The 16th County: The Role of Diaspora Liberians in Land Reform, Reconciliation and Development in Liberia

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the Center for International Studies of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

Siphokazi Magadla

June 2010

© 2010 Siphokazi Magadla. All Rights Reserved.
This thesis titled
The 16th County: The Role of Diaspora Liberians in Land Reform, Reconciliation and Development in Liberia

by
SIPHOKAZI MAGADLA

has been approved for
the Center for International Studies by

______________________________
Thomas A. Smucker
Visiting Assistant Professor of Geography and African Studies

______________________________
Thomas A. Smucker
Director, International Development Studies

______________________________
Daniel Weiner
Executive Director, Center for International Studies
ABSTRACT

MAGADALA, SIPHOKAZI, M.A., June 2010, International Development Studies

The 16th County: Role of Diaspora Liberians in Land Reform, Reconciliation and Development in Liberia (128 pp.)

Director of Thesis: Thomas A. Smucker

This thesis project examines the relationship between post-conflict land tenure reform and political reconciliation in the West African country of Liberia. The thesis asks: is successful land tenure reform a necessary precondition for political reconciliation in Liberia? Secondly, what are the primary means by which land tenure reform contributes to political reconciliation in Liberia? Thirdly, what is the role of Liberians in the Diaspora in the land reform process and how does the role of the Diaspora shape the contribution of land tenure reforms to wider political reconciliation?

The study examines the impact of Liberia’s 14 year civil war from 1989 to 2003 on the country’s land tenure system. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Liberia identified “land and property disputes as key threats to Liberia’s fragile peace” in its conflict mapping survey (UNMIL, 2009). In a broader context, this thesis is a contribution to the growing literature that links land policy with conflict and land reform as an important element of achieving of the national peace building process and sustainable development. As well this thesis contributes to the literature on post-colonial African Diasporas. The Liberian Diaspora which is known as the “16th County” composed of the country’s middle class was the first African Diaspora to be engaged in its country’s TRC process project. This thesis examines the role of the Liberian Diaspora in the land reform process and the implication for postconflict reconstruction in Liberia.
Respondents revealed that if their land problem is not solved there is a potential for a return to war in Liberia. The civil war exacerbated existing boundary disputes between different counties mainly Nimba County and Grand Gedeh. As well the civil war exacerbated existing tensions between ethnic groups mainly the Mandingo, Manos and Gios in Nimba County making Nimba the poster child of land conflicts in Liberia. In rural Liberia which uses communal land ownership family members are embroiled in land disputes as siblings sold land that belongs to the whole family during the civil war without consulting the rest of family which were displaced by the war. While urban Liberia is engulfed in land disputes due to multiple sales of the same piece of land which has resulted in many people claiming ownership to the same piece of land. Entire villages, the Liberian government including President Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson are themselves involved in land disputes. Liberians in the Diaspora are particularly vulnerable to land tenure insecurity because of their physical absence from home. Liberians in the US currently under Temporary Protected Status/Deferred Enforced Departure status point to land tenure disputes at home as one of the many indicators that Liberia despite the end of the civil war remains with the reality of everyday conflicts from family, neighbors, ethnic groups and government fighting over land. Therefore, conditions at home still do not allow for them to establish stable secure livelihoods like in the US.

It is due to these findings that this thesis argues that the ability of Liberia to fully establish democratic and security institutions that are free from the threat of violent takeover is dependent upon people’s ability to access bread-through rights to land.
Lastly, the Diaspora of Liberia reveals the importance of the African Diasporas in their continent’s reconstruction, in particular the Liberian Diaspora demonstrated the urgency for a greater and more formal involvement of the Diaspora in the development their homeland’s development agendas. The Liberian TRC project already set a precedent on how other African Diasporas should be part of the postconflict reconstruction process. Results revealed in this thesis that Liberians in the Diaspora remain key stakeholders in the land tenure process.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Thomas A. Smucker

Visiting Assistant Professor of Geography and African Studies
DEDICATION

To my mother for her love, courage, faith and companionship

and to my father for healing and growing pains
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my sincere thank you to Dr Thomas Smucker my thesis chair for all of his guidance and patience in explaining and opening up this new world land tenure system and livelihoods and how it connected to my world of political science. I am most grateful for granting me the freedom to making the thesis my own while swiftly guiding me back to the objectives of the research in the countless times I knocked in your door. I would like to extend gratitude to my other members of my committee Dr Stephen Howard for letting me remember the purpose of the research and Dr Myra Waterbury deepening my understanding of Diaspora politics and helping me understands where the research fits into the broader literature.

I am most humbled by the friendship and guidance of Samuel Wai Johnson who answered all my questions about Liberia to the best of his abilities and opened his network of friends and colleagues. I would also like to acknowledge the Liberian communities in Columbus and Minnesota that participated in this research, with full respect of their personal identity.

Lastly, I would like to extend a big thank you to Nickie Sene my classmate who was an important sounding board who also helped me edit this thesis as it developed to what it is now. I take full responsibility for the content of this thesis.
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 1: Liberia Surviving Black Apartheid and Civil War</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Land reform and Reconciliation: Research Questions</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Land and Violence in Liberia</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 The Conflict Trap</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 The 16th County: The Liberian Diaspora in the US and “New African Diasporas”</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Liberian Diaspora and Land Tenure</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Definition of Terms</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Two: Post-Conflict Land Tenure</th>
<th>43</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 The Case of Rwanda and postconflict land tenure</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Situating the Liberian Problem: Land Tenure and Citizenship</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Land Access after Civil War</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Rural Livelihood Diversity and the Place of Agriculture in Postconflict societies</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Lessons from the DDRR: United Nations Mission in Liberia</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Understanding Disarmament Demobilization Rehabilitation and Reintegration</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Implementation</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase I</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase II</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase III</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation and reintegration</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 3: Methodology: Whose Research Is It?</th>
<th>70</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Interviews and Observation</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2: The logo of the organization Liberians In Columbus Inc............................ 71
3.2 Limitations of Methodology- Positionality of Participants ................................. 73
3.3 Researcher positionality ..................................................................................... 75
Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 83
Chapter Four: Findings Part 1 Lands Histories and Modern Conflicts .................... 84
  4.1 Pre-Conflict Land Tenure ................................................................................... 84
  4.2 Impact of Conflict on Land Tenure ................................................................. 89
  4.3 Post-conflict Land Tenure ............................................................................... 92
  Conclusion .............................................................................................................. 96
Chapter Five: Land Reform, Reconciliation and Development: Solomonic Wisdom? . 99
  5.1 Contributions of the Liberian Diaspora to Postconflict Reconstruction .......... 102
  Conclusion .............................................................................................................. 108
Chapter 6: Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion ..................................... 111
  6.1 Discussion ...................................................................................................... 111
  6.2 Recommendations and Conclusion .................................................................. 118
References .............................................................................................................. 121
Appendix 1: Participant Description ......................................................................... 128
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: UNMIL Ex-combatants reintegration and rehabilitation skills preference……64
Figure 2: Liberians in Columbus Inc logo……………………………………………….71
CHAPTER 1: LIBERIA SURVIVING BLACK APARTHEID AND CIVIL WAR

I suggest that violence and democracy are not conceptually opposed in Liberian political discourse but are aspects of the same understanding of legitimacy. Liberian history can be understood as an ongoing interplay between themes of democracy and violence enacted on both local and national levels (Moran, 2006, p. 6)

Located in West Africa, the hotspot of many of Africa’s deadliest conflicts, Liberia was the arena of one of the longest and deadliest wars in Africa from 1989 to 2003. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2003 in Accra ended the 14-year war and paved a way for the eventual transition to democracy in 2005 (Zounmenou, 2008). It is important to note that with various peace agreements attempts the Liberian civil war had two phases, according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC), the phases were from December 1989 to 1996 and from 1999 to August 2003 (TRC Final Report, 2009). Amongst the various failed peace agreements to end the civil war include Bamako Ceasefire of November 1990, the Banjul Joint Statement of December 1990, the February 1991 Lome Agreement, the Yamoussoukro I-IV Accords of June-October 1991, Cotonou Accord 1993, The Akosombo Accord in September 1994, the Accra Clarification of December 1994, and the August 1995 Abuja Accord (Aloa, 1996). It was Abuja I and II Accords that eventually led to the 70% disarmament of the government and rebel factions, symbolizing the end of the first phase of war (Aloa et al, 1999). The success of this disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DRR) contributed to a new found shared belief by Liberians and outsiders that peace can be possible in Liberia. Elections finally took place in July 19, 1997; Charles Taylor received 75% of the votes, therefore becoming Liberian President (Aloa et al, 1999).
Liberia provides a compelling political history, Liberia became the chosen home for the freed African American slaves who were repatriated back to the African continent in 1822 (Kieh, 2008; Zounmenou, 2008). On July 26, 1847, Liberia became the first African Black ruled Republic (Haiti being the first Black republic) when the freed slaves, the Americo-Liberians, took into power residing over the indigenous population. There indigenous majority population was composed of three major ethnic groups with their own subgroups; these groups were the Mel, the Mande and the Kwa (Kieh, 2008). With the arrival and rule of the Americo-Liberians and their subsequent assumption of power, the indigenous groups of Liberia were subject to political, economic and social oppression until the military coup of 1980, which ended the Americo-Liberian hegemony.

1.1 Land reform and Reconciliation: Research Questions

The objective of the thesis is to examine the relationship between resource distribution mainly land tenure reform and reconciliation in Liberia. Reflecting on the construction of reconciliation the thesis seeks to establish whether reconciliation or peace is independent or dependent to other processes such as the land tenure reform process. Or more simply this thesis seeks to establish the necessary pre-conditions for national reconciliation by looking at land tenure reform and its implications to the postconflict nation building process. In doing so, the findings Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which was formed in 2006 and completed in July 2009 are used examine this relationship.
The objectives of this thesis are grounded in the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Liberia, on October 13, 2008, when it released findings which identified “land and property disputes as key threats to Liberia’s fragile peace” in its conflict mapping survey (UNMIL, 2009). This is following rampant violent attacks and tensions between various ethnic groups over land and other natural resources. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) report, warns that the “Government must address the often related issues of land reform and reconciliation. If not resolved, such tensions and conflicts could be manipulated for political or other motives, particularly in the period leading up to the 2011 election” (UNMIL, 2009; UNMIL, 2010). Between 75% and 90% of all statutory cases in Liberian courts are all related to land and property claims (The Diamonds and Human Security Project Report, 2007; Unruh, 2009).

Thus, thesis seeks to examine the relationship between land tenure reform and postconflict reconstruction. The research contributes to the growing literature which links land policy with conflict and land reform as forming an important role in the process of peace building and transitional justice (Dushimimana, 2007; Daudelin, 2003, Richards, 2005; Unruh, 2004, Unruh 2009). Thus, this thesis project examines the nature of this relationship of land tenure reform within the multidimensional atmosphere of postconflict reconstruction which encompasses looking at land as an aspect of state security, governance, socio-economic development, justice and reconciliation (Murithi, 2006; Grey- Johnson, 2005).
This thesis project poses three questions. Firstly, is successful land tenure reform a necessary precondition for political reconciliation in Liberia? Secondly, what are the primary means by which land tenure reform contributes to political reconciliation in Liberia? Thirdly, what is the role of Liberians in the Diaspora in the land reform process and how does the role of the Diaspora shape the contribution of land tenure reforms to wider political reconciliation?

In order to answer these questions the case of Liberians in the US who came to this country to seek refuge during the civil war who were threatened with forced departure as an example the urgency of these questions for development and for peace in Liberia. As well, through document analysis the condition of the poor in Liberia and current land disputes in urban and rural Liberia which are causing the current judicial deadlock is examined to answer these questions.

The broader objectives of this it to contribute to this growing body of work that seeks to deconstruct the root causes of conflict and peace as based fundamentally based on the presence or absence of security threats, by looking at land as it defines people’s economic livelihoods by their ability to eat or benefit from the land, it defines their identity as it gives them place and cultural identity, and is political because ownership of land defines citizenship. The research seeks to examine the extent to which the absence of land security has the potential to either evoke multiple threats that make it possible for people to resort to using arms to defend their ownership of land. It is equally important to highlight that this study of Liberia is not only relevant to Liberia, but speaks to a
continental dilemma in Africa. Therefore this study is significant to reflect national and continental challenges of postconflict reconstruction.

Frantz Fanon (1963) in his classic book “The Wretched of the Earth” argues that “for a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity” (p. 9). However the discourse of understanding peace and conflict has until the end of the Cold War always reacted to conflict and peace as the presence of a physical security threat instead of the presence of multiple threats such as poverty which results from lack of access to own production entitlements such as owning land and market entitlements such as accessing markets or ability to get employed (Sen, 1981). This is similar as conceiving of peace as Amartya Sen conceives of freedom as based on “empirical connections and mutually reinforcing connections – economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers, enabling conditions for good health, education, encouragement and cultivation of initiatives through organizations and values” (Sen, 1999 pp 4-5).

Indeed, the African Union (AU) which is the continental voice of African states, in 2006 adopted the policy of Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PRCD). The policy combines postconflict reconstruction and development to address immediate challenges for countries emerging from conflict with a goal to achieve long term sustainable peace and development. The policy has six priority areas 1) security, 2) humanitarian assistance, 3) political governance and transition, 4) socio- economic reconstruction and development, 5) human rights, justice and reconciliation and, 6) women and gender. The Liberian story is representative of the African story as many
African countries are facing the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction and getting out of conflict, period. Such countries include Liberia’s neighbors Sierra Leone, Guinea, other countries in conflict or crisis and in the post-conflict phase include Sudan, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Cote d’ Ivoire, Namibia etc. As Collier (2007) puts it, “Africa [is] therefore the core of the problem” (p. 7).

Therefore, this Liberian case is not only compelling because of its uniqueness, it is important to understand as it speaks to larger African challenges. The Liberian challenge of land and reconciliation that will be examined here is important as it will contribute to post-conflict reconstruction in Africa, as the AU policy is only four years old. While, many countries like Liberia are grappling with conceptualizing this post-conflict process in particular as concerned with land reform. The post-conflict priorities of the Liberian government correspond entirely with the priorities of the AU, making the continental importance of examining the Liberian case that much more important.

1.2 Land and Violence in Liberia

The section below elaborates with much detail on Liberian socio-political history in order to demonstrate Moran’s (2006) assertion relationship between the themes of democracy and violence. The understanding of the evolution of the Liberian state is imperative to understanding the context of this thesis questions which is embedded in the historical evidence of the constant threat of violence regarding the accumulation of resources specifically land acquisition in Liberia. The Liberian military was long used to violently acquire land and taxes from indigenous Liberians during the Ameri...
hegemony. During the civil war and during Samuel Doe’s time in power the military was used to violently displace sections of Liberians from their communities. As it is demonstrated the war extended the militarization of the state to the civilian population during the 14 years of national plunder by introducing violence to the child soldiers who make up Liberian’s current youth to the use of violence as legitimacy for acquiring political power, social and economic power. There historical exclusive nature of the Liberian state between the Americo-Liberian elite and the indigenous majority is revealing of the current government urgency towards an establishment of a unified Liberian identity. Therefore, in order to be able to examine the existence of the relationship between land tenure and political reconciliation in current Liberia, it is first imperative to understand the interaction of resource allocation and violence in Liberian history.

Samatar and Samatar in Kieh (2008, p.165) state that since the Liberian state was founded in 1847, it was inherently flawed and deemed the “wrong type” of state. As Jaye (2003) puts it, the “division between the settlers and indigenous Africans, the following issues have been identified: land, political exclusion, subjugation and repression, forced taxation, trade with Europeans, and the settler’s sense of cultural superiority” (p.68). Decades of segregation between the Americo-Liberian elite and the indigenous groups manifested itself through the aggressive takeover of land and rich resources by the Americo-Liberian elite. The civil war of 1980, which ended in 2003, only exacerbated the already volatile socio-cultural situation of inequality to access to land and other socio-economic and political resources.
Firstly, when the Americo-Liberians gained independence from the American Colonization Society (ACS), a constitutional convention took place in the capital, Monrovia, to outline the mission, character, values, structures and policies of the new state, delegates came from various regions of Liberia, decidedly without any representation from the indigenous groups (Jaye, 2003; Kieh, 2008; Moran, 2006). The result of this convention was a decisively American constitution that adopted the American presidential system of government, in all its three wings of the legislative, executive and judiciary. The same was for national symbols starting with the name Liberia meaning “land of the freed,” and the national motto “The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here,” while the preamble read as “We the People of the Republic of Liberia were originally the inhabitants of the United States of America,” which had no historical significance for the indigenous groups, are just few of the many ways the state was imaged and characterized in the face of the settler community, and thus a settler state was established (Jaye, 2003, p. 67-76). Liberia’s close relationship with the United States (US) can be traced to the founding of the Liberian state, to a large extent the US is a Liberia’s big brother, certainly the socio-political and economic and cultural influence imported by the former American slaves has endured since 1847.

Furthermore, citizenship was only extended to the Americo-Liberians, and the right to vote and run for political office was reserved for those who owned property. In this case land ownership was used as a direct link to political legitimacy. Capitalism, like in America, was the mode of production. Among the first economic programs was the enforcement of the “point of entry” law; the indigenous group’s economy was based on
trading with Europeans. It forced them to pay customs and dues to the state, taxes that they would not benefit from since they were denied citizenship (Jaye, 2003). For the indigenous majority population, the newly independent state bore little resemblance to the Liberian way of life. The values, structures and policies that were adopted denied them citizenship while forcing them to accept and follow its values and manifest its policies e.g. paying taxes as it will be shown below. When the constitution was amended in 1862, the indigenous population was “made subjects but not citizens of the country” - they were entitled to civil but not political rights” (Jaye, 2003, p. 67).

The indigenous groups paid taxes and performed public duties like the settler Americo-Liberians. By the 1900s, the Americo-Liberian state managed to expand the original small land that the Americo-Liberians had purchased upon settling. The state through a policy of and grabbing aggressively acquired the rest of the land from the indigenous groups, which had neither land nor citizenship in their own country (Kieh, 2008, p.50). Through the “Barclay Plan” of 1904, indigenous Liberians were officially integrated into the official state; chiefs and other traditional leaders became subordinate to the rule of the central government (Kieh, 2008). This was partly the central government defensive move against encroaching British and French colonialists.

