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Assessing the inclusion of youth and women in, and its impact on, the implementation of the Africa Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development[1] initiatives in Monrovia; Liberia.

By

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[1] African Union. 2006. African Union Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy Framework. Retrieved 20 April 2019, from: http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/pcrd-policy-framwowork-eng.pdf.

Declaration of authorship

I Rachel Nontobeko Gcabashe, declare that this dissertation tittled, *"Assessing the inclusion of youth and women in, and its impact on, the implementation of the Africa Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development initiatives in Monrovia; Liberia"*, is my research work. It has not been submitted to any institution for any purpose or interest. I maintain that quotations, citations or extractions from the works of others are properly confirmed and acknowledged.

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

The conflict in Liberia had an enormous impact on the country's social, political, and economic landscapes, affecting especially women and youth. Studies highlight the youth's and women's role in peace building and post-conflict reconstruction processes of society as a cross-cutting issue crucial to sustainable peace. Therefore, this study investigated the inclusion of youth and women in, and its impact on, the implementation of African Union's (AU's) Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy in Monrovia, Liberia. The study's main goals were to contextualise the Liberian conflict, analyse the AU PCRD Framework, identify the contributions made by youth and women in implementing PCRD initiatives in Monrovia, and identify the challenges faced by both youth and women in Monrovia, as well as how these challenges influence their participation in PCRD initiatives and their implementation. While there are abundant documents, reports, and studies that focus on the conflict in African countries, particularly in Liberia, there is a research gap regarding the inclusion of youth and women in, and its impact on, the implementation of the AU PCRD initiatives. Based on various experiences gained thus far in managing peace processes on the continent, the AU crafted the PCRD Policy Framework. The Policy Framework was developed, mindful that each conflict is unique, as a guide to consolidate peace processes, as a conflict prevention measure, and as a mechanism to promote sustainable development.

Using the mixed research method of quantitative and qualitative research designs, the study examined the extent to which the youth and women have been actively participating in the implementation of PCRD programmes in Liberia. Drawing from data collected, the study established that the participation of the youth and women in peace building processes and the conceptualisation and implementation of PCRD initiatives is critical in addressing physical, cultural, and structural violence, and in building post-conflict societies. However, as research findings suggest, there is no evidence of women and youth's effective participation and representation in crucial decision-making structures, and in the implementation of PCRD initiatives. Hence, women and youth remain underrepresented and overlooked. This study thus concludes that it is essential that youth and women become part of the PCRD processes at all levels and dimensions as stakeholders who are directly affected by the civil war. Their

involvement can strengthen local peacebuilding institutions and re-affirm the value of inclusive stakeholder participation.

Acronyms

ACCORD   -   The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes

AU   –   African Union

AUC   –   African Union Commission

AUDA NEPAD -   African Union Development Agency New Partnerships for Africa's Development

AYC   -   African Youth Charter

CAR   -   Central African Republic

CPA   –   Comprehensive Peace Agreement

DDRR   -   Disarmament Demobilisation Rehabilitation and Reintegration

ECOWAS   -   Economic Community of West African States

ISS   -   Institute for Security Studies

LPBO   –   Liberia Peacebuilding Office

LURD   -   Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy

MODEL   -   Movement for Democracy in Liberia

NPFL   -   National Patriotic Front of Liberia

OAU   -   Organisation of the African Union

OHCHA   -   Office of the High Commission on Human Rights

PCRD   –   Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development

PPA   -   Pro-Poor Agenda

PRS   -   Poverty Reduction Strategy

RR   -   Rehabilitation and Reintegration

SDG's   -   Sustainable Development Goals

TRC   -   Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UN   –   United Nations

UNDP   -   United Nationa Development Program

UNMIL   –   United Nations Mission of Liberia

UNSCR   –   United Nations Security Council Resolution

USAID   -   United States Agency for International Development

WANEP   -   West Africa Network for Peacebuilding

WHO   -   World Health Organisation

WIPNET   -   Women in Peacebuilding Network

YMCA   -   Young Men's Christian Association

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and research problem

Liberia has successfully transitioned from violent civil conflict to a relatively peaceful post-conflict country. To understand why Liberia is hailed as a successful post-conflict case study, a brief history of its conflict is essential. Former slaves returning from the Caribbean and the United States of America established Liberia in 1822. With the aid of the American Colonization Society, it developed into a colony, then a Commonwealth republic, before finally gaining independence in 1847 (Connolly & Singh, 2014: 1). Until 1980, the descendants of freed slaves, known as Americo-Liberians, remained in charge of the country's social, political, and economic systems (Long, 2008: 2). Although attempts were made to create a more egalitarian and just society for everyone, the nation was engulfed in a violent civil war that began in 1989 and lasted for 14 years (Connolly & Singh, 2014: 1).

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in August 2003 signalled an era of silencing the guns; transitional governance; and post-conflict development and reconstruction (Connolly & Singh, 2014: 1). The United Nations (UN) Security Council resolved to establish a United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) through Resolution 1509 (2003) to monitor the implementation of the peace accord and the stabilization of the country (UNMIL, 2016: 1).

Most of the literature on conflict and peacebuilding strategies in Liberia shares a common critique that, while there are discussions on conflict issues, the efforts designed to help address and mitigate the conflict are rarely informed by rigorous analysis that ensures that the interventions are context- specific (Mulbah, 2017: 8). This would include context-specific areas that are of interest to young people, and that are gender specific and sensitive. Subsequently, some priorities and interventions have not produced the desired results, nor have they ensured equal participation of youth and women (Mulbah, 2017: 8). The interest

of this study thus lies in assessing the extent to which the youth and women have been included in the implementation of the post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD)[2] initiative, and the impact of their inclusion.

According to McKay (2009: 382), youth and women are the most vulnerable in any conflict situation. The specific effects experienced by women of all ages during a conflict include displacement, involuntary disappearance of relatives, poverty, disintegration, victimization through acts of murder, torture, and sexual abuse. Youth, like women, are also targeted during a conflict (McKay, 2009: 382). In some countries, especially in Africa, they are enlisted at a tender age, some as young as nine, to fight and kill in civil wars. Furthermore, youth are faced with not only the biological and psychological development cycles that define them and adolescence, but also daunting external pressures such as poverty, illness, and abuse at a very young age. Therefore, the outbreak of conflict further exacerbates the hardships that many young people encounter. Because the youth have so much at stake, their participation in PCRD processes is, therefore, critical in shaping the policies for the voiceless (McKay, 2009: 382; United Nations, 2003: 373).

To comprehensively respond to the challenges of countries and communities emerging from conflict, African governments initiated a process of creating a policy framework to coordinate the multi-dimensional features that focus on post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD). Liberia is one of the countries that are undergoing post-conflict peacebuilding processes and therefore falls within the ambit of the African Union's (AU) PCRD's mandate. It is against this background that this study investigates the inclusion of youth and women in, and its impact on, the implementation of the African Union's Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development policy in Monrovia, Liberia.

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[2] According to the Alliance for Peacebuilding (2013), peacebuilding is a process that promotes the establishment of long-lasting peace and aim to prevent a relapse into conflict by addressing the root causes and effects of conflict through reconciliation, institution building, and political and economic transformation. PCRD in this study is synonymous with peacebuilding.

1.2 Research problem and context

Liberia's conflict can be traced to two broad elements: systematic marginalisation of the indigenous population and mismanagement of resources. A large portion of the population has been systematically removed and marginalized from national governance structures and basic fiscal agreements (PRS, 2008: 14). The construct of the constitution was designed for the needs of the Americo-Liberians and, therefore, disregarded the inclusion of indigenous people. The mismanagement of the state resources was prevalent and contributed to glaring inequalities in the distributions of already scarce resources, further marginalizing youth and women (PRS, 2008: 14).

According to Campbell-Nelson (2008), approximately 75 percent of adolescents and women were alleged to have been subjected to multiple forms of violence and sexual abuse during the war. In most conflicts, gender roles are strictly defined: usually women and children are the victims, while men are viewed as both peacemakers and perpetrators. Moreover, this was the case in Liberia. Against all odds, women vehemently fought against repression and inequality and were recognized as a major force in the peacebuilding and reconstruction processes in the country (Goyol, 2019: 123). Fifteen years down the line, women in Liberia are still marginalized and transformation by the government of Liberia has been stagnant. For example, women hold only one in nine Parliamentary seats[3]. Out of 20 ministers, only five are women. The Ministry of National Security only includes 13% of women and, out of 32 Senate committees, only three are headed by women (Luppino & Webbe, 2011:109).

On the other hand, for centuries, youth and adults in Africa have traditionally[4] had an inferior-superior relationship. Most cultures are rooted in a verbalized way of doing things, and it is

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[3] Statistics released in March 2019 by the World Economic Forum state that Liberia is currently listed at number 151 out of 193 on the global ranking of women representation in Parliament.
[4] African traditions are based on oral traditions, which ensures that fundamental beliefs and ways of life are passed down from generation to generation. These rituals are cultural identities passed down by legends, myths, and tales, rather than religious beliefs. These customs have been passed on from generation to generation. The elders are the final authority and are trusted completely (South African History Online, 2011).

commonly believed that custodianship of history and wisdom is contingent on age. As a result, adults are thought to possess superior intelligence, expertise, and ability to take decisions that benefit society (Mazzocchi, 2006: 464; South African History Online, 2011). It has been more than fifteen years since the PCRD process was initiated but, notwithstanding a detailed national agenda, there is still a lack of agreement about how to institutionalize youth involvement in the national development process. Sixty-five percent of the population are under the age of 35 in Liberia. This age group has systemically been marginalized developmentally, socially, politically, and economically; and are afflicted by poverty, unemployment, and inequality (PRS, 2008: 10; Woods, 2011: 3).

Gendered roles, leading to different outcomes for both men and women, often lead to conflict in society. Several variables shape gender dynamics. Men are often called to participate in battles and serve in armies, while women are responsible for the home and family (Dijkema, 2001: 2). As Mazurana et al (2005: 3) observe, 'in contemporary armed conflict, women and girls serve as front line messengers, wives, spies, combatants and porters'. Men often operate in the political arena, while women operate in what is called the private arena of the home and family, in communities where power disparities between men and women are prevalent. Men inhabit the public domain while women are limited to the private domain. Women are disproportionately affected by violence and PCRD mechanisms, but they are largely excluded from the peace table and decision-making bodies. Similarly, the conflict and post-conflict cycles typically lack gender dimensions. Nonetheless, while women are marginalised from levels of power, at the community level, their peacebuilding efforts are substantial (Dijkema, 2001: 2; Mazurana et al., 2005: 3).

Against this background, and the many experiences gained thus far in managing peace processes on the continent, at its 7th Ordinary Session in Sirte, Libya, from June 28 to July 2, 2005, the African Union's (AU) Executive Council urged the AU Commission to establish an AU Policy Framework on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD). This PCRD framework was conceptualised to guide the development of comprehensive guidelines and policies that elaborate on the approaches that work towards averting a relapse into

violence, consolidate peace, foster long-term stability and pave the way for growth and regeneration in conflict-affected countries and regions (African Union, 2005: 1). The AU PCRD policy was developed cognisant of the fact that each conflict is unique, and therefore, its implementation is flexible and open to adaptation by affected countries.

Globally, in the last two decades, international norms and standards have shifted towards emphasizing the protection of vulnerable groups[5]. This includes the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) on Women in Peace and Security, UNSCR 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace, and Security and the AU's Solemn Declaration (2004). This highlights the lack of urgency of youth and women as respondents and actors in the PCRD initiatives. This study is, therefore, conducted to assess the extent of the inclusion of youth and women in, and its impact on, the implementation of the African Union Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development initiatives in Monrovia, Liberia.

1.3 Study area

Monrovia is the capital of Liberia, a country in West Africa, within the Cape-Mesurado county. Monrovia is a semi-urban area. As stated earlier, it was founded in 1822 by returning freed slaves from the United States of America and the Caribbean (Connolly & Singh, 2014: 1). Monrovia's economy is based on trade and largely depends on foreign aids. The city is struggling to create large-scale job opportunities, which are needed to accommodate a large number of unemployed and underemployed young men and women (UNDP, 2016: 4).

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[5] According to the AU PCRD policy, this includes children, the elderly, women, and other traumatized groups in society, and its policy presents the vulnerability of these groups as persons who are or were adversely affected by violent conflicts. For this study, the vulnerable groups refer to youth and women.

1.3.1 The setting of the study: Monrovia

While the conflict engulfed the whole country, the study focuses on Monrovia for the following reasons: firstly, political power and economic activities were concentrated in Monrovia, and that is where the government administration was seated. Furthermore, most infrastructure and basic services were concentrated in Monrovia (PRS, 2008: 14). When civil wars are fought in Africa, armed groups tend to concentrate their efforts to take over the capital city as a strategy to topple a government, the same applied to Liberia. Secondly, the Monrovian community is diverse; its population density is characterized by the in-flow movement. Thirdly, in a post-conflict context, the process of rebuilding the destroyed infrastructure begins in the capital city, meaning that most organizations and programmes that are focusing on implementing PCRD initiatives are concentrated in Monrovia, thus creating greater accessibility. It is for these reasons that this study focusses on Monrovia as a centre of its focus in Liberia.

1.4 Research broader issues

The researcher identifies the following as central issues to the study:

- The social, political, and economic impact on youth and women as the result of the conflict.

- The role of youth and women in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction of society has come out strongly as a cross-cutting issue and is crucial to sustainable peace. Most PCRD initiatives have tended to overlook issues that relate to the inclusion of youth and women (African Union, 2006: 28). The transformation by the government of Liberia, especially that targets issues of youth and women empowerment, has been stagnant.

- Challenges faced by both the youth and women in Monrovia that affect the implementation of PCRD initiatives should be examined.

There are abundant documents, reports, and studies that focus on the conflict in African countries, and particularly in Liberia, but there is a research gap with regard to the inclusion of youth and women in, and its impact on, the implementation of the AU PCRD initiatives. This study intends to garner the perspective of field experts and the population at large on the extent to which the AU PCRD initiatives in Monrovia have been impactful and inclusive of youth and women in their implementation.

1.5 Objectives of the study

- To contextualize the history and nature of the conflict in Liberia.
- To examine the AU PCRD Framework.
- To assess the extent to which the youth and women have been involved in implementing the PCRD initiatives in Monrovia.
- To identify the challenges faced by both the youth and women in Monrovia, and how these challenges affect their involvement in the implementation of PCRD initiatives.

1.6 Research questions

- What is the history and nature of the conflict in Liberia?
- What is the AU PCRD Framework?
- To what extent are the youth and women involved in implementing the AU PCRD initiatives in Monrovia?
- What are the challenges faced by both the youth and women in Monrovia that affect their involvement in the implementation of PCRD initiatives?

1.7 Significance of the study

The conflict in Liberia had a tremendous impact on the social, political, and economic landscapes of the country. All parties involved in exacerbating the conflict committed heinous crimes against Liberian citizens, especially youth and women, with the aim to raise revenue and hold on to power. This study, therefore, examined the extent to which the implementation of the AU PCRD framework has been inclusive of youth and women, and the impact thereof. In a country where the civil war had such an impact on women and young people, it becomes important to examine the extent of their involvement in such post-conflict resolutions as PCRD, as victims of the war and as stakeholders in the country. The study will contribute to the new knowledge and the development or revision of policies to bridge the gaps in the participation of youth and women in PCRD initiatives.

1.8 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter 1: Introduction provides the background of the study, overview of the research problem, and the study's objective.

Chapter 2: A literature review of this study provides a contextual background on the conflict in Liberia, comparative perspectives on the implementation of PCRD initiatives globally, and synopsis on the AU PCRD policy framework.

Chapter 3: Presents the theoretical framework whereby different theories were applied, outlined, and discussed by the study to contextualize the objectives of the study. Focusing on the challenges, and contributions by youth and women in the implementation of PCRD initiatives in Monrovia.

Chapter 4: Chapter 4 presents the methodology that was used to undertake this study. It gives details and discusses the quantitative and qualitative research instruments used in the study. The chapter discusses primary and secondary data as sources of references used. It finally outlines how the data collected was analyzed and used to draw conclusions on the theme under exploration.

Chapter 5: Presents data as well as discussion of findings. It gives an analysis of the challenges faced by both the youth and women in Monrovia that affect the implementation of PCRD initiatives. It outlines the impact these challenges have on both youth and women. It further discusses the contributions made by the youth and women in implementing the PCRD initiatives in Monrovia.

Chapter 6: Provides a conclusive summary that highlights key points of the entire thesis. It further makes recommendations on how challenges faced by youth and women can be addressed. Finally, the chapter highlights areas for further research in the theme under study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Most of the literature on peacebuilding or PCRD programmes have a Western origin and ideology, which adopt a top-down approach. According to Autesserre (2010: 4), this approach uses a checklist method, which is usually unsuitable for different realities of post-conflict settings. The PCRD policy framework adopted by the AU Member States, on the other hand, advocates for a bottom-up strategy that seeks to prevent conflict and consolidate peace, with the local actors at the forefront. The African continent continues to face a variety of problems, including governance issues, low socioeconomic growth within its borders, and increasing terror attacks by terrorist groups. Not only the international community, but also African politicians, are concerned about the instability. To address these growing challenges, the PCRD framework seeks to find African solutions to the problems afflicting Africa in order to promote and support pledges of unity amongst African descent (Lobakeng, 2017: 1). Therefore, to understand the relevance of investigating the inclusion of youth[6] and women in, and their impact on, the implementation of the AU's PCRD policy framework in Monrovia, Liberia, it is crucial to study a wide range of literature related to the subject. The following sections present the multi-layered literature and experiences by extracting essential concepts from the literature dealing with the inclusion of youth and women in PCRD initiatives in general, and then in Liberia in particular.

Thus, the objective of this chapter is to contextualise Liberia's conflict, its causes, implications, and the involvement of key stakeholders towards post-conflict transformation and peacebuilding; provide a comparative analysis of international case studies on the inclusion of youth and women in post-conflict initiatives and unpack concepts and dimensions to PCRD. The chapter intends to locate the study on Liberia's PCRD and the involvement of youth and women within the context of existing literature on this subject. The

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[6] While there are various definitions of youth, depending on the various geographic regions, the study will adopt the definition of the African Union Youth Charter, which defines the youth as every person between the ages of 15 and 35.

literature review will assess the extent to which youth and women have been engaged on issues related to PCRD and peacebuilding, and literature on the history, context, causes, and the trajectory of the Liberian conflict. In so doing, it will also be important to locate this study within the AU's PCRD Framework and its applicability to Liberia.

