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Rebuilding Resilience of Rural Community Dwellers in Liberia Post-War: Case Study of Nimba County in Liberia

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REBUILDING RESILIENCE OF RURAL COMMUNITY DWELLERS IN LIBERIA

POST-WAR: CASE STUDY OF NIMBA COUNTY IN LIBERIA.

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PIM 77

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

Since the end of the war in Liberia, post–conflict development agencies have spent tens of millions of dollars in Liberia on justice, governance, security and infrastructure. These social cohesion methods in the past were considered a way of stabilizing the peace process. Unfortunately, these methods listed above overlooked rural communities. And these rural communities are actually affected by the conflict more severely. Can development aid contribute to social cohesion after the Civil War by focusing only on urban areas when most rural communities continue to be neglected? Evidence from a field experiment in post-conflict Liberia has emerged with lack of the basic needs which are critical concerns for those in Liberian rural communities. As Liberia remains one of the countries where new conflicts may arise, utilizing Participatory Ranking Methodology (PRM) is a valuable tool to redirect resources more effectively. I will use this method, which includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches of data collection to analyze the causes of poverty, a known destabilizer, and examine the effects and linkages to conflicts in the rural communities of Nimba County. My findings will suggest how government and post-conflict development agencies can transform relationships and effectively build resilience among the rural community dwellers.

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Introduction

Armed conflict is a major determinant of poverty in Africa. Poverty has amplified the conflict's impact and made civilians vulnerable. In turn, poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment remain some of the major sources of conflict on the continent today. Despite their cardinal importance in the history of warfare, the linkages between poverty, insecurity and conflict remain poorly documented and inadequately understood.

Notably, for over a decade now, a growing number of states have been unable to perform the primary functions of governance and provide basic human needs for their people. Identified as failed states, these countries typically suffer from violence, economic failure, political paralysis, uncertainty, and corruption. Severe deprivation, abject poverty and distrust among citizens and between them and political authorities are commonplace (Chomsky, 2006 and Rothberg, 2002). These conditions are amplified in post-conflict environments where normal development processes are overwhelmed by the need to bring the country back on track after violent conflicts. Meeting all these challenges during post-war reconstruction in ways that reconnect the state with its citizens as in the case of Liberia, to rebuild trust, sustained long-term development and genuine legitimacy has become the core issues in its post-war environment.

For these reasons, this research project embodies a determination to focus on rebuilding the resilience of the rural people of Nimba County in Liberia, thus facilitating change in post conflict environments. Furthermore, to achieve a change that will engender- rebuilding the resilience of the locals, it is deeply understood that leadership role is very important. For instant in Liberia, especially in Nimba, the community dwellers recognized the voices of their leaders similar to Jesus Christ who said that: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" John 10:27. These community's leaders know how to manage the expectations of

their people in the aftermath of crises, through effective mobilization, reconciliation, genuine

security environment, peace building, and constructive engagement of local constituencies in the

overall governance process for an inclusive participatory process that stimulates the

accomplishment of collective results.

However, nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate and the concerns of the

Peacebuilding and conflict transformation researcher, than the understanding that people in

conflict zones are to be free. But a post-war country's development and recovery agenda

requires measures that will help it move from conflict to sustainable peace.

Chapter one

Background and purpose of the study

The concerns about the best approaches and policy options available in post-war

countries to ensure sustainable peace and development have been the preoccupation of

researchers, policy actors and development practitioners. Scholars in peace studies and

democratic governance have been concerned about whether post-war development and recovery

initiatives should be focused on a genuine truth and reconciliation process, like the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission in South Africa at the end of apartheid (Langa, 2000). Other

researchers like Atobi (2009) believe holding regular or early elections will help recovery and

development during the post–war development in Nimba County. For example, the process of

early election helped Sierra Leone, which has made considerable progress in peace and

development since the end of the conflict. In addition, another school of thought sees post-war

recovery and development to be a gradual process. Take Rwandan Vision 2020 that was

launched in 2000 by Rwandan president Paul Kagame as an example. The vision agenda is a gradual process in a country that is transforming from the conflict of genocide and now becoming a country of knowledge-based middle-income citizens, with poverty reduction, health, reconciliation, and a strong democracy. Post–conflict development agencies need implementation of programs that will enable gradual and lasting peace and tranquility in post-war countries.

In the light of above argument, policy makers in war-torn community in Liberia should also be concerned about how to deal with conflict issues: promoting peace, reducing poverty rate, and ensuring security in order to guarantee durable peace and economic development for the people. In particular, efforts should focus on economic development of the locals who have been marginalized for many years. There were only a handful of reconstruction programs following the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as the President of Liberia in 2005, gradually resulting in peace in the country and the rural community (MacDougal, 2017). The most significant challenges now are how the current government can ensure progressive peace process and build the resilience of the community dwellers of the country.

As a result of the diverse opinion of the scholar on post-conflict development challenges this study will tackle contemporary issues that are of utmost significant to peace building in Nimba County. In this regard, this paper will focus on two objectives:

1. Investigates or explores a conflict model of human relationships with infrastructure development and security from participants' narrative.

2. Study a community peace initiative in comparison with international peace resolutions that I learned during my internship at the Carter Center in Atlanta GA.

I will be exploring conflict that considers the social and structural struggle of people in the rural community of Nimba County in post-war Liberia. My research project will also outline a conceptual framework for rebuilding community resilience as a process of dynamic adaptation with a positive path to buffer the adverse effects of disasters and promote community wellbeing.

1.1 Origin of Liberia Conflict and underdevelopment in Nimba County

To achieve the purpose and objective of the research project, it's very important to understand the basis of poverty, insecurity and underdevelopment and the deplorable living conditions of many community dwellers of Nimba County in Liberia. Unfortunately, the situation has left many in a seemingly endless cycle of deprived living conditions from one generation to the next generation.

The origins of the Liberian conflict can be traced back to various forms of political manipulation and ethnic differences originating from over 150 years of ethno-identity conflicts between Americo-Liberians and indigenous Liberians. Additionally, the era of Liberian civil war that lasted for more than 14 years (Dunn, 1999), left behind a structure in this society; the structure that promotes a lot of abuses and stress that can lead to psychological breakdowns, most of which people see as being natural. All these ethnic differences resulting in exclusion and marginalization of the indigenous people and have characterized the country for most of its existence. (Afolabi, 2017).

The founding constitution of Liberia from the colonial masters was designed for the needs of the settler population (Americo-Liberian) (Wilson, 1969), which subjugated the indigenous people for over a century. Land and property rights of the majority of Liberians were severely limited. Political power was concentrated mostly in the capital city of Monrovia and

primarily in the hands of the Presidency with little accountability. Most infrastructure and basic services were concentrated in Monrovia and a few other cities fuelling uneven development, a dualistic economy, and a major dichotomy between urban and rural areas. As a result many communities in Liberia continue to measure the effects of war mostly in terms of violence against people and physical destruction of properties and infrastructure.

