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The European Commission and Liberia: Supporting DDDR

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Small Arms Survey

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NOTE

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SUMMARY

Civil war in Liberia, which raged for the greater part of 14 years, came to an apparent end on 18 August 2003, when the warring factions signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Accra. The European Union (EU), along with other donors, was solicited for financial support to Liberia's peace process. This was a fresh opportunity for EU–Liberian relations to be established as European Development Fund assistance had been suspended since 1990. Following the signing of the CPA, the European Commission (EC) reacted quickly and made funds immediately available to Liberia. On 25 August 2003, they announced a €50 million contribution for peace support operations, €16 million of which was earmarked for the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) programme.

This paper presents a brief description and analysis of Liberia's DDRR programme. This is then followed by an examination of the EC's funding to Liberia, with a focus particularly on the key considerations underlying the support to DDRR, and any lessons the EU might be able to extract from its engagement.

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND LIBERIA—SUPPORTING DDR

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INTRODUCTION

Civil war in Liberia, which raged for the greater part of 14 years, came to an apparent end on 18 August 2003, when the warring factions signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Accra. The CPA requested the deployment of a United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force to the country, and committed the signatories to a national process of disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR). In September 2003 the UN Security Council established the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), which was tasked, among other things, with disarming the ex-combatants and helping to keep the peace.¹ A National Commission for DDRR was responsible for coordinating DDRR activities.

The European Union (EU), along with other donors, was solicited for financial support to Liberia's peace process. This was a fresh opportunity for EU–Liberian relations to be established as European Development Fund (EDF) assistance had been suspended since 1990.² Following the signing of the CPA, the European Commission (EC) reacted quickly and made funds immediately available to Liberia. On 25 August 2003, they announced a €50 million contribution for peace support operations, €16 million of which was earmarked for the DDRR programme.³

This paper presents a brief description and analysis of Liberia's DDRR programme. This is then followed by an examination of the EC's funding to Liberia, with a focus particularly on the key considerations underlying the support to DDRR, and any lessons the EU might be able to extract from its engagement.

DDRR IN LIBERIA

Since 1990, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR)⁴ programmes for former combatants have been integral elements in more than 15 peacekeeping operations worldwide.⁵ The popularity of these programmes is not so much an indication of their success, necessarily, but of the pressing need to support peace processes by addressing former fighters and their needs.⁶ DDR programmes are typically political in origin—usually born out of peace accords—but can be effective peace-building measures in practice if implemented correctly. Too often though, effective implementation is undermined by a lack of funds—particularly for the final phase of reintegration. As described in the *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* of 2000, better known as the Brahimi Report:

... the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants—key to immediate post-conflict stability and reduced likelihood of conflict recurrence—is an area in which peace-building makes a direct contribution to public security and law and order. But the basic objective of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is not met unless all

three elements of the programme are implemented. Demobilized fighters (who almost never fully disarm) will tend to return to a life of violence if they find no legitimate livelihood, that is, if they are not 'reintegrated' into the local economy. The reintegration element of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is voluntarily funded, however, and that funding has sometimes lagged behind requirements.⁷

It is within this context that Liberia's DDRR programme was to be designed. Donor nations responded to requests from the UN to help finance the programme, and it was then left to a Joint Implementation Unit (JIU)—comprising UNMIL, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the National Commission for DDRR and other partners—to ensure that DDRR plans were translated into appropriate action.⁸

DDRR PROCESS AT A GLANCE

With the signing of the CPA and President Charles Taylor's departure in August 2003, Liberia's combatants agreed to lay down their arms. As outlined in the CPA, the DDRR process was to target the three main warring parties, namely, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and Taylor's former Government of Liberia forces and paramilitary groups.⁹

DDRR was officially launched on 7 December 2003, amid concern among those working on the ground that the timing was premature.¹⁰ UN and non-governmental organization (NGO) officials alike feared that the initial site was not adequately constructed, service providers were unprepared, security was insufficient and that the ex-combatants were not thoroughly sensitized to the process. It soon became apparent that these fears were well founded when ex-combatants, frustrated and confused by the process, began rioting and subsequently took over the disarmament site.¹¹ The DDRR process was suspended indefinitely several weeks later amid continuing security concerns.