Consolidating the structure and the character of the Liberian state was the formation of the Liberian Frontier Force (LFF) in 1908. As Kieh (2008) quotes the former Liberian president Tubman, the Liberian military “…has three functions: to obey, to obey and to obey” (p. 51). Although the military composed of the so-called subaltern classes, who were the indigenous groups, the elite Americo-Liberian government
controlled the military by giving them, amongst other things, the mission of protecting
the elites against insurgents and aggressively and violently collecting taxes from the
population (Kieh, 2008). Thus, for more than 100 years the character and structures of the
Liberian state was authoritarian, with values of exclusion based on elitism and patronage.
These policies undermined the basic dignity and human rights of the population by
encouraging violence and torture. To an extent history of military security in Liberia was
tantamount to the state violent extraction of resources, land being a primary resource and
a money making scheme through violent taxation.

With that said, for decades Liberia was portrayed and presented as the beacon of
stability and prosperity in Africa, especially in the war-torn region of West Africa.
Liberia was one of the fastest-growing economies in the world with massive foreign
direct investment, especially during the time of William Tubman’s regime (Jaye, 2003).
Tubman had an “Open Door Policy” which further liberalized the economy to fit with
Western economies; the implementation of this policy was fraught with “corruption,
nepotism and concentration of wealth in the hands of the ruling families” (Jaye, 2003,
p.71-72)). Although there was economic growth resulting from this policy, it was shallow
as little of it contributed to development. Tubman also introduced the Unification and
Integration Policy, a nation building project which replaced indirect rule of the
indigenous hinterland by granting the people in central government. Yet, not even such a
program could change the patronage that drove the government in Liberia. With these
changes delegates from the indigenous groups were still not allowed to run for
presidential office; the president appointed all the members of the legislature who all
came from the True Whig Party (TWP) of the Americo-Liberian elites (Jaye, 2003). The Tubman regime continued to silence opposition and manipulated the citizenry despite its transformative intentions. Therefore, the interaction between resource extraction and violence under the façade of democracy continued as the major instrument of government legitimacy.

Perhaps, the biggest crack in the authoritarian Liberian state was during the presidency of Tubman’s successor, Tolbert, whose reforms led directly to the military coup of 1980. Thus, the facade and disillusion of stability was destroyed. The more than a century and more of state terror which was fundamentally antidemocratic and antipeople was brought to its knees.

Tolbert’s reforms for a “wholesome functioning society” allowed the existence of opposition parties (Jaye, 2003: 78). The Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) and the Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL) both were composed of indigenous and Americo-Liberian intellectuals. Consequently, this was the time of economic deterioration in Liberia consequent to the global oil crisis of 1972. The economic conditions escalated by the late 1970s; in 1979, Tolbert’s regime proposed an increase in the price of rice, the country’s staple food. This eventually led to the April 14, 1979 national strikes. Thousands of Liberians showed their dissatisfaction with the regime. This was partly a realization of the years of crony capitalism, where by 1980 four percent of the population controlled 65% of the economy (Jaye, 2003). This led to PAL demanding the resignation of the president in 1980; PAL members were subjected to harassment at the hands of Tolbert’s security regime (Jaye, 2003). Also during Tolbert’s time, the True Whig Party
which had been in power since 1847, split (Jaye, 2003). Their ‘cookie crumbled,’ so to speak, on April, 12, 1980, when seventeen military officers led by Samuel K Doe overthrew the government and assassinated Tolbert (Jaye, 2003). After 133 years since Liberian independence in 1847, Doe became the first indigenous President of Liberia (Kieh, 2008).

Amongst Doe’s priorities was to transform the military power into civil rule through giving citizens their constitutional rights, he promised the upholding of elections within a period of five years, fight corruption, unemployment and the abuse of power by the former Americo-Liberian elite (Moran, 2006). Besides these intentions, the reality of Doe’s regime was manifested in the silencing of voices, a continuation of brutal aggression against all forms of opposition, rigged presidential elections in 1985 and an introduction of ethnic conflict to the national scale amongst his ethnic group, the Krahn, against the Mano and the Gio ethnic groups after suspecting that some members of these groups were plotting a coup against his government (Jaye, 2003, p. 93). As Jaye (2003) argues, these rampant killings and criminalization of the state under Doe “marked a significant departure from the earlier promise to respect human, civil and constitutional rights of individuals; it also signaled the beginning of a terror that was to haunt the country for the ten years of Doe’s rule” (p. 90). Civilians who were linked to rebel groups were killed; women and girls were raped (Alao et al, 1999).

However, Liberia continued to receive massive international development funding especially from the United States. Liberia was the second biggest receiver of United States’ funding, second to Israel, besides the blatant gross violations of human rights that
governed Doe’s security regime. Doe and his cronies accumulated most of the funding for themselves. Again, the values and characteristics of the Liberian state were morally flawed; the criminalization of the state, which had began in the Americo-Liberian era when the indigenous groups were brutally forced to pay taxes and their land was grabbed. Legitimacy in Liberia was defined through violence as Moran (2006) rightly argues above. The values of exclusion and citizenship and torture were further redefined in terms of ethnicity in the Doe regime.

An attempted coup d’état led by Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) in December 1989, to overthrow Doe’s regime led directly to the Liberian civil war (Aloa et al, 1999). Taylor’s group had the help of mercenaries from Libya and had created enough coordination and support within Liberia, especially amongst the Mano and Gio people who were tortured by Doe’s regime (Kieh, 2008). Although Taylor’s army had the approval of many civilians, the ethnic composition of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), which was of Krahn ethnicity versus Taylor’s NPLF of mostly Mano and Gio set the scene for the outbreak of the civil war (Aloa et al, 1999). Aloa et al (1999) further argues that “unfortunately, brutal revenge-reaping was not the monopoly of the AFL; the NPFL in turn terrorized those thought to be Doe supporters and the conflict quickly degenerated into an inter-ethnic slaughter” (p. 20-21).

The Liberian conflict introduced other grave features—child soldiers. The AFL recruited children to carry out their atrocities, while hundreds of other children as young as 12 years old who were orphaned by the Doe’s military joined the reigns of the NPFL (Aloa et al, 1999). Soon the whole country was in disarray, 600,000 Liberians sought
refuge in neighboring countries, while “churches, schools, hospitals all became directly involved in the violence” (Aloa et al, 1999, p. 21). The civil war further intensified when Yomie Johnson broke away from Taylor’s NPFL to form the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), creating three military factions fighting for one crown of state power. INPFL was only one of the few factions that appeared during the course of the war, contributing to the shaping of the Liberian state to the land of warlords (Aloa et al, 1999). At this point, the state had collapsed completely- it disappeared into ashes of destruction (Zounmenou, 2008).

Despite the failure of the Abuja Agreement of August 1995, the extended peace agreement known as Abuja II of 1996 paved the way for the end of the civil war in 1997 which led to the election of Taylor as president in 1997 as stated earlier (Aloa et al, 1999). Just like his successor Doe, Taylor’s regime had rampant corruption, with Taylor and his cronies accumulating state funds for their personal accounts. Under Taylor’s leadership, Liberia became a destabilizing force in the conflicts of other West African states, such as, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d’Ivoire causing concern in the region (Aloa et al, 1999). Despite the plans for reconstruction and development the behavior and values of the state remained violent and corrupt, Taylor and his group embezzled state funds, crushed opposition and contributed yet again to the people of Liberia’s betrayal with this continuation of violence under so called democracies (Moran, 2006).

a peacekeeping operation to contain the violence in Liberia (UNMIL, 2005). The
Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the government and warring factions was
signed in Accra, Ghana, 2005. Part of the agreement was the presence of a
multidimensional United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) - a 15 000 member
peacekeeping mission, to oversee the transition. Five years later UNMIL is still operating
in Liberia.

Upon Taylor’s exit, Liberia held elections in 2005; the country added another first
in its historical records, from becoming the first African Black Republic to electing the
first female President in Africa, Johnson- Sirleaf. Her government perhaps faces the
toughest task of all- the nation building project, a nation whose beginnings as
demonstrated above were flawed back in 1847. The election of 2005 not only produced
Africa’s first female president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, but it also demonstrated a
commitment to reconstruction and development in a war-ravished nation. Despite this
progress, Liberia’s young democracy still faces the multiple challenges of “restoration of
state authority, security sector reform, economic recovery and national reconciliation”
(Zounmenou, 2008, p. 1). Liberia’s history reveals this complex challenge for Liberia to
redirect the history of corrupt governance, the use of the security sector to isolate and
protect certain sections of Liberian society and use of brutal violence to acquire both
political and economic legitimacy and to distribute resources. The challenge for the
postconflict Liberian state is to transform resource distribution from a reliance on
resources allocation through violence to equitable distribution that emphasizes national
unity and reconciliation.
1.3 The Conflict Trap

Paul Collier (2007) argues that there is a limit to the amount of economic progress a nation can achieve in a certain amount of time, however there is no limit to how much a country’s economy can collapse. Liberia presents a classic case of the limitlessness of economic destruction. In the years preceding the war and more so during the war, Liberia’s political collapse was preceded by the economic downfall of the nation’s Growth Domestic Product which holds a record for the world’s most catastrophic collapse of 90% between 1987 and 1995, as well as a significant drop in agricultural production, the shutting down of mining timber production and rubber plantations while rice production fell by 76% between 1987 and 2005, a complete collapse of financial services by 93%, water and electricity by 85% and a complete destruction of the national infrastructure (Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2008).

About 1.7 million Liberians (63.8%) out of the countries’ estimated 3.5 million people live below the poverty line. About 1.3 million people are living under extreme conditions of poverty (Liberia Poverty Strategy 2008, p. 25). As well, “poverty is higher in rural areas (67.7 percent) than in urban areas (55 percent)...since about 70 percent of the population lives in rural areas, about three-quarters (73 percent) of the poor live in rural areas” (Liberia Poverty Strategy 2008, p. 25). Most alarming as well is that poverty is most pervasive amongst the young people and children between 10-19 years old 67.4% of them live below the poverty line (Liberia Poverty Strategy 2008, p. 28). Poverty is highest in homes where livelihoods are dependent on “fishing, farming, mining/quarrying, and those who are unemployed or inactive” while poverty is lower for
those in the services sectors such as banking and other financial services. Furthermore, in rural areas “farmers, hunters, female-headed households, returnees and disabled persons are perceived to be the poorest, while warlords, ex-combatants and their relatives are perceived to be better off” (Liberia Poverty Strategy 2008, p. 28).

Liberia’s Poverty Reduction Strategy is most instructive when answering the social definition of poverty in both rural and urban Liberia; the government finds that in the rural areas poverty is seen as a “lack of material objects, roads, market access, social structures and services, employment, housing, food and a large family size…in urban areas, people associate poverty with unemployment, low income, high costs for medicine and education, limited market access and sanitation” (Liberia Poverty Strategy 2008, p. 28). Echoing Sen’s (1980) entitlement approach to the collapse of entitlements, it can be argued that the civil war not only destroyed own production endowments but also collapsed market endowments. Market access being one of the biggest collapses, according to the Liberian Poverty Strategy (2008):

Currently there is only around 700km of paved road surface, almost all of which is damaged, and 1600 km of unpaved roads, which are mostly in need of repair. Farm-to-market access is a paramount concern, and parts of the country remain cut off during the rainy season. It takes at least an hour for most rural dwellers to access a food market or the nearest potential transport option. Roads are central to reducing poverty, as they open-income-earning opportunities for the poor, improve access to health and education facilities, reduce transport costs and commodity prices, and help strengthen local governance (p. 29).

Correctly so, the Liberian government conceives of food insecurity as also caused poor access to health, water, sanitation services. With a life expectancy of only 45 years, Liberians in 2008 Liberians depended on 51 physicians and 297 midwives covering public health in the whole country (Liberia Poverty Strategy 2008). The Liberian Poverty
Strategy has established a Steering Committee headed by the president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf with the cabinet, Liberia Reconstruction and Development Committee, UN, ECOWAS, China, World Bank, European Commission, AU, and IMF (Liberia Poverty Strategy 2008). The committee is guided by four pillars: peace and security, economic revitalization, governance and rule of law and infrastructure and basic services pillar. Similarly to the continental policy on postconflict reconstruction by the AU, Liberia’s strategy reveals a much needed shift from a conception of poverty as a health or nutrition issue to an all encompassing approach.

Liberia like many African countries is an agricultural economy; however land tenure disputes are not only a threat to the economy but to the nation building process as well particularly because land is a cultural extension of one’s identity, inability to point to a homeland has bitter implications for peace and security. As the research questions posed in this thesis will show below, much focus will be dedicated to examining land reform for the rural farmers and the youth, but mostly this thesis will use the case of Liberians threatened with forceful return to Liberia from the US to demonstrate the urgency of land tenure reform and its implications for the nation building process. The underlying argument put forward and supported by literature below is that transitional justice and more so reconciliation for postconflict societies is based on how people see their lives improvement compared to conditions of war; poverty is at the centre of criteria. This thesis will seek to establish a link between land reform and postconflict reconstruction as poverty reduction strategy and as a contribution to the establishment of
justice and reconciliation in Liberia and identity as the primary means by which land tenure reform could contribute to postconflict reconstruction.

1.4 The 16th County: The Liberian Diaspora in the US and “New African Diasporas”

On the street corners of New York City, recently arrived West African traders sell to African Americans artefacts that appeal to their nostalgia for an Africa that no longer exists. In the schools of London, one percent of children speaks Somali, while Yoruba is the ninth most common second language among children and Akan is the thirteenth. In Paris there are over two thousand African Associations. Ghanaians in Toronto closely monitor the price of cement in Ghana, in order to build houses at home as cheaply as possible. The majority of Eritreans in the UK and Germany pay to the Eritrean state an annual contribution amounting to two per cent of their incomes. Somali communities in the USA and Europe send home the equivalent of over 120 million US dollars per year these remittances regularly doubling the average household income in parts of Somalia (Koser, 2003 p. 1).

In Diaspora Politics, Sheffer (2003) defines the Diaspora as implying of a “forcible dispersion” which is found in the biblical text the Deuteronomy which defines the Diaspora as “scattering to other lands” in this context, by the Jews (p. 266). Despite its linguistic origin in the Greek language, Diaspora as a term has largely been defined and originated from the Jewish experience. As Sheffer (2003) argues, it is only in the 1990s that the term Diaspora began to be defined in its broad and encompassing definition. According to Sheffer (2003) both Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary and the New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary respectively defined the term as “the settling of scattered colonies of Jews and outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile,” and the dispersion of the Jews among the Gentile nations” (p. 9).

Since then Diaspora literature, Sheffer (2003) argues, has grown to reflect a broad and encompassing definition as referring to a “socio-political formation, created as a
result of either voluntary or forced migration whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries” (p. 9). Safran in Cohen (1999) defines Diaspora as referring to “expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities” (p. 273). Amongst several characterizes of the Diaspora Cohen (1999) outlines, central to characteristics of a Diaspora includes a “dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions…a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements…an idealization of the putative ancestral home and collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even its creation” (p. 274). The Liberian Diaspora encompasses these above characteristics.

Unlike the Jewish, Indian, Italian and Kurdish, Mexican, Diasporas which dominate most of the literature on Diaspora politics, the Liberian Diaspora is a young Diaspora much like the “New African Diaporas” as argued by Koser (2003). Koser (2003) argues that the new Diasporas are those departing from what is known as the “original African diaspora [which] rose from the dispersal of Africans as a result of the slave trade” (p. 1). In essence the concept of Africa’s new Diasporas is concerned with “migrations from post-colonial Africa (arguably with the exception of Eritreans who fled before Eritrean independence) and usually in the last twenty years or so” (Koser, 2003 p. 4).

As Zeleza (2005) argues:

In recent years, Diaspora has become a popular term of critical and public discourse, a popularity it shares with narratives of globalization and
transnationalism, which seek to contest the old settled identities of nation and race and even class and gender and celebrate the energies of multiple subjectivities (p.35)

It is estimated that between 250,000 and 500,000 Liberians live in the United States (US) (Liberians In Columbus, Inc, 2009). The numbers were increased by the civil war when thousands of Liberians came to the US seeking refuge from the war. Since, 1991 the US has been giving extended protection to Liberians under the Temporary Protected Status (TPS), which allowed Liberians to work in the US. This temporary status was ended by the Department of Homeland Security in October 1, 2007. Liberians who are living in the US have been given another temporary status under Deferred Enforced Departure (DED), which was set to end March 31, 2010 (US Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2009). It is estimated that “approximately 3,600 Liberian nationals are currently protected under DED and are eligible to receive employment authorization in the United States” (US Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2009). The end of their DED status will mean that they can no longer work in the US. They will have to move back to Liberia.

This was until DED status was further extended by US President Barack Obama March, 19, 2010 for another 18 months from the March 31, 2010. Obama stated that “I have determined that there are compelling foreign policy reasons to again extend DED to those Liberians presently residing in the United States under the existing grant of DED… I have determined that it is in the foreign policy interest of the United States to defer for 18 months the removal of any Liberian national, or person without nationality who last habitually resided in Liberia, who is present in the United States and who is under a grant
of DED as of March 31, 2010” (Presidential Memorandum-- Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians, 2010). Despite the 18 months extension by the US government, this group of Liberians on DED still faces the same threat of forced return to Liberia unless the US government changes drastically changes its current policy to grant these Liberians permanent status in the next months. Due to this continuing uncertainty about the condition of these Liberians, the questions asked in this thesis remain urgent as they were pending the termination of DED March 31, 2010.

Moran (2005) argues that most of these people compose of the “country’s educated elite and former political officials…far from passively observing events as they unfold in West Africa, these people have been actively organizing actively to influence outcomes at home as well as American foreign policy toward Liberia” (Moran, 2005 p. 459). Using the Liberian crisis of 2003 when violent erupted once again in Liberia leading to Charles Taylor final departure to exile in Nigeria, Moran recalls a meeting in Bloomington, Indiana composed of Liberians who were mostly former government officials and American scholars of Liberia under the banner “the purpose is to begin a discussion designed to provide a deeper understanding of Liberian governance institutions and their potential to contribute to peace and democratic governance in Liberia” (p. 459). She states that while Liberians in Monrovia were dropping dead bodies of their loved ones in front of the US embassy in Liberia, Diaspora Liberians “were earnestly and creatively engaged in trying to re-imagine governance in Liberia as if Charles Taylor had already been disposed of” (Moran, 2005 p. 460). Moran (2006) continues to argue insightfully that this meeting which was reconstructing Liberia that it
was “quite clear, moreover, that the frank discussion of the kind that was taking place in Bloomington could not have occurred openly in Monrovia, where Taylor’s security apparatus maintained tight control and activists were routinely jailed and beaten…in this context, it was the displacement of the participants from the site of the “events” that made their intervention possible” (p. 460).