2.2 Definitions and concepts

It is important that the study is located within the context of existing conceptual definitions of PCRD and peacebuilding. In the 1970s, Johan Galtung (1976: 279) coined the word "peacebuilding," arguing that the development of mechanisms and approaches that foster long-term peace should address the "underlying issues" of violent conflict and strengthening local conflict management and resolution capacities. Similarly, Lederach (1997:2) claims that "peacebuilding incorporates a wide range of activities and functions that take place both before and after formal peace negotiations, this includes key steps required to turn conflict into more durable, peaceful co-existence." Paffeholz (2013: 13) describes peacebuilding as a long-term multi-dimensional process that aims to bring about positive change peacefully. Thus, the definitions from these three authors address issues related to setting up structures and processes to address the main drivers of conflict, bringing about social change, and sustainable peace.

The term then became a conversant concept within the UN, in particular following Boutros Boutros-Ghali's[7] 1992 Report, entitled *"An Agenda for Peace: Preventive diplomacy, Peace-making and Peace-keeping"*, which defines peacebuilding "as actions to solidify peace and stop the reoccurrence violence" (United Nations, 1992: 5). The issue of peacebuilding, being about preventing a relapse into conflict, as argued by the UN in 1992, is synonymous with

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[7] Was an Egyptian politician and diplomat who was the sixth Secretary-General (SG) of the UN from January 1992 to December 1996. One of his biggest contributions was his report *"An Agenda for Peace"* of 1992. This was a proposal for the United Nations to begin looking at the socio-economic aspects of peacekeeping in a more holistic way, especially in the aftermath of war. The idea was dubbed "post-conflict peace-building" by Boutros-Ghali, and it entailed new approaches to post-conflict scenarios. These new perspectives paved the way for a more robust disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration policy, resulting in a so-called integrated strategy (International Institute for Peace in Partnership, 2016).

the AU's peacebuilding framework, which also underscored a need to assist African societies coming out of conflict to avoid a relapse. However, key in these conceptual definitions, and as elaborated further below, the AU's Framework emphasised a need for peacebuilding efforts to be bottom-up and strengthen social resilience in post-conflict societies.

There are intrinsic differences between the approaches. The PCRD approach is bottom-up (grassroots approach), while the UN's approach to peacebuilding has traditionally been top-down (institutional approach). Therefore, this research adopts and advocates for a bottom-up approach and contends that for PCRD initiatives to be inclusive and sustainable, they must factor in the six indicative elements of PCRD in the implementation.

2.2.1 African Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Framework

Faced with a plethora of conflicts in Africa, as well as a need to guide and take the lead in assisting the countries coming out of conflicts to have a comprehensive approach to PCRD, the AU decided to formulate its continental framework. Accordingly, the AU's Executive Council at its 7th Ordinary Session held in Sirte, Libya, from 28 June to 2 July 2005, urged the AU Commission to craft an AU Policy Framework on PCRD. The purpose of such a Framework was to develop comprehensive guidelines and policies that elaborate on the approaches that "consolidate peace and prevent the reoccurrence of violence, promote sustainable development, and pave the way for growth and regeneration in regions and countries emerging from conflict" (African Union, 2006: 1). Therefore, the Policy Framework is envisaged as an instrument to encourage and carry out peacebuilding and PCRD initiatives, maintain peace, and prevent violence from resuming (African Union, 2006: 6).

However, as regional bodies and AU member states admitted, each conflict is unique and, therefore, its implementation must be flexible and open to adaptation. Nevertheless, the AU stated that the implementation of the PCRD initiatives involves several processes that must be pursued simultaneously as early as at the emergency stage, followed by the transitional stage and, finally, the development stages (African Union, 2005: 6).

The AU's Framework has five underlying principles[8] of engagement that are meant to guide the implementation of peacebuilding programmes, and they are there to ensure that PCRD programs resolve conflict's root causes and lead to long-term stability, social justice, renewal, and participatory governance (African Union, 2006: 6). From these five underlying principles, the ones most critical and relevant to this study are national and local ownership, inclusiveness, equity, and non-discrimination. These are the most relevant principles because, through their implementation at a country level, the issues relating to the representation and participation of the youth and women are prioritised (African Union, 2006: 6).

In this regard, the principle of national and local ownership highlights the continuous challenge whereby often local actors, especially women and youth, are hardly involved in PCRD processes. This is the case because, often, the most African countries were subjected to processes whereby PCRD policies and approaches are crafted and then implemented by international actors, with little or no participation of local stakeholders. The argument, therefore, from the AU's framework was that these critical stakeholders' aspirations and priorities must be aligned to PCRD activities in order to guarantee the sustainability of the stabilisation or recovery phases (African Union, 2006: 7).

Furthermore, the philosophy of inclusiveness, equality, and non-discrimination discusses problems of exclusion and unequal distribution of resources and power, which have historically been among the root causes of conflict. It further calls for the promotion of broad-based participation by attending to the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups such as the youth, disabled, women, girls, and the elderly (African Union, 2006: 7). In this study, this principle is also critical as one of the bases of assessing the extent to which the Liberian experience has lived up to it.

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[8] Including "African leadership, national and local ownership, inclusiveness, equity and non-discrimination, cooperation and coherence, and capacity building for sustainability" (African Union, 2006: 6).

Moreover, the last principle -capacity building for sustainability, acknowledges that post-conflict countries usually have a severe capacity deficit due to their recent past instability. The building and strengthening of local and national capabilities of society emerging from conflict is a crucial challenge (African Union, 2006: 8). This is also a relevant principle to the study, as it will be shown later that women and youth who were sidelined during the country's political history, and were the direct victims during the conflict, would have needed extraordinary support to ensure that they are empowered to play a meaningful role in the country's PCRD.

Along with the five underlying principles, the AU's PCRD Framework is anchored by six dimensions, including security, human/emergency assistance; political governance and transition; socio-economic reconstruction and development; human rights, justice, and reconciliation; and women and gender (African Union, 2006: 9). For this study, the focus will be on the Women and Gender Dimension.

In these dimensions, the Framework argues correctly that conflicts often have a negative effect on gender roles and relationships. Conflict interferes conventional gender roles and leads to the disintegration of social and family structures within the communities in many instances. The persistence of violence and abuse against children, especially young boys, who are subjected to forced recruitment into armies or militia forces, labor, trafficking, and sexual violence, increases vulnerability, particularly for war victims (African Union, 2006: 28). It also contributes to a rise in the number of women-headed households and militarization of communities. In these conditions, PCRD initiatives must be gender-sensitive, focused on educated gender analysis, and address the needs of vulnerable groups. Regrettably, most reconstruction initiatives have been inclined to overlooking or suppressing women's issues (African Union, 2006: 28).

With regards to youth participation, in 2006, the AU adopted African Youth Charter as there was no structure, implementation plan, or resources to promote the youth in peace and security agendas. At the time, the relevance of youth was very minute. It is therefore

important to emphasize that the lack of opportunities for youth in many countries jeopardizes peacebuilding efforts, raising the risk of relapse (Kujeke, 2020: 3).

Policies on youth and women in peace and security exist, but there is a need to put measures to fast track their participation in the implementation of PCRD or peacebuilding initiatives. Furthermore, there is a need to expand on the PCRD dimensions to accommodate the youth. The other five PCRD dimensions equally emphasise the importance of improving human development indicators and working towards sustainable socio-economic development in the affected countries (African Union, 2006: 16-24).

2.2.2 Political history and context of Liberia's conflict

Until 1980, the descendants of former slaves, known as Americo-Liberians, remained in charge of the country's social, political, and economic systems (Long, 2008: 2). The Americo-Liberians governed Liberia as a one-party state from 1847 to 1980, and their dominance heavily influenced Liberia's development as they introduced Western socio-political structures and English as a national language. During this period, the Americo-Liberians were able to satisfy all groups through a patronage system whereby they rewarded leaders for collecting taxes and for their loyalty (Boas, 2013: 79; Vinck et al., 2011: 8). The Americo-Liberians also had a segregationist stance. They hardly ever intermarried, indigenous Liberians were not allowed to serve in the military or government, and membership in the only recognised party was limited to Americo-Liberians. As a result, Americo-Liberians governed the settlements and the coastal area, and the indigenous population barely had any infrastructures, access to essential services or education (Boas, 2013: 81; PRS, 2008: 14; Vinck et al., 2011: 9).

Although most parts of the world in the 1970s had attained independence from colonial powers, Liberia's internal tensions between the Americo-Liberians and the newly educated indigenous Liberians were at a boiling point. As a result, there were mass protests across Liberia against the rising food prices. Although the then President Tolbert attempted to

respond to these protests by dropping the rising food prices, he was overthrown by Samuel Doe[9]. According to Vinck et al. (2011: 9), Doe's regime reigned from 1980 to 1989 and was marked by ethnic favouritism (towards his ethnic group – Krahn), oppression, and exploitation of resources (PRS, 2008: 12; Vinck et al., 2011: 9). These tensions led to the emergence of an armed rebellion in 1989 led by Charles Taylor,[10] who was the leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). This resulted in the execution of the then President Doe. This marked the beginning of Liberia's first civil war. Taylor waged a long and violent campaign for power from 1989 to 1997, which divided the nation into various military groups, many along ethnic lines (Schuster, 1994: 42; Vinck et al., 2011: 9). Although the NPFL was poorly armed, its ranks used the opportunity to seek revenge on ethnic groups that were favoured by President Doe's regime. Furthermore, the government's attacks against civilians drove the youth to the NPFL ranks, which grew in numbers. In 1990, Liberia was under siege, causing some of the war's most violent battles, and this went on for seven years. During this period, an interim government to replace Doe's regime, backed by West African peacekeeping forces, was installed led by Amos Sawyer.[11] It did not operate beyond Monrovia, the capital (Schuster, 1994: 43; Vinck et al., 2011: 9).

Charles Taylor, on the other hand, ruled the rest of Liberia and established a parallel government in the capital city of Gbarnga, allowing him to dominate and exploit the country's natural resources. The capital gains were estimated to be approximately 100 million United States dollars per annum, which enabled the war to continue and bought loyalty. In 1997, with 75% of the votes, Charles Taylor became the twenty-second Liberian president. The West African peacekeeping troops drew down, and the international community supported

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[9] Mr. Samuel Doe is a Liberian politician who led the country from 1980 to 1990, first as a military commander and then as a civilian leader.

[10] Is a Liberian politician and rebel leader who served as President of Liberia from 1997 to 2003 before being driven into exile. Taylor is serving a 50-year sentence in the Hague, after he was found guilty of aiding and abetting rebels in Sierra Leone's civil war of 1991-2002.

[11] "Is a Liberian politician and academic who led the Interim Government of National Unity in Liberia from November 22, 1990 to March 7, 1994.

the disarmament programme. Liberia's government then absorbed former antagonists' groups into government structures (Schuster, 1994: 43; Vinck et al., 2011: 11).

Different scholars agree that, during this time, there were high tensions between different ethnic groups, and that Charles Taylor deliberately divided the nation along ethnic lines. The population faced abject poverty, and corruption was at an all-time high. As a result, the second civil war broke out. Two rebel factions, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and the Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), were the key drivers of Liberia's second civil war, opposing Taylor's government. This conflict went on until mid-2003, despite the ongoing peace talks (Kieh Jr, 2009: 1; Vinck et al., 2011: 14). At the time, Monrovia was becoming a humanitarian catastrophe with mounting pressure from the international community, Taylor resigned and went to exile in Nigeria. The signing of the CPA in Ghana by LURD, MODEL, and civil society representatives formally ended the conflict (Amos, 2004: 440; Annan, 2014: 5; Kieh Jr, 2009: 1; Vinck et al., 2011: 14).

2.2.3 The causes and implications of the conflict

Liberia's conflict can be traced to two main elements. Firstly, a significant portion of the population was systematically excluded and marginalised from political governance institutions and access to fundamental fiscal accords (Gariba, 2011: 8; PRS, 2008: 14). The conceptualisation of the constitution primarily catered for the Americo-Liberians' needs and disregarded indigenous people's inclusion. Evidence of this self-perpetuation dates back to the True Whig Party, the only political party that held office from 1877 until the coup in 1980. Secondly, the mismanagement of state resources was prevalent and contributed to glaring inequalities in the distribution of already scarce resources (PRS, 2008: 14; TRC, 2009: 5). While indigenous Liberians were discriminated during this period, the needs of youth and women, and the impact of conflict on them during this period, hardly featured. This was because the key players in the country's political activity at the time were predominantly males (Ballah, 2012: 30; Utas, 2005: 404).

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One of the dominant features of the history of the conflict in Liberia was its use of child soldiers. From the outset of the conflict, former President Charles Taylor's military, LURD, and MODEL recruited young boys and trained them to be fearless and loyal fighters. They were introduced to drugs, alcohol, and coerced to kill and isolated from their families. In the same vein, young girls were abducted by the military groups into sexual enslavement and served at the forefront of the conflict (Twum-Danso, 2003: 17; Vinck et al., 2011: 12). This largely contributed to a generational and gender gap in social, economic, and educational development.

The socio-economic, political and developmental impact of Liberia's civil war is apparent in literature. To raise revenue and seek revenge for pre-existing grievances over land ownership and other issues, all parties involved in exacerbating the conflict committed heinous crimes against Liberian people, especially the youth and women. (Annana, 2014:5; Vinck et al., 2011: 14). According to records by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (2009: 269), approximately 250,000 people lost their lives during the conflict, and 1.5 million people were displaced. Unsurprisingly, the war wreaked havoc on the economy and obliterated much of the country's livelihood and infrastructure. This period was characterised by growing inequality, aggravating poverty, and unequal access to assets and opportunities (PRS, 2008: 8; TRC, 2009: 270; Vinck et al., 2011: 15).

2.3 Efforts to resolve the conflict in Liberia

2.3.1 Regional intervention by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

Among various actors involved in trying to resolve the Liberian conflict, ECOWAS[12] played a central role by leading peace-making and peacekeeping missions in the country. For seven years (1990-1997), ECOWAS tried to resolve the conflict, convening numerous peace talks and brokering several peace agreements, only to discover that the armed factions would not follow through with their commitments. The UN and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) (now known as the AU) involvement provided legitimacy, but that was not enough to immediately end the conflict. Due to the mounting pressure internally and externally, and military exhaustion, the warring parties finally agreed to resolve the crisis through a democratic process (Ero,1995: 6; Francis, 2006: 89).

2.3.2 United Nations Mission of Liberia

The government of Liberia, rebel groups, and opposition political parties signed a CPA in 2003. The CPA mandated signatories to immediately cease fire; engage in disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DDRR), reform the security sector, release prisoners and abductees, address human rights concerns, provide security assurances for humanitarian operations; and implement the peace agreement (Connolly & Singh, 2014: 1; UN Security Council, 2003).

As part of the peace agreement, Charles Taylor was forced to flee Liberia and was later apprehended by the Special Court in Sierra Leone, where he is currently serving a 50-year term (Ofeibea, 2003: 1). The signing of the CPA signalled an era of silencing the guns; transitional governance; and post-conflict development and reconstruction (Connolly &

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[12] Is a West African political and economic union made up of fifteen nations. Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo are among the 15 members of the ECOWAS.

Singh, 2014: 1). The UN Security Council resolved to establish a United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) through Resolution 1509 of 2003, "to support the implementation of a ceasefire agreement and PCRD processes (UNMIL, 2016: 1).

The UNMIL was fully deployed from 2005 and immediately began the demobilisation process and the coordination of national elections. Ms Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won those elections and became the first female head of state in Africa. During the transitional period, UNMIL continued to support the country's security (Vink et al., 2011: 16). UNMIL completed its mandate in March 2018.

2.3.3 Government of Liberia

To deal with the crimes against humanity, the CPA mandated a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and in 2005, the TRC was set up to establish, security, national peace, reconciliation and unity. The TRC's goal was to achieve this by investigating the civil conflict between January 1979 and 14 October 2003 (TRC, 2009: 174). This objective of the TRC, according to Archibald & Mulbah (2008: 8), was indeed the main focus behind its foundation. The report on the findings of the TRC was finalised and presented in 2009 to the Liberia government. The report highlights important findings on the conflict's root causes, as well as the conflict's effect on women, children, and Liberian society. One of the recommendations was to create an "Extraordinary Criminal Court for Liberia" to try those convicted of serious crimes committed during the war. (Archibald & Mulbah, 2008: 8; TRC, 2009: 299). However, the recommendations from the TRC were never implemented. The TRC report also targeted people[13] who still held positions of power and influence in the country.

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[13] Such as Senator Prince Johnson, a well-known former leader of armed groups whose atrocities have been well-documented, or former President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who was listed to be barred from holding public office for 30 years.

Conflict disrupts social norms and erodes society's resilience, particularly the youth and women. For peace to prevail and for it to be sustainable, it must be inclusive and engage all parties in the conflict. According to Lederach (2009: 3), contemporary conflicts need more than reframing positions and identifying a win-win situation. To end the conflict, stakeholders must adopt a multidisciplinary framework and a relationship-centred approach towards transforming the negative peace to positive peace. The term for this approach is conflict transformation[14] and has a better chance of brokering a sustainable and implementable peace agreement. Constructive conflict is an important driver of transition (Lederach, 2009: 3). This approach, by far, contributed to the ending of the conflict in Liberia.

2.4 Comparative perspectives

2.4.1 The role of the youth in implementing the PCRD initiatives

The dominant narrative is that inequality, the lack of economic progression, poverty and unemployment contribute to violence and discontent among young people, especially in countries coming out of conflict (Bilal et al., 2015: 12; Mutisi, 2012: 91). Contemporary debates on youth and conflict tend to be excessively pessimistic because the narrative concentrates on the dangers posed by disgruntled young people. This is evident in words like 'youth bulge' or 'at-risk youth', that are employed to depict them. The young people vacillate between the two extremes of 'infantilising' and 'demonising' (African Union, 2017: 2; Ozerdem, 2016: 2).

On the one hand, youths are seen as weak, helpless, and in need of defence. On the other hand, they are depicted as dangerous, aggressive, apathetic, and a security threat (Ozerdem, 2016: 2). Recent literature on young people in post-conflict environments depicts a shift in how young people are thought of, highlighting the urgency in acknowledging the gap and youth's role in the PCRD initiatives. This new narrative primarily focuses on shifting a mostly negative discourse and attitudes about youths' position in post-conflict societies, to

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[14] It involves engaging with and transforming the interests, discourse, and relationships, and, if necessary, the social composition that supports violent conflict. According to Lederach and Maiese (2009:7), this framework assesses each conflict situation to apply the most appropriate instead of a one-size-fits-all approach.

welcoming them as reform and growth advocates (African Union, 2017: 3; Ozerdem, 2016: 2).