In April 2004, the DDRR programme was re-launched following a nationwide information campaign designed to sensitize the ex-combatants to the process, and improved preparations for the disarmament and demobilization sites. The exact number of ex-combatants seeking to disarm remained unknown, however, as the armed factions had failed to submit comprehensive lists of their fighters to UNMIL. The original estimate used was 38,000 ex-combatants.¹²

After disarming, the ex-combatants were housed and fed at a demobilization cantonment site for a total of five days where they went through a medical screening process, were issued an ID card, identified their reintegration preference, participated in orientation sessions and received a package of non-food items.¹³ All ex-combatants who participated in the DDRR process received a US\$ 300 transitional safety net allowance (TSA) designed to provide them with a means of surviving during the period prior to the reintegration phase, and to decrease their need to depend on former commanders for support.¹⁴

The second attempt at the disarmament and demobilization process took place at 10 separate sites around the country and continued with relatively few technical problems until it came to a close 31 October 2004.¹⁵

DDRR ASSESSMENT AND CURRENT SITUATION

There are two critical observations that must be made with regard to the outcome of the disarmament and demobilization phase of the DDRR programme, both of which have a vital bearing on the overall evaluation of the process. First, the total number of participants in the DDRR programme was 102,193—more than two and a half times the original estimate of 38,000. This immense disparity was due to the fact that UNMIL was unable to effectively control who entered the DDRR programme, and thus many non-combatants were processed while some legitimate fighters were excluded. Second, only 27,804 weapons were collected and it is widely assumed that many more—perhaps another 10–15,000—were never turned in and either remain hidden in Liberia or have been taken to Guinea or Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁶

The fact that there are still many weapons that remain uncollected is an obvious source of concern due to the threat they pose to the stability of Liberia and the subregion as a whole. This, however, is not overly surprising, as it was not expected that all weapons would be turned in during the DDRR programme.

Of greater worry, and of more immediate importance, is the massive caseload of ex-combatants who disarmed and demobilized but who are now waiting for their reintegration assistance. This comes in the form of paid education or vocational training, and was promised to all those who entered the DDRR programme. The original budget for DDRR was based on 38,000 ex-combatants, and so there are vastly inadequate funds to contend with the larger caseload. Money that had been earmarked for reintegration was used to cover the costs of disarmament and demobilization (DD), leaving an imposing shortfall. This is compounded by the fact that insufficient funds were made available for DDRR from assessed contributions to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) budget. Consequently, the DDRR trust fund, administered by UNDP, is paying for all civilian-related demobilization and reintegration activities, as well as the establishment and operation of the JIU. As of February 2005, approximately US\$ 29.4 million of US\$ 31.8 million pledged in contributions to the trust fund had been received from donors (see Table 2). Nonetheless, another US\$ 33.2 million is required to pay for the reintegration costs of 42,800 ex-combatants who are not covered by current pledges.

There is a general feeling of dismay among donors over the massive caseload of ex-combatants and, overall, a certain degree of 'DDRR fatigue'. It is fair to say that some donors would rather see money spent on community development and other areas that would be beneficial to non-combatants, rather than pumping more money into a DDRR programme that has lost much of its credibility. Nonetheless, UNDP expects more funding to be forthcoming from such countries as Sweden, Denmark, Ireland and the United States.¹⁷ The EC, as discussed below, has been hesitant to provide more funding to the DDRR programme to date, but may make a further contribution as well.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND LIBERIA

NEW SUPPORT FOR LIBERIA

The EC was swift to react following Taylor's departure and the signing of the CPA, voting on 25 August 2003 to make €50 million available for Liberia's peace process.

Of the €50 million made available by the EC, €10 million was reportedly used to help support the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) peacekeeping force in Liberia (ECOMIL), which was deployed prior to the establishment of UNMIL, and to help finance the ECOWAS office in Monrovia.¹⁸

The remaining €40 million was allocated for peace support operations, which together with the €10 million noted above, form the EC's Post-conflict Rehabilitation and Capacity Building Programme (PCRCBP). The programme is designed to support the peace initiatives outlined in the CPA. Specifically:

- To encourage and accelerate the process of social and economic rehabilitation of the affected populations (particularly at the community level) and to contribute to the physical rehabilitation of basic infrastructure and services (public and other), including the availability of health services, medicines, education and water.
- To facilitate and to support the process of demobilization and economic and social reinsertion of fighters.
- To support the re-establishment and functioning of key public Ministries and key other Institutions and civil organizations involved in the peace and reconstruction process.¹⁹

The programme is to be implemented through activities targeting three components:

1. Institutional support;
2. Activities in support of DDR via the DDRR programme; and a
3. Programme of socio-economic development targeting all parts of the population affected by the crisis.²⁰