Furthermore, the structure of our post-war society has been marred by hatred, ethnic divisions and conflict. The political and economic elites continued to control the country's resources for their own interest and to consolidate their power. These factors led to wide gaps in the distribution of the nation's wealth and fueled ethnic and class animosities and rivalries. These realities and the dependence of the nation on a small range of natural resources eventually sowed the seeds for the 1980 coup d'état and the subsequent violent conflict that began in 1989. (Dunn, 1999)

The economy began to unravel in the 1970s with the combination of the sharp increase in fuel prices and the decline in the prices of key export commodities. By the latter part of the decade all indicators pointed to a looming crisis. Unemployment, consumer prices, and food prices in particular all rose at alarming rates. The lack of a long term vision and the absence of an effective short term response to the onset of the economic stagnation coincided with political repression, social exclusion and corruption thus accelerating the national crises. The April 1980 coup by Former President Doe worsened the country's predicament and bred more ethnic hatred, mostly among the Gio and Krahn tribes. Johnson (2003) explains more on decade of gross mismanagement and dictatorship from President Doe's regime. An historical, political, autobiographical analysis and revelation of some major issues and events that led to the outbreak of civil war and fourteen years of chaos, plunder, and violence, which did not end until

international peacekeepers finally ousted the government in 2003 and established a platform for

stability, peaceful elections in 2005. The 2005 election in Liberia was the beginning of Liberia's

recovery (MacDougal, 2017), but the process was limited only to the urban cities.

1.2 Problem statement

This research looks closely at the issues and problems associated with rural poverty and

persistent marginalization of post-war local communities (especially in Nimba County) that felt

the consequences of the fourteen years of war. Social exclusion, rural poverty and

underdevelopment are major problems that could renew potential conflicts in rural post-war

Nimba County. Almost all the communities in Nimba are effected by lack of infrastructure,

social and economic development. The resulting poverty and insecurity has made life unbearable

for them. If these perennial problems continue to persist amidst technological advances, the

Liberian peace process could be hindered, risking another round of conflict.

1.3 Significance of the study

Apart from being the obligatory requirement to the partial fulfillment for the award of

master's degrees or post- graduate degree to the researcher, the research report will add to the

existing literature. For this reason it can be referenced and provide a basis for further research on

the same theme. Also, this research report may be useful to new researchers who intend to

research similar topics in Liberia, especially when considering rural Nimba County as a case

study, where this research was conducted.

Furthermore, this research is intended to deeply inform researchers, policy and social

actors to learn how to transform conflict and theory of change in the peace process during Peace-

building and Conflict Transformation Process. Theory of Change does not simply effect the

peace process; it is the peace process; the process through which change comes about as a result

of a program's strategies and action that produce positive results. Likewise, the researcher will

understand that Peacebuilding programming is built on numerous assumptions about how

interventions enhance peace. This means that poverty, insecurity and violence should not be an

essential part of rural community's identity. There must be a change that will transform rural

community's partial development, social and structural struggle into a peaceful avenue. How to

arrive there is the subject of this capstone. My research subject will recognize the complexity and

the effort this elusive ideal requires. This will include a positive recommendation on how to

undertake peace with a desire not to harm or kill, being harmless to self and others under every

condition. And finally, by waging conflict nonviolently reducing direct violence, transforming

relationships and rebuilding community resilience.

1.4 Organization of the study

This research topic was selected based on the nature of the study which is designed to

carefully look at the perception of the people. Considering poverty in the rural part of Nimba,

efforts of the government to bridge the gap and the resilience of the people, and service

deliverables will be the target. The instrument to be used for the collection will be direct

interview, community engagement observations, and focus group interviews. The procedure for

the research will begin with a series of preliminary meetings with local communities' leaders,

youth and women groups as well as civil society leaders at the local levels, followed by

interviews with the selected individuals and stakeholders. The interviews will be recorded using

written and a digital voice recorder formats. The researcher will take notes allowing for

abbreviated transcripts. At the completion of the interview discussion, the raw data including the narratives from the data collection will be transcribed and analyzed as well.

Chapter Two:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Africa's predicament is the reason Ali Mazrui (Fapohunda, 2002), one of the most celebrated African writers, proclaimed that Africa is the first home of mankind, yet the last to be made truly inhabitable in contemporary world as a result of insecurity, poverty and underdevelopment. In fact, these problems: insecurity, poverty and underdevelopment in Africa are a clear case of 'res iptsa loquito' (the matter speaks for itself), particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa.

There is no doubt that the problem of conflict and insecurity is destabilizing the continent's peace process to the extent the rural communities are now the most affected. One could argue that a continent that is so persistently plagued with conflict and instability cannot achieve progress easily. Thus, the dire need for peace in the African countries is a matter of urgent concern. This argument is given credence by views expressed by Solomon and Swart (2005) on African Peace and Security: territorial disputes, armed conflict, civil wars, violence and the collapse of governments and ultimately the state have come to represent the greatest challenges to peace, security and stability. On the African continent, these threats have been much more noticeable and indeed have taken on a scale, intensity and regularity that have defied even the imagination of the greatest science fiction. The fact is that whenever conflict occurs, the development of the society is often seriously affected. As Wanyande, (1997) discloses the costs

of conflicts in Africa in terms of loss of human life and property, and the destruction of social infrastructure and insecurity are enormous. Likewise Liberia is facing the challenges of insecurity and underdevelopment. The 14 years of devastating war in Liberia are perfect example of Wanyande's idea of the cost of conflicts. The consequences of the Liberia war have resulted in insecurity and under development in the rural community of Nimba, given way to poverty, as a deprivation in nature, lack of adequate livelihood assets and failure to achieve basic capabilities such as health, economic and social life. (Adebayo, 2009)

However, this paper particularly will review the theory of conflict and poverty, conflict and its tie to political exploitation and de-development, social exclusion, marginalization and insecurity. All these are rooted in the rural community of Nimba.

2.1 Overview on the theory of conflict and poverty

Poverty is a multi-dimensional problem that goes beyond economics to include social, political, and cultural issues. Intellectuals like John Burton (1997), Laune Nathan (2003), Richard Sand Brooks (1982) and Ted Gurr (1970) have been trying to develop a theoretical approach to poverty and conflict. There is a general consensus/agreement that there is a direct relationship between poverty and conflict i.e. lack of access to basic human needs can result in conflict prone behaviors. Much research has been done on the impact of war on communities and the effects of subsequent poverty on these communities.