Indeed, there are numerous examples of young people's contributions to the implementation of PCRD programs all over the world. These include efforts such as enhancing social cohesion and reconciliation in South Sudan, civic education on peace and development initiatives in Nepal, and community entrepreneurship livelihoods projects in Burundi (Ozerdem, 2016: 2; United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, 2012: 64). It is in this regard that Ozerdem (2016: 3) correctly argues that young people must be recognised and considered as agents for positive peace committed to addressing the challenges of physical, cultural, and structural violence. Young people contribute to social change processes to transform the structures of conflict, stakeholder dynamics, and attitudes into more inclusive and participatory ones (Mutisi, 2012: 94; Ozerdem, 2016: 2).

According to the AYC (2006: 1), the mainstream society in most African countries disadvantages the youth. This results in restricted access in terms of employment opportunities and knowledge, and often leads to transgression and violence, and inequalities in power, wealth and income. In addition to this is a common misconception that getting a sense of history and knowledge is linked to age. Adults are said to have exceptional intelligence, experience, and capacity to make decisions that are in the best interests of the community (South African History Online, 2011; Woods, 2011: 3). For example, the conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR) mostly affected the vulnerable persons more specifically children, women, and young people. The high unemployment rate amongst young people has made joining armed rebel groups the most viable option.

Moreover, 75% of CAR's population (4.5 million) is below the age of 35, with a youth unemployment rate of about 12,5% (Heinzel & Shepherd, 2020: 1; Tunda, 2017: 3). The young people in CAR have been part of the conflict, as either armed rebel groups or peace agents. As positive contributors, the youth also played a critical role in building post-conflict societies by undertaking conflict analysis, participating in PCRD processes, and implementing PCRD initiatives (Tunda, 2017: 3). Heinzel & Shepherd (2020: 1) and Kujeke

(2020: 7) support this positive view about the youth by Tunda. As the country continues to be transitioning from war to peace, more needs to be done to ensure that the youth are part of the decision processes that are shaping the future in CAR.

By contrast, in Côte d'Ivoire, the Ivorian youth have played an active role in the country's continuous socio-political crises for more than two decades. To encourage, motivate, and endorse youth-led efforts and initiatives to reduce and mitigate systemic causes of conflict, the government established the Ministry of Youth Promotion, Employment, and Civic Services (Kujeke, 2020: 6). The Ivorian youth channelled its energy towards rebuilding a progressive and relatively peaceful society by being participants in peacebuilding trainings and outreach programs, particularly for women and girls. They have been linked to positive perceptions of education as well as positive social stability and conflict management outcomes (Indigo Côte d'Ivoire and Interpeace; 2017: 21; Ladisch & Rice, 2016).

The PCRD initiatives primarily focused on peace education through storytelling, sports, dialogue, and establishing youth networks. As a result of youth participation in PCRD initiative in Côte d'Ivoire, the development of important policy frameworks led by youth for youth was realised. Furthermore, they created momentum for what would be a long-term process of awareness raising, advocacy, and leading to structural reforms (Ladisch & Rice, 2016). Experiences from Côte d'Ivoire demonstrate that establishing a ministry or department dedicated to the youth created a conducive environment for policy development and intergenerational learning and co-leadership (Ladisch & Rice, 2016 & Kujeke, 2020: 6).

The conflicts between herders and farmers, land disputes, and violence involving state security forces, to name a few, are all part of Kenya's peace and security dynamics. Much of the commentary and analysis on the position of youth in Kenyan politics presents them as the catalysts for political demonstrations, inter-group conflicts, and violent extremism. However, much of this overshadows or ignores their comparatively significant positions and contributions to peacebuilding (Ismail, 2017: 4). Furthermore, Kenya's youth have effectively associated themselves with key reform mechanisms and actors involved in socioeconomic

issues affairs that directly affect them, as well as questioning the status quo by endorsing more institutionalized courses (Ismail, 2017: 4).

Like Côte d'Ivoire, the PCRD initiatives in Kenya are multi-faceted, incorporating art, language and music, sports, and dialogue to contribute to peacebuilding and wider social change processes. Some of the few documented cases of youth using art and entertainment highlight the role of music in addressing empowerment and memory in informal settlements in Kenya. Following the 2007 election violence, the Hip-hop Parliament was created, bringing musicians and artists together to play and tell stories about their experiences (Ismail, 2017: 10).

In Kenya, the youth's positions and contributions to peace and security are mostly localized, concentrating on particular issues and contexts. PCRD interventions led by the youth are typically sub-national rather than top-down in nature. This has benefits as well as potential disadvantages (Ismail, 2017: 12). More importantly, the youth led majority of initiatives are fairly sustainable (even in the context of limited finances), context-specific, and reflect local needs and expectations. Kenya's youth played a variety of roles that contributed to PCRD initiatives. In most cases, they use specific events as entry points to deliver messages of, and to advocate for, peace, as well as capacity building on peace and security issues like mediation, reconciliation, combating radicalization, and countering violent extremism (Ismail, 2017: 15).

The CAR, Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya are all in their different phases of the PCRD processes, but the resounding lesson is that for peace to be sustainable and that the success of PCRD initiatives lies in the inclusion of the youth. Therefore, this study will assess the contributions made by youth (and women) in implementing PCRD initiatives and the challenges they (youth and women) faced, affecting their participation in the implementation of PCRD initiatives in Monrovia, Liberia.

2.4.2 The role of women in implementing PCRD initiatives

Disaggregated data in the gender analysis on armed conflict shows that efforts to foreground women's outlook on peace processes have met with limited success (Davies & True, 2015: 496; Erzurum & Eren, 2014: 237). Historically, in most societies, men are conceived as authority while women are treated as subordinates. When analysing the hunting and gathering groups' behaviour, the relations between women and men were culturally gorged, depending on the division of labour on sex. The conflict somehow presents a different dynamic where, during the conflict, women are left to be heads of the households, be custodians of culture, and hold together the community (Erzurum & Eren, 2014: 237; Rehn & Johnson-Sirleaf, 2002: 9).

Women's direct participation in peace processes, and the design and implementation of PCRD programmes, increase peace, and stability. A statistical analysis by Krause et al. (2018: 989) found that, in eighty-two peace agreements in forty-two violent conflicts between 1989 and 2011, the peace agreements with women as witnesses is correlated to enduring peace. The study also discovered that peace agreements signed by women have a higher number of clauses aimed at democratic reforms, as well as a higher rate of enforcement of these provisions (Krause et al., 2018; Nduwimana, 2004: 20). The following case studies show how integral women's experiences are to the broader goals of inclusive PCRD implementation, sustainable peace, and development.

According to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), which endorses women's inclusion in peace processes, women's participation in peace initiatives and all decision-making processes is an important element of equitable social justice in peace processes (Nduwimana, 2004: 19; UN, 2000). Despite this monumental resolution on the inclusion of women in PCRD processes, and despite the work that women are already doing on PCRD initiatives, women in South Sudan were overlooked in formal PCRD processes in 2005 (Westendorf, 2018: 1). Largely, the poor representation of women in high-profile peace processes is one of the crucial reasons that these processes fail to establish lasting peace

(Westendorf, 2018: 1). The absence and marginalization of women in the South Sudanese peace talks was not due to a lack of appropriate expertise, experience, or roles in their communities. Women had considerable negotiating skills, peacebuilding experience, and capacity to bring to the table. However, they were largely discouraged from doing so because their positions, backgrounds, and experiences were deemed irrelevant to the conflict (Westendorf, 2018: 2). Consequently, women are treated as mere victims of war in these peace talks. However, according to Kumalo & Roddy-Mullineaux (2019: 5), women in South Sudan have always participated in peacebuilding processes at the grassroots level, but usually not to influence key decisions at the national level. Nevertheless, over time there has been gradual participation of women in key peacebuilding processes at the national level. Women's presence went beyond just being present in related fora; they had a significant impact on PCRD processes and agreements (Oxfam, 2020: 7). The shift in the role and participation of women in South Sudan is attested by the appointment of a female Defence Minister.

In Afghanistan's case, women have been predominantly excluded from the public sphere, and that perpetuated the narrative that victims of war have limited roles in PCRD initiatives (Kristensen, 2016: 4). The Afghan conflict can be divided into four stages over the last 40 years: aversion to Soviet occupation (1978–89), civil war (1992–5), Taliban command (1995–2001), and post-2001 uprising (2001–15). (Senarathna & Hedström, 2015: 17). Larson (2015: 30) states that women's roles have not surprisingly progressed with the change of regimes, despite an overall narrative depicting Afghan women as victims without political agency. Afghan women were prohibited from attending schools and working, under Taliban law. They were also subjected to public beatings and executions, as well as extreme movement restrictions (Kristensen, 2016:5). Women and girls now have more chances to go to school and engage in politics and the economy. Unfortunately, these advances have not translated into opportunities for women to engage in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020: 2).

In twenty-three rounds of talks between 2005 and 2014, women were only able to participate in the peace negotiations only on two occasions. These talks were hosted in the Maldives in 2010 and in France from 2011–2012, with 9 and 10 per cent women representation respectively[15]. In the absence of formal participation, civil society organisations led by women have sought to influence the PCRD processes through consultations with the Afghan government and the Taliban (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020: 2). The consultations highlighted that the social, political, security and economic issues also adversely affect women, and therefore they must be represented in the PCRD processes. Looking at the history of Afghanistan women and their role in PCRD processes (or lack of), there are small victories in terms of equal participation and representation of women in PCRD processes, and more needs to be done (Oxfam, 2020: 10).

Mali witnessed an armed uprising in 2012, which was followed by a coup d'état. Since then, the country has been engulfed in an unprecedented multi-faceted crisis involving political, security, economic, and humanitarian elements. Throughout all of this upheaval, women have been marginalized in the Malian PCRD processes, and their inclusion has received little attention. Women are unable to move freely, enter markets, or organize themselves through societies due to the security situation. Women are at risk of experiencing violence when leaving their homes or communities (Chica, 2020: 4; Lorentzen, 2018).

Despite difficulties in the Malian peace processes and being the most marginalised group, there are opportunities to improve women's inclusion as they have more in-depth knowledge and understanding of their community needs. Their inclusion in the processes of peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery is crucial. Like South Sudan and Afghanistan, the women in Mali have to fight for their voices to be heard, with various policy frameworks, this should not be the case.

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[15] It is common in many peace processes that the peace talks aimed at finding a solution are held in countries or cities outside the country that is in conflict. Therefore, in this case, some of the talks about Afghanistan were held outside the country, as these examples show.

The study by Lorentzen et al. (2019: 16) on "Women's Participation in Peace and Reconciliation Processes in Mali" found that women's contribution to resolving local conflicts was paramount. Their presence, on the other hand, is hardly ever acknowledged and is often sporadic and intermittent. It is therefore critical to develop institutional mechanisms and networks to ensure that the interests and expertise of women at the local level are represented, and that debates on PCRD initiatives at the national level are informed (Chica, 2020: 4; Lorentzen, 2018).

In her article on "The gender dilemmas of community-based peacebuilding", looking at the Nepal dossier, Ramnarain (2016: 1) argues that the nature and implementation of peacebuilding projects ostensibly involving women should be dissected further, lest they impose disparate pressures on the same women they are ostensibly assisting. Lessons emerging from Ramnarain's (2016: 5) case study highlight that, while the inclusion of women in PCRD programmes is important, it is also equally essential to look at how power dynamics are driving the agenda on women's participation, and the way this participation is brought about. Furthermore, community-based projects must consider the obligations that community members already have and find ways to minimize the additional responsibilities that such work can impose on women (Ramnarain, 2016: 5). In Nepal, for example, formalizing communal childcare, kitchens, and community spaces is critical to achieving women's open participation. To recognize the importance of such peace work, an atmosphere that allows women to specialize as paid group mediators should also be created (Ramnarain, 2016: 5). Nepal's case shows that the success of inclusive participation of women in peace processes and subsequent implementation of the PCRD is a critical lesson for continued improvements in the implementation of PCRD programmes.

The case studies on South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Mali show fractures of a non-inclusive peace agreement and poor representation of women in these processes. When the peace agreements collapse, the implementation of PCRD programmes is stalled, and in most cases, not successful. These case studies further highlight that when men hog the political process

and exclude women in crucial decision-making processes that discourages gender equity, the economy regresses further, and limits a democratic society's possibilities.

Usually, the signing of the peace accord signals the end of the conflict and the beginning of the design and implementation of PCRD initiatives. Also, the degree to which women (and youth) are involved during the PCRD processes sets the tone on their involvement in the design, implementation processes, and sustainability in any country. Therefore, the inclusion of women in PCRD processes and initiatives at local, regional, and national governments encourages political stability and governance that is more responsive and representative than reactive (Erzurum & Eren, 2014: 244). Furthermore, research shows that the presence of women as negotiators, mediators, witnesses, and signatories makes agreements 35% more likely to last for fifteen years (Chico, 2020: 8).

A key observation from the above case studies is that most PCRD processes overlook the relevance of women's (and youth's) participation, and therefore, the implementation of PCRD initiatives is hardly ever inclusive. Moreover, if there is some representation of women (and youth), it is usually by the elite or tokenism. However, literature also reveals that where women and youth are indeed involved, the peace accords are more likely to be executed, increasing the chances of peace and stability long-term. These cases are also interesting because they serve to expose that although important Frameworks by the AU and the UN can be drafted and agreed upon, it takes a lot of efforts, continuous engagement, and processes to strengthen a culture of involvement of women and youth. It is then within this context that this study seeks to examine the extent to which youth and women have been engaged on issues related to PCRD and peacebuilding initiatives in Liberia and the impact thereof.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored definitions and concepts focusing on the AU PCRD policy framework to contextualise the study. It provided a political history on the conflict that took place in Liberia between 1989 and 2003, the role that women played, the causes and implications of the conflict, and steps taken towards conflict resolution and transformation. It further highlighted the conflict transformation processes that were played by various stakeholders and actors (e.g., ECOWAS, UN, women and youth groups, and AU) who were involved in ensuring that there is peace in Liberia. The comparative case studies on CAR, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Mali, and Nepal provides a clear indication that peace without youth and women is not sustainable. These case studies highlight the point that when men hog the political process and exclude women in crucial decision-making processes, that discourages gender equity, the economy regresses further, and limits a democratic society's potential.

Literature shows that the participation of the youth and women in peace processes and in the conceptualisation and implementation of PCRD initiatives is critical in addressing challenges of physical, cultural, and structural violence and in building post-conflict societies. The background offered in this chapter clearly shows that there are PCRD or peacebuilding policies and frameworks that exist and do make provision for youth and women participation, but conflict and inequality are still pervasive in Africa.

Lastly, an outbreak of conflict disrupts the development process, and the PCRD initiatives must manage the physical, environmental, political, socio-economic, and cultural manifestations of the conflict and avoid a relapse (African Union, 2006: 2). Based on the literature, one can conclude that policies and frameworks that seek to ensure active participation and mainstreaming of youth and women exist. Nevertheless, the implementation of these frameworks and structural transformation remains a setback. For PCRD initiatives to be successful, they must adopt a multi-dimensional and grassroots approach with the youth and women at the forefront of the implementation (African Union, 2016: 38).

Chapter 3: Theoretical Review

3.1 Introduction

To recap, the objective of the study is to assess the inclusion of youth and women in, and its impact on, the implementation of the AU PCRD initiatives in Monrovia, Liberia. This chapter presents and discusses two theories chosen to underpin this study: the stakeholder and participatory theories. The chapter highlights the importance of stakeholder participation and the engagement of stakeholders to understand issues related to PCRD in post-conflict societies and Liberia.

Chapter 2 demonstrated that the participation of the youth and women in peace processes, and in the conceptualisation and implementation of PCRD initiatives, is critical in addressing challenges of physical, cultural, and structural violence and in building post-conflict societies. This is because, as mentioned in chapters 1 and 2, they are directly affected by conflicts, hence should be included in post-conflict resolutions. Therefore, engaging stakeholders, especially the youth and women to participate in PCRD initiatives holds excellent promise for enriching the entire process. Moreover, it is only fair that the youth and women participate actively in implementing PCRD processes, given the scale of suffering they usually have to endure during the conflict (African Union, 2006: 11). It is against this background that this chapter will analyse the participatory and stakeholder theoretical frameworks in a post-conflict reconstruction and development context.

3.2 Stakeholder theory

The stakeholder theory has a capitalist root that emphasises the interconnected relationships between a business and its customers, employees, investors, suppliers, communities, and others with a stake in the entity. The theory postulates that an entity should create value for all stakeholders[16], not just shareholders (Freeman & et al., 2010: 3). Freeman (2010: 3) broadly describes the stakeholder framework as the systematic study of relationships, their origins, and implications on how companies behave. In this study, the appellation stakeholder pertains to men and women or groups with a vested interest in the conflict or have something to gain from its outcome, who are affected by conflict positively or negatively, contributing to conflict, and dealing with the conflict. These include primary, secondary, and shadow parties to the conflict (Kwaghchimin, no date: 3&5; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 2009: 117).

Although the stakeholder theory originates from the business ethics field, it has evolved into various fields like social sciences, law, and many others. It also looks at the involvement and relations dynamics of various participants interested in social, economic, environmental, and political issues (Freeman et al., 2010: 4). This study adopts the stakeholder framework as an analytical approach in which it maps out common interests about the conflict or the resolution thereof and sets priorities in the identified interests to ensure that all stakeholders are consulted and participate in the implementation of PCRD initiatives (Watt, 2014: 42). Grimble & Wellard (1996: 177) state that the stakeholder analysis is a useful tool in understanding the compatibility and intricacy of problems between the purpose and stakeholders. The stakeholder framework is intertwined in the participatory framework because both frameworks are focused on integrating the perspectives and interests of all stakeholders (Chambers, 1997: 8; Pretty et al., 1995: 15).

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[16] Another term used interchangeably with stakeholder is actors, referring to an individual who participates in a process."