The cost estimate and financing plan is as follows:

Table 1: Post-conflict rehabilitation and capacity-building programme cost breakdown²¹

Activity	EURO
1. Institutional support (including Technical assistance, equipment and some infrastructure rehabilitation)	9,000,000
2. Support to DDR	16,000,000
3. Community based Rehabilitation	8,000,000
4. Long term Technical Assistance	2,500,000
5. Short term Technical Assistance	2,000,000
6. Audit	250,000
7. Monitoring and Evaluation	400,000
8. Contingencies	1,850,000
TOTAL BUDGET	40,000,000

SUPPORTING DDRR

The EC committed €16 million for the DDRR programme, with the idea that this would be handled by the UNDP trust fund. Two instalments of €4.15 million and €5 million were paid to

the trust fund—most of which was used to help cover demobilization expenses. A further €3.37 million was used to fund two contracts for reintegration projects. These were being implemented by two local organizations: Liberian Opportunities Industrialization Center (LOIC) and Community Empowerment and Skills Development (CESD). By established practice, UNDP also charged an extra 7% on top of this (€235,000) to monitor the two projects. As of 1 March 2005, €3.245 million was left of the original €16 million, and remained in the EC's hands. The Commission has been under pressure from the UN and other donors to contribute this to the UNDP trust fund, but has been resisting.²² A breakdown of donor contributions to the UNDP trust fund, including the two instalments from the EC, is below:

Table 2: Donor pledges and contributions to the UNDP Trust Fund for DRR (February 2005)²³

Donor	Amount Pledged (US\$)	Amount Contributed (US\$)
EC	11,218,283.84 (€4.15 million + €5 million)	11,218,283.84 (€4.15 million + €5 million)
UK	5,429,983.43	5,429,983.43
Denmark	3,300,000.00	2,211,554.02
Sweden	3,222,427.42	1,874,718.42
UNDP	3,100,000.00	3,100,000.00
USA	2,900,000.00	2,900,000.00
Norway	1,213,795.62	1,213,795.62
Switzerland	797,063.49	797,063.49
Ireland	601,684.72	601,684.72
Iceland	13,933.40	13,933.40
TOTAL	31,797,171.92	29,361,016.94

According to the EC official in Liberia in charge of the post-conflict rehabilitation and reintegration (RR) programme, the EC was planning on using the remaining €3.245 million to fund bilateral projects with international non-governmental organizations, instead of investing it into the UNDP trust fund. These projects would not target ex-combatants specifically, but focus as well on the reintegration of non-combatants (e.g. internally displaced persons—IDPs—and refugees). The justification presented was two-fold: first, it is felt that there was already sufficient focus on ex-combatants, while many other civilians remain in need of assistance; and second, the EC is unhappy with the lack of reporting they were receiving from UNDP with regards to how their money was being spent, particularly with regards to the two projects they already funded. In general, they felt the projects were unimpressive, and that local organizations should not have been used because the risk of corruption is too high.²⁴

As of March 2005, the EC Desk Officer for Liberia in Brussels reported that not only was the EC seriously considering handing the remaining €3.245 million over to UNDP, but was also possibly going to contribute a further €12 million (pulled from non-programmable funds allocated for Liberia's National Indicative Programme, 2004–2007) for the DRR programme.²⁵ This would be welcome news for the UNDP as it would significantly help deal with the outstanding caseload of ex-combatants waiting for reintegration assistance. It is safe to say, nevertheless, that the EC's concerns over how those funds might be spent would remain.

PROGRAMME DESIGN FOR EC FUNDING

Funding from the EC to Liberia in 2003 was allocated “in a case of special urgency” due to the pressing needs of the post-conflict environment. Consequently, the process of programme design and funding differed from standard EC procedures. Typically, the EC’s funding would be clearly based on a Country Strategy Paper that assessed the political, economic and social situation of the recipient country, frames a response strategy and then roughly delineated what the national indicative programme will entail. In Liberia, where civil war had disrupted many of the EC’s plans for financial aid, no such Country Strategy Paper existed when the CPA was signed in August 2003. Consequently, donors were left to quickly compose an ad hoc programme and funding strategy to help support Liberia’s fledgling peace process.