Furthermore, Moran (2005) argues that during the crisis of 2003 various organizations such as Liberian Studies Association were forced to examine their political purpose whether or not they should make public statement about the crisis. While after Taylor’s departure from office 26 Liberians participated in a Liberia Peace and Democracy Workshop organized by the University of Pennsylvania, “sought to make recommendations to help the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) effectively implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement…” (Moran, 2005 p. 462). As well recommendations from this democracy workshop were distributed to the “key stakeholders of Liberia” such as the UN International Contact Group on Liberia, ECOWAS, the US State Department, the EU, AU, and NGOs (p. 462).

Correctly so, Moran (2005) concludes that it is unclear how the recommendations from this workshop influenced the final language of the CPA, “what it certain, however, is that those attending the conference in Accra knew that they were being closely watched by diaspora Liberians…” (p. 462). As well Moran (2005) records a follow up meeting in Delaware in September of 2003, which led to several key organizers and participants travelling to Liberia to advise on new government positions for the transitional government NTGL, “ranging from Minister of Communications to President of the
University of Liberia” some became consultants of the government and the National Governance Reform Commission (Moran, 2005 p. 463). As well Diaspora Liberians February 2004 participated in a historic “Virtual Town Meeting” organized by the US Institute for Peace which featured a webcast conversation Charles Gyude Bryant who was the chairman of the NTGL, “Liberians all located all over the world were instructed in how to download the software to participate” (p. 463).

Indeed, it is no coincidence that government of Liberia refers to the Diaspora as the “16th County.” The Liberian Diaspora continues to play an intrinsic part of peace building in Liberia. The current government recognized the value of the Diaspora by extending the work of the TRC of Liberia to the US. The Diaspora formed part of the constituencies of which the TRC held hearings about the human rights violations of the civil war. Advocates for Human Rights located in Minnesota launched the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission Project in January 2007 (Advocates for Human Rights, 2009). The organization documented statements from Liberians in the US and in June 2008, the TRC held public hearings/testimonies from Liberians in the US in ST Paul, Minnesota. The final report by the Advocates for Human Rights commission entitled “A House with Two Rooms” (2009) has been included as an appendix in the final TRC report in Liberia which was made public July, 1, 2009.

1.5 Liberian Diaspora and Land Tenure

The government of Liberia should adopt measures to regain national unity. In particular, this recommendation includes adopting measures to combat discrimination and to protect linguistic rights, land rights, and cultural rights, paying particular attention to disabled persons and minorities. Such efforts should
cut across all sectors and levels, including constitutional and other legal reforms, changes to educational policies and curricula, and the development of national strategies to protect against discrimination and to promote social and cultural rights (2009).

The quote above is amongst the priority recommendations of the report on the Diaspora, “Taking steps towards reconciliation,” chapter two of the report. The section above established the Diaspora’s role in postconflict reconstruction. However, it is important to outline that the specific nature of the Diaspora as stakeholders in the land tenure process at home beyond the threat of departure of certain members of this community. In Chapter thirteen of the Diaspora TRC report titled “Everyone is scattered: experiences of the Liberian Diaspora” Liberians give testimony that beyond years of being unable to locate many of their family members due to displacement, many Liberians in the Diaspora lost a lot of property and land during the war. Therefore, “many resettled Liberians see themselves as entitled to citizenship in Liberia and to its benefits, such as land ownership and government jobs” (Liberia's TRC Diaspora Report, 2009, p. 374). Much of this discussion for Diaspora Liberians and those back home has been the discussion of dual citizenship. During the war some Liberians became citizens of their host nations, however the issue is that Liberia does not allow for dual citizenship. Therefore, these Liberians who are now citizens of the US for instance do not have the right to own property in their home country and many of them feel “wrongly disenfranchised” because they argue that their decisions were informed by the brutality of war back home (Liberia's TRC Diaspora Report, 2009, p. 374).

As well some Liberians in the Diaspora reported to the TRC that they are directly affected by the current land tenure regime at home because it constitutionally only allows
for people of “negro descent to own property and have a government position” (Liberia's TRC Diaspora Report, 2009, p. 374). This has made some Liberians to argue that “there should be no restrictions on a man who has been out of his country through no fault of his own on going back and wanting to help his country and also taking a spouse and children who may be of different race” (Liberia's TRC Diaspora Report, 2009, p. 374-375).

While the TRC Diaspora Report (2009) also outlined that “apart from feeling entitled to dual citizenship, many diaspora Liberians feel that they have something to contribute to Liberia after having been abroad and having gained new education and experiences that would aid Liberia’s rebuilding” of which agricultural development is one of (p. 375). For instance some Liberians argue that young Liberians with US or British citizenship are unlikely to forego their citizenship for Liberians citizenship because of economic reasons of stability in these countries. While another equally economic argument is that of these Liberians are not forbidden their Liberian citizenship they will not have the incentive to invest on Liberian land or even returning to Liberia (Liberia's TRC Diaspora Report, 2009).

Young and Park (2009) argued that part of the Liberian Diaspora TRC project was to examine “whether diaspora engagement should be a part of a transitional justice mechanism” continue to argue that “the successful conclusion of the LTRC [Liberian TRC] Diaspora Project provides a generally affirmative answer. Moreover, there is a clearly wider interest in such inclusion…the Advocates [for Human Rights] has received inquiries about adapting the LTRC Diaspora Project in Kenya, Zimbabwe and the Somali diaspora about adapting the LTRC Diaspora Project model to their contexts” (Young and
Park, 2009, p. 347). In asking what is the role of Liberians in the Diaspora in the land reform process and how does the role of the Diaspora shape the contribution of land tenure reforms to wider political reconciliation? This thesis seeks to examine whether this Diaspora with its government can set another African precedent and whether or not they should set another precedent which determines yet another role of the Diaspora from TRC to other processes such as land tenure. Should Liberians in the Diaspora have the same rights to land as Liberians at home even if they are citizens of other countries? What are potential benefits and risks of having this section of the population direct stakeholders in this land tenure process?

Therefore the role of Diaspora Liberians in this research is more than that of being a window on the land tenure-political reconciliation process in Liberia, but rather they are themselves situated actors in this relationship. These Liberians carry a unique positionality; some are threatened with forced return home which has raised question about their conditions of return, the availability of land for them. Some are engaged in this process already as citizens of their host nations who still see themselves as first and foremost Liberians, who feel that they should have a right to own land at home. Particularly because they did not leave the country out of choice but were forced out of the country by the civil war. Some are engaged in this process as family members who are not recognized by the current Liberian constitution as eligible land owners due to their race.

Indeed, as Moran (2005) argues “the recognition and incorporation of diaspora communities in significant events of their homeland is not limited, of course, to the case
of Liberia. The present Mozambican parliament includes a seat reserved for the representation of expatriates and the Iraqi elections of January 2005 were designed to include diaspora communities all over the globe” (p. 464). It remains to be seen whether other “new African diasporas” such as those of contemporary Zimbabwe which collapsed amidst land disputes leading to millions of Zimbabwens leaving the country will need to consider the same questions and strategies as Liberia. And perhaps at the point when Zimbabwe can address such questions as land reform, transitional justice and reconciliation it will be able to reflect on the Liberian example and other cases for a way forward.

Furthermore, research on new African Diasporas remains a relatively neglected reflected both in the informal nature of the relationship of the Liberian government and the Diaspora as well as the absence of the role of the Diaspora in the African Union’s reconstruction policy despite the multidimensional and evolved nature of the policy. This thesis seeks to also contribute to understanding how African states emerging from war negotiate the role of their populations that have been displaced by war both informally and formally as part of institution building and nation building.

1.6 Definition of Terms

It is important to note that the term postconflict reconstruction forms part of the process of peace building which encapsulates all the inter-linked phases of peace. The term peace-building came to prominent use in the early 1990s, amongst its first proponents is former UN secretary general Boutros Boutros Ghali’s paper “An Agenda for Peace,” he defined the term as inclusive of rebuilding the institutions and
infrastructures of nations ragged by war and a building of friendly relationships between
nations formerly engaged in conflict “in the largest sense, to address the deepest causes
of conflict: economic despair, social injustice and political oppression” (Report of the
Secretary-General, 1992). As many in the field of peace have identified, the term peace-
building is complex as it can be used to mean different things (Arneil and Manning,
1997:2). Upon closer inspection peace-building is very similar if not the same as post-
conflict reconstruction, the difference however is that peace-building encapsulates all the
stages of peace from peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction.

In essence, the postconflict environment is a multidimensional approach to ending
conflict and mapping out a transition to sustainable livelihoods and development. This
demanding phase of reconstruction entails according to Boutros-Ghali (1992) the ability
to “address the deepest causes of conflict: economic despair, social injustice and political
oppression.” It might seem that Boutrous-Ghali’s “Agenda for Peace” is self-explanatory
however at the dawn of the end of the Cold War in 1992, this conception of preventative
diplomacy which entailed asking the international community to assist nations emerging
from war with a long term assistance by being part of the reconstruction process, was not
a dominant thought since diplomacy in a polarized Cold War world largely centered
around peacemaking and peacekeeping.

Postconflict then becomes a multidimensional in a sense that it has several
demands that have to be addressed by the state or else there is a potential to fall back into
conflict, as laid out by Murithi (2006: 17) and Crispin Grey- Johnson (2005, 4-5) these
dimensions are:
1. Security (a need for security reform different to that conditioned by culture of conflict)
2. Political transition, governance and participation (restoration of established authority throughout the country through robust peace and capacity building)
3. Socio-economic development (a launch and re-launch of economic activity)
4. Human rights, justice and reconciliation
5. And coordination, management and resource mobilization (a need for a creation of an inter-agency (economic terms) programme to complement peace building efforts)

The peacekeeping process which is usually followed by the peacemaking process where the political settlements are agreed upon such as Liberia’s CPA in the postconflict phase are usually followed by an immediate security sector reform much like the hierarchy above by Murithi (2006) and Grey-Johnson (2005). This term used for the security reform is Disarmament Demobilization Reintegration and Rehabilitation (DDRR) process.

This thesis will be examining the link between security sector reform and Liberia’s economic reality by examining the Liberians DDRR process which was led by UNMIL in chapter two. While the next section of this chapter will focuses on Liberia’s socio-economic development particularly looking at the ways in which land contributes to the re-launch of economic activity as outlined above by the Liberian Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008) and reconciliation by looking at the findings of the Liberian TRC.

The AU subscribes to the assertion that countries emerging from war have greater chances of slipping back into war within a period of five years (African Union, 2007). As Collier (2007) explains” the end of the civil war often is not the end of the conflict; once over, a conflict is alarmingly likely to restart. Furthermore, the experience
of having been through [a] civil war roughly doubles the risk of another conflict” (p. 27). He argues that statistically “only around half of the countries in which a conflict has ended manage to make it through a decade without relapsing into war [and] the risk that a country in the bottom billion falls into civil war in any five-year period is nearly one in six, the same risk facing a player of Russian roulette” (Collier, 2007, p 32).

In the case of Liberia, the two phases of the civil war 1989-1996, 1999-2003 are testament to five year conflict trap argument. Collier in Miller (2003) states that this is largely due to the fact that post conflict states still face the very challenges that led to warfare, primarily, “if before a war a country had low average income, rural areas well endowed with natural resources, a hostile neighbor, a large Diaspora, after war it is still likely to have these characteristics” (p. 9). According to Collier and Hoeffler “On the Incidence of Civil War in Africa” (2002) and “On Economic Causes of Civil War” (1998), the rate of per capita income and the condition of natural resources attribute to greater chances of civil war; the higher the per capita income the lower the chances of civil war. While natural resources increase the chance of civil warfare if captured by rebel factions, and lessens the chances if state authority over resources has been well established. For Collier and Hoeffler (2002), natural resources of which land is one exist as an economic, social and political entity. Conflict occurs when groups are denied access to these resources on these multiple levels.

This thesis is concerned with the distribution of land as a socio-political and economic resource for Liberian people and how the distribution and access to land has implications for peace or potential for the lack of peace- civil war. Such as the above
dynamics noted by Collier and Hoeffler (1998; 2002) the thesis examines links between land access and per capita income by looking at the most vulnerable groups the rural farmers, the youth and the role of the Liberian Diaspora in the reconstruction of Liberia.
CHAPTER TWO: POST-CONFLICT LAND TENURE

A father walks his son past a house he had owned, or land the family owned. He points them out to his son, and says, “This was ours, then they took it”. The boy will remember (Bruce, 2007, p. 2)

Violent conflict, especially prolonged, is disastrous for the whole country, but rural areas experience the most severe effects of conflict to the already poor infrastructure and the large displacement of the infrastructure caused by war (Collier & Hoeffler, 2002; Daudelin, 2003; Unruh, 2004). After war, the displaced return to their communities with different labels, some as former refugees and some as former members of militia groups. This creates a delicate environment for the establishment of sound governance caused by the separation between the national peace processes due to the destroyed infrastructure during war. The local administration is left to address the weight of post-conflict access to resources, primarily land, by at once staying true to customary procedures or other systems in place without evoking conflicts that provoked the war in the first place with regards to resources (Unruh, 2004; Unruh, 2008; Unruh, 2009).

Thomson’s paper, “Access to Land in Post-Conflict Situations” (2003), and several case studies, such as those conducted in Kosovo, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Nicaragua and East Timor; provide a description of the results of post-conflict land tenure at a formal state administration level. From these case studies core issues were identified that link land directly to the continuation or eruption of violence- access, security, distribution and tenure regime governance (Daudelin, 2003, Richards, 2005; Unruh, 2004, Unruh 2009). As Unruh (2008) argues, the access to land comes at different levels- “the scramble for the land-based assets necessary to re-establish
livelihoods for large numbers of people, together with pursuit of land access by large scale commercial interests, speculators, and others, brings how actors intersect with land-based resources to the forefront of the peace process very quickly” (p. 103). Often the peace process is concentrated on issues of disarmament and demobilization, but land becomes the determinant of the endurance of the peace process because when the conflicting parties disarm and demobilize, they need land and other resources to make a living. Civil war puts into disrepute land tenure rights, breaks relationships through displacement, and destroys institutions, the challenge for reconstruction is how to ensure access for others and re-access to land for others without slipping back to violence (Unruh, 2008).

Insecurity of tenure in post-conflict states is one of the core issues, especially in African countries where customary land tenure system is used to secure access. “In pre-conflict settings formal land dispute resolution employed by the state can favor claimants in possession of some form of documentation as evidence for a claim and often ignore customary evidence” (Unruh, 2004). Customary land tenure system uses community and lineage and physical signs as the security measure for land rights (Daudelin, 2003). Customary land tenure system becomes an extension of historical group identity, the threat for violence occurs when access is denied, therefore the groups sees the denial and the denial of identity and citizenship. Countries merging from war face the challenge of uniting the formal land tenure system of document evidence and the customary system used by the majority of the rural population. Distribution, as a core issue, is the outcome of the state’s ability to intervene from a state level to the bottom level, or bottom up
distribution in which the local people are given the opportunity to employ their own mechanisms for distributing land equally. Dissatisfaction in distribution very easily leads to violence.

Tenure regime governance is very important for post-conflict land tenure as it determines the rules, the authorities (state or traditional authorities), procedures, administration and dispute resolution mechanisms regarding access, security and distribution (Daudelin, 2003). Rwanda provides an example of how government tackles the land question by unifying its formal procedures with the informal land tenure procedures of the rural population (Unruh, 2008). Like in Liberia, pre-colonial land tenure in Rwanda was governed by customary law which meant that land rights were passed from generation to generation. Belgium introduced private ownership through written law which was mostly in urban areas. Up until Rwanda gained independent until the new land tenure regime, “land access, ownership and control have governed by a dual system of land tenure: customary law and written law” (Dushimimana, 2007, p. 14).

2.1 The Case of Rwanda and postconflict land tenure

Below is a brief account of the Rwandese land tenure history and postconflict land tenure reform process. Much like Liberia, Rwanda had to address large population displacement. The Rwandese experience is used here to examine how Liberia can draw lessens from this experience, such as reconciling communal and statutory land tenure systems, violent displacement and how this process should be connected to other political processes such as reconciliation and justice in the case of the Rwandese Gacaca courts.
After independence Rwanda went through a violent social revolution between the Union Nationale Rwandaise (UNAR) party led by the Tutsi and Hutu led Parti du movement de l’émancipation Hutu (PARMEHUTU) at the dawn of independence in 1959. The social revolution which sought to remove the Tutsi elite from power resulted by the “mid 1960s as many as 200,000 UNAR supporters and their families, most of them Tutsi, had either fled the country of been expelled (Takeuchi & Marara, 2009, p. 9). Yet it must be made clear that after independence not all Hutu benefited from this new hold of power, it was a minority Hutu elite who benefited until the genocide in 1994. Some Hutu moderates like it happened in during the genocide were systematically kicked out of the country during the different periods of the persecution of Tutsis from 1959 and the massacre in 1973.

By the time the Revolutionary Patriotic Front (RPF) led by current president Paul Kagame attacked the Hutu led Habyrimana regime in 1990, it is estimated that 1.5 million Rwandan refugees were involved (Takeuchi & Marara, 2009, p. 9). Rwandese refugees were located in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Tanzania and Southern Uganda. After the RPF victory in 1994, about 900,000 refugees who had left the country during the social revolution came back, these refugees are now know. While about 1.5 million Hutu refugees who had fled the country after the RPF took power in 1994, returned in 1996 after the civil war in the DRC began (Takeuchi & Marara, 2009, p. 9). This is the reason that Rwanda is one of the most highly densely populated countries in Africa.
At the national level, the Ministry of Lands, Environments, Forestry, Water and Mines has the mandate and authority for land administration and management systems for urban and rural registration, except for the capital city, Kigali City Council. The National Land Policy of 2004 calls for the creation of land registries for all the 104 and 8 urban municipalities, to accommodate both the formal and informal tenure systems (Rurangwa, 2004). The formal system is applied to “high value land, urban areas and commercial enterprises or other land users required detailed documentation for legal and financial purposes” while a “system of local land registration for the majority of rural areas will be developed and managed by the Districts. This process will be vastly aided by use of high resolution photomaps derived from aerial photography, also proposed as a tool for local level land use planning, to facilitate reconciliation of individual and family rights will land parcels” (Rurangwa, 2004, p. No page number).

The reality however, is that most of the registration since 2004 is in the urban areas, while in the rural areas it has been concentrated on commercial agriculture farming registration and other large organizations such as churches as opposed to individuals (Rurangwa, 2004). Land registration is crucial to tenure security, as it solves the problem of evidence of ownership. As a result of this slow process of tenure registration and the complicated nature of registration in addressing returnees the old and new who are trying to secure the same piece of land, local leaders in the rural areas have initiated “land sharing, whereby those who held land were ‘encouraged’ to share it with earlier returnees and other landholders” (Bruce, 2007, p. 1). While many refugees were re-settled in resettlement villages known as the mudugudu a “compulsory relocation and villagisation”
programme (Bruce, 2007, p. 1). The informal land sharing process led by local leaders in rural areas has been highly successful. According to Takeuchi and Marara (2009) land sharing is successful because it is a personal agreement between individuals and families involved, without the mediation of the formal courts.