Provision of essential livelihood is a must in rebuilding resilience within community dwellers. Burton's (1990) human needs theory suggests that conflict and instability occurs because people are denied not only their biological needs, but also psychological needs that relate to growth and development. The overriding importance of Burton's (1990) theory is that it

understands that basic human needs such as food, clothing, shelter, health and water are essential and cannot be traded, suppressed, or bargained for. The unfortunate part is that many developing countries have not considered Burton's (1990) theory of needs in their development agenda. The failure to meet needs has resulted in the loss of many lives of community dwellers in Liberia particularly Nimba County. Nearly the entire rural community in Liberia has no access to basic needs. Women and children in particular are affected the most in these conditions.

Besides Burton's theory, Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" in Psychological Review said that…..." a number of more basic needs must be met such as the need for food, safety, love, and self-esteem." From Maslow argument the failure to have needs met at various stages of life could lead to physical and physiological violence. In Nimba community the effects of poverty fall most heavily on the children and women and as a result many lives have been lost, particularly among teenagers. For example a 13 year-old girl was reported to have been raped by a State man, who is a member of the House of Representatives, (Super, 2017). Another 15 year-old teenager, Sata Binda, was murdered as part of a ritualistic killing while on her way from school. The death of the teenager sparked massive protests in Gbatala. Another example given by the FrontPage Africa Newspaper is a sick lady who lost her life because of the deplorable road conditions. The woman was traveling to Tappita in Nimba County for advanced medical treatment. She eventually died near the township of Graie. The report indicates that the vehicle that conveyed the woman was stuck in the mud and they could not get through the mud before she died. The road from Ganta to Tappita and other roads in around Nimba community had become totally inaccessible and posed a serious threat to lives, especially those traveling to seek medical care from the Jackson Fiah Doe Referral Hospital in Tappita in Nimba County. (FrontPage Africa Newspaper, September 19, 2018).

Furthermore, according to Aristotle in Okanya, (1996: 3), social strife and revolutions are not brought out by the conspiratorial or malignant nature of man but are derived from poverty and distributive injustice. Therefore, when the poor are in the majority and have no prospect of improving their conditions, getting their basic needs they are bound to be restless and seek restitution through violence. No government can hold stability and peace when it is created on a sea of poverty (Okanya, 1996). In Liberia, particularly Nimba, the case is that of absolute poverty. This means that lack of basic needs (like food, clothing, shelter and health) is the seed of conflict (though, as a matter of emphasis – all African countries are not equally poor and equally conflict prone). Poverty, a situation no human being would be contented with, because of the agonizing pains that follow the lack of these basic needs.

Therefore, people in most cases react negatively to lack, in order to show their grievances and discontent, particularly when the government is corrupt. For instant, in recent times, a multinational company Arcelor Mittal was vandalized in Nimba by some youths resulting to at least five protesters and six officers of the Liberia National Police (LNP) sustained gunshot wounds. These youths are from towns near Arcelor Mittal-Liberia operations in Nimba. They clashed with riot police who came to save lives and properties after an attack on the company. During the attack the youths destroyed several equipment including a train and heavy duty mining truck. This situation is seen as a dangerous trend in Liberia's march to peace (Wesee, 2014). According to former President of the Press Union of Liberia, Abdullai Kamara, whatever claims community members have must be discussed in an atmosphere free of fear and mistrust in order to reach logically sound and mutually beneficial decisions.

Finally conflicts are therefore often caused by an attempt to clamor for these basic needs by violent means. Liberia, as a volatile mix of poverty and conflict has continued to be poorly

developed. Thus, as long as absolute poverty which is rooted on political corruption remains in Liberia, conflict is inevitable especially in Nimba County.

2.2 Conflicts and its ties to political exploitation

The argument of this study is that poverty and conflict in Nimba are traceable to political corruption. Hence the question, how can Nimba County develop politically mainly by eliminating political corruption in order to effectively alleviate absolute poverty; in effect manage its conflict to avoid further human losses? Nimba County's dwellers that live in impoverished conditions are deeply discontented owing to the pain and agony associated with the denial of their basic needs. It is only natural then that they would react negatively to marginalization by supporting rebellious activity in order to show their grievances and discontent, particularly when the government is corrupt (Elliott, 2013). Conflicts are therefore often caused by the peoples' attempt to fight for access to basic needs. For this community, seeing those who have plundered all the country's resources and continue to enjoy the immunity and occupy coveted positions in the government is traumatic.

Similarly, the Boko Haram and Ogoni people in Nigeria continuously terrorize the country, where innocent citizens are the most affected. Due to political exploitation, a new force for political change is emerging across Africa: popular protest. Widespread urban uprisings by youth, the unemployed, trade unions, activists, writers, artists, and religious groups are challenging injustice and inequality. What is driving this new wave of protest? Is it the key to substantive political change? As long as absolute poverty and insecurity rooted in political corruption remains in Nimba, conflict will be unavoidable (Branch and Mampilly, 2015).

Authoritative sources like 'The Borgen Project" has associated poverty in Africa to corruption. The Borgen Project believes that leaders of the most powerful Nations on earth should be doing more to address global poverty linked to political corruption (The Huffington Post, 2017). Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former president of Liberia, once said that corruption is her "public enemy number one". She made this statement when she took office more than a decade ago. (Super, 2017) "We have not fully met the anti-corruption pledge that we made in 2006," Ellen Johnson Sirleaf told lawmakers in her final state of the nation address and ended by terming corruption as a 'vampire' and now a 'cancer'. Sachs and his collaborators at the Millennium Project, similarly discuss the effect of corruption on poverty in Africa. They contend that the quality of governance is balanced to the amount of money available for it, but lack of political will to do so lies in the dishonesty cultivated from years of deprivation of Africa leaders. (Sachs et al, 2004). In case of Liberia, the significance of their argument is that there are certainly 'corruption-related indicators of poverty' in Liberia that need to be adjusted including embezzlement, political patronage, money laundering, bribery, invoicing and over estimation of project and contract costs. Just as UN Secretary General Kofi Annan notes, 'corruption is found in all countries big and small, rich and poor but it is in the developing world that its effects are most destructive" Wentling (2002: 5). He castigates corrupt, oppressive leaders in Africa, and suggests that what is most needed is a consistent and aggressive "tough love' diplomacy that refuses to deal with leaders who have fortunes stashed away in foreign bank accounts, and steps up support for legitimate, non-violent opposition groups, while most African states sink deeper into an almost irreversible morass of poverty and chaos.

Nevertheless, former President Sirleaf still claimed that as a result of her efforts of fighting corruption Liberia met the eligibility requirements for the compact grant under the

Millennium Challenge Account (MCC) by consistently passing this rigid corruption index (Tarnoff, 2009). However, her immediate successor and current President George Weah levied corruption charges against many officials of the central Bank of Liberia for allegedly mismanaging 16bn Liberian dollars and charged for economic sabotage (Liberia Front page Africa, 2019). This casts doubts on the legitimacy of Sirleaf's earlier claims (Ikejiaku, 2009),

It is because of the devastating levels of political corruption in Africa that Jeremy Pope, one of the founders of Transparency International, labeled the African model as 'lootocracy, you don't find it anywhere in the world' (Wrong, 2005). There is a contrary view that African poverty is due to poor economic growth. Marke (2007) argues that in much of Africa very little economic growth has occurred and some countries are even poorer today than they were thirty years ago. Furthermore, according to J. Bradford Delong of California, Berkeley, 'the twenty first century has been the century of increasing wealth in the industrialized economies: in material and standard of living, but for the majority of Africans, it has been an era of negative growth…' (Marke, 2007).