According to the Chargé d’Affaires of the EC office in Liberia, donors began consulting one another in the summer of 2003 when it appeared as though a peace accord would be signed in Liberia. They discussed, in conjunction with UN officials, what the country’s funding needs would be, and what potential contributions might be forthcoming. These discussions continued once the CPA was signed, and then the Chargé d’Affaires drafted the PCRCBP and came up with the figure of €50 million for support to Liberia.²⁶

There was significant pressure put on donors by UN officials to allocate funding for the DDDR programme and to contribute to the UNDP trust fund. It was the Chargé d’Affaires who decided that €16 million of the EC funds would be slated for DDDR, and that this would be donated to the UNDP trust fund as requested.

THINKING BEYOND LIBERIA?

Next door to Liberia, in Sierra Leone, the UN, the Government of Sierra Leone and other partners implemented a DDR programme similar to that which is taking place in Liberia. Officially completed in March 2004, the programme succeeded in disarming and demobilizing over 72,000 ex-combatants, and then reintegrating 54,000 of them into society.²⁷ The DDR programme in Sierra Leone was funded largely by a multi-donor trust fund administered by the World Bank, to which the EC contributed €10 million in 2001.²⁸

While far from perfect, the programme remains an important source of potential lessons to be applied to future DDR operations, for both planners and funders alike. For example, Sierra Leone’s DDR programme was criticized for being gender-blind and failing to consider the roles women and girls played in the fighting forces, even if they were not actual combatants.²⁹ Other criticisms are that the demobilization process was disorganized, psychological counselling resources were largely unavailable, and reintegration programmes administered by different organizations were overlapping and uncoordinated.³⁰ There were noteworthy achievements as well, however. For example, the Sierra Leone programme was praised for reintegrating ex-combatants in their home communities rather than at centralized locations, for being well coordinated between the UN and the National Commission for DDR on both a political and technical level, and for making substantive efforts to inform and sensitize the public to the DDR process through the use of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) radio.³¹

The Chargé d’Affaires in Liberia claimed to have taken the Sierra Leone experience into account when designing the EC’s funding programme for Liberia. It is not clear, though, what specific lessons may have been considered or whether these were brought up in consultation with other donors and UN officials during the planning phase of Liberia’s DDDR programme. The only

reference in the PCRCBP document made to lessons learned with regards to DDR appears under the heading “programme analysis”. It appears, though, more as a warning to others—perhaps those actually designing and implementing the DDR programmes—rather than something taken into consideration by the EC when designing the funding strategy for Liberia’s DDDR:

It is clear from the DDR programmes in other countries (Sierra Leone being a particularly pertinent example) that success can only be obtained if there is a will to disarm and if a sufficiently strong peace keeping force exists to forcibly disarm if necessary. Further experience shows that national initiatives cannot be solved by purely a regional programme (this has been shown in the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme for the Great Lakes region) for DDR and RRP [Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programme] but that equally regional considerations must be incorporated into the overall design. Any peace agreement has to be accompanied by an overall recovery plan which is owned by the government whose capacity to undertake good governance should be addressed in parallel by institutional support.³²

It remains unclear, then, to what extent previous experience the EC may have had in funding DDR—particularly in Sierra Leone—was brought to bear on Liberia. It is equally unclear as to what regional considerations, if any, were incorporated into the EC’s funding strategy.³³ It would seem, however, that as the funding was provided on an emergency, ad hoc basis, that the EC was acting mostly in response to time constraints, pressure from the UN and consultations with other donors, rather than in response to previous EC funding initiatives elsewhere or a broader, regional plan. In general, it appears that the PCRCBP was largely designed to specifically target the immediate funding requirements of Liberia following the signing of the CPA, without consideration given to potentially applicable lessons from other programmes.

LEARNING FROM THE LIBERIAN EXPERIENCE

The EC has made a considerable financial investment in Liberia and its DDDR programme. It was the largest donor to the UNDP trust fund, and its funding has significantly contributed to Liberia’s peace-building process. While the size and scope of the EC’s funding package is of tremendous worth, of equal value are the lessons that can be extracted from its development and implementation. What follows, then, is an examination of what lessons the EU should take away from its engagement in Liberia.

DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

The most noteworthy, and single most positive aspect of the EC’s funding programme to Liberia was the speed in which the financial support was made available. This is mentioned up front, as its importance supersedes everything else. Indeed, the rapidity of disbursement was extremely critical, regardless of what the funding package was to entail, or what rationale it was based on. As discussed above, the EC support was allocated “in a case of special urgency”, and thus avoided much of the delay which might have taken place otherwise. According to the Chargé d’Affaires in Liberia, the first €10 million was disbursed in November 2003 for ECOWAS, and the remaining €40 million for the PCRCBP arrived before the end of December.³⁴ This rapid disbursement of funds allowed for the provision of support to peacekeepers on the ground, and for the initial launching of the DDDR programme—two key elements integral to keeping Liberia’s peace process on track. The significance of this fact is something the EC surely recognizes, and is a successful measure that should be replicated in other post-conflict scenarios when required.