Even the Gacaca traditional court system charged with administering the violent killings of the 1994 genocide has been criticized for being slow and not linked to the land reform process. However the villagisation programme has been criticized by donor organization and human rights organizations as many of the refugees were resettled to very poor communities with no livelihood systems. Bruce (2007) argues that “some who will be prosecuted are occupying the lands of those killed in the genocide. It is not clear how those landholdings will be dealt with by the gacacas, which have the power to order redress for the families of those killed” (p. 2).

Lastly and importantly, Dushimimana (2007) argues the National Land Policy of Rwanda does not address access to land by the youth. This is despite the fact that the youth are 36% of the total population. According to Dushimimana (2007) “…many young people lost several years of their education and professional careers due to life in the Diaspora; others lost their families belonging in the genocide and the war. Most of them are generally poor and live in rural areas where they experience all the difficulties mentioned above especially landlessness and unemployment” (Dushimimana, 2007, p. 1-2).

The key lessons Liberia can take from Rwanda’s land tenure process is a much more inclusive negotiation of returnee land access. The land tenure challenge in indeed a
complex one as it has to simultaneously address conditions of internal displacement, re-establishing agricultural livelihoods, addressing land access right of an uneducated and militant youth as well as negotiating re-access for both the internally and externally displaced sections of the community without evoking hostilities between sections of the populations.

2. 2 Situating the Liberian Problem: Land Tenure and Citizenship

To date however there has been no examination of Liberia in a postwar land tenure context, despite the primary role land tenure played in the cause and maintenance of the war, and will play in meeting the challenges of the postwar socio-political environment and providing a foundation for durable peace and development (Unruh, 2009, p. 426)

In Liberia, land acquisition was different for the indigenous groups (who mostly occupy the interior of the country) and the settler Americo-Liberian elites (located in the coastal regions). The elites introduced private property ownership as opposed to usufruct rights used by the indigenous groups (Unruh, 2009). Usufruct rights is a customary law which gives an individual or family the legal right to use land that belongs to another person for either personal benefit or profit, withstanding that there is no damage to the property. The state has historically manipulated customary land rights as it sees fit, in the 1950s the Kwa indigenous group as opposed to others had rights to private property ownership; the Kwa were considered as civilized by the elite, therefore enjoyed special status (Unruh, 2009). The Government violently intervened in the interior for commercial interests, such as for foreign private investments like Firestone for rubber in the 1920s, while some private companies received concessions for timber and minerals.
Increasingly, the government transferred land in rural areas from the customary system to the statutory tenure system by the Americo-Liberian through deeds permitted by rural chiefs (Unruh, 2009).

2.3 Land Access after Civil War

Four years after Johnson-Sirleaf’s government came into power, the disarmament and demobilization of the security forces, the police, and the military have been a general success (UNMIL Report, 2009; Zounmenou, 2008, Unruh, 2009). Yet, as pointed out in the latest UNMIL progress report (2009), based on the finding of the TRC, “land rights in particular are a concern, and a potential exists that contentious land issues could degenerate into extremely problematic situations if not addressed in a timely, effective fashion” (Unruh, 2009, p. 425; Richards, 2005 UNMIL Report, 2009). Two fundamental challenges that remain and were exacerbated by the civil war include the continued exploitation of rural labor at the hands of the rural elite and the disfranchised youth, who were the biggest age group of fighters in the war (Unruh, 2008). The thousands of young people, who under customary tenure law have no rights to land or at least no immediate land access, are the most vulnerable group economically and socially; they are also most vulnerable to be manipulated to military mobilization by the elites—therefore posing immediate threat to peace (Richards, 2005; Unruh, 2008). As Richards (2005) rightly asserts, “reform of rural rights seems as urgent an issue as tracking the gun-runners or diamond- and timber-smugglers” (p. 588).
Unruh (2009) argues that the key land tenure problem in Liberia is the “massive confusion that exists on a range of legal, administrative, boundary, claim, and ownership issues” (p. 427). Liberia faces the core challenges of access, security, distribution and tenure regime governance discussed above. There is confusion regarding security rights on ownership, specifically on who owns the rights and how they own those rights, and there is further confusion and uncertainty on the process of resolving disputes due to a lack of regime authority/governance (Unruh, 2009). The civil war and the displacement caused by it distorted the countries’ boundaries, and created a confusion on distinguishing who are the rightful owners of the land. This confusion led to the violent conflict that still erupts in the country. Like other post-conflict land tenure dilemmas, Liberia faces the dilemma in deciding what comprises as legitimate evidence in the dispute resolutions for land and property claims. The problem is identifying which evidence is most legitimate, historical or physical evidence.

The Land Commission Act of Liberia which was approved July 24, 2009 and signed into law by President Johnson-Sirleaf August 5, 2009 will establish official government policy framework that will guide the land tenure reform in all levels, national and local (All Africa News Report, 2009). The approved bill calls for the establishment of a seven-member team under the leadership of one chairperson and a lifespan of five years of the commission. The approved bill is tellingly different from the original proposed bill to the legislature which called for a fifteen-member commission with two vice chairpersons and a perpetual life span for the work of the commission. Therefore, the Land Commission of Liberia has the responsibility within the limited 5 years to address
multiplicity of land tenure insecurity in Liberia in order to make appropriate recommendations for government policy. The commission does not have the power to implement its recommendations; it can only propose/suggest policy to the government for implementation. To an extent it can be argued that perhaps the decision of the Liberian legislature to a 5 year deadline was a lesson learnt from the Rwandan experience.

2.4 Rural Livelihood Diversity and the Place of Agriculture in Postconflict societies

According to Ellis (1999) a livelihood is “defined as the activities, the assets, and the access that jointly determine the living gained by an individual or household” rural livelihood is therefore defined as “the process by which households construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities for survival and in order to improve their standard of living” (p. 2). According to Bryceson (1999) the Sustainable Livelihoods approach is concerned with the “complexity of rural and livelihoods and their growing non-agricultural character” (P. 173). In the context of this thesis which is examining the impact of land tenure as related to other nation building processes of reconciliation by evaluating the different uses of land.

This section on rural livelihood diversity is a recognition that in discussing the role of land as a political, economic and social entity this thesis is remains aware of the changes that are currently taking place in developing areas regarding agriculture. The discussion of the DDRR process specialization chosen by ex-combatants is revealing of this “growing non-agricultural character” of the livelihood systems of developing and postconflict societies. Ellis (1999) states that in sub-Saharan Africa alone a “range of 30-
50 per cent reliance on non-farm income sources is common”; Southern Africa for example demonstrates a case that “reliance on agriculture tends to diminish continuously as income level rises” (p. 3). In parts of the developing world such as south Asia “60 per cent of household income is from non-farm sources” (Ellis, 1999, p. 3). This trend is essentially what Bryceson (1999) terms the “depeasantization in the African countryside” which implies that agriculture is increasingly becoming irrelevant to African development, much like other parts in the world.

However, Bryceson (1999) also argues that the diversification of formerly agricultural livelihoods should not imply that agriculture is not important because the current means of income diversification used by rural dwellers are themselves “non-committal” (p. 174). Bryceson (1999) drawing on Collier and Gunning, argues that although rural livelihoods diversification reduces household vulnerability to poverty, “income diversification sacrifices the gains of specialization in favour of spreading risks over multiple income-generating activities…in other words income diversification is not a decisive step forward, but rather a fumbling attempt to ‘make do’ in a severely deficient market environment” (p. 174). This is because majority of these multiple income generating activities belong to the informal sector. The gap however remains on how poor communities essentially translate these diverse income strategies into permanent sources of income. Due to the high rate of unemployment and severely damaged education system agricultural centered livelihood systems remains central to many poor Liberians. Most importantly, this thesis is not only concerned with the use of land only as an economic entity but the socio-political role of land tenure which remains very key in
this discussion. The example of land disputes which directly led to the collapse of the Zimbabwean state despite the fact that Zimbabwe has one of the most highly educated and urbanized populations in Africa is instructive of the remaining importance of land not only as a socio-political tool, but land as an economic tool. Therefore, in examining land tenure reform and reconciliation, this research seeks to precisely discern the extent to which land remains political essential for political reconciliation despite the presence of alternative ways of income.

2.5 Lessons from the DDRR: United Nations Mission in Liberia

As stated in the previous chapter, this section on DDRR in Liberia seeks to evaluate the extent to which this security sector reform process was connected to other national processes of reconstruction and national building. The chapter examines the degree to which the disarmament and demobilization of both the Liberian military regime and the militant civilian population was constructed as but one part precondition for peace. The chapter therefore investigates the alternative livelihoods that were promoted in particular the promotion of agricultural livelihoods.

When the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in Article IV of the agreement outlines that a need for the “deployment of an International Stabilization Force (ISF) in Liberia. Accordingly, the Parties hereby request the United Nations in collaboration with ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), the AU (African Union) and the ICGL (International Contact Group on Liberia); to facilitate, constitute, and deploy a United Nations force in the Republic of Liberia to support the
transitional government and to assist in the implementation of this Agreement” (CPA, 2003).

UNMIL was officially established by the Security Council Resolution 1509 following a report that necessitated this UN intervention by then Secretary General Kofi Annan. It must be stated that UNMIL was taking over from years of a regional effort at the hands of ECOWAS, with the regional interventions ECOMOG which had been purely regionally funded by ECOWAS and ECOMIL which was led by ECOWAS but supported and funded by the UN and other international agencies. UNMIL has two primary objections, “to support and to protect” (Aboagye & Bah, 2004, p. 95). At the time of deployment UNMIL consisted of 15,000 United Nations military personnel, with 250 military observers and 160 staff officers, and up to 1,115 civilian police officers, making it the largest UN intervention in history. The mission was to be deployed for a period of only 12 months, yet since UNMIL step foot in Liberia in October 1, 2003, six years later today UNMIL is still in Liberia. As it will be seen below in tandem with the argument of this paper the continued extension of UNMIL duties in Liberia, as recently the Secretary General has recommended that the forces be completely phased out only after the second democratic elections in 2011, demonstrates this continued dominant paradigm where the West flies in to save the day and as soon as they leave the centre begins to crumble.

UNMIL outlines its supporting role in terms of these responsibilities include vows to “support the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement, support for humanitarian and human rights assistance [and to] support security sector reform” (Aboagye & Bah, 2004,
p. 95; UNMIL, 2003). While in terms of protection the responsibilities of UNMIL include a vow to “to protect United Nations personnel, facilities, installations and equipment, ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel and, without prejudice to the efforts of the government, to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, within its capabilities” (UNMIL, 2003). UNMIL’s implementation plan is an expansive plan that identifies eight key areas of intervention outlined by Aboagye and Bah (2004, p. 95) as:

- Peace and security
- Disarmament and demobilization
- Rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants
- Establishment of the rule of law, including judiciary corrections
- Establishment of safeguards for human rights
- Provision of factual information through public media campaigns
- Coordination of UN agencies for humanitarian assistance

2.6 Understanding Disarmament Demobilization Rehabilitation and Reintegration

According to Meek and Malan (2004) the process of disarmament and demobilization consists of three objectives, to firstly “remove the tools of violence” from both combatants and armed civil population, secondly, to “reduce tensions and demilitarize politics” by emphasizing a political sphere of dialogue and negotiation, thirdly, this process seeks to “restore the power monopoly of the state. (p. 23). According to Cornwell (2004) in his article “DDR: The case of West Africa and the Great Lakes Region” demobilisation and reintegration “seek to reduce the economic and manpower burden on society of sustaining a large standing force, and reintegration describes the effort to assist ex-combatants wishing to return to rewarding and productive civilian livelihoods. Taken as a whole, DDR seeks to reduce the will and ability of combatants to
return to conflict” (p. 91). Liberia provides another aspect of the DDR by adding the element of rehabilitation, in many cases the process addresses the two Ds and the one R for reintegration. As the findings of this thesis revealed and the literature that criticized the DDRR process in Liberia, the biggest challenge of this security sector reform mechanism is providing long term reintegration opportunities to former combatants and armed civilians. Cornwell (2004) argues that this is largely due to a political and economic climate especially regarding funding agencies that is preoccupied with quick indicators, as Cornwell (2004) states “unfortunately, much media and political attention is concentrated on the highly visible, and relatively easy, DD and very little on the relatively difficult R” (p. 92). The challenge with reintegration and in the Liberian case rehabilitation, is that unlike the process of disarmament and demobilization which is the taking away of arms, this process requires the difficult task of moving a “conflict economy to a peace economy, which implies not only a change of economic activities but control over the levers of economic production and exchange themselves” (Cornwell, 2004, p. 92).

It is important to note that several African countries have undergone this security sector reform process of DDRR with varying success and challenges such as the DRC, Rwanda, Mozambique, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoire, Angola and Sudan among others. As Cornwell (2004) states in particular to Liberia is that “West Africa’s zone of conflict embraces a number of contiguous states: Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoire and Guinea” (p. 92). As Liberia’s own DDRR process will demonstrate all the different stages are extremely important as part of whole in revealing the success of these
programs and how they ultimately contribute to the nation building process. As Meek and Malan (2004) stipulate “the failure of disarmament and demobilization of former combatants has been a real concern, given the possibility of a recurrence of conflict. Reintegration of former combatants into society and back to their normal way of life, however, depends on very much on a successful DD programme” (p. 28). While Cornwell (2004) argues that in the several cases in both West Africa and the Great Lakes “the international community persists in focusing attention on the technical, military aspects of peace-building, presumably because these appear doable and relatively short term…[while] the remainder of the national economy is largely subsistence in nature, and the results of training ex-combatants or disgruntled youth prior to insertion into notional livelihoods are going to be uncertain” (p. 93-94).

Similarly, Van der Merwe and Lamb (2009) in their article “Transitional justice and the DDR: The case of South Africa” criticize the South African DDR process after Apartheid as technocratic and “one-dimensional ad hoc in nature…” they argue that the “DDR was largely seen as a technical exercise, geared toward reducing the potential threat that s sizeable population of individuals with military skills may have posed to democratization and sustainable peace…likewise, transitional justice measures failed to consider links with the DDR process (p. 4). Like other African example the integration process is regarded as the most challenging, Van der Merwe and Lamb (2009) state that a “number of problems with the integration of ex-combatants into civilian life, especially with respect to economic integration…most difficulties arose from lack of adequate planning and coordination to implement programs effectively [furthermore] studies of
demobilized combatants have found that a large percentage are unemployed, with most either being dependent on family members to provide with money, food, and shelter or else engaged in ad hoc informal sector activities” (p. 2). Furthermore the authors argue that “more than a third of the respondents indicated that they suffered from psychological problems…women reported facing additional psychological challenges: apart from exposure to war-related violence, some were the victims of sexual abuse by commanders” (Van der Merwe & Lamb, 2009, p. 2).

While the case of El Salvador’s DDR under the leadership of UN mission (ONUSAL) is very instructive to the objectives of this research where the “economic and social integration of ex-combatants was effectively implemented through an extensive land transfer programme, where ex-combatants became farmers” (Meek & Malan, 2004 p. 35).

2.7 Implementation

Phase I

The criminalization of the Liberian state by the brutal civil war which involved led to dozens of rebel factions fighting along ethnic lines called for a necessary disarmament of demobilization of the forces both on government and the side of rebel factions. Article IV of the CPA outlines a need for a formation of the cantonment, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (CDDRR) for all former combatants. Upon deployment UNMIL established a Joint Implementation Unit (JIU) “to implement all aspects of DDRR [disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation] and
to coordinate with traditional leaders, civil society, organizations and other stakeholders” (Aboagye & Bah, 2004, p. 7). This DDRR process was officially launched on December 3, 2003 as a voluntary process where former combatants were encouraged to participate in all the different phases of the process. The first phase of the DD (disarmament and demobilization) was started in the capital city Monrovia with the government soldiers in Camp Schaffelin.

During this phase a total of a total of 13,490 soldier of the Government of Liberia (GoL) combatants were disarmed, about 8,679 weapons, 2,650 unexploded ordnance and 2,217,668 rounds of small arms ammunition were collected (Aboagye & Bah, 2004). Despite this success UNMIL has been blamed for having grossly underestimated the number of former combatants who showed up and a clear lack of coordination amongst UNMIL, government partners and other actors. This is demonstrated by the small number of which heavy weapons were submitted for disarmament due to the ration of 4 to 1 between disarmed combatants and collected weapons meaning that a lot of weapons used during the war are still being circulated in the country. Aboagye and Bah (2004) argue that the “lack of adequate facilities and personnel to process the large number of GoL combatants who turned up at Camp Scheffelin pointed to the unsuitable timing of the start of the DD programme and the lack of preparedness of UNMIL and other stakeholders” (p. 7). Some even argued if the programme was beginning to overtake the political process as it began before the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) was officially put in place. Due to this criticism the DD programme was shut down.


**Phase II**

UNMIL realized that it did not have the capacity to address the huge numbers that showed up in the phase, this forced them to establish a joint planning with different stakeholders in order to consult about a way forward, something they had failed to do in the first phase. During these consultations it was then established that each DD site should hold only 250 ex-combatants each day, furthermore UNMIL needed higher numbers of both civilian and military personnel. The second phase of the programme was restarted in April 15, 2004 this time concentrated on the capital Monrovia and surrounding counties including ex-combatants from the two major factions Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) in Gbanga, Buchanan and Tubmanburg. In this phase a total of “51,970 former combatants, made up of 6,888 from the AFL [Armed Forces of Liberia], 19,742 from LURD, 2,863 from MODEL, 5,231 GoL/Militia, including paramilitary, and 17,246 from other groups. In addition, a total of 27,000 weapons and 6,153,631 small arms ammunition were collected, besides a total of 29,794 types of other categories and natures of ammunition” (Aboagye & Bah, 2004, p. 95).

**Phase III**

The last phase was launched in July 2004 in other counties such as Grand Gedeh, Nimba which was at the heart of the conflict and continues to be a county with a lot of tension even today, and Lofa County. This phase is arguably the least successful phase of the DD programme. The lack of infrastructure in these counties “exacerbated by the arrival of the rainy season, which rendered the road network in these areas
impassable…Overall, out of the 98,113 former combatants that went through the DD process during the three phases, 66,882 (68%) were adult males, 20,319 (21%) adult females, 8,498 (9%) boy-children and 2,414 (2%) girl-children.” (Aboagye & Bah, 2004, p. 8).