Many studies have shown that corruption is the major factor affecting development growth in Africa. The negative impacts of political corruption on investment mostly affect economic growth in rural communities like Nimba county of Liberia. The bottom line is that political corruption is the single greatest obstacle to economic and social development; noting that the harmful effects of corruption are especially severe on the poor, who are hardest hit by economic decline, and are the most reliant on the provision of basic needs and public services. Government attitude towards corruption must change in order for the community dwellers to gain confidence and work toward peace and tranquility.

2.3 Linking conflict to Ethnicity and Population

Ethnicity is another key factor in the continent's overabundance of conflicts. Theorists believe that ethnicity underlies practically all conflicts in Africa, since ethnic groups in their bid to compete for scarce resources such as property rights, jobs, education, and social amenities engage in violence. Nnoli (1980) employed empirical evidence associating conflict to ethnic problems, but Elbadawi and Sambanis (2000) questioned the ethno-cultural and linguistic explanation for conflict in the continent, rather linking Africa's conflicts to other factors like poverty, absence of democratization and over dependence on natural resources.

In Nimba County, issues of ethnicity and the absence of effective conflict-resolution mechanisms between the Gio and Mano tribes (which constitute the largest population in the county) are the main reasons for conflict and insecurity in this region. In 1985 Thomas Quiwonkpa, a Gio tribe from Nimba, and former Commanding General of the Armed Forces of Liberia (whom Doe had demoted and forced to flee the country) attempted to overthrow Doe's regime from neighboring Sierra Leone. The coup attempt failed and Quiwonkpa was killed. Following this incident, there were major crackdowns, in Nimba County Zuleyee in the north of the country, against the Gio and Mano ethnic groups where the majority of the coup plotters came from. The mistreatment of the Gio and Mano ethnic groups fueled ethnic tensions in Liberia, which had already been rising due to Doe's preferential treatment of his own group, the Krahn. The struggles to survive got worse in Nimba under the regime of Samuel Doe. However, in an attempt to avenge their losses, thousands of Gio and Mano welcomed and joined Charles Taylor and his NPFL rebel group.

The underlying ethnic rift between the dominant communities of Krahn, Gio and Mano will continue to cause conflicts and insecurity in the region. Even if they are not shooting Guns at one another, does not mean that they are at peace. Therefore, this review indicates that in post-

conflict societies, handling expectations in a changing atmosphere remains a complicated effort. On the one hand, the needs are enormous and urgent; on the other, because of limited resources and weak institutions, it is hard to achieve immediate results on the pressing needs. Leaders must monitor public discernments and at the same time engage in constructive dialogue with different stakeholders to foster a shared understanding of the priorities and difficulties. Apart from direct discourse with a diverse group of people, polling data and cooperation with an independent media can play a critical role in informing as well as helping in the formation and articulation of public opinion.

Finally, absence of war does not guarantee total peace in Nimba; that is why I agree with Johan Galtung who referred to the absence of war as "negative peace". Galtung argued that there was a richer, more complex meaning of peace, "positive peace" (Galtung, 1996, p. 265), for it is not bullets and bombs alone that kill and maim people. When people are trembling, dying, living in fear and abject poverty this can be referred to as "structural violence", violence that is built into the structure of political, social-culture and economic systems.

The Liberian government should be questioned when we see that people continue dying of malnutrition in a country with more than enough food for everyone, where people are blinded, crippled or killed by preventable diseases, become the targets of vicious crimes committed by desperate, marginalized youth, or loose their life as a result of a road in precarious conditions, regardless the fact that the country has enough resources to cater for its infrastructural development. These are not the victims of war! They are the victims of lack of basic needs. Yet they are just as damaged, just as dead as those we count as war casualties. Rebuilding resilience of Nimba communities' dwellers is more than just the absence of war; it is the presence of decency, wellness and genuine legitimacy.

Chapter Three:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodology Choice and Rational

To gain an understanding on how Rebuilding Resilience of Rural Community Dwellers in Liberia Post-war of Nimba County became a reality. A qualitative and quantitative research study was crafted to answer the research question: What are the main causes of poverty effects and linkages to conflicts in the rural communities of Nimba County? How can the government transform relationships and build resilience among the community dwellers? The procedure for the research begins with a series of preliminary meetings with local communities' leaders, youth and women groups as well as civil society leaders at the local levels. Following this, the Direct interview and Focus group discussions commence with the selected individuals and the stakeholders, using Purposive Sampling method also known as judgment sampling.

The methodological framework employed for the review of research materials is a Participatory Ranking Methodology (PRM).This is a mixed methods approach which includes both qualitative and quantitative data collection; well-suited for assessing the main causes of poverty, the effects and the linkage to conflicts in four rural communities of Nimba County. The selected communities were: Gompa, Saclepie, Tappita and Karnplaye. It's an open method shaped by means of enabling affected communities and other relevant stakeholders to identify key needs and resources to transform relationships and build resilience among the community dwellers.

This approach was selected based on the nature of the study which is designed to carefully look at the perception of the people considering poverty in the rural part of Nimba, efforts of the government to bridge the gap and the resilience of the people, and service deliverables. By using focus groups, and structured direct interviews, I was able to capture a broad spectrum of resourceful sampling from the selected population. The focus groups enabled the selected populations to provide contextual information and to subsequently give lengthy narratives on the consequences of insecurity and poverty in post-war Nimba, the level of vulnerability to conflicts and violence. Also, confidence of Nimbalian for sustained peace, development, justice and reconciliation was noted. Some recommendations for improvements were also noticed.

Throughout my research study, the participants in both the focus groups and direct interviews provided recommendations consistent with what was discovered in the Literature Review: that Africa is the first home of mankind, yet the last to be made truly inhabitable in our contemporary world as a result of poverty, insecurity and underdevelopment (Fapohunda, 2002). The method also helps to analyze the findings and results of interview in both statistical and narrative terms from the groups of knowledgeable participants and community stakeholders guided in generating responses to a specific question or set of interview questions. (Appendix ii).

3.2 Methods of Data Collection

 Two methods of data collection were used: Direct Interviews and Focus Groups. There were five interview questions and five focus group questions, which can be reviewed in Appendix ii. This approach was selected based on the nature of the study which is designed to carefully look at the perception of the people considering poverty in the rural part of Nimba, efforts of the

government to bridge the gap and the resilience of the people, and service deliverables. In an attempt to maintain credibility, age, gender and education were considered as a strategy of credibility and trustworthiness of the finding (see Table one). Tables were also used to analyze the results.