FUNDING AND PROGRAMME DECISIONS

In the design stage of the EC's assistance programme for Liberia, it appears that there needed to be greater clarity with regards to what the funding strategy would be. How were the funds to be allocated and why? Yes, it was decided that €16 million would be earmarked for the DDRR programme, but any thought as to how this money would be used appeared to end there—the justification likely being that the funds, and programme planning responsibilities, were now in the hands of the UN.

This observation is applicable not only to the EC, but to all donors. As mentioned previously, consultations between donors did take place prior to and following the signing of the CPA in Accra, yet the focus appears largely to have been on who was contributing how much and for what. It is unlikely that details of the DDRR programme, for example, were discussed in depth, or at all. This is clear, because it is only after the DDRR programme was well under way that the donors began to ask serious questions, voice concerns and identify problems—something they should have been doing from the onset at the donor table, and in conjunction with UN officials.

For example, one donor official complained in February 2005 about the reintegration phase of the DDRR programme, claiming there appeared to be no plan of delivery whatsoever for the RR—that it was “totally reactive”.³⁵ Whether warranted or not, such criticism begs the question whether or not this particular donor ever made an effort to engage in the DDRR programming phase and contribute to the formulation of an RR plan. At the very least, it can be argued that he should have been aware of the absence of an RR plan—if that is indeed the case—long before the RR phase had ever begun, instead of months after the fact.

In general, there are many questions that the EC and other donors should have asked when planning their funding programmes, particularly with regards to DDRR. Specific information regarding how many of these had been tabled and discussed is unavailable, but the assumption is that there were not many.

Some of these questions are:

- Should non-combatants such as women and children associated with fighting forces be eligible to enter the programme?
- What should be the entry criteria for the programme?
- Should child combatants and children associated with fighting forces receive a TSA, as do the adults?
- Should child combatants and children associated with fighting forces receive a monetary-based reintegration benefit? (e.g. Should they be paid to go to school?)
- What services should be provided at the demobilization cantonment sites?
- What special measures are being taken to address the needs of women and children associated with fighting forces?
- What will the reintegration phase consist of, and how long will it last?
- Will local or international organizations be used to implement reintegration programmes?

Another question that needed to be asked, worth looking at in depth, is whether the donors are prepared to fund a targeted assistance programme. In other words, are they content to allocate funding specifically to support ex-combatants—not simply for disarmament and demobilization, but for reintegration as well? It is debateable whether non-targeted assistance (e.g.

community development and reconstruction) is as effective as targeted assistance (for example, vocational training) in meeting the reintegration needs of ex-combatants. However, the former alternative also benefits non-combatants, including IDPs, refugees and other victims of war. Furthermore, in Liberia specifically, there is concern over the abysmal reintegration capacity of the country, prompting the question, What are ex-combatants actually being reintegrated *into*?. This would argue for more funding to be spent on development and capacity building, rather than having it funnelled into a targeted DDDR programme. What is critical is that donors commit to one strategy or the other. If they agree to fund a targeted assistance programme for the reintegration of ex-combatants, they must see this through until the end, and avoid diverting funds to non-targeted programmes prematurely, once DDDR fatigue sets in.

In the specific case of Liberia, where the final caseload of ex-combatants far exceeded original estimates, donors have been put in a difficult situation. They are being pressured to inject more money into the trust fund to cover the reintegration expenses of ex-combatants, while at the same time they want to focus on supporting the civilian population through community development initiatives. This is particularly the case for the EC. While nobody is likely to argue against the fact that IDPs, refugees and other civilians are just as deserving of assistance, if not more so, than ex-combatants, to provide this at the expense of financing a DDDR programme until its completion risks undermining the peace process and being counter-productive in the long run. The EC, and other donors, must resist shifting their focus from DDDR until the process is complete.