Rehabilitation and reintegration

The overall criticism of the success of the DDRR programme rests in the apparent gaps between the achievements of the DD programme notwithstanding the shortfalls the programme experienced, but it is the limited success of the Rehabilitation and Reintegration (RR) programme that has put into question the success of the entire programme. As outlined by UNMIL the RR programme goals were to:

- Transitional support programme, including start-up allowance and repatriation of ex-combatants to their local communities;
- Transitional payments to assist foreign ex-combatants to return to their home countries; and
- Social services programme, which includes macro and micro infrastructure development, education, vocational training and outreach. Specific aspects of the social services programme cover the establishment of specific social service requirements for male, female and child ex-combatants.

At the core of the RR programme was its ability to provide sustainable options for ex-combatants in terms of employment opportunities outside the war economy which would help rehabilitate their corrupt values of taught to them during the war in order to help them reintegrate back to their communities as responsible citizens with honorable livelihood systems. Several options were provided; vocational training programmes such as auto mechanics and carpentry, formal education and agriculture. About 85, 629 ex-
combatants participated in the programme, “41% opted for formal education, only 4% for agriculture and 0.65% for employment, while slightly over 47% opted for various vocational training programmes ranging from auto mechanics to tie-and-dye.”, see Figure 1 below. The majority of female ex-combatants opted for vocational training programmes – 11,271, as opposed to 7,051 for formal education and 744 for agriculture. A high percentage of male ex-combatants, however, opted for formal education (28,236), with only 2,742 opting for agriculture and 515 for employment. “What informed the decisions of the ex-combatants in their preferred skills is not clear, especially when one looks at the breakdown between males and females in the various skills categories” (Aboagye & Bah, 2004, p. 9).

However, it can be deduced to an extent that the lack of infrastructure which has destroyed the agricultural livelihoods for most Liberian farmers played a role in most combatants choosing educational and vocational training instead of agriculture. The lack of access for land holders in rural Liberia who make up the poorest group according to the Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008) has influenced the high levels of urban migration to places like Monrovia. In “Peacekeeping and post-conflict criminality: Challenges to the (re-) establishment of rule of law in Liberia” Mbadlanyana and Onuoha (2009) argue that this over-population of the urban centers has led to a particular concern with burgeoning incidences of rape, murder, armed robbery, mob justice and ritual killings... these crimes have assumed such worrying proportions that the Liberian president recently described the situation as a ‘bad state of affairs’ (p. 2). It can also be argued that the collapse of the land security regime together with the collapse of the
agricultural economy influence many ex-combatants away from choosing agriculture due to the multiple levels of insecurity in acquiring the land and access to markets compared to the vibrant although over-extended urban economy which shows signs of recovery compared to agriculture.

![Pie chart showing preferences](image_url)

Figure 1. UNMIL ex-combatant reintegration and rehabilitation skills preferences (Aboagye & Bah, 2004, p. 9).

Due to rising urbanization most ex-combatants chose to be resettled in Monrovia and other well developed counties such as Montserrado. It must be said that it is this migration to the urban areas that has led to the alarming crime rates in places like Monrovia. This is because despite the fact ex-combatants chose these urban areas; Liberia is a largely agricultural economy.

The bigger problem has been the slow inflow of funds which has meant that although ex-combatants have registered for their chosen RR path, few of them have actually been placed in their programs. Aboagye and Bah (2004) in line with this argument state that for instance, of the 35,287 who prefer formal education, only about a third (11,869) had been registered for that purpose. Again, only 18,560 targeted former
combatants were in approved projects, while another 14,402 have been targeted in approved projects.

These gaps point to a clear disconnect between the DD and the RR components in Liberia” (p. 9). The problems with the actual funding of the programme is terms of inconsistency in funding for example out of budget of $13.5 million administered to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for DDRR $10.2 million of that fund was spent in the DD programmes leaving only $3.2 million for the entire RR programme (Aboagye & Bah, 2004). Disappointingly out of the total 11,869 registered ex-combatants, only 3,258 have benefited from the projects they chose. This is because the RR programme only received $2,615,436 in funding out of a “total Trust Fund budget of $20,359,140 needed for reintegration activities. About $1,409,935 was already committed to reintegration activities, and another $1,205,501 projected for reintegration activities, there was a funding shortfall of $17,743,704 for future reintegration programmes. This projected shortfall in the Trust Fund now stands at about $44 million” (Aboagye & Bah, 2004, pp. 9-10).

Furthermore this emphasis on the auto-industry in the vocational training projects was not a adequate response to Liberia’s economic reality. As some Liberians have commented sarcastically, this pre-occupation with making ex-combatants the mechanics bordered on having more mechanics than actual car-owners in the country as very few people actually need mechanics as they all are lacking in basic needs such as food.

A very small part if these DDRR programmes looked at agriculture as a sustainable way for reintegration. Instead, much of it focused on shaping a ‘modern’
economy with technical training and so forth. It appears that little attention was given to the costs of the rehabilitation and reintegration processes. The DDRR process suggests a perception of the absence of violent threat as based on the absence of weapons, not so much the provision of alternative livelihood lifestyle that emphasize a peace economy. As well the implementation of this process demonstrates an apparent engagement with Liberians as stakeholders in this reconstruction process beyond being recipients.

2.8 Communication channels

The key communication strategies used by UNMIL are 13 of traditional communicators called The Unite. These communicators are responsible for communicating UNMIL programmes in all 16 indigenous languages; one of the biggest efforts of The Unit was communicating the DDRR programmes to the local population through drama, theaters and music. Other channels of communication for the DDRR programmes that were used to encourage ex-combatants to be part of the DDRR programmes and to encourage communities to integrate ex-combatants back to the community were flyers, posters and billboards, T-shirts, video and sports such as soccer games. UNMIL has also collaborated with Liberian musicians in producing the Peace Album and as well their strategy has been gaining the approval of community leaders.

However, despite the communication strategies employed above, the implementation of DDRR does not demonstrate an involvement from the ground by the local population. The local population became central as the receivers of the DDRR programmes not so much the key stakeholders in the conception and implementation of
the programs. This is evident in the lack of capacities in the first phase of DD, the lack of diverse options for rehabilitation and reintegration and the miscalculation with the funding of the whole DDRR programme. The DDRR programmes demonstrate a top-down approach of the dominant paradigm of development.

Indeed, the Liberia’s international partners should continue to play a key role in this land tenure reform process. However, key lessons need to be taken from this DDRR experience by prioritizing the intimate involvement of Liberians in this process instead of engaging them as mere receivers. In order to continue the dialogue started by the TRC, the Land Commission needs to priorities a dialogue amongst Liberians instead of using international organizations as messengers to one another. As well, the financial distribution of the commission needs to allocated after elaborate consultations with the local people in order for them to define where priorities of the commission, this too is a positive step towards negotiating nation building.

Conclusion

This chapter evaluated the literature that links land tenure security and reconciliation by looking at such pertinent themes as access, security, distribution and tenure regime governance as relating to the Liberian case. It was established that the current land tenure in Liberia with the absence of a national tenure regime is fraught with insecurity of access, distribution and an institutional collapse of governance. Moreover, the Liberia’s twofold system of land distribution is reflective separatist’s nature of the Americo-Liberian hegemony fraught with settler bias and violence. There confusion in
land access as argued by Unruh (2009) due largely to the collapse of regime authority and recurring violent events after the war is revealing of relationship between tenure security and conditions for peace.

The Rwandan case was specifically used to further examine the relationship between postwar land tenure and the establishment of reconciliation. Very importantly the Rwandan case was used examine how the Rwandan government engaged with the Diaspora who are the returnees in particular how return is constructed such that it complements the dynamic livelihoods of the refugee population. In which case the Rwandan example demonstrates a lack of better engagement with the formerly displaced on how return is constructed such that it reflects their dynamic livelihoods instead of forced villagisation. This is an important lesson for Liberia as the country continues to have a Diaspora which is facing sudden return to Liberia.

Lastly, this chapter evaluated the DDRR process of Liberia in order to examine how the reform of the security sector by UNMIL reflected the long term goals of reconstruction beyond the physical absence of arms to those of economic revitalization and nation building. The DDRR process reflected a disconnection between the disarmament and demobilization and rehabilitation and reintegration processes, the latter two being the long term processes. Specifically regarding to land access, the DDRR process demonstrated a disregard of the contribution of agriculture to the economic reconstruction process exampled by the financial and coordination neglect of the ex-combatants who chose farming. As well the DDRR process despite a clear agricultural economic reality of the Liberian economy demonstrated a failure to incorporate
agriculture as long term key sector of the economy. From the DDRR process it unclear whether the youth was emphasized in the revitalization of the agricultural economic sector. Overall, the Liberian DDRR process much like other African cases reflected a continuing perception with peace as the absence of the physical threat of civil conflict rather than the presence of sustainable conditions for alternative livelihoods. This is demonstrated by the high financial investments on the first DD phases of the DDRR process instead of a holistic process. This thesis is primarily concerned with whether these alternative livelihoods after massive militarization of the state, such as access to land contribute to the peace process beyond the military security dimension.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY: WHOSE RESEARCH IS IT?

3.1 Interviews and Observation

Liberians in the Diaspora are as much of a Liberian as Liberians at home; they continue to be engaged with developments on the homeland, supported, financed warring factions as an instrument for regime change; their voices must be heard and their issues and concerns must be addressed in fostering greater national reconciliation (TRC Final Report, 2009).

The state of Ohio comprises one of the biggest populations of Liberians. In order to answer the questions posed by this research study, the three research questions: Is successful land tenure reform a necessary precondition for political reconciliation in Liberia? Secondly, what are the primary means by which land tenure reform contributes to political reconciliation in Liberia? Thirdly, what is the role of Liberians in the Diaspora in the land reform process and how does the role of the Diaspora shape the contribution of land tenure reforms to wider political reconciliation?

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Ohio University approved all the recruitment procedures for the data collection procedures for this project. The sampling and recruitment strategies that employed in this study were in full respect of the pillars of the IRB, which has a policy of sound research that prioritizes the safety of the research participants. The interviews selection began with the contacts that have been recommended to me by “key informants” who are Liberians in Ohio University, and my personal contacts with the Liberian community associations in Columbus. The key informants are the Liberians that have influenced the shape of the research problem, I have relied on them because of the “nature of their position [within the Liberian] culture and by their relationship” to me (Crabtree & Miller, 1992, p. 71). The key informants are...
the Liberians within the academy that continue to act as my consultants and collaborators. The leadership of the organization Liberians in Columbus the president Dr Bokai was most helpful in this interviewing process as he led me to important members of the community.

![Liberians In Columbus, Inc.](image)

*Figure 2: The logo of the organization Liberians In Columbus Inc.*

Interviews were carried out with the Liberian Diaspora in Columbus Ohio 13, those interviewed was the combined leadership of the Liberians in Columbus Inc (LICI) and the LICI board members, a former minister of the Doe administration of 1980, a former national president of Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA) and ordinary members of Liberian descent. The 7 respondents from Minnesota where the majority of the Liberian Diaspora in the US resides; were specifically chosen for their role in giving hearings in the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions hearings which took place in Minnesota. Except for one participant who is an employee of the Advocates for Human Rights in Minnesota who was directly involved in the TRC of Liberia process including the compiling of the final report, at the time of the interview had just returned from Liberia in three days, while other participates had not been to Liberia since their arrival in the US.
A total of 23 participants took part in the study. Of the 23, 19 of the interviews were semi-structured individual interviews, while 4 female respondents participated in one focus group. Of the 23 interviews, 14 were men, and 9 were women. It must be stated that although the focus group was composed of women, the themes from the focus group discussion did not differ from the individual interviews by gender or by the group setting. It is because of this that the results are not presented by gender or age.

Participants came from 11 of Liberia’s counties (states), 4 from Lofa County, 3 from Bomi County, 3 from Grand Cape Mount, 2 from Margibi County, 2 from Sinoe county, 1 Grand Bassa, 1 Rivergee county, 1 Maryland county, and 1 from Montserrado county. Of the 16 ethnic groups in Liberia, participants came from 9 different ethnic groups, the Bassa, Kpelle, Krahn, Kru, Gola, Kissi, Grebo, Vai and Mandingo ethnic groups. Out of the 23 participants, 1 interview is not a Liberian, but an official of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Professor Mensa- Bonsu who was interviewed upon a visit to Ohio University.

Of the 23 Liberians interviewed, 4 are currently engaged in land disputes back home in Liberia, 2 reported that their villages back home were involved in boundary disputes with the government and missionary officials. All participants reported family members and friends who are currently entangled in land and property disputes in Liberia. Only 3 of the participants are currently on DED, while the rest are now residents of the United States.

The participants from Minnesota only two of the participants had arrived in the US before the Liberian civil war of 1989, they had arrived in 1984 and 1988 respectively.
The rest of the participants immigrated to the US at the height of warfare between 1991-1999, and one came in 2002 when the regime of Charles Taylor was falling apart threatening another start of the war.

For the purposes of the semi-structured interviews, the two research questions were broken into five questions for:

1. What type of land tenure system was used in your community before the civil war?
2. How did the civil war affect this system?
3. What happened after the war?
4. What role can land reform play in the process of reconciliation?
5. What can be the contributions of Liberians in the US to reconciliation in Liberia?

3.2 Limitations of Methodology- Positionality of Participants

The first chapter introduced the nature of the Liberian Diaspora and their role in Liberian’s postconflict reconstruction process. These Liberians are situated as active participants in the continuation of the Liberian civil war; its ending as well as these Liberians have been made part of the framing of the reconstruction process by their inclusion to the TRC process. This thesis locates these Liberians as both a community that is directly affected by their country’s reconstruction process because some of them are now facing return to Liberia. To a broader extent these Liberians are engaged in this research for their personal stories and the stories of their families in Liberia about land tenure reform and reconciliation. As well, these Liberians were engaged in this research due to the uniqueness of their positionality as they make sense of their position as the absent middle class which wants to continue to support development of their homeland and families, while facing the difficult task of requesting citizenship of their host
countries or retaining Liberians citizenship and its benefits such as land ownership and opportunity to be government officials.

Therefore, unlike Liberians in Liberia this group brings different dynamics and complexities to this research. One of which is influenced by their position as political, economic and intellectual elites who are aware of the benefits of their economic and intellectual authority in Liberia’s nation building process. The views expressed in this research reflect the conditions of the participants who are just negotiating their role of Liberians, as well as rationally negotiating the economic and political comforts of their family in the US. I realize as the researcher that the limitation of this participant group is their transnational nature, their dual identity. Therefore, the position of the participants as informants carried some biases which the biggest bias is that the participants claim to speak for a place and a reality of which they are not currently living. As much as I looked at the participants as a window to the Liberian reality, they were themselves looking to their families and to memory for their own Liberian reality.

With that said, the weakness of this research methodology is also its strength. This is because the Liberian Diaspora is also a window for other African states and Diaspora communities in how to negotiate transnationalism. The TRC of the Diaspora has set a precedent for different communities in the world, more so those of new African Diasporas, by providing a space to examine whether the Diaspora has a wider role in negotiating truth, justice and reconciliation. This thesis project expands on examining this link of Diasporas, to other homeland process, that of land tenure.
Despite the intention to conduct most of the interviews face to face especially in Columbus, due to busy schedules of the participant’s majority of the interviews were carried by phone mostly in the evenings when participants returned from work. The assistance and enthusiasm of the LICI president made the communication with participants easy despite not having met me personally. I eventually met most of the participants in the project during the Liberian Independence Day where I managed to conduct the focus group discussion. Another limitation of the methodology due to its focus on community leaders, due to the structure of community leaders in both Columbus and the respondents in Minnesota, the study was dominated by males with fewer voices from women, despite that the focus group was composed of all women. As well because the sought to map out Liberia’s land history through the experience of those in Diaspora in order to make sense of the root of current land tenure disputes, the study was biased towards the older generation than the youth.

3.3 Researcher positionality

Hearing the other is the priority. We need to listen diligently for clues concerning how our questions are being heard and regarded. We need to risk to discovering that our projects are misguided. In short, we need to experience our conversations with others as opportunities to learn the questions we should be asking, as well as to hear and respond to the questions the other has for us (Rawlings in Clair, 2003, p. 119).

The nature of the questions I pose in this project calls for a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a “means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). The primary motive of this study is to explore and understand the questions posed and the answers that will arise from the primary agents, Liberians.
I come to the study as an outsider; my positionality is that of a unique and subjective South African perspective. Most importantly, I recognize that “research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions,” of which my positionality plays a vital role as it influences the exercise of research and its implications (Smith, 1999, p. 5). I am aware that my positionality goes beyond that of not being Liberian, positionality encompasses an awareness of the complexities of research which include its long and troubled history especially for the people of the developing world.

In the “Tales of the Field,” Van Maanen (1988) provides the evolution of ethnography, the role of culture in ethnography, the place of ethnography as an institution and the deep layers that constitute ethnography. He defines fieldwork as the “stiff, precise, probably too visual, but nonetheless double-edged notion of participant-observation” (p.3). The role in of the researcher, who is the participant observer, is to share “problems, background, language, rituals and social relations of a more-or less bounded and specified group of people” (p.3). The researcher then provides a visible presentation of a particular culture. The presentation of the ethnography is the fieldwork not the fieldwork itself, he emphasizes that it is the “written report that must represent the culture, not the fieldwork itself” (p.4). As he puts it “the matter is put candidly by Malinowski…it is I who will describe them or create them” (Van Maanen, 1988, p.51).

While in the collection of essays of Expressions of Ethnography: novel approaches to qualitative methods, Clair (2003) traces “The changing story of ethnography” (p. 3) from its different waves of colonization to the present dynamic tales
that many researchers are employing. As she rightly puts it, “ethnography is a practice and an expression with a capacious historical past that necessarily includes philosophical, political, spiritual, and aesthetic elements. These elements have at times defined cultures, named people, and told of a master discourse of colonization. Today scholars question the legitimacy of the discourse” (Clair, 2003, p. 3). Clair (2003) deconstructs or redefines the meaning of ethnography and to ascertain that “the days of naïve ethnography are over” (Clair, 2003, p. 3). Clair (2003) essentially places ethnography in its “political terrain” and to “set the stage for discussions of alternative perspectives” (p. 3).