3.3 Confidentiality and Ethical Practice

Confidentiality is critical to this review with the aim of providing safeguards and human protections for all participants. This review was guided by the research code of conduct which encourages frankness, honesty, confidentiality, open discussion, and a full exploration of issues relevant to the review. To protect participants, a Human Subject Research (HSR) form was submitted to the project advisor and the review board prior to conducting research (see Appendix i). The HSR form outlined precautions that would be taken to ensure research was conducted ethically, participants were treated ethically, and guidelines were followed.

Each participant was sent an informed consent form to be completed prior to the Focus Group. Direct Interview participants were also provided consent forms. This ensured that all participants acknowledged that they were participating of their own free will and that they could discontinue at any time without penalty. All information that was obtained or linked to the study was kept confidential and used for the sole purpose of the review. Audio or video tapes and note pads were kept secure. Information and data collected will be used anonymously and confidentially for this review. All communication made on or in connection with the interview process is confidential and will not be released for any purpose not described above. It becomes binding on the researcher to maintain ethical practices that include confidentiality and avoiding conflict of interest.

Therefore, the data forms were collected and brought back to Monrovia in a safely locked briefcase to protect the information obtained. The information from the participants and institutions was locked up along with the notepad, recorder, and all materials used in a briefcase and only the researcher has the password to the computer where the data was entered.

3.4 Delimitation of the study

There were several delimitations to the scope of my research paper. For one, due to time constraints, I was only able to focus on four communities out of ten and one local NGO. With more time, I would have included more NGO interviews as part of my research.   Originally this research paper basically focused on the following issues in order to proffer medium through which conflicts can be avoided in a post-war era of Liberia; taking rural Nimba as a case study. These areas are: conflicts and recovery, rebuilding infrastructure and providing basics services, security governance, a long term development approach and building local capacities. Due to time inadequacy, the study was basically limited to the view of youth, elders, chiefs, civil society actors all at the rural part of Nimba County. These people involved in the day to day decision making of the area; they are fully abreast, aware or have a profound knowledge about local marginalization which is tantamount to renew conflicts. Also, the stakeholders are also aware of the challenges faced by rural communities prior, during and after the civil crises in Liberia.

3.5 Limitation of the study

There were many obstacles experienced in an effort to collect data that answered the interview questionnaires. I encountered problems such as limitation of access to key stakeholders at the local level especially travelling from one community to another, and lack of cooperation from potential respondents. Lack of research facilities, electricity constraints and unavailability

of resource materials were principal factors that limited the research. Another limitation to this study has to do with basic schedules of respondents who were not available at the time of the interview.

Finally, time was the critical obstacle in making appointments to meet potential respondents who are knowledgeable about the locality and the issues of rural poverty, marginalization and underdevelopment faced. Most of the time, key individuals who could have contributed relevant information through interviews were busy doing other duties outside their various areas. This therefore, has serious limitation in doing this research, and other countless constraints not mentioned.

Chapter four:

PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, AND DISCUSSION OR ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The first part of this chapter presents analyses of data collected from direct interview followed by the focus group respondents' narrative. The social characteristics/identity of the respondents was taking into consideration in the finding, followed by sub-themes developed according to the study's set objectives. I categorized the data from direct interview into two themes that emerged frequently to help me answer my research questions. Themes that emerged are: Vulnerability of the people of Nimba to conflict and the road to post-war recovery.

Direct interview

Based on the judgment sampling technique used, the participants were randomly selected to represent the population of community dwellers in Nimba County. Hence, 'N' represents the number of the entire conflict affected population of Nimba, while 'X and Y' represent the male and female respectively. The numbers of the people interviewed are in ratio 3:2 of male and female respectively. For the purpose of this project the whole population of affected community is taking to be 40 (N=40).Therefore, the mathematical notation of affected community is: N=40, X=3, Y=2 and the percentage of the population is 60% to 40% as shown in the Table one.

Age was considered as one of the important cardinal of my research credibility. The age ranges from 21 to 40 in Nimba County were used mainly by the rebel leaders to carry out destruction of lives and properties during the 14 years of war. Some of them have been seen transformed to be good citizens, despite the limited opportunities available to them; they strive to become contributors to their communities. In addition, respondents' education attainment had drawn the attention of the researcher because information from this category and spectrum of individuals was cardinal and took into consideration all levels. As seen in table one below, college and post-graduates took the highest percentages of the participants, followed by high school graduate, vocational education and others.

Respondents' social identity table

	Range	Male (X)	Female (Y)	Frequency (X+Y)	Percentage		(X+Y)%
					X%	Y%	
Gender		24	16	40	60	40	100
	21 - 30	5	4	9	12.5	10.0	22.5
	31 – 40	5	5	10	12.5	12.5	25.0
AGE	40 - 50	8	4	12	20.0	10.0	30.0
	50 above	6	3	9	15.0	7.5	22.5
	High school graduate	5	3	8	12.5	7.5	20.0
	College graduate	6	4	10	15.0	10.0	25.0
	Post-graduate	6	4	10	15.0	10.0	25.0
EDUCATION	Vocational education	3	2	5	7.5	5.0	12.5
	Others	4	3	7	10.0	7.5	17.5

Table One.

Vulnerability to conflict

"The difficult thing is that vulnerability is the first thing we look for in others and the last thing we are willing to show others. In others, it's courage and daring. In ourselves, it's weakness." – Dr. Brené Brown

Looking at vulnerability of Nimba County Communities to conflict in the respondents' opinion; vulnerability simply mean easily hurt or harmed physically, mentally, or emotionally. To be vulnerable is to speak from the heart said one of the post graduate respondents". As she continues, "it is difficult for those of us who use silence as our shield and counter-intuitive to those of us who need to demonstrate strength. Our triggers often work against us in

demonstrating vulnerability". Many of them didn't want to speak directly by relating oneself to vulnerability rather generalize it to the communities where they resides. The majority of people with the age bracket between 21- 40 were born during the war. Some participated in the war, while some were used as a Child Soldier by the rebel's leaders.

Vulnerability table

Options	Respondents	Percentages
Very vulnerable to conflicts and violent	18	45
Somewhat vulnerable to conflicts and violent	12	30
Not too vulnerable to conflicts	10	25
Total	40	100

Table Two

Sources of data: Owing to the options provided in the table above, one can conclude on the question: what are the consequences of insecurity and poverty in post-war Nimba County? In this case, the consequences are vulnerability to conflict. As this may lead Nimba County to another round of conflicts, or Nimba may be used again for another war, or experience internal conflicts.