By asking detailed questions in the planning stage, acquiring clear answers and elucidating a comprehensive and justifiable funding strategy, donors will then be in a strong position from which to monitor and evaluate a DDDR programme as it unfolds. It must be noted, however, in fairness to the EC and other donors, that it is largely the responsibility of those who were formulating the DDDR programme to do so with the appropriate funders at the table. This would have allowed donors to express their concerns, provide input and better understand how their money to be spent. It is also true that when donors held their original consultations, it is unlikely that many of the programme specifics for DDDR had even been formulated.

THE PAST AND THE BIGGER PICTURE

As mentioned earlier, it is not evident to what extent previous experience the EC may have had in DDR was taken into account when designing Liberia's funding strategy. Likewise, it is questionable as to whether or not the plan for Liberia was created with reference to any sort of regional context. The assumption, however, is that neither previous experience nor broader regional considerations had much influence over the funding decisions for Liberia. The ad hoc origin of the financial support is largely understandable given the emergency basis on which it was donated. Yet this remains a systematic shortcoming that needs to be identified and addressed in order to strengthen future EC funding initiatives.

The obvious and most relevant source of information pertinent to DDDR in Liberia is Sierra Leone. Just as the UN was in a position to benefit from their experience in this country when planning for DDDR in Liberia, so too was the EC. Some of the most evident lessons from Sierra Leone regarding programme specifics, both positive and negative, were highlighted earlier, but there are likely others more specific to EC involvement. For example, in Sierra Leone, the EC donated money to the World Bank trust fund for DDR, but they also contributed to the reintegration of ex-combatants by establishing a Sierra Leone Rehabilitation and Resettlement Programme (SLRRP). This programme allowed the EC to directly fund its own RR activities outside

of the official DDR programme, and this provided it the freedom to make assistance available to both ex-combatants and civilians alike. This is but one example of an initiative from Sierra Leone that might be worth replicating next door. In general, the EC should ideally have been able to assess their own involvement in Sierra Leone's DDR, and take this knowledge into account when participating in the planning of Liberia's programme and the EC funding package.

Overall, it appears that the EC needs to have a broader, more regional focus driving its post-conflict support agenda. This is certainly the case concerning initiatives related to small arms—not only in order to distil lessons from EC involvement in other nations, but also to understand how small arms have a regional interplay, and how this might impact programme decisions. This would enable the EC's work in neighbouring countries to become mutually supportive, and mesh into a comprehensive and logical regional strategy. This is particularly critical in West Africa. Liberia has been the epicentre of much of this subregion's conflict over the last two decades, and as such, it is essential that there be a regional focus when planning and implementing the country's peace-building initiatives. To date, the EC does not seem to have this broader picture in mind when developing funding initiatives and implementing aid strategies.

THE BRUSSELS CONNECTION

Much of the EC's inability to address some of the issues highlighted above—particularly concerning the identification and application of lessons learned, and the regional outlook—can be traced back to the functioning of the EU headquarters in Brussels. Under the current arrangement, there is no formalized structure in place to allow for valuable information concerning different countries to be exchanged among EU country officers. It is largely up to the officers themselves to take the initiative to track down pertinent information from EU involvement in other countries, and then to take it into consideration accordingly. And while there are regional coordinators responsible for overseeing operations in many different countries at a time, their role is not necessarily to facilitate collaboration and communication among the country programmes. Nor is it to adopt a regional strategy, even if the issue, such as small arms, has an important regional dynamic.³⁶

The problems in Brussels go beyond structure, however, and extend also to the ability of staff to effectively do their jobs. In truth, the two problems are intertwined as the former very much impacts the latter. Country officers change positions quite frequently—so much so that they hardly have sufficient time to immerse themselves in the issues related to their country in question, let alone begin to research and digest any relevant EU involvement elsewhere.³⁷ Similarly, regional coordinators are so overwhelmed with the task of monitoring numerous individual country operations that they are not in a position to focus time on issues that cross-cut their region, or to develop “big picture” strategies. This inefficiency, of course, has a trickle-down effect on staff in the field. They are at risk of receiving minimal support from headquarters, and being left, much like the country officers in Brussels, to fend for themselves when it comes to identifying lessons learned from previous EC initiatives or to developing regional strategies.

All of these point to the need of having Brussels staffed with knowledgeable and diligent officials who can devote their time to ensuring that funds are being spent the most effectively as possible, and within a broader, regional framework as required. The small arms issue would most definitely benefit from this sort of specific attention. The EC involvement in Liberia's DDDR programme has served to exemplify how, to date, country-specific programmes are largely being drawn up in a void.