While Gonzalez’s (2003) *An ethics for postcolonial ethnography* (2003) echoes similar persuasive arguments regarding the tragic colonial past of ethnography put forward by Smith (1999) in *Decolonizing methodologies: research and Indigenous peoples*. Like Smith (1999), Gonzalez (2003) reinforces the need for change in the ethics that have governed ethnography. She puts forward “four ethics of a postcolonial ethnography” (p. 83). The four ethics are accountability, context, truthfulness and community. Accountability or as she puts it, “account-ability” does not imply following the rules but rather it is the ability to tell the story (Gonzalez, 2003, p. 83). To tell the story implies telling the story and the story of the story, it involves asking the question, “What is the story of our story?” (Gonzalez, 2003, p. 83). Context involves the “ability to describe the environment within which one’s tale is told” (Gonzalez, 2003, p. 84). Describing the context demands the researcher to discern the political, social, environmental, physical, and emotional surroundings of the story. The ethic of
truthfulness “exemplifies a sort of radical openness to see not only what is in one’s social and environmental context, to see not only what one has actually done or said, but also to see that which is on the surface not visible” (Gonzalez, 2003, 84). The last ethic, which is that of community, Gonzalez (2003) argues that it “reflects what is created when naked stories are shared and one opens both in expression and receipt of those stories” (p. 85). The communal role of the researcher then is to contribute to a healing process and help the community in moving forward.

Smith (1999) asks the difficult questions regarding the purpose of research “whose research is it? ...Is her spirit clear? Does he have a good heart? What other baggage are they carrying?” (p. 10). What I take from these studies is the political nature of research that research is has a long history that includes a marginalization of many people in the developing world. As well that a researcher cannot separate themselves from the research, the researcher therefore carries personal and socio-political baggage. The researcher of today is suspicious to many communities especially those who have endured years of conflict in conditions of continued uncertainty. I believe that my awareness of the wider implications of research forced me to be in a constant state of self-analysis which forced me to listen more than I talked with the participants of the study. This professional understanding of positionality forced me to seek accountability, context, truthfulness and community in this research. However, I cannot deny that my personal baggage of being a child of South Africa’s DDR process contributed largely my relentless to the purposes of this research and its wider implications. The ultimate goal is for this thesis to contribute positively into the building and strengthening of
Liberia, through employing these ethics that guided my position is a researcher who sought answers in a midst of a complex story of a story embedded in the research quest. It is therefore imperative that I share briefly this personal baggage that influenced my interests in this particular topic.

My father was a former soldier for the Transkei government in Apartheid South Africa, during the time when the government began its security sector reform process. The security reform was the incorporation of the South African Defense Forces (SADF), the militaries former homelands like Transkei, and the former military wing of the now ruling African National Congress (ANC), Umkhonto Wesizwe (MK) into a one South African defense force.

In 1996, my father was successfully enticed in taking early pension in the government’s quest to reduce the size of its massive military. As a child during that time, I did not understand what it would take to consolidate an army of ten Bantustan homelands and the national defense SADF with ANC’s military wing. In this process that men like my father were told that the new South Africa presented far better options beyond the military enclave. The financial packages they were being offered would help them build their mini-empires by starting their own businesses. Without any business training, they easily and greedily bought into the dream that in the new South African “big money” was to be made. Not too many years later my father’s taxi business had failed, the family was in debt, and mother was suddenly the sole breadwinner.

Men, my father and his friends, turned to alcohol to fight the disillusionment of our ‘Rainbow Nation’ and its promises. I know countless stories that my mother, a
psychiatric nurse, told us about the number of my father’s friends admitted to the mental hospital. Only later did I become aware that this sequence of events was a manifestation of the disillusion with democracy's promises, a common phenomenon of post-conflict societies, especially for those men and women in the military.

Certainly no one had warned my mother and her friends about how and to what extent their family's lives were to change during this historical transition. Democracy had made these women the sudden heads of their families because of their income; and their husbands raving lunatics who drank away their future while reminiscing about the good old days when they used to be big man in the armed forces. Ten years later the post-apartheid government has tried to assist this generation of soldiers with training on how to manage agricultural projects and promises to the former servicemen plots of land. In the meantime, however, my mother and many women like her still continue to run the family while I continue my quest in understanding what happened to my family not only as my story, but as a tragic consequence of post-conflict reconstruction.

It is for such as a nuanced approach to the study that qualitative methods were utilized. Indeed, qualitative research methodology allows for a much needed interpretive inquiry which allows a researcher to acknowledge biases as an outsider (the “baggage” I carry to the study), and most importantly to acknowledge the role my background and history have influence my framing (Creswell, 2009; Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Smith, 1999, p. 10). It is the historical “apartheid-like” structures of the Liberian state at the hands of the Americo-Liberian settler elite, which triggered my deep interests in this
Liberian case as well as the country’s negotiation of transition, justice and reconciliation at the face of multiple insecurities (Kieh, 2008, p.69).

Qualitative methods of data collection allowed face-to-face interviews, one-on-one interviews, focus group sessions, observations, and email and document analyses. This method allowed for a holistic understanding of the research problem instead of relying on one data source. This helped the study in developing a “complex picture of the problem…[by] reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved” (Creswell, 2009, p. 177). As argued by Crabtree and Miller qualitative sampling concerns itself with “information-richness” compared to quantitative sampling which is more concerned with “representativeness” (1992, p. 31). As well, qualitative methods were advantageous in this study as they use inductive methods of data analysis. This method of structured open-ended questions allowed for patterns, categories and themes to emerge by themselves from the data.

As participants confirmed the emerged established socio-cultural truths that were confirmed by one participant after the other, the same goes for the arguments put forward in the discussion they are deeply embedded by frustrations from a real memory of brutal violence, a love and responsibility to homeland and an insatiable optimism for the future. The analysis and presentation of this data relies heavily on the usage of quotes. This was done with a careful awareness of the avoiding the “two great sins of qualitative analysis” the first being “excessive analysis” in order to avoid this selected quotes are combined with clear analysis that relied on simple English that is easy to understand (Bernard, 1995, p. 363). The second sin “consists of avoiding doing any analysis”; in the
presentation of the findings below and the discussion I constantly connect the data as it is
with the objectives of the research focusing on the meaning of the data to goals of the
research in examining the relationship between land tenure reform and reconciliation in

I employed a constant validity check with the data informed by the participants
against each other (such as a description of historical and current events in the same
manner or inconsistencies in the chronology) and documented historical events. Even
with documented data I used multiply sources such as government publications, academic
journals and books and international organizations such as the various United Nations
organizations,, government documents, Liberian newspapers and international
newspapers, the TRC the Institute for Security Studies in South Africa whose researchers
have participated in Liberia’s DDRR process and others. The key words search was
employed in the analysis are divided into historical periods much like the interview
questions such as before, during and after the war. The key word search in the folk tales
of the participants. From the beginning of the data collection process it was easy to
identify the different periods chronologically by the participants such as the two different
types of land tenure systems statutory and communal in urban and rural areas, the
beginning of conflict, especially the extent of ethnic tensions before the civil war to much
nuanced themes such as the complexity of ethnic tensions the meaning of peace, justice
and reconciliation. By the end of the data collection from the first question questions that
relied on the memories of the Liberian’s land use histories I could most certainly predict
what a participant was going to say as it had been confirmed by other participants over and over again.

The quotes used below are ones that confirm majority of what participants stated multiple times during the interview process in absence of other participants as majority of the interviews were individual with the exception of the focus group. While other quotes used are the ones that differed from the rest what Bernard (1995) terms “negative evidence” (p. 361) as they added to the complexity of the findings and opened room for further research beyond this thesis.

Conclusion

As the findings of this research project reveals, Liberians in the Diaspora are as Moran (2005) argues not passive observers of the reconstruction of Liberia. Regardless whether those on DED are repatriated by the US government or given permanent residency as they seek, the Liberian Diaspora will continue to play a major role in the Liberian nation building as the “16th County. As it will be discussed, this research on “new African diasporas” (Koser, 2003) such as this one of Liberia brings forth critical questions and broader continental considerations on how Africa should address very active sections of the continent who are physically outside of the continent despite a clear political, economic, social and cultural presence.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS PART 1 LANDS HISTORIES AND MODERN CONFLICTS

Due to the vastness of the data collected, the presentation of findings will be divided into two chapters. The first chapter will present the findings of the first three questions which provide a historical context of land use history in history until the impact and after the war: what type of land tenure system was used in your community before the civil war? (pre-conflict land tenure) How did the civil war affect this system? (the impact of civil war on land tenure) What happened after the war? (postconflict land tenure). The second chapter addresses the last two questions regarding the specific role of reform to the process of reconciliation and how Diaspora Liberians can contribute to this peace process whilst living in the US: What role can land reform play in the process of reconciliation? What can be the contributions of Liberians in the US to reconciliation in Liberia?

4.1 Pre-Conflict Land Tenure

All respondents confirmed the literature findings that in Liberia the land tenure system is a two-fold system between the statutory systems in the urban areas, and customary land tenure in the rural areas. Majority respondents (20) grew up in the rural areas and are all accustomed to communal land acquisition. However, all of them agreed that although both systems are recognized, the statutory system is more supreme than the customary system. One respondent put it more eloquently that the land tenure system
before the war was reflective of the political and social structure of Liberia under the

Américo-Liberian hegemony:

Land tenure system in Liberia was regulated through a system of statutory means of acquiring land and customary or traditional means of acquiring land. By that I mean statutory, and this is historically it goes way back to the founding of the country. Indigenous African people, and indigenous in quotation because it should not be either be construed as sort of anthropological meaning of indigenous Africans that did not leave the shores of West Africa and such as the slaves that were resettled out of slavery in the United States so are referred to as indigenous and settlers or Américo-Liberians vs. indigenous Liberians. That's it, as I said it's historical. So in traditional ways in Liberia especially in the rural areas no one particularly owns land. Land belongs to the community. It's a collectivist sort of communal society. Whereby when the settlers came the so-called Américo-Liberians they came from the United States and other places and have experienced owning land by buying land and so on and having deeds to possess land as part of an estate. So of course this legal system developed along those lines. That is almost the American system, so people in Monrovia and most urban areas began owning land by purchasing land and owning deeds and having titles to land. So that became the official way of acquiring land in Liberia. At the same time, in the rural parts of the country, families are known to have settled down somewhere stop at their farmland. Whatever, so that became their land.

Some respondents also reported that the government used a census to draw village boundaries according to history of ancestral use. As well, one respondent revealed that it was possible for an individual to be allocated land if they:

Went there as a missionary for educational or medical work and you wanted to live there and work, they would give you a portion of land maybe 10 acres or 25 acres. And you were a custodian of that property until you decided not to do any of those things. As long as you were doing medical work, as long as you were doing educational work. And you take care of it, when one of those things are being done or any of these things are not being done any more then that land goes to back to the government even though, it is owned by the original people the indigenous Liberians.

One respondent revealed that Doe’s regime had a “use it or lose it” policy regarding land acquisition, where the government would sell an individual land but if that person did not make use of the land, the government was legitimated at taking over the
land for its own use. The respondent explained that this policy was to ensure that land was used for developmental purposes instead of people claiming land to be their own and then do nothing with it. The respondent continued to state that during the war, many people who occupied the land of those Liberians who left the country argued that they did so because the land was not being used by the owners. Indeed most respondents were inheritors of family land back in Liberia; the land is currently being looked after by family. Many of them reported that although the land was not taken by others, most of their households were looted; their families had to start from scratch re-furnishing the household.

Also regarding the Doe regime, the one respondent who had served as a minister in the Doe regime commented that their administration was confronted with too many problems to be able to address land tenure in 1980. He stated that "No, we did not deal with the issue of land. What we dealt with were the emergencies. What the PRC (People’s Redemption Council) dealt with is to talk about giving indigenous Liberians an opportunity to life. What the PRC did was to deal with the injustices that were created against the indigenous Liberians before I was born. Even before Doe was born. You do not expect a government that just came to power no longer than 18 years old to talk about the issue of land."

As well, all respondents agreed that all land and property disputes were settled in two ways accordingly with the two land tenure system. In the urban areas the judicial system of court settlement is used for settling all disputes. Traditional leaders such as the chiefs, kings and elders settle disputes in the rural areas. However, majority of the
respondents also emphasized that the judicial system rulings has the supreme place in settlement of deals. As one respondent state:

> Chiefs in the rural areas were responsible for distributing the land and giving deeds to people. Although at the communal level the chiefs had authority, in times of disputes the Ministry of Land, Mines and Energy had the final jurisdiction. People respect the traditional governments. But people who have money go to the Ministry of Land and Mines if they are not happy with the ruling of the chiefs. Chiefs call a Council of People, elders in the community to determine which family settled first. But if you are dissatisfied you can go to the ministry because sometimes the elders, grandfathers of the area are not objective, they can be favor the family that they like.

When asked about land disputes between different ethnic groups, all respondents pointed out that there were disputes over land before the civil war. Most participants stated that the current disputes between Manos, Gios and Mandigos in Nimba County is a historical conflict. In Nimba County Manos and Gios are accusing the Mandigoes of not belonging in Nimba County, participants argued that the war has not created these tensions but rather it has made them worse.

Another dispute that began before the war is a border dispute between Nimba County and Grand Gedeh, Grand Gedeh is the county of Samuel Doe. As one respondent put it, “Nimba County is the poster child of land disputes in Liberia.” Grand Gedeh is dominated by Doe’s Krahn ethnic group, while Nimba has Manos, Gios and Mandigos. While in power, after the attempted coup by General Quiwonkpa of Nimba County, Doe manipulated existing border dispute tensions by electing Mandingos into local government inciting Manos and Gios against the Mandigoes, as well as Gios and Manos against the Krahn people. As one respondent stated:

> The conflict came from Grand Gedeh and Nimba County. Grand Gedeh and Nimba County share a common border. In the border Nimbarians and Krahn are
the claiming land. This was not solved when the conflict started. The area was used to penetrate the conflict. Because of these disputes that existed before the war.

The internal fighting between groups in Nimba County and the county’s border dispute with Grand Gedeh were the only ones mentioned in by respondents. The case of Nimbarians Manos, Gios and Mandingos expose a historical case of the Liberians imagery, of which the Mandigo traders of Nimba County have been excluded from. Upon Doe’s capturing of power amongst his priorities was to transform the military power into civil rule through giving citizens their constitutional rights, he promised the upholding of elections within a period of five years, fight corruption, unemployment and the abuse of power by the former Americo-Liberian elite (Moran, 2006).

Failing to address the crisis of the Liberian state due to a lack of policy measures and structural arrangements, Doe realized that the failure of his government to implement its promises would lead to public dissatisfaction and possible unseat from power. Realizing the dubiousness of political power, Doe sought security in controlling military power by appointing members of his ethnic group, continuing the exclusionary legacy of the state from settler privilege to ethnic privilege. According to Dolo (1996), Doe “transfigured into a political monster at a dramatic speed…the situation retrogressed to the point where even his pundits were not aware of his daily devious schemes” (p. 65). Ellis (1995) argues that as soon as Doe got into power he began a “rapid recruitment and promotion of Krahn within the armed forces” (p. 178), causing Ellis (1995) to further argue that the “construction of ethnic patronage systems by rival soldiers, starting from
scratch, in the shortest possible time, was probably the single most important cause of Liberia’s subsequent collapse” (p.178).

4. 2 Impact of Conflict on Land Tenure

When I was coming my land was right here (points to stomach). When I was coming to the states, I had a waist bend under my pants and I had my deed in there, I had my kids birth certificate, I had my children. I had all documents tied in my waist bend under my pants and I came to the states without one suit and all my documents and now my land is preserved in Liberia. And I have the deed in the US.

When asked how the land tenure system was affected by the outbreak of the war majority residents stated that like themselves, many people left their communities. Most of them left for other neighboring African countries before coming to the US, the quote above from one of the women in the focus group discussion, had also stated that before coming to the US she had left with her family for refugee in Guinea, she explained:

I walked from Liberia to another country called Guinea. I walked 16 hours in one day. And I was there in Guinea for six months. And when I had that my husband is alive over the radio, I walked back to Liberia and then I saw him, a 200 pounds man was 135 pounds. And he got me ticket and then I came. Like I said I'm just making it brief, and then I left Guinea after I found that my husband was alive. I went to him in Liberia and he sent me back so that I could be able to fly back to Guinea and bring the children back by air. And we stay in Liberia 1991 up to 1996 I thought the war would be finished by now. But war couldn’t stop. So April 6, the war was heavy again. We all left, thousands of people besides my family. That's how I came to come to this country.

Many respondents explained that since the war started from the country-side, in Nimba County, Taylor’s regime started their attack from Nimba County. Many people moved in the rural areas moved into urban areas such as the capital Monrovia hoping that the war will not get there. Or better yet, most of respondents stated that they truly did not
think the war was going to go on for the period that it did. Especially since Liberia had never had a civil war before.

As well some respondents argue that the war brought forward a religious dimension between Christians against Muslims a dimension that goes back to Liberian’s national identity. Again, this was more prevalent in Nimba County where the Mandigos who are accused by many Liberians of not being Liberian, the Mandigos who are majority a Muslim community, Manos and Gios like most Liberians are Christians. As one religious leader respondent crudely:

When Doe came he surrounds himself with his own people. He was taking care of his own. The tribal war degenerated into a religious war between Christians and Muslims. Many people said that the country was built on Christian principles; there was no place for Muslims. Almadi Kromah was a leader of the Muslim group. Muslim territory was the Mandigos. The religious war started with Taylor. Taylor is a Congo, he doesn’t have a tribe.

Much of the debate that surrounds the ‘Liberianness’ of the Mandigo people is their uniqueness compared to majority indigenous Liberians. Yet, many respondents argued that Mandigo people just like other ethnic groups, come from different parts of West Africa, and that they have been in Liberia since the founding of the country, therefore they are like all Liberians, Liberian.

Respondents reiterated again and again that the nature of disputes is not ethnic, the disputes that occurred during the war and are presently occurring, have a long history beyond the war that extends into arguments about citizenship such as in Nimba County with the Mandigos. They reported that a big characteristic of land tenure disputes during and after the war was betrayals by family members to other and neighbors against other
neighbors especially in rural areas where the land belongs not to the individual but to the whole family.

They reported that at the core of the instability is the fact that brothers and sisters of those who went to exile sold the land in order to service, without informing the other family members outside the country. As Mensa-Bonsu of UNMIL stated, “issues of displacement, after 14 years of warfare, there is a serious issue of defining county boundaries. “This is a hotly contested issue between individuals, community trials.”

Despite the fact that some family members managed to escape the war with their deeds at hand, because the land belonged to the whole family, relatives sold the land regardless. As well, because the institutions in the country broke down, few people in both rural and urban areas followed the Ministry of Land, Mines and Energy which stipulates that before a piece of land is sold it needs to be surveyed by the ministry. One respondent reported below:

People left their homes during the war. Those that came to the vacant land they took over the land. Since the end of the war people are returning home gradually. Some people took their documents with when they left, but many came to find out that their property was sold despite the deed. The instability of war broke all the institutions. People sold land because of hunger. Some of the people that sold the land were the real owners. Some sold family land without consulting other family members which causes immediate disputes. Some deeds belong to individuals but some to the rest of the family by default.