While the stakeholder theory aims to enhance collaboration and coordination amongst key stakeholders, it has been heavily chastised for claiming that the interests of different stakeholders can be undermined or balanced against one another at best (Blattberg, 2004: 9). Stakeholder collaboration and coordination is very crucial for any post-conflict society, and particularly for Liberia, because it contributes to a relatively smooth transition from conflict to post-conflict society and successful implementation of PCRD initiatives. Proper coordination creates opportunities for various stakeholders, including women and children in this case study, involved in the peacebuilding programmes to communicate with each other so that they become aware of each other and their role in the overall process. When this is achieved, the stakeholders will adjust their plans accordingly to avoid duplication and, at times, will synchronise their plans to contribute to the common objective (Ngubane & de Coning, 2015: 15-16).

Stakeholder collaboration, on the other hand, is realised when a various actors pursue a shared goal in a coordinated effort. It means that the stakeholders have agreed on a joint assessment of the situation and a strategy for achieving their common objective. In relation to this study, it means that coordination and collaboration are not complete without the incorporation of the youth and women when implementing PCRD programmes, which is crucial because it will result in more relevant, effective, efficient, and sustainable impact (Ngubane & de Coning, 2015: 17). The youth and women should coordinate and collaborate with other relevant stakeholders on a common objective that is informed by rigorous engagements, consultations and, ultimately, consensus. Therefore, women and youth as stakeholders are central to any national PCRD processes and socio-economic development programmes, especially in post-conflict societies (Cahn, Haynes & Ni Aolain, 2010: 352). The stakeholder framework re-emphasises the PCRD approach, which is bottom-up, as it seeks to understand PCRD issues and dynamics from a lens of local actors.

In relations to this study, women and youth is a group of stakeholders that are usually overlooked when the PCRD processes are initiated and are not part of the key decision-making processes on PCRD initiatives. The comparative case studies discussed in Chapter 2

on CAR, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Mali, and Nepal indicate that peace processes that exclude youth and women in their implementation are not sustainable. Engaging the youth and women in the implementation of PCRD initiatives is critical in addressing challenges of physical, cultural, and structural violence and in building post-conflict societies. Therefore, the stakeholder theory, with regards to the inclusion of the youth and women in the PCRD initiatives, advocates for gender mainstreaming and intergenerational collaboration when implementing PCRD initiatives.

3.2.1 Dynamics to the stakeholder approach

The stakeholder framework must factor in the stakeholder dynamics when implementing PCRD programmes because such dynamics highlight the changing attributes, roles, and perceptions of individual and group stakeholders throughout a project life cycle. The stakeholder dynamics that are most critical and relevant to this study are the gender and intergenerational dynamics. Usually, the gender composition when implementing PCRD initiatives determines how specific actions or inactions affect men and women (Jeffery, 2009: 36). In contrast, intergenerational dynamics highlight the bonds formed between two or more people of different ages, allowing for the exchange of experiences and contribution to the harmony within the diversity (da Silva et al., 2015: 2). Jeffery (2009: 36) points out that the domination of women by men and youth by the older generation is the primary source of inequalities in many spheres of life. Therefore, gender and intergenerational dynamics play a critical role in the level and quality of stakeholder engagement in the PCRD processes and programmes (Jeffery, 2009: 36). Furthermore, the stakeholders' position and perception regarding their rights and freedom could influence how the conflict evolves. Therefore, it is crucial for those in power to recognise the importance of including the next generation of national leaders and mainstream the gender composition in all PCRD programmes (Jeffery, 2009: 36).

The stakeholder theory highlights that conflict happens because there are vested actors. Therefore, ending the conflict is also dependent on those actors coming together and working towards a common goal – peace. The women in Liberia played a critical role in creating a

favorable environment for peacebuilding. More importantly, Liberia's women did not wait for someone to identify them as stakeholders; they understood how the war affected them and what kind of change they wanted in Liberia's post-conflict era (Popovic, 2009: 13). They organised and lobbied in one voice. Unfortunately for the youth, the narrative is not the same. While Liberia's youth were instrumental actors during the war and are still important stakeholders in the post-conflict era, they fell through the cracks (Woods, 2011: 18). Therefore, their narrative should change, and their voices must be amplified.

3.3 Participatory approach

The emergence of the participatory framework in the development field transpired from critiques on the traditional top-down development practices that usually incorporated Eurocentrism[17] and positivism[18] school of thought (Mohan, 2002: 50). Escobar (1995) and Chambers (1997) argued that the top-down approach is disempowering, and it attempts to introduce the same development procedures that the West underwent to modernise (the world) without understanding the local dynamics. Against this criticism, the participatory theory was conceptualised to address this shortfall of the top-down approach. It encourages the active participation of all stakeholders in the research design, methodology, and the implementation of development programmes. Furthermore, it symbolised a shift from the Eurocentric, Western and top-down approaches that dominated early development initiatives to locally brewed solutions or bottom-up approaches.

Studies on participatory processes broadly originate from two major areas: political sciences and development theory (Chambers, 1997; Claridge, 2004:17; Escobar, 1995; Mohan, 2002: 50). Rahnema (1990: 202) critically points out that participation in the development discourse has been "reduced to partaking in the economic objectives and arrangements related to social contracts" (Rahnema, 1990: 202). Furthermore, the term participation is very broad and open to interpretation, depending on the context. Participation, according to Ndekha et al. (2003:

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[17] Eurocentrism is a worldview that emphasizes or favors Western civilization over non-western civilisations. (Hobson, 2012:185).

[18] is a philosophical theory which states that "genuine" knowledge is derived primarily from the observation of natural phenomena and their relationships and properties (Comte, 2008).

326), is a social process in which specific groups, united by a common vision and living in a defined geographic area, actively pursue the identification of their needs and the development of solutions to meet those needs.

The United Nations (1979: 225) defines participation as the "sharing of development benefits by people, active contribution by people to development, and involvement of people in decision-making at all levels of society". The United Nations Development Programme Ombudsman (2013: 36) further highlights that participation "contributes to the exchange of information needed for effective decision-making processes and to legitimise those decisions". As Rahnema (1990: 202) has pointed out, participation means many things to different people. Drawing from Escobar (1995), Chambers (1997) and Ndekha et al. (2003), this study understands and defines participation as a bottom-up approach that seeks to engage all relevant stakeholders or stakeholders who share a common vision towards enhancing the social contract and development of society, regardless of the geographic location.

Kilroy (2011: 129) argues that genuine participation necessitates genuine involvement of the intended beneficiaries of the development program from planning to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. The objective is not only that a better and more relevant programme is designed, but also that the process must engender an aristocratic ownership by the relevant stakeholders, promote and strengthen capacity, and generate social capital among actors to ensure greater sustainability of the programme (Kilroy, 2011: 129). Thus, understanding the local history and context clarifies the problems and needs. It further enhances solutions, reaches more people, and increases local stakeholder participation (Cahn, Haynes & Ni Aolain, 2010: 343; Mohan, 2008: 46). The value of using a participatory framework is that it advocates community empowerment, community support, and capacity building (Cahn et al., 2010: 343; Mohan, 2008: 46).

Given pre-existing socio-economic disparities and power relations, there are limitations to what participation alone can accomplish in terms of quality and performance. As such, inadequate participation in a poorly designed or operated program may result in dissatisfaction, unmet expectations, and the perception of unfair treatment of particular

stakeholders. In the context of this study, all these factors can influence the outcome of PCRD initiatives negatively. For example, interventions by ECOWAS to resolve the conflict in Liberia broke down numerous times because there were stakeholders that were not part of the peace talks (while this was not the only reason – but it was the main factor) (Ero, 1995: 6; Francis, 2009: 89). ECOWAS envisaged a short surgical police operation (Adibe, 1997: 472). This predetermined expectation by non-local stakeholders defied that fundamental principle of the participatory framework, which is a bottom-up strategy that aims to engage all relevant stakeholders genuinely. Despite the fact that some authors disagree about whether or not participation makes a difference, the importance of participation is well documented in literature, and the case of Liberia emphasises it (the importance of participation) (Claridge, 2004: 26; Kilroy, 2011: 129).

In relation to this study, inclusive participation of the youth and women in PCRD initiatives seeks to mitigate their exclusion in such processes and promote the institutionalisation of equitable participation in political and socio-economic development platforms. The discussion above indicates that, while there are small gains to integrate the women and youth in the PCRD programmes, they have been overlooked in key PCRD processes, and this has resulted in a limited representation of diverse views in coining PCRD initiatives. The CAR, Côte d'Ivoire, and Kenya case studies demonstrate that, for peace to be sustainable, the successful implementation of PCRD initiatives lies in the inclusion of the youth (and women). The literature above also reveals that where women and youth are included, the peace accord are more likely to be carried through, increasing the chances of peace and stability long-term.

Therefore, meaningful participation by youth and women in PCRD initiatives is a matter of right, legitimacy, and efficiency. Young people are critical agents and drivers of change for society to advance. This may be because young people project the willingness to change, input, and learning; they tend to be more future-oriented, quixotic, creative, and willing to take risks. For example, research emphasises that large youth cohorts should not be a problem if there are sufficient socio-economic opportunities (Rogan, 2016: 13). Furthermore, women's engagement in PCRD and peacebuilding programs is also critical to creating a more inclusive, stable, and prosperous society. Benard et al. (2008: 3) argue that a society that shows concern

by the rights of the youth and women will be less likely to initiate violence. Gender equity and women's participation are both a litmus test and an active factor in the creation of a more democratic, prosperous, and developed society (Benard et al., 2008: 3).

While the study focuses on the youth and women, it would be amiss if it did not acknowledge the importance of a cohesive society. Intergenerational relations[19] are also often very strained in the aftermath of conflict. The research above briefly highlighted the dynamics of the African tradition on gender roles and age domination, and therefore, the researcher calls for intergenerational participation in the implementation of PCRD initiatives. Furthermore, young people may be easily mobilized by their peers or organisations to partake in destructive or aggressive actions in circumstances where there is substantial distrust among groups (Rogan, 2016: 14). Therefore, the implementation of the PCRD initiative should encourage intergenerational co-leadership and participation.

Liberia's civil war took a heavy toll on the country's youth and women in terms of both systematized and amorphous brutality, as well as the trauma that followed. As a result of this, the women took a very decisive stand and demanded that there be stability and peace in their country. Women organising at the grassroots level became an essential component of that civil society agenda for peace in Liberia (Goyol, 2019: 128). The importance of women's engagement and inclusion in PCRD initiatives at all levels cannot be overstated, since the vision of long-term peace and prosperity is inextricably linked to their active participation as well as that of the youth (Reardon 1993: 4; Shulika, 2016: 11). Additionally, their engagement in PCRD programs and processes provides them with a forum to strengthen their human welfare, which has been harmed by conflicts and gender biased practices in society (McKay, 2004: 152; Shulika, 2016: 11).

The narrative of the youth, on the other hand, has mostly depicted them as victims of conflict, and in the post-conflict era, as victims of poverty, unemployment, and economic

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[19] Refers to the social and family relationships between members of different generations (Vandervan, 2008: 33).

marginalisation. Over the years, there has been a notable shift in the narrative, for example, the case studies on CAR, Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya demonstrate that the youth are constructive stakeholder in PCRD processes. For peace to be sustainable, the success of PCRD initiatives lies in the inclusion of the youth. Many of Liberia's youth are seen as a potential source of conflict, rather than a constructive group. Social norms and structures linked to age affect young men's and women's access to power, influence, and rights (McKay, 2004: 153).

3.4 Conclusion

In understanding the extent to which the youth and women have been included in the implementation of PCRD initiatives, and their contributions to PCRD initiatives, this chapter has discussed in-depth the stakeholders and participatory theories. It analysed the different definitions, advantages, and limitations of the participatory and stakeholder theoretical framework. Theses theoretical approaches offer an opportunity to investigate ways to improve the participation and representation of the youth and women as key and relevant stakeholders in implementing PCRD initiatives. Combining the two theories serves as a powerful tool and mechanism to generate possible solutions for post-conflict societies and society in general.

Chapter 4: Research design and methodology

4.1 Introduction

Research usually brings in the exploration of information through data collection. Using a range of methods and techniques, the study entails the development and extension of scientific knowledge (Welman et al., 2005: 2). Therefore, a research methodology is a series of steps or processes that are used to solve the problems identified in the analysis, respond to the questions asked, and achieve defined goals by managing data collection and analyzing the observed object. One of the main goals of this research is to add literature while also making suggestions for addressing the socio-political and economic disparities that young people and women in Liberia face.

This chapter aims to present the methodology, which has been used by the researcher to undertake this study. It covers the research methodology, techniques for data collection and sampling, data sources and research procedures, data analysis methods and styles, ethical concerns, and study limitations. The mixed research methodology underpinned the study to address the research questions and achieve the objectives of the study. Thus, the analysis needed an empirical research approach to gain a detailed understanding of the Liberian perspective on the participation of youth and women in PCRD initiatives in Monrovia, Liberia, and its effect on their implementation.

4.2 Research methods

4.2.1 Research design and methodology

This study employed a mixed-method research methodology; this means that the research used both qualitative and quantitative techniques (Ranjit, 2011: 103). The reason for using a mixed method was to provide a better understanding of a research problem. A qualitative approach entails gathering information through interviews, focus group or analysing texts and behaviour. Whereas the quantitative research approach includes collecting or analysing surveys or conducting experiments (Ranjit, 2011: 138). The advantage of using a qualitative research method is that it provides in-depth and comprehensive data, and it encourages participants to elaborate on their responses. It can also implore emerging debates not initially considered (Ranjit, 2011: 140). The quantitative approach is also advantageous because it allows the researcher to use a considerable sample size which enables better accuracy when attempting to create generalisations about the subject matter involved (Ranjit, 2011: 143). The use of methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative, is beneficial to the study because they offset the disadvantages of each other. These techniques were employed to critically evaluate the extent to which the youth and women have been actively participating in the implementation of PCRD programmes in Liberia.

The study adopts the sequential exploratory research design to examine the inclusion of the youth and women in, and its impact on, the implementation of PCRD initiatives in Monrovia, Liberia. The data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and administering Google Form questionnaires. Furthermore, the sequential explanatory research design was applied in this study to garner the participants' experiences in order to understand the trends, challenges, and opportunities faced by the youth and women in implementing PCRD initiatives. The sequential exploratory strategy is characterised by prioritising qualitative data collection first, followed by a quantitative data collection and analysis; and at a later stage integrated (Saunders et al., 2012: 93). Responses by the participants are reflective of their perspectives and experiences on issues related to the inclusion of youth and women or lack of, and impact

on, the implementation of PCRD initiatives. Meanwhile, the quantitative data was used to statistically present the results gathered from questionnaires into tables, graphs, and analysed qualitatively (Saunders et al., 2012:93).

4.2.2 Data collection methods and research instruments

4.2.2.1 Sources of data collection

The researcher elicited data from two kinds of primary sources by cross-examining the primary documents on the AU PCRD policy as well as research reports on Liberia, convening semi-structured interviews, and through administering Google Form questionnaires. In terms of the primary documents, the study reviewed reports, policy and practice papers, handbooks, journals, and articles on the AU PCRD policy and the conflict in Liberia from various institutions. These include but not limited to government entities and non-governmental organisations.

Secondly, the research engaged in comprehensive interviews with experts in the field of peace, security, and development in Liberia (and Africa) to garner trends and narratives on the following issues:

- The social, political, and economic impact on youth and women as a result of the conflict.

- The role of women and young people in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction of society has come out strongly as a cross-cutting issue and is crucial to sustainable peace. Most PCRD initiatives have tended to overlook issues that relate to the inclusion of youth and women (African Union, 2006: 28). The transformation by the government of Liberia, especially that targets issues of youth and women empowerment has been stagnant.

- Challenges faced by both the youth and women in Monrovia that affect the implementation of PCRD initiatives should be examined.

The aforementioned data collection sources also provided the researcher with a useful method of analyzing the responses obtained in order to produce data and a thorough understanding of issues concerning Liberia's youth, women, and peacebuilding programs. In relations to this study, the views of the five institutions namely: Liberia Peacebuilding Office, ECOWAS, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Institute for Security Studies (ISS), and The Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) are crucial in understanding the extent to which the PCRD initiatives in Monrovia have been impactful and inclusive of youth and women in their implementation. The semi-structured interviews were aimed at collating information on the subject matter. It is the most common way of interviewing people and is widely used research methodology. The use of semi-structured interviews in this study made it possible to contrast and decipher the participants' views. The advantage of using semi-structured interviews as a major part of the methodology of this study is that participants were encouraged to talk freely on the subject matter but guided by the objectives of the study (Creswell, 2003: 22).

The study also made use of the Google Form questionnaire and was guided by the research objectives and questions to allow for a more straightforward interpretation of the issues under investigation as recommended by Gillham (2008: 15). The questionnaire that was used had mostly open-ended questions and as well as closed-ended questions. According to Gillham (2008: 16), the advantages of open-ended questions in a study is that they permit an unlimited number of responses. Furthermore, unanticipated findings can be discovered. The questions were clear and straightforward and in line with the objectives of the study. Knowledge transferred during this data collection process highlighted the significance of the contribution of the youth and women in peacebuilding and development processes. Furthermore, the study made critical use of secondary data from journals, research reports, policy briefs, textbooks, and articles related to conflict, peacebuilding, PCRD, women, and youth in conflict environments. This also included the use of verifiable and reliable information available on the internet.

4.2.3 Sampling Method

Sampling is a portion of a focus population that has been carefully chosen as a representation of the study's target population, and it must be representative of the set population's individualities (Blumberg et al., 2014). The researcher used a purposive sampling approach because it was impossible to interview every practitioner in the field. This method gave the researcher the option of deciding on the study's target population based on the background information collected on the research population. Accordingly, the selected population was further based on the participants' knowledge on the subject matter, and their involvement and experiences on implementing PCRD programmes, support or leading policy processes related to PCRD and the participation or representation of women and youth. Additionally, the participants must be contributing, directly or indirectly, to Liberia's post-conflict reconstruction and development aspirations.