The road to post-war recovery

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."
Ralph Waldo Emerson's

After conflict, transformation will not be successful until all parties affected by the conflict get involved. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the people involved in the situation, and what their needs are to ensure their involvement. For the Nimbalian, their key desire is to broaden economic recovery, security, development and social inclusion without diminishing the social cohesion dynamism they already have.

From the respondent narrative, a representative from Organization for Women Empowerment (OWE) Ms. Florence Dorley said "the problems of Nimba County are far more acute and their choices much more constrained. Indeed, they confront double challenges: to create dynamic economies and to promote, at the same time, economic and social inclusion. Without both of these elements, national reconciliation will likely prove impossible". Many of the interviewees particularly the high school to college graduate level agreed to an opinion of equal treatment of communities in terms of development and empowerment and trusting one another. Apart from equal treatment, the categories of higher educational level participation in the interview believes in minimizing rural poverty can be achieve through a proper road connectivity within the county, particularly market to farm road and inter-community roads. These are maps toward post-war recovery of community dwellers.

A little contrary from the opinion of the high school and college graduate, is that of NGO and some stakeholders who have different view. Their view makes the dynamic of the Nimba County post-war recovery road change with increase in the age level and academic level. The changes shifted from not just broaden economic recovery, security and development but to

strengthen social cohesion of the community dwellers. The demand of the community

stakeholders, local NGO and other educators in Nimba see community peace and reconciliation

forums, justice, and fair treatments as a platform of building a genuine resilience within the

government and the community dwellers.

The statistics and table three below show low percentage of equal treatment. The

percentage being so low in the area of equal treatment and in development compare with finding

peace in reconciliation and justice with greater percentage. This statistics is very interesting in

regard to the research literature review. While the majority of sources were indicating that

poverty and disproportionate development towards urban areas over rural areas was a primary

causes of violence. *"According to Aristotle in Okanya, (1996: 3), who said that social strife and*

revolutions are not brought out by the conspiratorial or malignant nature of man but are derived

from poverty and distributive injustice." This is an indication that rebuilding the resilience of the

locals, leadership role is very important. Furthermore, conflict model of human relationships

with infrastructure development will prevail when there is a true reconciliation. Perhaps the

present threat of violence and injustice prevents local community members from recognizing the

greater challenges connected to poverty and violence. However, general observation from the

research respondents indicates, they are much more concerned with finding peace, reconciliation,

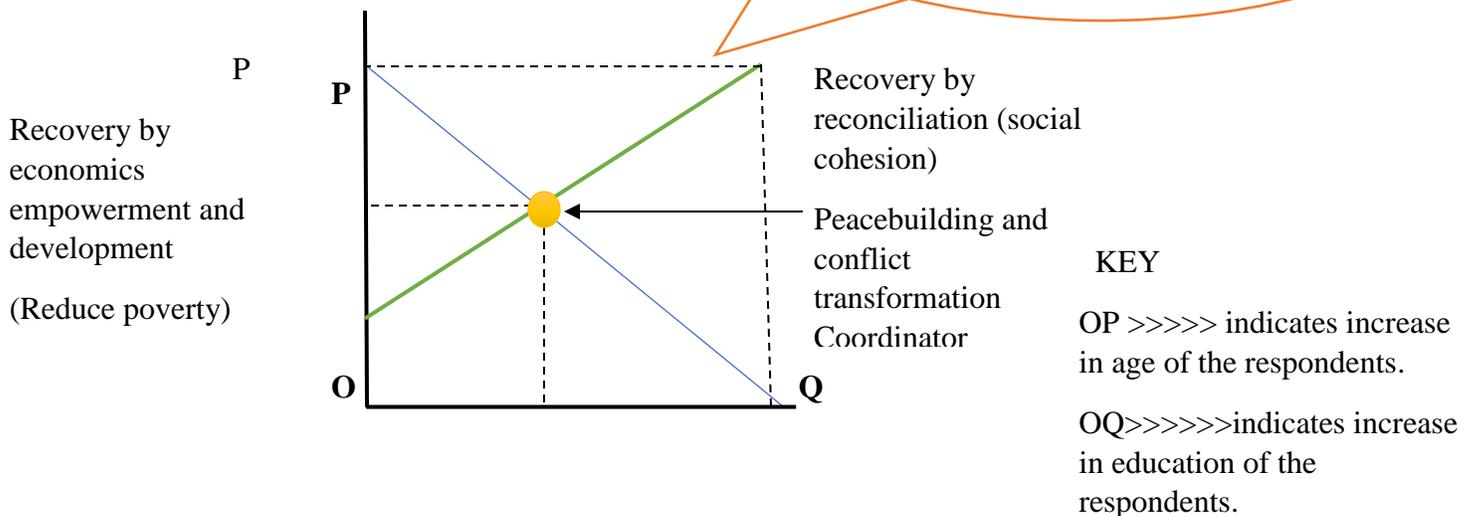and justice than they are about gaining equal treatment in development.

LIBERIA POST-WAR

Post-war recovery table

Options	Respondents	percentages
Equal treatment of communities in terms of development	5	12.5
Empowerment and trusting each other's	10	25
Community peace and reconciliation forum	15	37.5
Justice and fair treatments	10	25
Total	40	100

Table Three

Shift in opinion curve

Graphic P and Q

The entire curve shows the shift in the recovery dynamic of Nimba County in respect to age and education.

To actualized genuine recovery peace builder stands as an equilibrium (neutral body) and ensure the opinion of the conflict parties are workable.

P

P

Recovery by economics empowerment and development

(Reduce poverty)

Recovery by reconciliation (social cohesion)

Peacebuilding and conflict transformation Coordinator

O

Q

KEY

OP >>>>> indicates increase in age of the respondents.

OQ>>>>>>indicates increase in education of the respondents.

 Focus group discussion

There were four semi-focus group discussions held in four of the communities selected for the interview. The communities were Gompa, Saclepie, Tappita and Karnplaye, all in rural Nimba county of Liberia.

Key findings from the focus groups conducted are presented in a narrative form rather than statistical because the questions were open ended and aimed at gathering the informants' perspectives and view on how to Rebuild Resilience of Rural Community Dwellers in Liberia Post-war: Case Study of Nimba County. Also look at those eminent factors that may have the capacity to rekindle another round of violence or conflicts in Liberia particularly Nimba. Additionally, I was able to conduct the discussions in four communities out of the ten target communities. The contents of the focus group discussion were centered exclusively on the theme of this research paper. The focus group discussions were limited to only five questions, but with some follow-up questions to provide adequate clarification as the facilitator deemed it necessary.