On a final note related to Brussels, one EU official also commented that, in general, staff members find it difficult to stay abreast of the numerous aid initiatives, inter-related programmes, overlapping strategies and funding alternatives that the EU supports. With regards to funding, for example, she pointed out that it would be tremendously helpful to have a “funding flow chart” that highlights the various funding options for programmes, making it clear what all the alternatives are. Something similar for specific issues, such as small arms or DDRR, which briefly illustrates EU involvement and potential courses for action, might be of tremendous value.³⁸

IMPROVING USE OF FUNDS

While there is much the EC can do to improve how funding strategies for initiatives like DDRR in Liberia are developed, it remains more difficult to improve how the funds are actually spent on the ground. This is particularly the case once the funds are out of the EC’s hands, and—in Liberia’s case—under the control of the United Nations.

In Liberia, as mentioned, the EC has been unimpressed with how the UN has been using the funds contributed to the UNDP trust fund. Specifically of concern is the lack of comprehensive reporting regarding expenditures, and the low quality of the two reintegration programmes the EC financed. This of course is on top of the fact that—as other donors—the EC is disenchanted with how the DDRR programme has been run and the results that are being produced.

To improve the use of funds, the EC is left with three options: better collaboration, greater control, and improved reporting. The first option, as detailed above, is to collaborate more fully with the UN and other donors or relevant parties during the design phase of the DDRR programme. This would, ideally, create a more solid and satisfying programme, and lead to fewer nasty surprises for the EC as it unfolds.

The second option is to acquire greater control of the funds. The easiest way of doing this, of course, is to not actually hand them over to the UN in the first place. Indeed, this is what is currently being considered by the EC official in charge of the post-conflict RR programme, who would rather spend the remaining €3.245 million to fund bilateral reintegration projects with international NGOs, instead of investing it into the UNDP trust fund. The main obvious drawback of this is that the EC is then essentially turning its back on the established DDRR programme and going its own way, thereby contributing to the DDRR funding shortfall. There are also other challenges linked to operating independent RR programmes, such as ensuring that the expectations of ex-combatants will be adequately met by the projects, and that there will be sufficient coordination among all RR projects, UN and other, to ensure there is a standardization of benefits (e.g. amount of money, food, materials received).

The third option is to work on demanding improved reporting from the UN on how the money is being spent, so that funding adjustments can be made throughout the DDRR process as required. In Liberia, reporting requirements were built into the contract between the EC and UNDP, but these were apparently not being properly adhered to by the UN agency. The EC was not the only donor frustrated by this lack of feedback. This problem extends far beyond the UN in Liberia, however, and according to one EU official in Brussels, it will hopefully be taken up at a high level between the EU and UN headquarters.³⁹ Nonetheless, on the ground in countries like Liberia, a greater effort, and perhaps better arrangements, must be made to improve reporting from the UN. One method, for example, may be to tie some of the funding to specific

programming areas so that there is better clarity regarding how it is spent, instead of blindly adding it to a pot of money for DDDR. While those holding the purse strings of the UNDP trust fund might object to the loss of control, it would force them to be more accountable and transparent in their spending.

These options are not mutually exclusive, and in fact, all three should be strategies that are pursued in tandem. The EC should, simultaneously, be involved in the design phase of DDDR, get regular and accurate feedback on expenditures from the UN, and also put money aside to fund specific bilateral projects that support the RR organized by the UN, if they are so inclined.

COMMITTING LONG-TERM

By contributing funds to the Liberian DDDR process, the EC is acknowledging the devastating impact that small arms are having on the country, and recognizing the need for this problem to be addressed. Given this fact, there are two measures the EC should take to ensure that it is addressed successfully and comprehensively.

First, regardless of who controls the funds that are donated, or how effectively they are being spent, the EC must commit to financially supporting the DDDR programme until it is completed. This commitment must be made, knowing that the results of such a programme will not be ideal. The EC must accept the fact that the outcome of post-conflict and peace-building programmes, such as DDDR, are always uncertain, yet full funding of these initiatives is required nonetheless. Funding “half way” will only guarantee their failure. When surprises arise, such as the massively increased caseload of ex-combatants in Liberia, there also needs to be a flexibility and willingness within the EC to react accordingly. Failure to do so risks undermining DDDR initiatives completely.