Based on the above description, the researcher purposely selected the Liberia Peacebuilding Office, ECOWAS, UNDP, ISS, and WIPNET. The Liberia Peacebuilding Office was established in 2009 and is housed within the Ministry of Internal Affairs as the Office of the Government for the execution of peace and reconciliation tasks, including coordination, evaluation, appraisal, and reporting on government projects for peace and reconciliation initiatives and programs. It also offers political guidance, establishes policies, programs and plans, and bordering on reconciliation and stability. The UNDP is the United Nations Global Network for development; it works towards promoting reform and connects countries with expertise, experience, and tools to help people create a better life. The UNDP has worked in Liberia since 1977 during the times of peace and crisis. It is dedicated to assisting Liberia in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as the national development strategies outlined in the National Vision 2030 - Liberia Rising and the Government's new Pro-Poor Agenda (PPA). As already mentioned in Chapter 2, ECOWAS is the Economic Community of West African States, and Liberia is part of this community. ECOWAS implements various peacebuilding and conflict prevention programmes working with women

and the youth across Liberia and election observing missions in the country. WIPNET[20] was developed with the aim of increasing women's capacity to play a more active role in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction in West Africa. The WIPNET programme strives to promote the mainstreaming of the gender perspective into peacebuilding and conflict prevention frameworks at community, national, and regional level. Moreover, and lastly, the ISS is an African organisation that is "committed to improving Africa's human security by providing evidence-based policy guidance, technical assistance, and capacity building".

These institutions are projected to have played, and continue to play, a valuable role in providing useful insights on PCRD initiatives in Liberia and are champions on mainstreaming the inclusion and participation of the youth and women towards a peaceful society. Hence, the criterion that informed the selection of these organisations was in line with the objectives of this study. In no particular order, the selection criteria included: firstly, the organisation's vision and mission should contribute to PCRD, conflict resolution or peacebuilding programmes across Liberia; secondly, they should be working on peacebuilding or PCRD programmes; thirdly, the organisations must prioritise mainstreaming youth and women's participation in PCRD programmes. Based on all the reasons listed above, representatives from these organizations were sampled for the study.

Using the qualitative data collection method and a purposive sampling technique, the researcher conducted two semi-structured interviews that lasted for three hours each. The semi-structured interviews were convened on Zoom. The third institution responded to the questions in writing. The other two institutions had initially confirmed their participation, provided the gatekeepers letters, and confirmed availability for the interviews. On the day of the scheduled interviews, the other institution was not available, and the other cited unavailability due to family emergency. The researcher sent numerous follow-up emails that

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[20] In 2020, WIPNET was founded to encourage women in Liberia to come together for peace. The in 2003, WIPNET led mass demonstration against the civil war that had engulfed Liberia at the time. This women's movement encouraged the government led by Charles Taylor and the LURD rebels to stop the violence and initiate talks that would bring about peace in Liberia.

were never responded to. The researcher also phoned the participants, they confirmed receiving the email correspondence and promised to review the questions and respond, but there was no response. The researcher interpreted this as a refusal to further participate in the study because the researcher did not receive any feedback either rescheduling the interview or submitting a written response on the questions sent to them by email. This interpretation was based on the researchers' experiences and socio-cultural interaction with Liberian colleagues and counterparts. An indirect refusal is sometimes perceived as being politer than an outright refusal. Given the wealth of experience and national reach that three organisations that participated have, their responses were robust and ample enough to provide depth and analysis to the study. Furthermore, ISS and WIPNET who were not necessarily part of the approved proposal but participated in the study provided valuable insights that were relevant and in line with the objectives of the study.

Additionally, in terms of quantitative data collection and snowballing sampling technique, the researcher distributed fifty Google Form questionnaires to get at least thirty responses as per the approved proposal. Only twenty-seven respondents responded and filled in the questionnaires. To solicit broader participation and representation, the researcher sent numerous follow-up emails to the respondents that had not responded; still, there were no responses. The researcher also made follow-up phone calls; some answered their phones while others did not. From those who did answer their phones, some did acknowledge receiving the emails while others requested that the questionnaire be re-shared, and they would attend to it. As a last resort to get more respondents to participate in the study, the researcher reached out to the respondents on WhatsApp by sharing the Google Form questionnaire. This attempt also did not yield the anticipated results.

To ensure that the study was inclusive and participatory to as many people as possible who can reflect on the PCRD processes in Liberia and the inclusion of the youth and women, the researcher reached out to fifteen individuals to participate. Of the fifteen individuals, ten were available to participate, and they were interviewed over the phone. To this end, the researcher tried all means possible to reach out to the participants to participate remotely.

In ensuring that the intersectionality of gender and intergenerational representation is inclusive in this study, the researcher ensured that the interviewed institutions are committed to working with the youth and women. For example, Liberia's Peacebuilding Office, ECOWAS, ISS, and UNPD work is guided by intergenerational collaboration and gender mainstreaming in all its programmes. WIPNET focuses on working with women. Preliminary reflections from that data collected indicate that the overall participation was 45% for women and 55% for men respectively. Correspondingly, while females constituted 43% of youth study participants, males constituted 57%. Chapter 5 will provide a detailed analysis of the age disparity of the participants and what it means in terms of intergenerational and age intersectionality for this study.

4.3 Ethical considerations

Before beginning the data collection process, the study received formal approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's degrees ethics committee. Since the study is focused on Liberia, the researcher's first point of contact was the Liberia Peacebuilding Office who provided the researcher with the gatekeeper's letter permitting the continuation with this research. Upon receipt of the ethical clearance, the researcher reached out to ECOWAS, Liberia Peacebuilding Office, UNDP and WANEP, and requested their participation in this research.

Before conducting the interviews, the researcher shared the consent form with the participants. The consent form explained the objectives of the research and that it was seeking discretionary approval of participation from the respondents. The respondents filled in and signed the consent form, and the date and time of the interview would then be confirmed and finalised. In addressing the issues of anonymity and confidentiality, the participants were assured that their identities would be concealed. The ethical concern is a sensitive issue in research. However, given the narrative of the Liberian youth and women in the area of PCRD, it has been extensively interrogated and documented – the respondents had no reservations

in participating in the study. Some signed the consent form and sent it back to the researcher while others gave consent for their participation in the study via email. It is crucial to highlight that most of what was deliberated by the participant's links back to work they do for the organisations affiliated to as well as personal experiences.

4.4 Data analysis

The primary and secondary sources were used to extract data, and it was processed using the sequential exploratory method of analysis, which entails understanding the unfolding of social issues over a time (Fisher & Sanderson, 1993: 251). The sequential exploratory data analysis method was distinctly used to analyse and assess existing information and literature gathered from the semi-structured interviews and online questionnaires for this study. In relation to this study, the sequential exploratory method of analysis enabled the researcher to compare quantitative and qualitative data and reflect on participants' point of view on the inclusion of and impact on youth and women in the implementation of the AU PCRD initiatives in Liberia. The crucial advantage of using the mixed-research methodology in this study was that each research method offsets the limitations of the other.

4.5 Limitations and challenges of the study

The study aimed to investigate the inclusion of, and impact on, the youth and women in PCRD initiatives in Liberia. The findings generated in this study proved to be timely and relevant in addressing the research question, fill in the research gaps, and meet the objectives of the study. Notwithstanding this, there were some limitations to the study. The first limitation relates to the fact that the qualitative data could not be collected from all stakeholders, whether individuals or organisations, who were and still are actively working with the youth and women in the implementation peacebuilding programmes in Liberia. This challenge is mainly because of the geographical location between the researcher and the participants and the financial restrictions. The study was carried out as planned during the

initial proposal presentation and approval of the study. In light of this difficulty, the researcher admits that sampling such a small sample is often considered to have an effect on the study's results. The innuendo here is that the data collected does not necessarily represent the whole population of Liberia. However, to mitigate this shortcoming, the researcher ensured that the sampled organisations and individuals were reliable and a representation of the wider population.

The second limitation relates to accessing the respondents and the respondents responding to the call to participate. In terms of qualitative data collection method, the researcher had set out to interview the Liberia Peacebuilding Office, UNDP, ECOWAS, WANEP, and YMCA as per the approved proposal. However, interviews were only successfully conducted with Liberia Peacebuilding Office, UNDP, and ECOWAS. This was also the case in the quantitative methodology, where the referred respondents did not respond to the calls to participate. To mitigate this challenge, the researcher reached out to ISS and WIPNET to participate as key informants in this study, to which they were also interviewed via Zoom for one hour and two-hours respectively. Then in terms of the quantitative respondents, the researcher reached out to participants outside the snowballed population who were then interviewed over the phone.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the design and methodology of the study and identified the mixed research methodology as the most suitable for this study. It further provided an understanding of the research design, sources of data collection, the study's sample size and population, sampling method, and how the data was construed and analysed to meet the objectives of the study. In this manner, the chapter detailed the use of the secondary and primary sources of data collection. It identified the target group of participants using the purposive and snowballing sampling methods through interviews and questionnaires administered by the researcher. A sequential explanatory method of analysis was used to analyse and interpret data. Additionally, the chapter provided a rationale of the methodology used for the study, and it profiled the participants as the subject matter of the research and addressed ethical concerns as well as the limits to the study.

Chapter 5 will present the findings of this chapter and provide an analysis of the data collected. This study is a critical assessment of the inclusion of, and impact on, the youth and women's participation in the implementation of PCRD programmes in Liberia. Chapter 5 focuses on creating a more in-depth understanding of the youth's and women's experiences, challenges, and opportunities when it comes to implementing PCRD initiatives. To conclude the study, chapter 6 will provide a summary, recommendations, and conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Analysis and Findings

5.1   Introduction

Over the past three decades, increased debates have taken place about women's position and role in crucial decision-making structures. Platforms such as the 1995 Beijing Conference and the UNSCR 1325 of 2000, for example, were already in existence when Liberia was in turmoil. These agendas were on the international platform at that time. Multitudes of women were part of Liberia's peace processes, especially as they came to realise their worth and skills to change not only the conflict, but its effects on them in particular, and society in general. Indeed, studies show that women played significant roles at various levels and were 'purposefully and imposingly' part of the discussions for peace negotiations towards resolving the Liberian conflict. On the other hand, when it comes to the youth, the narrative has been about those that fell through the cracks. Therefore, there have been increased calls to bring youth issues to the negotiation tables and decision-making processes over the years, especially when implementing PCRD or peacebuilding programmes. The conceptualisation of the African Youth Charter of 2006, UNSCR 2225, and African Union's Office of the Youth Envoy in 2018 and the 2020 Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security attest to this. In this context, this study investigated how the youth and women have been included in implementing PCRD initiatives, and the impact of their inclusion, in Liberia.

The study used six dimensions of the AU PCRD as a benchmark to gauge participants' perceptions on the focus of PCRD initiatives in Liberia. These dimensions are highlighted in Table 1 below. The study acknowledges that women and youth are affected by the conflict differently and, therefore, the interests' specific to each social group would inform their engagements in PCRD initiatives. Nonetheless, as some respondents stated, there has been an intersectionality of challenges and opportunities between the women and youth during and post the conflict in Liberia. The study found that women's advocacy was very influential in ending the Liberian civil war and setting stage for social, economic, and political reforms in the country, and that this continues to evolve. The study also observed that excluding

or overlooking the youth's participation in implementing PCRD initiatives further entrenched structural exclusion, poverty, and unemployment. Therefore, the implementation of PCRD initiatives should ensure that the six dimensions of the AU PCRD policy framework are equally prioritised to contribute towards inclusive participation, development, and sustainable peace. Accordingly, this evidence highlights the importance of inclusive and participatory PCRD initiatives and probes the relevance of women and youth's effective participation in PCRD initiatives. This study's research problem was to assess how youth and women have been engaged in issues related to PCRD initiatives in Liberia, and what has been the impact of this engagement. The organisations and individuals from which this chapter draws its discursive perspectives on the youth and women's participation in PCRD programmes were selected purposefully and through a snowballing sampling technique. These included the Liberia Peacebuilding Office, UNPD, WIPNET, ECOWAS, and ISS. Conclusions on the subject under study were drawn from their contributions as participants in the study.

5.2   Summary of the data analysis

Table 1: Questionnaire distribution

Number of questionnaires distributed	Targeted number of respondents	Actual respondents	Percentage response rate
50	30	27	90%

As shown in Table 1 above, fifty questionnaires were distributed, and the target was to reach 30 participants. The study achieved a 90% response rate.

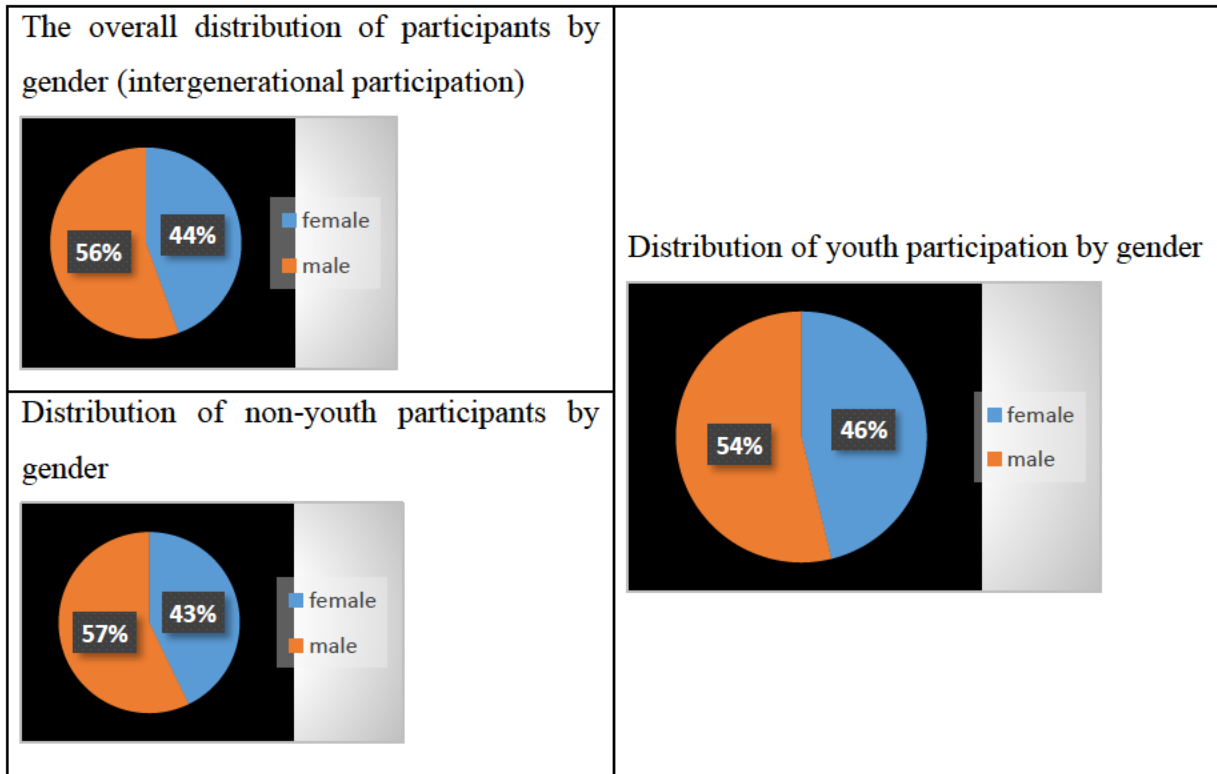|	
The overall distribution of participants by gender (intergenerational participation)	
	Distribution of youth participation by gender
Distribution of non-youth participants by gender	

Figure 1: Gender breakdown

As depicted in Figure 1, the overall males' participation was 56% and females 44%; whereas the youth participation had 54% males and 46% female participation; and non-youth participation had 57% males and 43% female participation.

Participants distribution by age	Participants distribution by education level
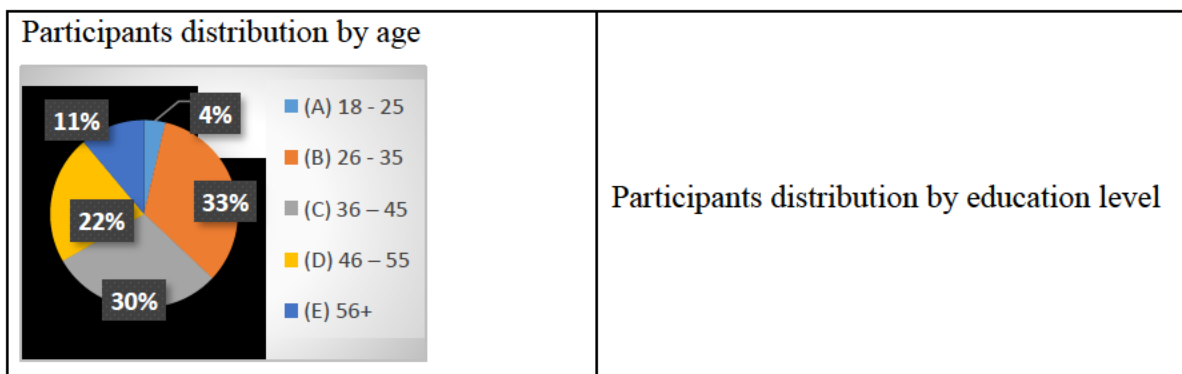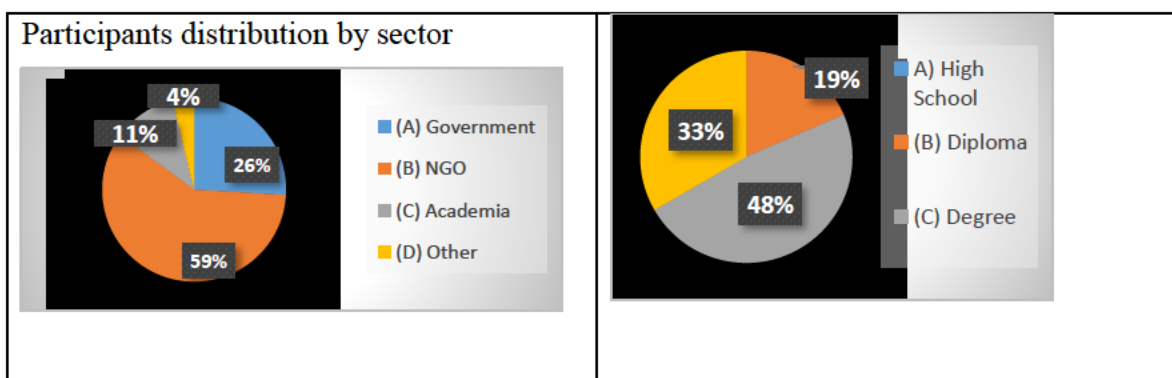
Figure 2: Participants' characteristics

Figure 2 above shows the participants' characteristics when looking at the age distribution. It is shown that 33% of participants aged 26 – 35, 30% aged 36 – 45, 22% aged 46 – 55, 11% aged over 56 years, and 4% aged 18 – 25 years. All the participants had attained formal education, with 48% holding a university degree, 33% with a diploma, and 19% with just high school education. Fifty-nine per cent of the participants were from the NGO sector, 26% from government, 11% from academia, and 4% identified themselves as other sectors.
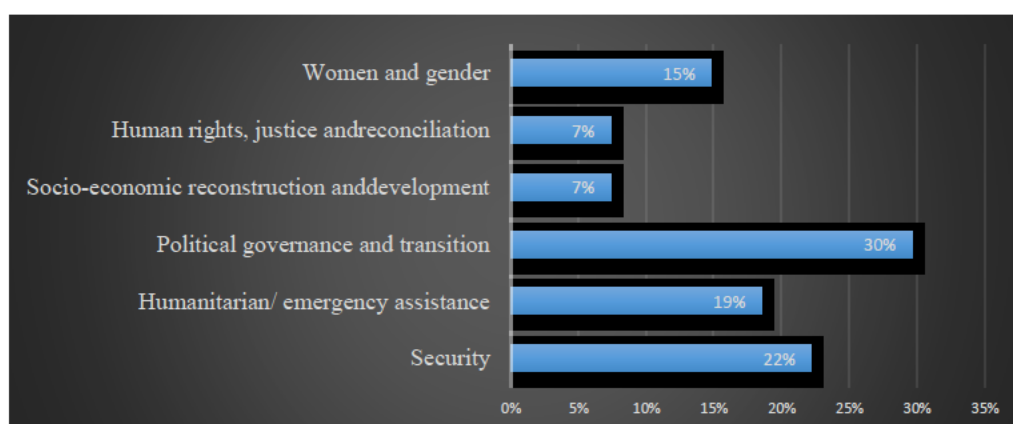
Figure 3: Participants perception on the focus of PCRD initiatives in Liberia

The literature review highlighted that six dimensions anchor the AU's PCRD Framework. As seen above, these are security, humanitarian/emergency assistance, political governance and transition, socio-economic reconstruction and development, human rights, justice and reconciliation, and women and gender (African Union, 2006: 9). In order to assess the perceptions about the focus on PCRD initiatives in Liberia, the participants were asked to choose an indicative element that they thought was dominating the implementation of PCRD

initiatives in Liberia. The bar chart in Figure 3 above reveals that the implementation of, and approach to PCRD initiatives, in Liberia are spread out as follows: women and gender (15%), human rights, justice, and reconciliation (7%), socio-economic reconstruction and development (7%), political governance and transition (30%), humanitarian/emergency assistance (19%), and security (22%) respectively. The analysis provided in this chapter revolves around these identified elements, which also feature critically in the AU's PCRD Framework. In order to present these findings coherently, the afore-mentioned indicative elements from the respondents will each be analysed below. The analysis will be done in a manner that cuts across both categories, namely women and youth.