In sum, the civil war exacerbated existing boundary disputes which existed before the war such as in Grand Gedeh and Nimba County. The war exacerbated existing tensions between ethnic groups within particular counties in particular between the Mandigoes and Mano and Gios. The war introduced another dimension to the tensions of land in particular regarding the communal land ownership in the rural areas- the war has
contributed to brutal hostilities between family members and neighbors who where those who stayed behind sold the land of their families without consulting other members, and those neighbors who occupied the land of the refugee neighbors. The data reveals that more than the tensions between different ethnic groups over land during the war, participants revealed that these family and neighbor disputes are considered the most dangerous and most betraying due to the communal setting of the rural areas where neighbors and families are suppose to guard each other’s properties. As a result these type of disputes are the most complex to solve especially under the judicial system as it will be seen in the next section. They are the ones that need the delicacy and the spirit of reconciliation mostly found in traditional means of dispute settlement for sustainable peace between family members and communities. The civil war also evoked religious tensions between Christians and Muslims raising tensions that were not addressed before the war about the relationship between the Liberian state and the different religions and whether Liberian identity subscribes to a particular religious identity, Christian or Muslim.

4.3 Post-conflict Land Tenure

My cousin called me last week telling me that in my village there is a mission school that I attended, the missionary owners claim that the land of the school includes the whole village. So the village is their property. Because of traditional ownership, we have no documents to prove that this is our land except for the fact that we were born there. And the fact that the village exists. If the missionaries win the case they can lease the land to the villagers, or compensation by villagers having to work in the farms of the school providing labor as compensation.

Since the end of the war it can be simply put that Liberia is engulfed in land disputes. The government is engulfed in a series of disputes that took place during the
Americo-Liberian hegemony. Respondents cited the case of the Ducor hotel located in Monrovia, the Ducor hotel used to be the most luxurious hotel in Liberia before the war; it was destroyed during the war. The administration of Johnson-Sirleaf has been trying to rebuild the hotel since they took over power, but the government is currently in a dispute with citizens who are claiming that the government of Tolbert gave them the rights to the land, and they have the documents to prove it. The president herself is in a land dispute over a four acre parcel of land located in Morri’s Farm, Paynesville which she argues to have bought in 1979, where some citizens are claiming ownership of the land.

Another respondent reported a case in Marghibi County where the government built a military base before the civil war without purchasing the land from the local community, and since the end of the war the people from local communities claimed the land from the government. However, in this case the government prevented a bitter dispute after threatening to arrest anyone encroaching the land; the president herself emerged to reconcile the matter. As the respondent put it “Ellen Johnson Sirleaf being a very stylish leader she bought a big cow and brought to the village saying we will rebuild the base saying we didn’t build it the right way the first time. Now we Liberians, we need to reconcile and forget about it. Then the villagers agreed.” As it will be clear from the other findings below, the government does not have enough cows to address the land disputes that are breaking many families in Liberia.

Other respondent argued that part of the obstacle to the establishment of land tenure governance in the country is due to the fact that several political elites are
themselves in the midst of several disputes. Hence the legal process has been very slow.

As one respondent stated:

The government needs land reform given to the senate but they do not agree to declare a reform bill. They way things are happening is because some say the courts should hold the records of people who own land. The land mines, they need to detail how a surveyor can go and survey somebody's land without a deed. Because they give the land to the surveyor and then they give the land to some of the ministers in government. So when they get taken to the court they bribe the surveyors in the ministry. I have lost 5 pieces of land in Liberia and I only got 2 back.

The aftermath of the war has intensified the land disputes in Nimba County between Manos, Gios and Mandigoes. One respondent argued that “because the Manos and Gios have always maintained the Mandingo are strangers…The war came as an opportunity for Gios and Manos to drive them out of the county. Of course the Mandingoes came back after the war and tried to reclaim their property and some Gios and Manos refuse to move.” The respondent further emphasized that this is a “very tricky issue the government is delicately trying to deal with it, but it's very very emotional and a very high tension matter right now.”

Indeed, all respondents agreed that the war exacerbated the disputes between the ethnic groups of Nimba County. Regarding the case of Nimba County’s special place in the land disputes, Mensa-Bonsu of UNMIL argued that “the problem with land is that it is linked to identity and citizenship. If you are pronounced as a non-citizen then you have no claim in the land. The issue of arbitrary borders is all over Africa, Liberia has border issues with Guinea, Cote D’Ivoire. The problem of the citizenship of the Mandingo people, particularly in the South. The problems Mandingos face when people say they are not Liberians, but they are. The reality is that there is an identity crisis, not merely land.”
However, majority respondents reiterated the fact that the case of ethnic groups such as that of Nimba County fighting over land is rare; the legacy of the war has been erroneous family betrayals that have seen neighbors, brothers and sisters killing each other. The multiple claims to the same pieces of land are the biggest problem in both rural and urban areas, more so in urban areas where land is titled. In the aftermath of war, and amidst rampant corruption, respondents were either in a personal dispute or had a family member or friend currently in a dispute due to a seller who sold the land several people. Many respondents argue that having the actual deed to the land has not helped since many of the sellers bribe members of the Land, Mines and Energy Ministry to produce several title deeds to the same piece of land. Those in the Diaspora are also accused of having the better end of the deal compared to those who stayed. The respondent reported:

My cousin finally got a chance to go home maybe two months ago; he established that he was selling the land that belongs to the family. So the guy gets in town he asks why you sold the land. And what did you do with the money? He said well when you were in America we were suffering here nobody had anything to get food. That was the excuse he gave. So most families have this problem, because half of the family came here and they are using that to sell their property, and when the family members from here go back relatives are fighting. So the main thing is the land problem is not a group thing its individuals.

Majority respondents stated that because the institutions such as the judiciary were destroyed during the war and are now engulfed in high levels of corruption, the informal system of communal land settlement has been more successful than the formal system. The cases of elders and families being brought together to reach compromises has been more effective than relying on the credibility of the court system which as
reported in earlier chapters in currently overwhelmed with land and property dispute cases.

There were also unique urban land tenure problems. One of them is the establishment of zoning laws in urban areas. The government had legislated a zoning law before the war, but the law was never implemented. Respondents argued that the biggest problem in the capital city of Monrovia for instance has a serious problem where people migrating from poor rural areas are building shacks all over the city with no restriction whether the area is a township of a suburban area due to the lack of an official zoning law. The current government has also threatened to remove people building shacks especially near the capital’s Highways, but faces the critical questions of where else should people live.

Other Liberians who participated in the study, who have worked for international organizations such as the United Nations in its post-conflict reconstruction and recovery strategy argued that the fundamental problem with land tenure reform is that it was never made part of the national strategy of reconstruction and recovery.

Conclusion

This chapter provides important historical evidence regarding the intersection of land, ethnicity, and conflict. This is regarding the border disputes between Nimba and Grand Gedeh which were manipulated by both Doe and Taylor for their own ends during the war as well as the conflict between Nimbarians over land and identity which was also manipulated by the warlords. Firstly, it is also clear that although land reform alone is not a sufficient to all of Liberia’s post-conflict challenges, it is however also clear that
land reform when done correctly in the context of a wider ethnic and political reconciliation can be a powerful tool for reconciliation. This process will however require a commitment from government at all levels, a commitment to transparency to guard against rampant corruption.

Secondly, due to three periods which affected land tenure that is land tenure before, during and after war provides an important historical and contemporary lens which can be used to address these disputes. This national memory can be instructive in the rebuilding of institutional memory especially since the destruction of government records. In order for this process to emphasize the objectives of peace and reconciliation, it seems important for the government to take the discussion away from the judicial courts back to the local structures of power in both rural and urban areas by emphasizing dialogue instead of a winner takes all court system mentality.

Lastly, the Liberian Diaspora is particularly susceptible to this insecurity of tenure because of their physical absence. As a group they are vulnerable to more corruption especially through multiple-sales of land. They are dependent on family members at home for security, this has affected their potential to investing on land and agricultural livelihoods. The continuing interest in investing in agricultural livelihoods by the Liberian Diaspora is potentially instructive of the various ways the Diaspora can be officially organized in the reconstruction of the agricultural economy. The Diaspora can be a vehicle through which agricultural livelihoods can be made attractive to young people and the thousands of rural citizens who fluctuated to the urban centers. Ways to do this can include encouraging the Diaspora to invest in reconstructing roads and other
necessary infrastructures, and supporting existing farmers in the production as well as purchasing commercial plots for young people to help them control the means of production.
CHAPTER FIVE: LAND REFORM, RECONCILIAATION AND DEVELOPMENT:

SOLOMONIC WISDOM?

Respondents unanimously agreed that if the problem of land is not solved there will be another war in Liberia, as one respondent stated regretfully, the answer to reconciliation and land reform in Liberia will take “Solomonic wisdom, there are no easy answers”. Insightfully, interviewees argued that there will be no development if the land problem is not solved. One respondent stated that “land reconciliation will bring stability. If I know that this is my land, I can develop. I cannot invest if this is not my land. If there are no disputes there will be peace and prosperity.” Many respondents stated that if you are in a dispute for a year, you are not able to work on the land for private or commercial reasons. One respondent stated that “some bad things have happened to people. Like people have been poisoned for land. A friend of mine went to Liberia, and she got sick when she came back, they poisoned her. Spiritual and demonic means of killing people for land.” Respondents repeatedly stated that as long as families and neighbors are fighting over land, as long as the government is engulfed in land disputes and the statutory system remains corrupt as it is, reconciliation is not possible.

In order to address current disputes that are a result of the war and those boundary and ethnic conflicts that preceded the war respondents reported that the land tenure act, or more specifically the work of the Land Commission, which has been recently established, should not function like the court justice system but rather be responsible for re-evaluating the land legislation, investigate and substantiate land claims, propose relocation of policies, address human rights violations and also be responsible for issues
regarding repatriation for those who have permanently lost their land to others. Many participants recognized that cases of reconciliation of disputes differed according to different cases. For instance, cases of multiple deeds for the same piece of land are difficult to resolve especially when people have multiple deeds. Yet, if none of those claiming the land have not already developed the land, chances of reconciling the true owner are much higher. While, reported cases where someone had purchased a piece of land and built their house on it only to find out that the sale was fraudulent are much more complicated due to the extensive investment already made beyond the piece of land. Yet, like some families did in the Rwandan case, many families even after constructing buildings find ways to co-exist.

While some respondents reported that it is often easier to resolve a dispute between members of the same ethnic group because they are considered blood brothers and sisters. Some stated that this sometimes worsens the disputes as some people feel betrayed that those they know took over their property. It appears that people are maybe more forgiving towards someone who comes from a different community, driven by desperation and without knowing the original owners either as neighbors or relatives belonging to the same bloodline or ethnic group. One respondent recalled that, “in some cases some people and some families have found a way to work with those who kept their properties going and occupied them and coexisted until they eventually find a permanent solution. Others have had to go to court. Others have had to resort to fist fights, in some instances killing people for pieces of land. There was a recent case where two prominent Liberians were fighting over farmland. And there were 16 people I think who were killed
as the result of that and they had to go to court, one of the senators was trialed and acquitted in that matter."

Many respondents felt that because they were out of the country they were even more vulnerable to corruption. One of respondent stated that:

> We need to do something to reform the land. What we need to do is to set rules and regulations otherwise there will be another war between land owners. Every village does not have a single deed, the administrators that goes around selling land to individuals any case in the village that is 10 years old or 15, can go to town find someone who owns the land sells it, he gets the money and then he gives the money to the owners of the town. And there thing is if you bought land in Liberia and you left it and you didn't do anything. Once they have learnt that you have left, they will go and re-sell that land to someone else. What the government is doing is wrong in that, whenever you buy land, when the land owner comes back they are suppose to probate the land. The officials that means the ministry of lands and mines, probate the land. Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy they are suppose to call you and notify if that person is suppose to sell the land. But what has happened or is happening, is that you buy the land you probate the deed, you leave Liberia and come to America once the town or the villagers know that you are no longer in town. The re-sell the land to somebody else.

On a long-term basis beyond the Land Commission, recommendations were made by participants regarding the establishment of a village administration to link traditional communal land tenure with statutory system. The village administrator would be responsible for overseeing all the land and property sales and report to the Ministry of Land Mines and Energy before and after sales are completed. Whilst in the urban areas respondents called for an establishment of zoning laws. This is to establish where and what type of houses can be constructed and in what area of the cities. All respondents agreed that the government has to address corruption within its government structures. Other respondents directed the responsibility to other Liberians stating that Liberians need to stop being “crooks.”
5.1 Contributions of the Liberian Diaspora to Postconflict Reconstruction

All respondents stated that they see themselves as Liberians more now than before, since being outside of the country. Respondents stated that being in the United States has made them more nationalistic, that being part of the Diaspora has provided a unique opportunity to get to know Liberians from different ethnic groups. The respondents stated that Liberians in the Diaspora need to show Liberians at home the importance of rising above ethnic identity in establishing a peaceful national identity. Some respondents reported that since being in the US, they have had no tensions with fellow Liberians from other counties and ethnic groups.

One respondent stated that “now that I am in America I think I’m more rational. I try not to be emotional. I try to understand the state of mind at the time before making decisions.” The respondents continue to argue that when regarding land disputes it is important to “approach all the situations at a human level.” Further arguing that “the conflict is of egos...to reduce the dispute you have to reduce the ego of a person to reduce tension.” Another respondent revealed a similar belief that those in the Diaspora, because of their interactions with people from different countries, have a potential to become better leaders with better world views than those who have not travelled outside their home country. Therefore, the travel experience of the Diaspora better enables individuals as agents of reconciliation back home. He stated:

First of all I have this belief that no one in any African country or any country for that matter should hold an established superior position if they have not traveled out of the county. For this reason I don’t think anyone should be president of any country especially Liberia without traveling, without traveling experience. I say this because before the war in Liberia we never used to travel whether in Liberia or America. So you were narrow minded when I was in Liberia. When I got out of
the country I started working with Mexicans, Chinese, Africans, I was working with Ethiopians I work with people from Mexico. You become a world class, what I call a world class citizen. So you learn to listen to other people so that when you go back and you become a leader in your country. When you lead by confusion you get confusion. That’s what we saw in Liberia. Because Liberia or Africa or whatever other country you hear is a global village. When you do that you meet people from different countries your mind becomes global so that when you are a leader you don’t make decisions based on the tribe or the country you make the decisions based on your international experience.

However, some Liberians reported that Liberians in the Diaspora still live divided lives that can have negative effects to reconciliation back home, especially because the Diaspora has the financial arm to influence the political landscape. Mensa-Bonsu stated bluntly that, “we have to acknowledge the role of the Diaspora in fuelling conflict. The biggest Liberian Diaspora is in Minnesota, they caused a lot of problems back home.” One of the leaders in Columbus noted that even though most Liberians in the US state that being outside the country has helped them seek reconciliation back home, the respondent argued that in his view Liberians in the Diaspora managed to assimilate to the US lifestyle but still manage to cling to divisive views of other Liberians that were caused by the war and before the war. He stated that:

Personally I think we are living parallel lives. On a personal level we have adopted the American lifestyle, but with tribal relations I don’t see changes. We are living separate lives. The two lives to not meet, the American lifestyle and the Liberian identity. There is a lot of amount of acrimony within Liberian organizations, for instance in ULAA people are fighting over political power on ethnic terms. People have never been able to come together. For instance ULAA had elections; they caused a lot of tensions because people wanted the candidate from their group to win. Now another group has walked away to launch their own association. People go to war literally. Even our Ambassador, the Liberian ambassador to the US has not been able to intervene. For us it’s better to be native to us than to unite. People see themselves as first and foremost members of ethnic groups, they have a very weak national affinity… We have not changed, or moved away from our tribal identities; many people are still vehemently opposed to unity. Even the church experience, political and social experience. People still
prefer small cliques, for instance we form 4-5 different churches in a small community because we cannot agree even at the spiritual level on serving one God.

Like the respondent above, others stated that there is a generational difference of behaviors amongst Liberians in the Diaspora. Some participants stated that “older people see things in an ethnic way” and some reported that older Liberians cling on divisive identities due to the status of which it grants them. While others stated that intermarriages have helped in diminishing the idea of pure Liberians, as there are no longer pure ethnic groups per se. Respondents stated that for the younger Liberians, who grew up in the US, “Liberians who came here at much younger age, who perhaps went to college here or high school here and so forth and so on. Tend to be more inclusive, tend to be welcoming of diversity; knowing that well this is a country that's diverse, different religious beliefs, ethnic communities and so on.”

However, some participants responded strongly that, even though the Diaspora has an economic muscle above Liberians at home and there is a definite impact with their actions, it is no longer as strong as it was before. One respondent who had just returned from Liberia, who worked with the TRC of Liberia argued that the “environment has changed, I was just in Liberia just last week and I have been there every year in the last 3 years. I can tell you those who sit in the Diaspora and haven't been home in the last 20 years or so they imagine a different Liberia than the reality. People are tired of war and conflict they do not owe loyalties to these warlords anymore because they have seen abandoned them, have disappointed them so they will not allow to be used. So from my
experience from what I’ve heard and what I’ve seen is that people want to prosper, they want to move on and they don't want to go to war.”

Indeed, all Liberians stated that the Diaspora has a responsibility to learn and transmit the democratic values that they have witnessed in the US, although imperfect. They stated that the obligation of the Diaspora is beyond economic purposes of remittances, but their transnational value is in transmitting such values as governance, and that all Liberians who work hard, are abiding by the Law and are ethical should have the opportunity to a good life not hindered by political or ethnic affiliation.

Although only 3 participants interviewed are directly affected by DED, which means they face the threat to be sent home if the DED status is not changed to residential status of extended, all Liberians interviewed either had a family member or friends who face the threat of being sent home. Both, of these concerns directly affected respondents and those who are not residents stated their desire to go home but stated that they cannot go home now because they have young children who were born in the US. One respondent stated that for most Liberians the ultimate goal is to return home but because of family responsibilities “going home is not an event, it is a process.” They stated that Liberia did not have the facilities that children are already used to the US could adapt to; one respondent directly affected stated that he has two young children who are physically disabled; he fears that Liberia does not have the facilities for children with special needs such as his children.