The same questions used during the direct interview were also used for the focus group. Direct interviews were focus on the general perspective opinion of Nimba County in general while the focus group is more specific to the effect of conflict in each community. There were ten participants in Gompa while fifteen participants attended in Saclepie. There were ten participants in Karnplaye and five participants in Tappita respectively. The focus group discussions were conducted separately in the respective locations. During the discussions in these four communities, there were extensive similarities of the responses of the informants. Highlights or the major themes centered on Poverty and under-development couple with abandonment. Finally, the respondents were not given any incentive or transportation for their

participation and their involvement was voluntary. They were residents of the communities where the discussions were held and the time frame for the focus group was limited to 1 hour.

Focus group in: Gompa, Saclepie, Karmplaye, and Tappita.

Question 1. *In what ways are the people of Nimba more vulnerable to conflict related to violence particularly in your community?*

(Answers): When this question was posed, some of the participants from the inception were apprehensive to answer. Most of the participants from the four communities asserted that there was no reconciliation program carried out in their communities during the fourteen years of upheaval in Liberia. As a result, there is mistrust among citizens. People that committed heinous crimes during the war are left with impunity. One of the participants from Saclepie said "We are vulnerable because this people think nobody can do anything to them." He was referring to the war lords who are now Senators are holding position in the government. Also, there was no program on trauma healing; soldiers who fought during the war still see themselves as being in the war era and perpetrating criminalities in the various communities. Another woman from Tappita said there communities are not safe. Children are not in schools, and can easily attract anything that can give them quick money in term of survival. For instance, crimes are many in the neighborhoods, no jobs for young people that participated in the war. These and many more are signs of vulnerability of conflicts related violent.

Question 2 *What do you think the issue of insecurity and poverty is escalating in Nimba, and can you explain the danger the situation poses to individuals in your communities?*

(**Answers**): There is neither company nor any opportunity in Saclepie that could help ex-combatants for employment after the cessation of the war. As a result, more of the ex-fighters are in the various neighborhoods committing crimes and other crimes as earlier mentioned, said a respondent from Saclepie. All the participants show their grievance and lamented to the abandonment of their communities by the government. One woman said angry "if you wanted to call my name go ahead I will say what is in my mind". "Since the war our community has been abandoned in term of security. You only see security personnel when you travel in the capital city". Everybody is on their own", common saying in Liberia. "Government has completely forgotten about us they are corrupt" another respondent lamented. Interrupted by another woman, "in fact, why should we live in our own place and continue to live under such inhumane situation?" the woman rhetorically asked "are we not part of this country? Why should we be so secluded?" Many of the participants averred that they went to war for fourteen years due to these same things, and today, there are very prevalent in our society. Nearly all the participant talks about poverty, corruption and is the cause of insecurity. "Due care need to be taken; Nimba, or Liberia may likely slip into danger if we as a people failed to address the issue of insecurity and poverty in Liberia and Nimba in particular" said a focus group participant who works with a private security firm in Karnplaye. There is a justification in the response of the participants as stated in Ikejiaku (2009), formal President Ellen Sirleaf attributed corruption as one aspect she failed Liberia people during her regime.

Question 3 *How do gender, age, and other factors shape peoples' experiences of poverty and conflict in your communities?*

(**Answers**): Most of the participants in Kamplaye refer us to the 'Book people' (Literate people) to answer this question. Another person from Gompa said "poverty and conflicts have cut across every grouping in the community irrespective of gender and age. No one is exempt from this nightmare". The participants averred in some tone. In addition another two people stated that; the more your age, the more you are aware about issues about poverty in this community. Based, it is an age old problem that is affecting every spectrum of the society of Nimba, both males and females, young or old.

Question 4 *How can we heal the wounds or trauma created as a result of conflict, and build trustworthy resilience in the rural communities of Nimba?*

(**Answers**): Focus group participants believe in building trust amongst one another will help healing the wounds and trauma. But in the absent of resources they believed that it would be very difficult. "Our aims and intention have been fruitless. We need the support of local government officials as well as national government to get involved in healing process" said one prominent farmer in Gornpa community who join us during the focus group. He continued by saying that he has more than 10 ex-combatants working in his farm. He jokingly said, if our interview will be of help to him to get more farming equipment, he will be able to take more ex-soldier and rehabilitate them.

However, both government and the local people have the ability to bring about total healing and build the trustworthiness of everybody thus creating resilience in the rural communities. The war has created a huge impact and only needs the involvement of stakeholders to resolve cardinal issues that had a blockage on societal growth.

Question 5 *What do you think; the government can do with its pro- poor agenda of 2018 to gain the confidence of the Nimba and promote a sustained development, healing, reconciliation, justice and peace in Nimba County*

(**Answers):** I was so shocked when two participants in Gompa simultaneously said "what government, they are not ready yet. In fact the past government is far better." One participant in Tappitta said, "With this prop-poor agenda, justice, reconciliation and sustained development will bring about peace and healing". Not only that, another participant from Karnplaye agreed that 2018 Pro-poor agenda must first of all look at peace in justice and reconciliation. "We fought war without total justice, reconciliation and healing. In the absent of these foregoing the citizens realized, development cannot be sustained. People that perpetrated crimes very heinous during the war are still policy makers today" concluded by a focus group participants from Saclepie

As can be seen, without justice and total reconciliation, peace and development will be illusive in Nimba County. From the participants' responses, justice has been swept under the carpet. But with the nomenclature pro-poor, I think this agenda can be used to add value to the poor community of Nimba, by firstly, build their confidence that this government has come to develop. Then reconcile the communities' differences and heal the wound of trauma so that justice and peace can return to Nimba and Liberia as a whole.

Challenges

There were numerous obstacles encountered in an effort to collect data that answered the interview questionnaires. I encountered problems such as limitation of access to key stakeholders

at the local level especially travelling from one community to another, and lack of cooperation from potential respondents. Lack of research facilities, electricity constraints and unavailability of resource materials were principal factors that limit the research. Another challenge to this study has to do with basic schedules of respondents who were not available to the time of the interview.

Finally, time was the critical obstacle in making appointments to meet potential respondents who were knowledgeable about the locality and the issues of rural poverty, post-war infrastructure and security, marginalization and underdevelopment faced as well as peace-building and reconciliation. Most of the time, key individuals who could have contributed relevant information through interviews were busy doing other duties outside their various areas. This therefore, posed serious challenge for the successful completion of this research, and other countless constraints not mentioned.

Recommendations

From the review of related literature coupled with the key informant interview and the focus group discussion held with citizens at the rural communities in Nimba County. I observed that, lack of proper reconciliation between the ethic group (Gio, Noma and Krahn) and government is the nucleus of Nimba predicament. Nimba County could possibly have avoided the current obstacle of poverty insecurity and underdevelopment to a sustainable human development and peace if community member had reconciled their differences since the end of war for over a decade.