5.2.1 Women and gender dimension in Liberia's PCRD

The assessment of the study responses reveals that women and gender issues in relation to Liberia's PCRD initiatives have constituted 15% of the overall programme. The respondents highlighted the following areas as having been responded to or taken care of by the PCRD initiatives in Liberia regarding women and gender: sexual and gender-based violence, access to land, and teenage pregnancy. Compared to the other dimensions, this lower percentage of women and gender-related issues may be linked to the fact that women's voices are limited when attempting to influence the political structures. Fewer women are represented in decision-making positions. Q-Respondent P (September 2020) confirms this observation, by pointing out that "*over the past few elections, women's seats in the National Assembly have decreased. The quota system[21] already exists (requires 30% representation of women) but needs to be operationalised to allow women and youth to participate in the politics and governance matters so that their voices can be heard*". Against this narrative, it is important to highlight that the quota system was introduced to ensure women's recruitment into political positions (Rosen, 2020: 1). Gender quotas have enabled women in non-democratic countries with low levels of development and industrialisation to make significant political gains. Furthermore, the quota system has served as affirmative action programs, assisting women in overcoming barriers to election such as a lack of electoral

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[21] Is a policy mandates that a certain amount or proportion of people from minority groups be employed or admitted to companies and government systems.

experience, cultural norms, and incumbency (Rosen, 2020: 3). In Liberia, the decrease in women's representation and gender balance in the political sphere affects the extent to which women are included when implementing the PCRD initiatives. Therefore, poor gender representation implies that the gender gap and inequalities continue to widen, and gendered unequal access to resources is prevalent. On this basis, this study observes that promoting and encouraging the political participation of women and youth must further be institutionalised with practical steps that seek to include the two groups of citizens at all levels of the nation's political management.

Studies demonstrate that there are policies and legislation to ensure that women and youth are included in implementing PCRD initiatives, but the challenge is implementing these policies. The study's findings corroborate with Oxfam (2016: 10) and Westendarf (2018: 1), who assert that more needs to be done to ensure that PCRD initiatives are inclusive of women and the youth when conceptualised and implemented. Additionally, the gender dynamics are usually informed by socio-cultural perceptions about gender and power relations. Balancing the gender dimension is very important when implementing PCRD initiatives because it ensures that the PCRD processes are inclusive and that women and youth enjoy the same opportunities, rights, and privileges in the post-conflict era, and all spheres of life (African Union, 2006: 28; Ramnavain, 2016: 5; USAID, 2018: 1).

Furthermore, the narrative on women in Liberia during the PCRD era has been strongly linked to sexual and gender-based violence, domestic violence, and female genital mutilation, which continue unabated (Q-Respondent L, October 2020). As KI-1 & 2 (August 2020) added, *"the government is unwilling to support the tracking and follow up of rape cases, and perpetrators have gone on with impunity"*. These findings collaborate with McKay's (2009: 382) assertion that women and the youth are the most vulnerable in any conflict situation, and such vulnerabilities continue into the PCRD era. Furthermore, research shows that sexual and gender-based abuse spikes in post-conflict societies due to the breakdown of the rule of law and family and social structures, and the availability of small arms (UN OHCHR, 2021). The post-conflict era should allow the transformation of societal norms and structures to ensure that women and youth enjoy their rights (UN

OHCHR, 2021). Therefore, these experiences affect women's inclusion in PCRD initiatives because, when not addressed, they tend to undermine women's and youth's fundamental human rights which include protection, security, and accountability for crimes committed against them (In *On Africa*, 2012: 7). Ultimately, when the women and gender dimension is not mainstreamed in the implementation of PCRD initiatives, it undermines the broader impact of the initiatives, and the extent to which women and youth can benefit from inclusion in them (initiatives).

The Liberia narrative indicates that the PCRD process was not entirely inclusive nor participatory, mainly because the legal frameworks do not protect women and youth, and the perpetrators are not held accountable (WHO, 2012). The study observes that when women and youth are not protected, that discourages their participation in the implementation of the PCRD initiatives. Therefore, the legal frameworks should be strengthened to protect women and youth and hold the perpetrators accountable. Furthermore, the women and gender dimension should be mainstreamed throughout the PCRD processes to ensure that the initiatives are inclusive, gender-sensitive, and intergenerationally collaborative.

Popovic (2009:13) highlighted that the women in Liberia played a critical role in creating a conducive environment for peacebuilding. Liberian women did not wait for someone to identify them as stakeholders – they understood how the war affected them and what kind of change they wanted in Liberia in the post-conflict era (Popovic, 2009: 13). Indeed, women played a crucial role in advocating for an end to the Liberian civil war, and this role contributed to creating an expectation that they would be an integral part of the social, economic, and political post-conflict reform initiatives. Therefore, to assess the impact of women's advocacy post the conflict era, the participants were asked to reflect on how advocacy for women's involvement in the crucial process, including PCRD, has evolved over the years. Q-Respondent R (October 2020) highlighted that *"before 2003, women were lobbying on the peace talks' corridors and as observers of the peace agreements. However, today, women are not fully represented in key decision-making positions".*

The success of Liberian women's advocacy for their representation in peace processes is also reflected in Liberia's neighbouring States. For instance, Q-Respondent O (October 2020) accounts a case in time when "*the presidents of the Minor River Union (MRU)[22] were in conflict and could not agree with each other. The citizens within the MRU could not freely travel to neighbouring countries. Some citizens died in foreign countries because of the conflict among the presidents. The women were mostly breadwinners, were the merchants trading in and out of those borders, were killed, imprisoned, and raped. Given the constraints faced by the women within the MRU, they grouped themselves and engaged the three Presidents into a successful peace dialogue that brought the presidents together*". While women and youth's narrative remains overlooked and underrepresented in PCRD, there are few cases where women have asserted their roles as mediators at the community level. One case is highlighted by Q-Respondent O (October 2020) above. This demonstrates that the active involvement of women in peace processes contributes to ending the conflict and that, given the opportunity, their inclusion in PCRD initiatives could have a direct bearing on Liberia's socio-economic developments.

Q-Respondent O (October 2020) further recalls how "*in 2002 the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace led by Leymah Gbowee[23] mobilised their efforts and staged silent nonviolence protests that included a sex strike and the threat of a curse. When there is a national crisis, those women still gather at Sinkor Monrovia (fish market) to pray for the country. The women have always taken the lead in advocacy and continue to do so because they continue to be the primary victims in times of crisis*". Furthermore, KI-4 (August 2020) asserts that "*women have been able to sustain the same kind of advocacy they had in 2003, for example, the women of Liberia lobbied the government on passing a bill on Rape Act. Women now have access to land and can have land rights. This success is overshadowed by the challenges they face, particularly on resources, resulting in the division and fragmentation*". The study observes that when women organise, coordinate, and collaborate, the whole community benefits, thus increasing sustainable peace and

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[22] In 1973, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire established the Mano River Union (MRU) as a regional cooperation tool.

[23] Is a Liberian peace activist who helped end the Second Liberian Civil War in 2003 by leading the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, a nonviolent women's peace movement.

development. The challenge is that their potential is not fully recognised in the PCRD decision-making processes and subsequent implementation.

Ramnarain (2016: 5) states that while women's inclusion in PCRD programmes is crucial, it is also equally essential to look at how power dynamics drive the agenda on women's participation and how this participation is brought about. There is consensus among the respondents that women's advocacy in Liberia has evolved over the years. *"While some continue to advocate for change, women empowerment and meaningful participation, there are divisions along traditional, cultural, literacy, ethnic, and religious lines. Moreover, there are perceptions that some are advocating for their gains"* (Q-Respondent X, October 2020). This division usually occurs within the national structures and not at the grassroots level (Ramnarain, 2016: 5). In this regard, it becomes imperative that the implementation of PCRD initiatives is non-partisan and impartial to ensure that they are inclusive of women and youth. PCRD processes and initiatives overlook women's effective inclusion or imitate gender insensitive dynamics in their design and execution. Gender mainstreaming entails systematically defining and resolving gender problems that may hinder or strengthen efforts to create peaceful and sustainable post-war societies (Greenberg & Zukerman, 2009: 11). Therefore, gender mainstreaming PCRD programmes ensures inclusive participation of women and men, gender equality, transparency, and accountability (Greenberg & Zukerman, 2009: 11).

The study observes that the AU PCRD policy framework mentions the youth but does not have a separate dimension on youth, making it difficult to make a comparative analysis of the youth's challenges against the framework. Neither does it acknowledge the role of youth in the post-conflict era under the women and gender dimension. Nonetheless, the study does acknowledge that any political decision does affect them (Kujeke, 2020: 10). The study, therefore, observes that women and gender dimensions do affect the youth because the concept "youth" has a gender connotation. It is commonly used to categorize a young male rather than a young female of the same age who is neither in school nor working, lives on the outskirts of society, and is vulnerable to violence (Kujeke, 2020: 10). This policy oversight entrenches male domination over women across generations and re-

affirms the narrative that most PCRD initiatives tend to alienate or exclude women and youth in the decision-making processes and implementation. The absence of opportunities for youth in the post-conflict country further impends peacebuilding efforts, thus increasing the possibility of relapse. Therefore, for the PCRD initiatives to be inclusive, they must focus on youth empowerment, employment, and equal participation in peacebuilding processes.

In summary, when it comes to the implementation of the women and gender dimension of the AU PCRD framework in Liberia, women and gender-related issues are not prioritised as they should, and this may be linked to the fact that women's voices are limited when attempting to influence the political structures. The narrative on women in Liberia during the PCRD era has been strongly associated with sexual and gender-based abuse, domestic violence, and female genital mutilation, which continue unabated (Q-Respondent L, October 2020). These experiences affect the extent to which women participate in PCRD initiatives because, when not addressed, they tend to undermine the women's and youth's fundamental human rights (In *On Africa*, 2012: 7). As a result, balancing and mainstreaming the women and gender dimension is critical when implementing PCRD programmes because it ensures that PCRD processes are equitable and that women and youth in the post-conflict period have equal opportunities, rights, and privileges (African Union, 2006: 28; Ramnavain, 2016: 5; USAID, 2018: 1).

The study further notes that AU PCRD policy framework does not acknowledge the youth's role in the post-conflict era under the women and gender dimension (Kujeke, 2020: 10). It merely mentions the youth but does not have a separate dimension on youth, and this makes it difficult to make a comparative analysis of the youth's challenges against the framework. This policy oversight reinforces the narrative that most PCRD policies tend to overlook women and youth participation in decision-making processes and implementation of PCRD initiatives.

5.2.2 The socio-economic reconstruction and development dimension in Liberia's PCRD initiatives

Liberia's socio-economic advancement has been hampered by civil and regional conflicts, severe debt burden, food insecurity, and financial crises. This is reflected in the participants' responses when asked: *what are the main socio-economic and developmental challenges facing youth and women in Liberia since the civil war ended*?

In their responses, participants highlighted the following as the main issues that reflect the socio-economic reconstruction and development challenges still facing women and youth in Liberia: unemployment, lack of, and poor access to, education, poverty, and drug abuse amongst the youth. They further mentioned the following: unequal access to job opportunities, unresolved land issues, an increasing number of children dropping out of school despite basic education being declared free for all, inadequate life skills and economic empowerment programs, and unfunded programs that are supposed to empower women and youth. Indeed, Q-Respondent R (October 2020) asserts that *"the main socio-economic and development challenges confronting youth and women in Liberia are among others: poverty, high rate of unemployment, limited education and professional capacity"*.

These main issues reveal that Liberia's youth and women's socio-economic and development challenges are myriad and deeply structural. The respondents show that Liberia's approach to PCRD has not yet adequately addressed socio-economic development issues. As reflected in Figure 3 in one of the preceding pages, only 7% of the initiatives address socio-economic development issues. This implies that a lot still needs to be done to alleviate women's socio-economic conditions and youth post-conflict in Liberia. These challenges affect their inclusion in PCRD initiatives because, when not addressed, they delay the transitional period and are a fault line for a relapse into conflict. This delays the long-term goal of sustainable socio-economic development of the country. Therefore, the state and development stakeholders in post-conflict countries like Liberia should prioritise setting up effective socio-economic models that will prioritise

employment-generating interventions and poverty alleviation instruments for women and youth (AU, 2016: 22). It is anticipated that these efforts will address social ills in a post-conflict environment to ensure that PCRD initiatives are well coordinated, inclusive of women and the youth, and contribute to sustainable development. Furthermore, ensuring that women and youth can get back as quickly as possible is socio-economically critical to the success of PCRD. Therefore, prioritising socio-economic reconstruction should ensure that the PCRD initiatives are impactful and inclusive of women and youth as they are the most vulnerable group during and post the conflict (AU, 2016: 22).

In conclusion, unemployment, lack of and poor access to education, poverty, drug abuse amongst the youth, unequal access to job opportunities, unresolved land issues, an increasing number of children dropping out of school despite basic education being declared free for all, inadequate life skills and economic empowerment programs, and unfunded programs that are supposed to empower women and youth are the key socio-economic reconstruction and development challenges highlighted by the respondents. The study observes that these challenges are structural and, in the Liberia context, they have not been adequately attended to. Therefore, the socio-economic reconstruction and development dimension should also be prioritised in a manner that ensures that the implementation of PCRD initiatives is impactful and inclusive of women and youth.

5.2.3 The human rights, justice and reconciliation dimension in Liberia's PCRD

In relation to Liberia's human rights, justice, and reconciliation dimension, the respondents opined that only 7% of the initiatives responded to this element. Their responses highlighted sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, post-traumatic stress disorder, and limited access to justice. Liberia's civil war recorded severe human rights violations and crimes. Twum-Danso (2003: 17) and Vinck et al. (2011: 12) documented that the youth in Liberia were recruited as child soldiers (boys) and sex workers/slaves (girls). The respondents were asked if this narrative was true.
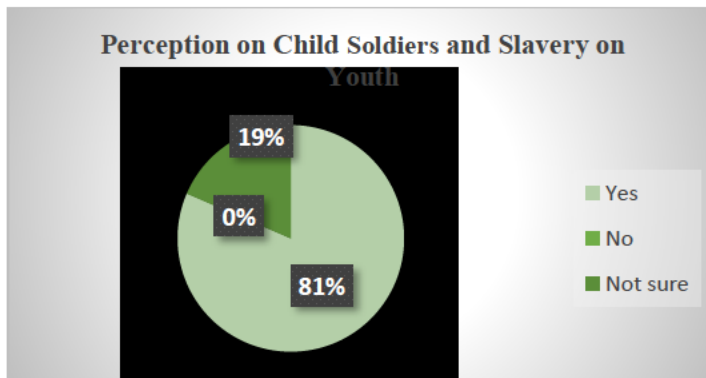
Figure 4: Participants' perception of child soldiers and slavery in Liberia

As per Figure 4 above, 81% of the respondents confirmed that this was true, while 19% stated that these claims could not be substantiated. The follow-up question was: *what is the post-conflict narrative on the youth of Liberia?*

According to Q-Respondent M (September 2020), *"the post-conflict narrative on Liberia's youth has posed many challenges and has not gotten their space in society. Most young people remain beggars and are in street gangs, criminals, and drug dealers and users"*. Q-Respondent O (October 2020) noted that *"the narrative is true. However, since the end of the war, the phenomenon is increased violence against women and girls. This has been declared a 'national emergency' by the national government of Liberia"*.

Furthermore, Q-Respondent P (September 2020) stated that *"post the conflict, the narrative is a different type of slavery. It is economic slavery and drug slavery. In this day and age, there is still prostitution. This is happening because there are no jobs or job opportunities. The system is saturated with nepotism. While there is no bloodshed, the social ills continue"*.

Then Q-Respondent N (October 2020) asserted that *"this is true and unfortunately there is little or no progress over the last years. The number of disadvantaged youths in the streets has multiplied, the number of young people, including girls on substances and involved in prostitution is increasing and alarming. First, the rehabilitation and*

reintegration of former combatants did not go well, and second, there are little or no concrete opportunities available for these young people".