Many respondents echoed a statement from President Johnson-Sirleaf that Liberia is simply not ready to swallow large amounts of Liberians from the outside, especially
because the country has a difficult time already managing Liberians who are home. From the limited participants who were directly affected by DED and a point noted by one informant, it is working class Liberians who are most affected by DED. The participants interviewed held low-income positions as sale-persons in some US stores. Despite the fact that individuals such as Kirkpatrick Weah the National Chair of the Committee of Liberians on Deferred Enforced Departure-COLD, who was one of the participants of this study, held a part-time position because of the uncertainty of his US status despite being a qualified drug prevention counselor. Some respondents noted that because those on DED in particular do not hold upper positions, if forced to return to Liberia they will be competing for the same jobs as other Liberians with limited education.

Interviews for this project were conducted during a historic time in Liberia’s contemporary history when the TRC of Liberia released its final report on July, 01, 2009 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia Report, 2009). When asked about this event, in particular about the clause in the report requesting the current president not to undergo re-election in 2011, as well another 30 individuals who should not hold public office for at least 20 years, respondents had different views. Some argued that the report is “taking us back to the times of war” and that Liberians in general need to “forgive and forget”. Others argued that perpetrators should be made to pay for injustices they caused during the war. One respondent who was involved in the drafting of the Diaspora TRC report of Liberia, which forms part of the appendix for the final TRC report, stated the following:

I view the report as sensitive; I think it’s the springboard to so many responsibility and accountability and reconciliation measures. I think that the report’s
recommendations should be implemented by the government. In fact it's legally bidding if you look at the TRC add. This is the first truth commission whose report is legally bidding. It’s controversial in a way that not everybody will be happy with it. We didn't expect that everybody will be happy with it anyway because certain people who are connected do not like the report. People that the report says they were not honest and sincere and remorseful therefore they face the consequences. And then those people's allies and their relatives and their friends will try to shoot the report down. This is a very serious body of work that if implemented carefully can really significantly change the country in the right direction.

Despite differing views on the official process of reconciliation, all respondents recognized that true and lasting reconciliation will only be possible if and when Liberians see that their bread and butter issues are addressed, of which land security is top priority. One respondent convincingly argued that “when you see food you forget about politics” while another respondent in same vain argued that “the issue of peace and development are like a chicken and egg. If there is no food there will be no peace, but you have to be willing to pay a high price for peace.” Henceforth, respondents highlighted the urgency of which the government needs to address development issues of poverty and education, specifically addressing these issues for the young people who were former child soldiers during the war. Some respondents reported that they are personally involved in the building of schools and libraries in their various counties, to ensure that young people are not manipulated into war again.

Some respondents argued that another land security problem is that young people are not owners of land. The respondents advocated for the involvement of young people in agricultural projects stipulating that they must be given plots of land which they can own and be responsible to develop. Other respondents however, reported that Liberia is part of the global economy, which is increasingly concentrated on services; therefore the
government needs to prioritize training in commercial careers as opposed to agriculture. Mensa-Bonsu from UNMIL stated that whether the government is addressing land tenure security or another development issue, the fundamental priority is making peace an everyday reality for Liberians:

The UN is building schools, courts to make people feel secure; to make peace an everyday reality. Incidences of rape, gender-based violence still a serious problem. During the war 9 and 10yr olds were taught how to rape, with their nicknames such as ‘Black Cobra’, Fearful Monkey’. Now after the war those children who made a living and a reputation as warlords have a drop in social standing, because now they are no longer soldiers with reputations, mostly they are unemployed. This is not easy to deal with. It is important to attack the problem in various angles.

Conclusion

This chapter underpins the symbolic role of land as an important part of belonging- land as giving place. The data goes beyond establishing the relationship between land tenure and reconciliation by exposing a fundamental interdependence between the two, primary based on the provision of bread and butter. The precondition for peace as an everyday reality therefore involves the symbolic belonging of the community in a defined territory that is reflective of the people’s history and collective memory and dignity as argued by Fanon (1963), the cultural identity and capacity for the land and resources to ensure socio economic prosperity. Although it is important to state that this thesis is not arguing that land access guarantees food security as evident in the poor conditions of farmers in most of the developing world, in particular African farmers. However the evident insecurity of land tenure has extensive implications at different levels of economic influence such as investment in real estate development in both urban
and rural areas. Agricultural production is difficult to negotiate in conditions where the population is facing a challenge of negotiating a place to build a house as stated by the Liberian Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008) much less negotiating condition to cultivate the land. It is therefore important to address the differing levels of land access from the ability for the populations to build homes that will not be claimed by neighbors and strangers, while emphasizing land tenure security as potential avenue for food security through agriculture.

As well the role of the Liberian Diaspora to national reconciliation is indicative of the potential for the young generation of Liberians who grew up outside of Liberia to play a significant role in this construction of a postconflict land tenure that embraces the dynamic unified imagery of a Liberian identity. The advantage of the youth in the Diaspora is partly their imaginative distance of the pre-conflict and conflict land tenure regime which reflected the ugliness of war, the young Diaspora in negotiating an inclusive tenure regime that emphasizes engagement with all groups and a celebration of diversity.

This is of course not to argue the young members of the Diaspora are beyond the social and ethnic cliques that affect their parents; however their unique identity as Liberians born outside the country and the collective memory of a troubled homeland provides a practical manner in which the Liberian government can engage the young Diaspora Liberians to their homeland. This inclusive potential of the young generation of Liberians on the Diaspora can be realized beyond the informal relationship with Liberia to a formal relationship that involves Liberian youth in the US with their counterparts at
home. In doing so, the transnational Liberian youth is able to negotiate the future together, the one at home by bringing the current Liberian reality to those in the US, while the ones in the US can share how their livelihoods and access to better education and employment can share how these can be used to foster development back in Liberia.
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Discussion

Since the reconstitution project was not intended to rethink, deconstruct, and democratically reconstitute the settler Liberian state, its neocolonial permutation retained its basic nature, mission, character, and policies anchored on an antipeople, antidemocracy, and antidevelopment foundation. In essence, the change from the settler to the neocolonial phase of the Liberian state was analogous to, using the proverbial expression “putting new wine into old bottles” (Kieh, 2008, p.167)

Is successful land tenure reform a necessary precondition for political reconciliation in Liberia? Secondly, what are the primary means by which land tenure reform contributes to political reconciliation in Liberia? Thirdly, what is the role of Liberians in the Diaspora in the land reform process and how does the role of the Diaspora shape the contribution of land tenure reforms to wider political reconciliation?

Chapter four maps out different historical periods of land use in Liberia during conditions before, during and after the war suggests a historical intersection between land, construction of citizenship between settler Americo-Liberian elite, ethnicity, violence and conflict. Therefore land tenure gives political legitimacy; land distribution provides the conditions for reconciliation or conflict.

The findings of this thesis reflect not only a link but interdependence between successful land tenure reform and political reconciliation in Liberia. The data reveals that land for development purposes and land for identity, peace and reconciliation purposes is like some respondents put it “the chicken and egg” debate, it is difficult to state which one comes first. All participants in this thesis project were either themselves in a land dispute or knew a family member or friend who was, some even stated that their own
village as a whole is engulfed in a dispute. However, land disputes in Liberia have been influenced by the three historical periods: before the war, during and after the war.

Before the war in Liberia there were boundary disputes between different counties although not many. The ones reiterated by participants are those between Nimba County and Grand Gedeh. Before the civil war Mandigos, Manos and Gios in Nimba County had disputes on whether the Mandigo people are true Nimbarians and Liberians. At this time the majority of rural Liberia was governed by a communal land tenure regime which tied whole families to one piece of land which belonged to all family members passed from generation to generation. The urban areas such as Monrovia were governed by statutory land ownership which used the law of the document as proof of ownership for private ownership. This was a mechanism used by the Americo-Liberian elite to grab land from indigenous Liberians who signed away their land without their knowledge as one participant stated “for pieces of fish.” Before the war although traditional rulers in the rural areas settled disputes between community members and surrounding groups, the statutory system had superiority in the settlement of disputes. Even at this time the statutory system was subject to elite corruption at the time favoring the ruling Americo-Liberian elite. This biased history of land acquisition towards the ruling elite was not beyond violence, as argued by Kieh (2008) and Moran (2005). The land tenure regime in pre-civil war Liberia reflected the violent nature of the Liberian state.

Civil war Liberia has added to the worsening of pre-war tensions in Nimba between Nimbarians and between Nimba and Grand Gedeh County. During the war family members and neighbours left their land, seeking refuge in neighboring countries
and in peaceful parts of Liberia. During this time family members sold their family land as a necessity for economic survival, while neighbors looted and occupied the land of their neighbors claiming that the land had been left vacant.

Postconflict Liberia has resulted in destroyed government departments and documents such as in the Ministry of Land Mines and Energy as well as a rise in rampant corruption, all of which are holding the Liberian system hostage to land dispute. Even the Liberian President Johnson-Sirleaf, the vast majority of government officials and the state itself are facing several land disputes. Some claims to government land are historical, emulating from the brutal land grabs of the Americo-Liberian regime. Postwar Liberia has brothers and sisters and neighbors fighting over what used to be communal land. The urban land owners in postwar Liberia are not any better off than their rural counterparts, as rampant fabrication of title deeds by sellers offer no security but a climate of survival of the fittest reflective of a continuing war economy. Post-conflict Liberia has an agricultural economy that is underinvested in due to the hyper conditions of tenure security as well as a collapse of market entitlements as evidenced by the Liberian Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008). Although participants pointed out the success of traditional leaders in establishing a land disputes mechanism and reported lowering levels of government corruption postconflict Liberia has not succeeded in easing the tensions of many Liberians. The As projected by Collier (2007) the possibility of another war is a real fear due to continuing levels of extremely poor livelihoods.

However, the situation is somewhat unusual as postconflict Liberia has a middle class that is located in other countries throughout the world. The “16th County” of Liberia
is in the United States. Liberia faces the challenge of negotiating peace and development with a generation of Liberians, who as former government officials and economic and intellectual elites, shape a Liberia that they left during the war, a new Liberia that they envision from a distance. Indeed the Diaspora is imperfect as many of its members are still trapped in the divisions created by brutality of the memory of war as evident in those members who continue to hold on to social and ethnic lines.

The fact that all respondents, despite their physical absence from their homeland, remain so intimately engulfed in the land tenure struggles of Liberia, underscores the urgency of the land tenure problem. This means that for those in Liberia, who are the smallholder farmers, the disgruntled youth and refugees, that land tenure reform is a matter of national emergency. However, the conviction by participants that various disputes can be traced before the war, such as those in Nimba County between the Mandigoes, the Gios and the Manos and those which have been directly caused by the war, demonstrates that essentially the work of the Land Commission can be divided according to this national memory instead of addressing these disputes on an individual basis. Yet, as many participants reiterated, the condition for such a commission is that of uncompromised democracy independent from government and individual influence.

Most importantly, on both the local and national level the fundamental conception of the establishment of a land tenure regime, whether addressing historical disputes or current ones over corruption due to multi-sales of land, all should be addressed with the acknowledgement that behind each of them is as Fanon (1963) puts it, a desperate quest for bread. Additionally, the government needs to acknowledge that, they have had the
most success addressing disputes with those in the rural areas, especially the farmers who are the most poor, they as compared to those in the capital Monrovia. However, the government cannot leave the settlement of disputes to rural leaders considering that even that system is easily overwhelmed by rampant corruption.

Despite the fact that participants continuously stated the role of the traditional dispute settlement and the compromises that people have already made with their neighbors and families, it would seem as if this condition continues to encourage subsistent production instead of re-thinking the way farm production should be reconceptualized beyond subsistence farming. This postconflict condition of Liberia opens a space for government leaders to re-think, together with the farming community, how agriculture should be made more competitive and essentially how agriculture can be improved such that Liberia is able to feed herself. This implies looking at the ways in which the youth can become more engaged in this process of transforming the agricultural sector from traditional to industrialized agriculture. This would also help Liberia in getting people to return to their counties, as the participants demonstrated many people are willing to return to the rural areas provided they have access to the market. Engaging the transnational Liberian youth is provided as a practical as a potential example.

These results show that the statutory system remains superior to the communal system as it is more favorable to the economically and politically powerful. The current administration of Sirleaf-Johnson has gone to great lengths to address rampant corruption (Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2008). However, even with the work of this land
commission, which was finally approved in July, 2009 (All Africa News Report, 2009), the government needs to be aware of how it relates to these institutions and what role they play in the larger reconstruction framework and implications for democracy. Specifically, the government needs to ensure that all Liberians, rural and urban, have equal access to these institutions beyond the work of the commission. When the Land Commission completes its work, just like the TRC did last July 2009, its work will be continued by government departments such as Ministry of Land Mines and Energy. It is however unclear as to how the work of the commission is connected to the overall re-structuring of this ministry, which is accused of being subjected to elite corruption.

Furthermore, during this research process the final TRC report was released July, 1, 2009 (All Africa News Report, 2009). Amongst the many recommendations made by the report which highlight land reform, the most controversial was the banning from power of certain individuals who are seen as having been involved in the civil war, from government power at the end of their current term for 30 years. President Sirleaf-Johnson is one of these individuals recommended to be banned from political office for 30 years. This controversial report led to some in Liberia and outside to call for the resignation of the president, however, since then the president has not only not commented on the report but has announced that she will be running for office for elections of 2011 (All Africa News Report, 2010). Currently the government has given the final report recommendations to another commission to evaluate which recommendations qualify for implementation and which do not. Although the Liberian government reserves the right to make considerations of the TRC’s recommendations, it however needs to be careful of
forming institutions whose recommendations it might or might not follow because this will weaken the confidence in the already fragile institutions of the country and the faith of the people.

Zounmenou’s (2008) assertion about Liberian responsibility to build institutions highlights this imperative, that people should be able to trust their institutions to implement recommendations that are presented as representing the national consciousness. The Land Commission that is set out to draw this absent national strategy should conduct its work under the confidence that its work will be implemented instead of creating it for the sake of doing so.

Lastly, as well intentioned and ambitious as the Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008) is with establishing a holistic approach to poverty that looks at a security, economic, governance and infrastructure perspective as well as with a coordination structure that encompasses the government, regional, continental and international partners, priority should be focused on empowering the voices of Liberian people. It is important and commendable that Liberia is seeking regional partners such as ECOWAS who played an important role in the ending of the conflict, however, perhaps Liberia should consider even going a step further by pulling much closer to her neighbors Guinea, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone as well as Ghana in its establishment of a land tenure regime, in order to continue the discussion on livelihoods, considering many Liberians lived in these countries during the civil war.
6.2 Recommendations and Conclusion

The first recommendation is that the work of the Land Commission should, just like the work of the TRC, be extended to the Diaspora in particular to the vibrant Diaspora community in the US. Much like the work of the organization, Advocates for Human Rights, which conducted the TRC hearings on behalf of the TRC, the same can be done by selecting an organization that is already working on and in Liberia. Much like the case of Rwanda where the expatriates came back with innovative means of addressing land tenure, the Liberian Diaspora which is composed of the academic, political and social Liberian elite, undoubtedly can continue to play a key role as consultants and advisers of this commission. Because postconflict societies suffer high rates of illiteracy as is the case in Liberia, the country nevertheless does not need to entirely utilize the expertise of outsiders but of Liberians who, though on the outside, remain insiders. This is despite the results of the extension of DED for 18 more months. The same might be necessary for other African countries like Zimbabwe when they eventually undergo land tenure reform, they will also likely need to engage the millions of Zimbabweans who left the country over the past ten years due to the collapse of the Zimbabwean state, fuelled by land disputes in the country. It is unlikely that most Zimbabweans will return home immediately after some stability is achieved; Liberia’s experiment, if it includes the Diaspora, could become an example for other African nations with substantial amounts of their citizens outside of their homeland.

Secondly, when established the official national settlement law should encourage a person to person and communal dispute settlement mechanism as they are more
important for long-term reconciliation. The government needs to encourage people to use local methods of settlement instead of the statutory system which is costly to both the state and the individual especially considering that oftentimes a much more favorable compromise is made by the individuals involved.

Most importantly the work of the land commission in discussing settlements and repatriations should emphasize the values of reconciliation and nation building introduced by the TRC, instead of a winner takes all mentality. The commission should continue to highlight that reconciliation is a continuous process of which the TRC was but one part of, and that the ability for Liberians to agree to distribute land such that they can live together and begin to invest in their land and establish better livelihoods is beneficial both economically and for the nation building process. Again, the commission should be prepared to distinguish not only between disputes that occurred during the war but also disputes over vacant land versus disputes over land which people have been accused of taking has and have substantially invested in. In the case for the latter, the government of Liberia needs to call on its partners including the Diaspora to invest in a fund that will address financial reparations for those losing their investment.

As well, the government and the Land Commission needs to ensure that its work is connected to broader reconstruction programs such as that of the security sector reform, primarily by, as stated earlier, taking key lessons from achievements and failures of the DDRR process. This is particularly important in engaging young people’s rights to land within both the communal and statutory systems.
Lastly, the government needs to outline the legal implications of this Land Commission and how it contributes to permanent institutions of democracy including how the government and other players will be held accountable to implement the recommendations of the commission to avoid this current case of the TRC.
REFERENCES


Neely, C., Sutherland, K., & Johnson, J. (2009). *Do sustainable livelihoods approaches have a positive impact on the rural poor?* Retrieved Mar. 16, 2009, from Food and Agriculture Organization:


Richards, P. (2005). *To fight or to farm? Agrarian dimensions of the Mano River conflicts (Liberia and Sierra Leone).* *African Affairs, 104*(417), 571-590.

http://www.fao.org


http://www.issafrica.org/dynamic/administration/file_manager/file_links/LIBERIA%207-7-08.PDF?link_id=14&slink_id=6236&link_type=12&slink_type=13&tmpl_id=3
### APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>US Arrival</th>
<th>On DED</th>
<th>Land Ownership</th>
<th>Land Dispute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Rivergee</td>
<td>Grebo</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>On DED</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Grand Cape Mount</td>
<td>Vai</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>On DED</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>United Nations Mission in Liberia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Nimba County</td>
<td>Krahn</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Sinoe County</td>
<td>Kru</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bomi County</td>
<td>Gola</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Village dispute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Nimba County</td>
<td>Kissi</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Grand Bassa</td>
<td>Bassa</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Margibi County</td>
<td>Bassa</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Lofa County</td>
<td>Kpelle</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Montserrat County</td>
<td>Kpelle</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Sinoe County</td>
<td>Kru</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Grand Cape Mount</td>
<td>Vai</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Grand Kru</td>
<td>Grebo</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bomi County</td>
<td>Gola</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Lofa County</td>
<td>Kpelle</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>Grebo</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Lofa County</td>
<td>Kpelle</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>