
- refugees,

**Reintegrate** – This term speaks to the effort to interweave the fractious elements of the war torn society. Secondary terms related to this process are:

- shared governance,
- reconciliation

**Rehabilitate** – This term addresses the return to fitness. Secondary terms related to this process are:

- infrastructure,
- public [outlay]
- Structural Adjustment Program
- job training,
- security
- family

Beyond these terms, we looked for the **health specific** terms that included:

- Communicative diseases
- Nutrition
- Trauma
- Mortality rates
- Refugees
- Red Cross
- Health related NGOs
- Health Ministries
- Hospitals and clinics
- Pregnancy rates
- Birth weights [of ex-combatants' offspring]
- Prenatal care [for ex-combatants]
- Suicide

**Finally, there are sociological terms which we intend to use that include:**

- Violent criminal activity [homicide, rape, and assault]
- NGOs
- counseling

**Chronology of the project:**

- Our first step was to identify and download relevant documents from targeted agencies.
- These downloads were done in two time periods. We began in the summer of 2006 with the assistance of Ms. Monica Kahindo and expanded in the summer of 2007 with the assistance of Mr. Chinonso Nwachuku, both Lincoln University students at the time of their employ.
- After each stage of downloading the searchable PDFs had to be separated from those PDFs that were maintained as image files. Image files are not searchable by word or phrase and were usually scanned prior to the evolution of PDF software. We initially included html pages but they did not offer the same ability to search entire folders as the searchable PDFs did. These documents would provide a clearer focus if the person power available were plentiful enough to search each of these documents – which have to be searched on word at a time.
- Appropriate searchable documents were then electronically catalogued first by authoring agency and then by topic within agency folder.
- We then searched agencies' folders by applying the terms mentioned above as filters and entered results of the search in spreadsheets able to calculate the frequency of terms and word indicators.
- We are still in the process of analyzing the first run of data and preparing the 'relational' run of data which will compare mixed terms within sentences.

**Notes on the method:**

1. The project combined the software capabilities of Adobe Acrobat with the traditional methods of content analysis.

2. Practically all eligible documents were produced since 2000. Some reports, however, summarized past efforts, projects, and scenarios.
3. Unlike the manual content analysis of the past we had to adapt word manipulations that were idiosyncratic to the software. For example, when searching for the term “health” we would use the term “heal” to cast a broader net around the core concept.
4. There is a need to categorize the files in more ways than is done thus far. The files need to be list in size and date categories. Afterward the array characteristic of documents would include: title, date, number of pages, number of words, byte-size, and subcategory of organization represented.