The above quotation points out that if the human rights, justice, and reconciliation dimension are not attended to in the post-conflict era, then there is a wounded and unhealed generation suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (Musis & Kinyanda, 2020). Furthermore, the study observes that a whole generation of young people, both male and female, is not reintegrated into society, with limited access to opportunities and resources. This generation of young people presents a vulnerable and dangerous element to society. Additionally, Liberia's history of the civil war shows how powerful forces can use them to destabilise the country and affect the much-needed reconciliation process in the PCRD era. Kujeke (2020: 3), who stresses that the absence of opportunities for youth in many countries threatens peacebuilding efforts, increasing the chances of a relapse, confirms this narrative. The more side-lined they (youth) are, the less successful the PCRD processes (Kujeke, 2020: 3). According to the Independent Expert Report commissioned by the African Union (2020), there is a lack of strategic guidance on engaging the youth on national discourses, political and peace processes, community growth, and post-conflict reconstruction development.

KI-4 (August 2020) further pointed out that "*the post-conflict narrative is that the youth is divided into two social structure categories: the first group are the college graduates (the informed youth). Most of them are under the Federation of Liberia Youth, Mano River Parliament, and the government provides support to this group. In contrast, the second group is the frustrated and dehumanised group (locally referred to as Zogos (men) and Zogis (women). This group lives on drugs, and they live off by stealing (and they are growing in numbers). The government has not been able to rehabilitate them, and they are a threat to peace and stability in Liberia".* These dynamics highlighted above demonstrate that there continue to be divisions and gaps among young people in Liberia, depending on their social status and access to opportunities on the basis of education, for instance (Mulbah, 2016: 17). In this regard, the category of youth that is referred to as "frustrated"

and "dehumanised" would not have been able to reap the benefits of PCRD initiatives, and their sense of justice and protection of their human rights have not been fulfilled (African Union, 2020: 72). The consequences of the failure to address issues of justice and human rights pertaining to the youth in Liberia's PCRD initiatives further entrench structural exclusion.

The UN OHCHR (2014: 108) notes that failure to address justice and human rights issues also affects women disproportionally. The UN OHCHR (2014: 108) further observes that a reduction in women's participation in public life and decision-making post-conflict suggests that women are often obligated to return to their traditional domestic roles. There are attempts to revise the constitution, policies, and legal frameworks to incorporate women and youth in the implementation of PCRD initiatives, but there are delays in implementing the changes (Mulbah, 2016: 45). The study, therefore, deduces that PCRD initiatives have not been inclusive of all women and youth in Liberia.

The participants' responses show varying opinions regarding youth involvement in implementing the human rights, justice, and reconciliation dimension in Liberia. Some participants are pessimistic about youth involvement. However, Q-Respondent M (September 2020) noted that *"today, despite the many challenges faced by youth, they remain one of the greatest voices for social justice. They are, to a larger extent, determined, innovative, and resilient group of people in our country today".* Q-Respondent R (October 2020) stated that *"the youth are also contributors to peace and development in Liberia, for example, they are active in local peacebuilding programmes and advocacy campaigns, but this is for a small group. To increase the number of youths involved, there needs to be a decentralisation of current policies and structures to ensure that more young people are part of the change in Liberia".* Tunda (2017: 3), who narrates how the youth in CAR also played a critical role in building post-conflict societies by undertaking conflict analysis, participating in PCRD processes, and implementing PCRD initiatives, shares this positive view on their involvement. Previous studies (Ismail, 2017: 15; Mutisi, 2012: 94; Ozderdem, 2016: 2) also indicate that young people contribute to social change processes to transform the structures of conflict, and that the majority of youth-led initiatives are relatively sustainable. Therefore, concerning youth inclusion in implementing PCRD

initiatives in Liberia, intergenerational collaboration and co-leadership become crucial for social change towards sustainable peace and development.

In conclusion, when it comes to the human rights, justice, and reconciliation dimension in Liberia, the study acknowledges that a whole generation of young people, both males and females, is not reintegrated into society, with limited access to opportunities and resources. Furthermore, there is a lack of strategic guidance on how to engage youth better in national discourses, political and peace processes, community growth, and post-conflict reconstruction development (African Union, 2020). This dwindling youth and policy gap threatens peacebuilding efforts and increases the chances of relapse to conflict. Consequently, failure to address justice and human rights issues and women and youth's role in implementing PCRD initiatives in Liberia further entrench structural exclusion. The study further observes that, while there are attempts to revise policies to incorporate women and youth in implementing PCRD initiatives, there are challenges that remain with the actual implementation of the changes.

5.2.4 The political governance and transition dimension in Liberia's PCRD

Figure 3 noted that 30% of the PCRD initiatives focused on political governance and transition in Liberia. The respondents noted the following gaps in relation to political governance and transitional governance in Liberia: limited opportunities for youth and women political participation, corruption and shrinking political space. Therefore, as much as 30% of the PCRD initiatives focused on political governance and transition in the country, the respondents' challenges, as mentioned above, make it challenging to track and celebrate the progress made towards ensuring inclusive participation of women and youth in PCRD initiatives. The AU PCRD political governance and transitional dimension have not been implemented in a manner inclusive of women and youth. This is attributed to the institutionalised gender roles in many societies, which discourage and inhibit female participation in governance when it comes to women. On the youth aspect, this is attributed to the age perception of assuming leadership roles in PCRD processes (AUDA NEPAD, 2018).

Q-Respondent O (October 2020) stated that *"Liberians must first accept that ensuring and sustaining genuine peace is essential for the country's development. Hence, managers of the state and the citizens must pursue genuine and sustainable peace as part of a national vision. When this is achieved, they must institute strong anti-corruption policies and instruments that will bring public officials involved in corruption activities to account"*. Liberia's history of conflict and centralised governance structures exemplifies a convolution of democratic mishaps that have tainted the government's image, thereby alienating it from the population (Shulika, 2019: 77). Corruption covers all tenets of bad governance and social injustice that favour leaders and the elites, giving them inequitable access to resources and opportunities that ordinary citizens cannot enjoy (Mulbah, 2016: 19). Additionally, advancing the political governance and transition dimension requires a participatory approach that prioritise engaging with the grassroots and national stakeholders and adopting a bottom-up approach. Therefore, good political governance is indispensable to inclusive participation and implementation of PCRD initiatives of all stakeholders, especially the youth and women (Mbaku, 2020: 24).

Q-Respondent L (October 2020) reiterated that *"a quota system should be introduced to allow for women and youth to participate in the politics and governance matters so that their voices can be heard"*. Q-Respondent P (September 2020) has already indicated that Liberia does have a quota system. However, the challenge lies in addressing the social and cultural impediments that prevent women from participating in critical issues related to implementing PCRD initiatives (Kumalo & Kujeke, 2017). This study observed that strengthening governance structures is indispensable in implementing PCRD initiatives and sustainability of peace and development, and protection, advancing human rights and justice in Liberia. This is in line with the AU PCRD policy framework, which upholds that, in a post-conflict environment, governments need to prioritise promoting inclusive politics and pluralism to contribute positively to nation-building (AU, 2006: 20; Kumalo & Kujeke, 2017). Moreover, inclusive participation of women and youth is fundamental in mitigating and preventing a relapse into conflict and rebuilding trust amongst stakeholders across society.

In conclusion, the study observes that political governance and the transitional dimension of the AU PCRD policy framework has not been implemented in a manner that is inclusive of women and youth. This is attributed to the institutionalised gender roles in many societies, which discourage and inhibit female participation in governance when it comes to women. On the youth aspect, this can be attributed to the age perception of assuming leadership roles in PCRD processes (AUDA NEPAD, 2018).

5.2.5 The humanitarian/emergency assistance dimension in Liberia's PCRD

Figure 3 depicts that 19% of the PCRD initiatives focused on humanitarian/emergency assistance. According to the AU PCRD policy, this dimension aims to stabilise and rehabilitate the society, to facilitate the return and reintegration of displaced populations, and help resuscitate socio-economic activity (African Union, 2006: 12). KI-4 (August 2020) highlighted that "*the conflict damaged close to 60 per cent of school buildings, including water and sanitation facilities which are key to keep children, especially girls, in school*". Based on this assertion, the study observes that the immediate focus was to rehabilitate and provide essential services for survival and foster collaboration with various stakeholders to speed up the transition from emergency to growth.

KI-4 (August 2020) further recalled that *"UNDP instituted cash transfer programmes, but the programme was not effective because there were no finances to maintain it. Instead of starting businesses, beneficiaries ended up using the cash for basic needs"*. The humanitarian/emergency assistance dimension focuses on quick impact initiatives, which are usually unsustainable. This can be interpreted to mean that such cash transfers would have had a limited contribution to the long-term socio-economic upliftment of women and youth, yet PCRD-related initiatives need to be sustainable over a long period (Myamba, no date). The fact that some of the beneficiaries of these cash transfers were not able to use them to have sustainable ventures during the PCRD initiatives also meant that, long after the conflict has ended, Liberia is still faced with the adverse effects of having citizens who were affected by the war but not being adequately taken of. The AU PCRD policy framework asserts that

this dimension must be linked with the subsequent phases of the PCRD processes, as it will contribute to the fast tracking of key development measures immediately after the conflict (AU, 2006: 13). Concerning the study, the humanitarian/emergency assistance dimension ensures that women and youth-related interventions immediately after the conflict address structural challenges that may exacerbate the vulnerabilities, particularly to women and youth.

A key concluding observation on the humanitarian/emergency assistance dimension is that, while this dimension is crucial to the success of the PCRD policy framework, it focuses on quick impact initiatives, which are usually unsustainable. Therefore, the inclusion of women and youth in the PCRD initiatives in relation to the humanitarian/emergency assistance dimension requires coordinated efforts that intentionally deconstruct gender inequality and age perception in its implementation.

5.2.6 The security dimension in Liberia's PCRD security

The AU PCRD regards the security dimension to create a secure and safe environment for the affected state and its population by re-establishing its architecture (African Union, 2006: 9). The respondents were of the view that 22% of the PCRD initiatives focused on the security dimension. Q-Respondent P (2020) noted that "*there are many Liberians who still grapple with human security challenges such as food security, health-care, and personal security, and these impact on both women and youth*". The fact that there are Liberians who still grapple with such challenges is indicative of the fact that Liberia's PCRD initiatives did not successfully provide for all those who were directly affected by the conflict. It also means that Liberia's PCRD could not adequately ensure that no one was left behind when the country was engaged in its post-conflict reconstruction processes. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that the security dimension of the PCRD is inclusive of human security.

Furthermore, in the context of the security dimension of Liberia's PCRD, it was also noted by some respondents that the youths were heavily impacted because not all their challenges had been addressed. For example, Q-Respondent M (September 2020) observed that "*this situation remains because the Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) processes were never appropriately done for the benefit of the young population*". Many young people were coerced into armed combat during the conflict (Mulbah, 2016: 15), and therefore the DDR processes during the transitional period should be designed to target the youth purposefully. Therefore, implementing the security dimension of the PCRD was not inclusive, and the intended outcomes were not achieved.

Studies show that former President Charles Taylor's military, LURD, and MODEL recruited young boys from the outset of the conflict and trained them to be fearless and loyal fighters (Twum-Danso, 2003: 17; Vinck et al., 2011: 12). They were introduced to drugs, alcohol, and coerced to kill, and were isolated from their families. In the same vein, young girls were abducted by the military groups into sexual enslavement and served at the forefront of the conflict (Twum-Danso, 2003: 17; Vinck et al., 2011: 12). This largely contributed to generational and gender gaps in social, economic, and educational development post the conflict era.

Furthermore, Q-Respondent S (October 2020) stated that "*the United Nations' Rehabilitation and Reintegration (RR) did not meet their local demands. As such, frustration is set at roar with these youths as they continue to live in acute poverty*". Shulika (2018: 72) emphasises that the security dimension entails emancipating the societal organisations and groups committed to building and strengthening PCRD processes and providing the platform for communal inclusivity and local stakeholders' participation. The study observes that Liberia is faced with the challenges mentioned above because most of the youths who were part of the war have not been appropriately reintegrated back into society. Therefore, the implementation of the PCRD policy framework's security dimension was not inclusive, and there is a need to set-up monitoring and evaluation structures. These monitoring and evaluation structures will ensure a

consolidated approach to implementing the PCRD initiative, and it measures the quality and the impact of the implemented initiatives.

While the participants' responses did not focus on how the security dimension affects women in the post-conflict context nor the implementation of PCRD initiatives, the study does acknowledge that the security dimension, when implementing PCRD initiatives, affects women. Women of all ages during a conflict are subjected to displacement, involuntary disappearance of relatives, poverty, disintegration, and victimisation through acts of murder, torture, and sexual abuse (McKay, 2009: 382). The study further observes that women are impacted by the weak and ineffective justice system, further alienating them in implementing PCRD initiatives.

The concluding observation on the AU PCRD policy framework's security dimension is that its implementation in Liberia did not fully protect women and youth who were directly affected by the conflict. Furthermore, the DDR processes were never appropriately done to benefit youth and women, nor did it acknowledge women and youth as key stakeholders in the conflict transformation and PCRD processes.

5.3   Conclusion

The chapter explored how youth and women have been engaged in PCRD and peacebuilding initiatives in Liberia and their impact. The study expounded on the experiences as recounted by the respondents during the semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom and on the Google Form Questionnaires distributed from July – November 2020. The preliminary reflections on the study's findings determine that Liberia is rife with existing socio-economic challenges and looming sources of conflicts, which can undermine national peace, stability, and potential for development. This assertion is reflected by the opinions and recount of personal experiences of field experts, ordinary citizens, and community stakeholders from Liberia working in peace, security, and development. Anchoring this analysis, the chapter recognises that investing in PCRD programmes led by youth and women is the best way

of committing to peace and development initiatives, thereby redirecting their focus from violence to post-conflict state rebuilding.

Overall, this chapter mapped the participants' characteristics and then gauged the respondents' perceptions of Liberia's PCRD initiatives' current focus. Furthermore, the study engaged in analysis of the six dimensions of the AU PCRD policy framework in relation to women and the youth in the post-conflict era. The chapter ascertained that the implementation of PCRD initiatives in Liberia was somewhat inclusive but not sustainable, owing to the existing socio-economic challenges; more can be done. Reflections from the literature review succinctly affirm that the sustainability of peace lies in the inclusion and participation of the youth and women in PCRD initiatives.

Liberia's case study reflects a history of a protracted conflict that dominated the government institutions, structures, and government services and displaced thousands. It damaged physical infrastructure and the country's stability, social rights and economic capital. The study's findings reflect a deep structural exclusion of women and youth in the implementation of PCRD initiatives, and the need to mainstream all its PCRD initiatives to ensure inclusive participation of women and youth. The deconstruction of gender inequality and age perception when implementing PCRD programmes should be prioritised. The study observes that the AU PCRD policy framework mentions the youth but does not have a separate dimension on youth, making it difficult to make a comparative analysis of the youth's challenges against the framework. Furthermore, the findings also indicate that empowering women and youth through PCRD programmes creates long-term social and economic benefits for all individuals, their local communities, country, and the world. The study also emphasised that the importance and power of representation, participation, and inclusivity could unlock the potential for collaboration and embed a sense of ownership in implementing PCRD programmes. On this note, the next chapter will provide a conclusive summary that highlights key points of the entire thesis and make recommendations on how challenges faced by youth and women can be addressed.

Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1   Introduction

This study aimed to assess the inclusion of the youth and women in implementing PCRD initiatives, and its (inclusion) impact in Liberia. It engaged with the youth and women directly and indirectly working in the peace and security field, particularly implementing PCRD and peacebuilding initiatives in Liberia. Furthermore, it conducted semi-structured interviews and distributed Google Form questionnaires to engage with the respondents. The objectives of the study were to:

- Contextualize the background of the conflict in Liberia.
- Examine the AU PCRD Framework.
- Identify the contributions made by the youth and women in implementing the PCRD initiatives in Monrovia.
- Identify the challenges faced by both the youth and women in Monrovia, and how these challenges affect their participation in the implementation of PCRD initiatives.

In general, the study contributes to the body of knowledge by understanding the degree to which youth and women have been involved in the implementation of PCRD initiatives and their effects in Liberia. This chapter brings together the concluding overview of chapters one to four of this study, a summary of research findings presented in chapters five, key recommendations on the challenges that confront the youth and women in order to assert their role in sustaining peace and development, contributions of the study and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 1 provided the background to the study, the outline of the research problem, and the study's objectives. To understand the relevance of investigating the inclusion of youth and women in, and their impact on, the implementation of the AU's PCRD policy framework in

Monrovia, Liberia, it was crucial to study a wide range of literature related to the subject. Therefore, chapter 2 contextualised Liberia's conflict, its causes, implications, and the involvement of key stakeholders towards post-conflict transformation and peacebuilding. It provided a comparative analysis of international case studies on the inclusion of youth and women in post-conflict initiatives, and unpacked concepts and dimensions to PCRD. Thus, chapter 2 located the study on Liberia's PCRD and the involvement of youth and women within the broader context, drawing from regional, national, and international case studies on the subject.

Engaging different stakeholders, especially the youth and women, to participate in PCRD initiatives holds excellent promise for the success of the entire process. Moreover, it is only fair that the youth and women participate actively in implementing PCRD processes, given the scale of suffering they usually have to endure during the conflict (African Union, 2006: 11). It is against this background that chapter 3 analysed the participatory and stakeholder theoretical frameworks as units of analysis in a post-conflict reconstruction and development context.

Chapter 4 presented the research methodology used in undertaking this research study. It detailed the research approach and methods used for data gathering and sampling, data sources and research processes, methods and types of data analysis, ethical concerns, and limitations to the study. The mixed research methodology underpinned the study to address the research questions and achieve the study's objectives. As a result, the analysis needed an empirical research approach to gain a detailed understanding of the Liberian perspective on youth and women's participation in PCRD initiatives in Monrovia, Liberia, and its effect on their implementation.

Using the six dimensions of the AU PCRD as a benchmark, chapter 5 presented the data and discussion of findings to gauge the participants' perceptions on the focus of PCRD initiatives in Liberia. The study's findings reflect a deep structural exclusion of women and youth in the

implementation of PCRD initiatives, and the need to mainstream all the PCRD initiatives to ensure inclusive participation of all stakeholders, particularly women and youth.