Therefore, the following are hereby recommended:

a. That to transition from war to sustainable peace and development, government should ensure that justice is prevailed.

b. That the Pro-poor Agenda of 2018 should be used as an opportunity to reconcile, unite, and build the necessary infrastructures that gravitates the people from abject poverty.

c. That since poverty and neglect is identified as some of the principal sources of conflicts, citizens in the rural part of Nimba County should be empowered to enhance good livelihood

d. That since insecurity is tantamount to rekindle conflicts in post war nation, ex-combatants looming over the various communities of Nimba County are provided employable skills as means of giving them access to employment opportunity

e. That, in order to gain confidence and resilience, rural communities should be empower through financial inclusion and connectivity to the cities through good road networks.

f. That there should be community palaver huts discussions related to sustained peace and development that is owned and controlled solely by local officials.

g. The uncertainties and complexities that pervade the post-conflict context require that change leaders maintain two-way communication with key stakeholders to ensure understanding of priorities, changing perceptions and difficulties of the various communities. This entails regularly consulting with key constituencies and listening to them to gain access to their insights and perspectives. It also means providing critical information on progress and interim difficulties, and challenging citizens to be part of creating solutions.

h. The preparation of local development plans (County Development Agendas) alongside the pro-poor agenda constitutes an important tool through which peace building can be

integrated into local poverty alleviation efforts. The pro-poor agenda itself being an exercise in peace-building.

i. In addition to understanding the voice of the communities' leaders, the leaders also need to understand the voice and advice of the international peace mediators.

Chapter five

CONCLUSION

Moving from fragility to community building and development in a post-war environment requires the collective will and resilience of the people. Most especially leaders. Leader that will give confidence to people to set new direction, align and motivate them to change things around**.** The distrust, ethnic divisions and the sense of hopelessness that often comes with the feeling of reliance on external sources for one's livelihood, all of which are amplified in post-conflict contexts, can be mitigated through systemic dialogue and communication strategies. Not only intended to coordinate information that will dispense credible messengers on government's activities and results, but also to secure citizens' views.

However, when community dwellers understood that their view are recognized by their leaders, they start to regain confidence. Dr. Amos Sawyer, a former interim President of Liberia and one of the country's leading political analysts, makes the argument this way: "… democracy (and development) has seldom flourished without evolving through processes of contestation (and cooperation) among a people themselves". Even though when imposed from outside, they must be sustained by empowered citizens to guarantee a sustained and stable peace and development. Liberia Government needs to establish governance (political, economic, social)

arrangements that build on the capabilities of local people and advance their prospects of

working together to build peace, social equality and attain development from the bottom up, so

as not rekindle their memory of war, and then rebuilding their resilience in the government.

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Appendix i:

Participant Informed Consent Form

Title of the Study: Rebuilding Resilience of Rural Community Dwellers in Liberia Post-   war: Case study of Nimba County in Liberia

Researcher Name: Richard D. Agbaje

Telephone: 404-940-5318.

My name is Richard Dayo Agbaje I am a student with the SIT Graduate Institute.

I would like to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting (for partial fulfillment of my MA in Peacebuilding & Conflict Transformation). Your participation is voluntary. Please read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and you will be given a copy of this form.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore conflict that built in social and structural struggle of people in the rural community of Liberia as a result of lack of development and the danger it poses to the fragile peace in Liberia.

Study Procedures

Your participation will consist of engaging in a short open-ended interview for 50-60 minute, exploring your role and experiences with the IRC. The interviews will be recorded if you permit me for the purpose of maintaining clarity. The audio recording will be deleted after transcribing and all other transcripts will be deleted within 6 weeks after themes and concepts are analyzed

 Nevertheless you can still participate in the interview, even if you don't wish to be audio/video recorded or photographed.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

Due to the state of poverty and injustice that alarming in the rural sector of Liberia, argument and counterargument may build up within the participants.

Otherwise, there are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study. There are no penalties should you choose not to participate; participation is voluntary. During the interview you have the right not to answer any questions or to discontinue participation at any time.

Potential Benefits to Participants and Society

The interview will provide an opportunity for the participants' voice to be heard. It is a great relief while Liberian people especially the rural dweller have been given room to express their view without subjection. And a chance for the participants to

increased understanding on how to manage conflict within them and their community thereby reduce violence in our society.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents will be maintained during data collection, and

all my data both written and audio recordings will be stored and secured in a password protected document on Google Drive and on my personal computer for the duration of my research project. After this time, all data except for the final paper will be deleted permanently and no data will be available online.

Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

"I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older."

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

Consent to Quote from Interview

I may wish to quote from the interview either in the presentations or articles resulting from this work. A pseudonym (fake name) will be used in order to protect your identity.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

_____ (initial) I agree to the researcher's use of quotations from my interview in presentations and publications.

_____ (initial) I do not agree to the researcher's use of quotations from my interview in presentations and publications.

Consent to Audio-Record Interview

I may wish to audio record the interview for the purpose of accuracy in data collection. Recordings will be stored under password protection.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

_____ (initial) I agree to be audio recorded during the interview.

_____ (initial) I do not agree to be audio recorded during the interview.

Consent for Future Use of Data

I may wish to use data collected in interviews for future academic analysis beyond this specific paper. As with this current paper, anonymity for all research participants will be maintained in future academic usage.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

_____ (initial) I agree to usage of my anonymized interview and/or survey in future academic work of the researcher.

_____ (initial) I do not agree to usage of my anonymized interview and/or survey in future academic work of the researcher.

Researcher's Contact Information

If you have any questions or want to get more information about this study, please contact me at richard.agbaje@mail.sit.edu or my advisor at john.ungerleider@sit.edu.

Rights of Research Participant – IRB Contact Information

In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by an SIT Study Abroad Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a research participant or the research in general and are unable to contact the researcher please contact the Institutional Review Board at:

School for International Training

Institutional Review Board

1 Kipling Road, PO Box 676

Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676 USA

irb@sit.edu

802-258-3132

Appendix ii:

<u>INTERVIEW GUIDE & INSTRUCTIONS</u>

Research question: What are the main causes of poverty effects and linkages to conflicts in the rural communities of Nimba County? How can the government transform relationships and build resilience among the community dwellers?

To provide insight to my research question, I will be asking series of simple open-ended questions. If any question is not too clear to you, it's your right to seek for clarity. The two of us will be able to further discuss the answer with follow up clarifying questions and explanations, before moving onto the next question.

<u>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</u>

i.   *In what ways are the people of Nimba County in Liberia more vulnerable to conflict-related violence?*

ii.   *Why do you think the issue of insecurity and poverty is escalating in Nimba County, and can you explain what kind of danger the situation poses to individual in that county?*

iii.   *How do gender, age, and other factors shape people's experiences of poverty and conflict in Nimba County?*

iv.   *How can we heal the wounds or trauma created as a result of conflict, and build trustworthy resilience in the rural communities of Nimba in Liberia?*

v.   *What do you think; the Government of Liberia can do with its pro-poor Agenda of 2018 to gain the confidence of Nimbalian and promote a ustained development, healing, reconciliation, justice and peace in Nimba County?*