6.2   Summary of the research findings

The study's starting point is that it was designed to contribute new knowledge and the development or revision of policies to bridge the gaps in youth and women's participation in PCRD initiatives. In presenting a comprehensive analysis, the study focused on the engagements highlighting the extent to which the AU PCRD initiatives in Monrovia have been impactful to, and inclusive of, youth and women in its implementation.

The analysis presented in chapter 5 revolved around the six AU PCRD dimensions: security; human/emergency assistance; political governance and transition; socio-economic reconstruction and development; human rights, justice, and reconciliation; and women and gender. The analysis of the findings was done in a manner that cut across both categories, namely women and youth. The study acknowledges that women and youth are affected by the conflict differently, and therefore, the interests' specific to each social group would inform their engagements in PCRD initiatives. Nonetheless, as some respondents stated, there have been an intersectionality of challenges and opportunities between women and youth during and post the conflict in Liberia. Participants were asked to select an indicative factor that they believed was dominating the implementation of PCRD initiatives in Liberia. This was done in order to assess their opinions, and their areas of emphasis regarding the PCRD initiatives in Liberia. According to the participants, PCRD initiatives in Liberia are distributed as follows: women and gender (15%); human rights, justice, and reconciliation (7%); socio-economic reconstruction and development (7%); political governance and transition (30%); humanitarian/emergency assistance (19%); and security (22%).

With regard to women and gender dimension, the study established that most PCRD processes and initiatives tend to overlook the relevance of women's and youth's participation, and therefore, the implementation of PCRD initiatives is hardly ever inclusive. It was further noted that there is a decrease in women's representation and gender balance in the political

sphere, affecting the extent to which women are included when implementing PCRD initiatives. Consequently, poor gender representation implies that the gender gap and inequalities continue to widen, and gendered unequal access to resources is prevalent. Moreover, the literature demonstrates that there are policies and legislation to ensure that women and youth are included in implementing PCRD initiatives, but the challenge is implementing these policies. When the youth, women, and gender dimension is not mainstreamed in the implementation of PCRD initiatives, it undermines the broader impact of the initiatives and how women and youth can benefit from inclusion in them (initiatives).

While women and youth's narratives remain overlooked and underrepresented in PCRD, there are few cases where women have asserted their roles as mediators at the community level. This demonstrates their potential, and that the active involvement of women in peace processes contributes to ending the conflict and that, given the opportunity, their inclusion in PCRD initiatives could have a direct bearing on Liberia's socio-economic developments. The study further noted the glaring gap in the inclusion of the youth within the women and gender dimension and the overall AU PCRD Policy Framework.

The socio-economic reconstruction and development dimension focused on highlighting the main socio-economic challenges faced by the youth and women post the conflict in Liberia. To mention a few, the respondents highlighted the following: poverty, high rate of unemployment, unresolved land issues, limited education and professional capacity (Q-Respondent R, October 2020). The study observes that these challenges are profoundly structural and are yet to be adequately attended to.

Liberia's civil war recorded severe human rights violations and crimes in terms of the human rights, justice, and reconciliation as one of the AU PCRD dimensions. Twum-Danso (2003: 17) and Vinck et al. (2011: 12) noted that the youth in Liberia were recruited as child soldiers (boys) and sex workers/slaves (girls). In this study, while 81% of the respondents corroborated this view, 19% stated that these claims could not be substantiated. These results indicate a whole generation of young people, both male and female, who have not been reintegrated into society and have restricted access to opportunities and services. The African

Union also acknowledges a lack of strategic guidance on how to engage youth better in national discourses, political and peace processes, community growth, and post-conflict reconstruction development. Therefore, Liberia's systemic isolation is exacerbated by a failure to resolve justice and human rights problems and assert the role of women and youth in implementing PCRD initiatives.

The study noted that political governance and the transitional dimension of the AU PCRD policy framework has not been applied to include women and youth. This is due to the institutionalized gender stereotypes in many cultures, which discourage and inhibit female participation in governance when it comes to women. On the youth aspect, this can be attributed to the intergenerational dynamics of assuming leadership roles in PCRD processes (AUDA NEPAD, 2018).

The study highlighted that the humanitarian/emergency assistance dimension is set-up to focus on stabilising and rehabilitating the post-conflict communities, and to facilitate the return and reintegration of displaced people. Part of its vision is also to help resuscitate social and economic infrastructural development (African Union, 2006: 12). Furthermore, this dimension ensures that women and youth-related interventions, immediately after the conflict, address structural challenges that may exacerbate the vulnerabilities, particularly to women and youth.

In the context of the security dimension of Liberia's PCRD, some respondents noted that the youth were heavily impacted because not all their challenges had been addressed. Studies by Twum-Danso (2003: 17) and Vinck et al. (2011: 12) demonstrate that young boys were recruited from the outset of the conflict and trained to be fearless and loyal fighters, while young girls were abducted by the military groups into sexual enslavement and served at the forefront of the conflict. Post the conflict, Q-Respondent S (October 2020) noted, the UN failed to demobilise, reintegrate, and emancipate the youth in Liberia fully. On this basis, the security dimension did not fully achieve its mandate, which was to create a safe and nonviolent environment for the affected state and its population by re-establishing its architecture (African Union, 2006: 9). The responses of the participants

did not address how the security factor affects women in post-conflict situations or the implementation of PCRD initiatives. Nonetheless, the study recognizes that the security dimension has an influence on women during conflict and when PCRD policies are introduced within this dimension.

Based on the results of the literature review and research findings, the study was able to establish the following in relation to the inclusion of youth and women when implementing PCRD initiatives:

1. Policies on youth and women in peace and security exist, but there is a need to fast track their participation in the implementation of PCRD or peacebuilding initiatives. Furthermore, there is a need to expand on the PCRD dimensions to accommodate the youth (African Union, 2006: 16).

2. Much of contemporary deliberations on youth and conflict tend to be excessively pessimistic because the narrative concentrates on the dangers posed by the disgruntled young people (African Union, 2017: 2; Ozerdem, 2016: 2). Recent literature on youth in post-conflict environments marks a shift in how young people are thought of. This shift mainly focuses on transforming a predominantly negative discourse and highlights the urgency in acknowledging the gap and young people's role in the PCRD initiatives (African Union, 2017:3; Ozerdem, 2016: 2).

3. The extent to which women and youth are involved during the PCRD processes sets the tone for their involvement in the design and implementation processes. Additionally, the inclusion of women and youth in PCRD processes and initiatives in local, national, and regional government structures encourages political stability, economic growth, and good governance (Erzurum & Eren, 2014: 244).

4. Stakeholder collaboration and coordination are crucial for any post-conflict society, particularly Liberia because it contributes to a relatively smooth transition from conflict to post-conflict society, and successful implementation of PCRD initiatives (Ngubane & de Coning, 2015: 15-16).

5. The gender composition and intergenerational dynamics play a crucial role in the level and quality of stakeholder engagement in the PCRD processes and initiatives. As a result, those in positions of authority need to understand the importance of

involving the next generation of leaders in all PCRD processes and mainstreaming gender composition (Jeffery, 2009: 36).

6. Women and youth are affected by conflict differently, but there is an intersectionality in terms of challenges and opportunities in the post-conflict era.

6.3 Recommendations

The Liberia case study tells the story of a country that came out of the most protracted and violent civil war. Then the post-conflict era reflects a narrative of deep structural exclusion of women and youth. To this effect, the implementation of PCRD initiatives in Liberia has not been entirely inclusive of women and youth, and the impact is yet to be measured. Drawing from literature on PCRD and the meaningful inclusion of youth and women, particularly in Liberia, this section seeks to recommend strategies and policies that may help improve the state of implementing PCRD initiatives in Liberia. To ensure impactful and inclusive participation of youth and women, this study recommends the following:

- Engage with youth and women at all levels and dimensions of the PCRD as this strengthens local peacebuilding institutions and re-affirms the urgency of inclusive stakeholder participation.
- Mandate the adherence to the quota system in all PCRD processes and initiatives, emphasising the intergenerational dynamics and gender composition.
- Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track and ensure effective implementation of PCRD initiatives.
- Amend the AU PCRD Policy Framework in a manner that recognises the youth contribution to policy designs.

6.4 Contributions of the study

The study notes that there is a growing focus on the role, contribution, challenges, and opportunities for women and youth in the PCRD discourse over the years. Therefore, this study contributed to how women and youth have been included when implementing PCRD initiatives. The study comprehensively examined each AU PCRD dimension in relation to the implementation of, and involvement of women and youth in the Liberia PCRD processes. This study is one of the first to call out the AU PCRD Policy Framework to include the youth dimension in the policy framework. Furthermore, given that almost 60% of Africa's population is under the age of 25, and the need to bridge the skills deficiency among young people, particularly in participation in the peace and development discourse (Yinka, 2018), the study encourages intergenerational collaboration and coordination.

6.5 Suggestions for further research

The study's findings have strongly noted that implementing the AU PCRD Policy Framework was not entirely inclusive of women and youth. Therefore, more research is needed to examine the lives of women and youth before and after the conflict. This will help not only to understand the context for the systematic failure to integrate women and youth into PCRD processes and initiatives in order to improve their lives. It will also highlight policy gaps that undermine their potential as stakeholders and make recommendations to improve current processes.

6.6   Conclusion

This study provided an analysis and sought input from field experts and the public on the effect of the AU PCRD initiatives in Monrovia, and the inclusion of youth and women in their implementation. The research findings indicate that, when it comes to women and youth's participation and representation in crucial decision-making structure and implementing PCRD initiatives, they remain underrepresented and overlooked. Analysing the PCRD framework's implementation against the six dimensions highlighted that, while something is being done post-conflict, it is not enough, particularly the following dimensions: women and gender, socio-economic reconstruction and development, and human rights, justice, and reconciliation. The use of the stakeholder and participatory theoretical frameworks highlighted that PCRD processes are multidisciplinary and relationship-centred. Furthermore, the inclusion of youth and women in the implementation of PCRD initiatives has much potential for improving the overall process. Thus inclusive and meaningful participation of women and youth lies in intentionally deconstructing gender inequality and age perception towards ensuring sustainable peace and development.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Gatekeepers letter from the Liberia Peacebuilding Office

LIBERIA PEACEBUILDING OFFICE

EKM/ED-PBO/MIA-RL/241/'19

August 16, 2019

Dr. Nokuthula Cele
Professor
University of Kwazulu-Natal
Howard College, Durban, South Africa

Dear Dr. Cele,

I'm pleased to present my compliments, and hereby grant permission for Ms. Rachel Nontobeko Zondi to conduct field work in Liberia in fulfillment of her study for Master Thesis in Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, Howard College, Durban, South Africa.

The Government of Liberia through the Liberia Peacebuilding Office will be glad to receive copy of her completed Thesis Report for information purpose only.

Best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Edward K. Mulbah
Executive Director

Appendix 2: Informed consent letter

Dear Participant,

My name is **<u>Rachel Nontobeko Gcabashe (Student Nr: 209503859)</u>**. I am a master's student at Howard College at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The title of my research is: **<u>Assessing the inclusion of youth and women in, and its impact on, the implementation of the Africa Union Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development initiatives in Monrovia - Liberia</u>**.

The study aims to **<u>assess the inclusion of youth and women in, and its impact on, the implementation of the Africa Union Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development initiatives in Monrovia - Liberia</u>**. I would like to interview you to hear about your experiences and thoughts on the subject.

Please take note of the following:
- The material that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- It is completely up to you whether or not you participate. You have the option to participate in the study, not participate in the study, or avoid participating in the study. You will not face any consequences as a result of your actions.
- In this interview, your opinions will be expressed anonymously. In the report, neither your name nor your identity will be revealed in any way.
- The interview could last between *30 – 45 minutes*.
- The record of the interview, as well as any other materials related to it, will be kept in a password-protected file accessible only to my superiors and myself. It will be shredded and burned after a span of five years, in accordance with university laws.
- If you agree to participate, please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures)

I can be reached at the University of KwaZulu-School Natal's of Social Sciences, Howard College Campus in Durban. Email: 2095038895@stu.ukzn.ac.za or Nontobeko.gcabashe@gmail.com; Cell: +27 72 032 6537.

My supervisor is **Dr N. Cele** who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Howard College Campus, Durban of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email Celen1@ukzn.ac.za, Phone number: +27 71 117 7050.

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee contact details are as follows: Ms Phumelele Ximba, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Research Office, Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za, Phone number +27312603587.

Thank you for taking the time to contribute to this study.

DECLARATION

I…………………………………………………………………… (*full names of participant*) hereby confirm that I am familiar with the contents of this document as well as the scope of the research project, and that I am willing to participate in it.

I am aware that I have the choice to leave the project at any time. The research's goal is clear to me. By signing this document, I consent to take part.

I agree / do not agree to have this conversation recorded (if applicable)

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE   DATE

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Appendix 3: Interview questions

Research Question: **Assessing the inclusion of youth and women in, and its impact on, the implementation of the Africa Union Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development initiatives in Monrovia, Liberia**.

Interview Questions:

Date of Interview: _____

Organisation or Group: _____

What is your occupation: _____

1. In your opinion, what are the main socio-economic and developmental problems facing youth and women in Liberia since the civil war ended?

2. How do you think these problems can be addressed/resolved?

3. How would you describe your organisation position/contribution on the role of the youth and women in the implementation of Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD)/ peacebuilding initiatives in Liberia?

4. Looking at the role played by women in influencing the end of the conflict in 2003, how has their advocacy evolved over the years?

5. The narrative of youth in the Liberia civil war is that of child soldiers and sex workers/slaves. Is this narrative entirely true? Post-conflict was it the narrative of the youth?

6. Are you aware of any PCRD/peacebuilding initiatives aimed at mobilizing youth and women in the country? If so, what are their main interests?

7. Do you believe that the Liberian youth and women are being included or excluded from the PCRD process in Liberia, based on the current government's policies and programs? If included/ excluded, please explain how.

8. What are the benefits of investing in PCRD programmes that are led by youth and women?

9. Have the programmes/initiatives (peacebuilding, PCRD, socio-economic development) been inclusive and participatory in their implementation? And are/were they sustainable?

Appendix 4: Questionnaire

Appendix B: Questionnaire

1. How old are you?

(A) 18 - 25 (B) 26 - 35 (C) 36 – 45 (D) 46 – 55 (E) 56+

2. What level of education have you completed?

(A) High School (B) Diploma (C) Degree (D) Honours/Post graduate diploma or degree (E) Masters (F) PhD

3. Years of experience working in the field of Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD):

(A) Less than 3 years (B) 3 – 5 years (C) 5 – 10 years (D) 10 – 15 years (E) 15 years +

4. Which sector are you working in?

(A) Government (B) Non-governmental organisation (C) Academia (D) Other

Specify other: _____

5. The AU PCRD initiatives in Liberia mostly respond to which indicative element of the AU PCRD framework:

(A) Security (B) Humanitarian/ emergency assistance (C) Political governance and transition (D) Socio-economic reconstruction and development (E) Human rights, justice and reconciliation (F) Women and gender

6. In your opinion what are the main socio-economic and developmental challenges facing youth and women in Liberia since the civil war ended?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. How do you think these problems can be addressed/resolved?

_____

_____

_____

8. Looking at the role played by women in influencing the end of the conflict in 2003, how has their advocacy evolved over the years?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. The narrative of youth in the Liberia civil war is that of child soldiers and sex workers/slaves. Is this narrative entirely true? What is the post-conflict narrative on the youth of Liberia?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. Are you aware of PCRD/peacebuilding initiatives in the country that are geared towards mobilizing youth and women? If so, what are their focuses?

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. Analysing the current government and their various policies and programs, do you think the Liberian youth are being included/ excluded from the PCRD process in Liberia? If included/excluded please explain how.

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

12. Have the programmes/initiatives (peacebuilding, PCRD, socio-economic development) been inclusive and participatory in their implementation? And are/were they sustainable?

_____

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_____

Appendix 5: Ethical clearance letter

UNIVERSITY OF ™
KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

15 June 2020

Miss Rachel Nontobeko Zondi (209503859)
School of Social Sciences
Howard College Campus

Dear Miss Zondi,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001290/2020
Project title: Assessing the inclusion of youth and women in, and its impact on, the implementation of the Africa Union Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development initiatives in Monrovia; Liberia
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 19 April 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL** subject to the following condition:

- Data may be collected only from those sites where gatekeeper permission was granted and attached for consideration by HSSREC

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 19 June 2021.
To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/ms

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix 6: Turnitin report

Assessing the inclusion of youth and women in, and its impact on, the implementation of the Africa Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development initiatives in Monrovia; Liberia

ORIGINALITY REPORT

6%	6%	2%	2%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper	1%
2	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	1%
3	"Gender Equality", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2021 Publication	1%
4	digitalcollections.sit.edu Internet Source	1%
5	cdn.walkfree.org Internet Source	1%
6	www.law.berkeley.edu Internet Source	1%
7	Submitted to Soochow University Student Paper	1%

Appendix 7: Editor's report

Reg. No.: 2005/ 031803/08

Date: 28 March 2021

To whom it may concern;

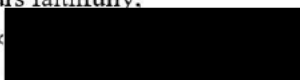**Subject: Editing Report of a Masters Thesis for Ms. Rachel Nontobeko Zondi**

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited the Masters Thesis for Ms. Rachel Nontobeko Zondi, Student Number: 209503859. In her thesis, issues that relates to language, style, punctuations, spelling, grammar, formatting, font, labelling and structure of sections were thoroughly checked and corrected where necessary as displayed on the table below. Appropriate recommendations were also made where necessary.

Report of editing, copy-editing, proof-editing, and proofreading conducted:

Service	Editing	Copy-editing	Proof-editing	Proofreading
Heavy content re-writing	N	N	Y	Y
Re-writing for style, clarity and tone	N	Y	Y	Y
Implementing a style	N	N	Y	Y
Implementing formatting	Y	Y	Y	Y
Querying facts	N	N	Y	Y
Cross-checking in-text references to illustrations	Y	Y	Y	Y
Cross-checking in-text references with bibliography	Y	Y	Y	Y
Ensuring consistency of formatting	Y	Y	Y	Y
Spelling	Y	Y	Y	Y
Punctuation	Y	Y	Y	Y
Grammar	Y	Y	Y	Y
Logical connection and coherence	Y	Y	Y	Y

Please do not hesitate to contact me on the details below should you require further information or have any queries regarding the editing of Ms. Zondi's Thesis.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Zethembe Mseleku (PhD: Public Policy-UKZN)
Post-Doc Researcher – UKZN
Researcher Coordinator - AVRI

African Vision Research Institute (AVRI)
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