A second measure that the EC should take to combat the small arms problem is to focus beyond DDDR and incorporate small arms projects into future programming. In essence, making a longer-term commitment to addressing the issue rather than limiting efforts to an emergency basis. Indeed, if the importance of funding disarmament initiatives is recognized in an emergency situation and can be done ad hoc, it seems justifiable to expect that related initiatives should be mainstreamed into regular programming. For example, financial support could be earmarked for community arms collection programmes, public weapons destruction ceremonies or other small arms reduction schemes, all of which are crucial to preventing the likelihood of future conflict. To date, it appears that the EC has no intention of making any such longer-term commitment in Liberia along these lines. Though €16 million was already allocated for DDDR, in the forthcoming €68 million identified under the National Indicative Programme for Liberia in 2004–2007, none is set aside for any sort of disarmament initiative: €44 million is earmarked for community development, education and other focal sectors, and the remaining €24 million will be used for “unforeseen needs such as emergency assistance where support cannot be financed from the Community budget, contributions to internationally agreed debt relief initiatives and support to mitigate adverse affects of instability in export earnings”.⁴⁰

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The EC financial support provided to Liberia, particularly with regards to DDDR, has been invaluable. Clearly, as the largest donor to the UNDP trust fund, the DDDR programme would have been hard pressed to operate without this financial backing. Just as valuable, however, are

the lessons the EU can extract from its engagement in Liberia. A summary of the lessons and recommendations discussed in detail above are as follows:

RAPID DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

- The most positive and important aspect of the EU's funding to Liberia for DDDR remains the rapidity in which it was made available to support the country's fledgling peace process. This swift disbursement of funds was of critical importance for Liberia, and is a practice, which should be replicated in other special cases of urgency where countries are emerging from conflict.

TAKING A BROADER APPROACH AND BUILDING ON LESSONS LEARNED

- The EU's funding strategy for Liberia was largely drawn up in a void, and while its ad hoc origin is understandable given the emergency basis on which the funding was donated, the incorporation of lessons learned from other EU involvement is desirable. Previous experience in other countries must be drawn upon and broader regional considerations taken into account when designing and funding DDR programmes.
- The current structure of EU headquarters must be revised in order to improve the ability of country officers and regional coordinators to effectively distil lessons learned, coordinate initiatives, and plan programme initiatives within a regional framework. Comprehensive flow charts for DDR funding and small arms initiatives would be of value.

IMPROVING THE USE OF FUNDS

- In Liberia, the EU has been unsatisfied with how some of their funds were used for the DDDR programme. It is clear that in Liberia, and other situations alike, the use of funds could have been and can be improved through the implementation of a series of measures:
 1. There needs to be **greater involvement in funding and programme decisions**, through extensive collaboration with donors and the UN during the design stage of DDDR. Specific questions regarding programme details (e.g. entry criteria, incentives) need to be asked in an effort to both clarify and justify the proposed use of funds.
 2. **Greater control over funds** can be acquired by financing bilateral projects outside the DDDR framework, thus reducing the need to rely on the UN to implement all aspects of a DDDR programme.
 3. **Improved reporting on fund expenditures** from the UN must be sought in an effort to improve programme implementation and transparency. This must take place both at the ground level and between the EU and UN headquarters.

COMMITTING LONG-TERM

- A commitment must be made to fund DDDR programmes until they are fully complete, despite the fact that there will likely be unexpected outcomes along the way. Funding "half-way" risks undermining DDDR initiatives completely.
- Reintegration support to ex-combatants—particularly WAFF, CAFF and other vulnerable groups—must remain a priority for donors beyond and outside the parameters of a formalized DDR programme. These individuals—many of whom will remain marginalized from society despite benefiting from a DDR programme—remain at great risk of missing out

on employment and educational opportunities, and subsequently engaging in criminal activities, fomenting discontent, and undermining post-conflict peace-building efforts. Sustained donor support, beyond that provided by a short-term reintegration initiative, is required to assist ex-combatants in affecting substantive and endurable lifestyle changes.

- A longer-term commitment must be made, beyond DDRR, to address the issue of small arms by incorporating arms reductions projects into future programming plans. The EU must set funds aside for disarmament and arms control initiatives, which can take place in a country's peace-building phase, and not restrict them to programming on an emergency basis.

With the acknowledgement, incorporation and implementation of these lessons and recommendations into future funding practices, it is reasonable to assume that the efficacy and comprehensiveness of EU funded DDR and small arms control efforts will be greatly enhanced.

Notes

¹ Security Council, UN document S/RES/1509, 19 September 2003.

² In 1990 the EC suspended EDF assistance to Liberia due to concerns over the lack of international human rights, rule of law, democracy and good governance. The powers of the National Authorizing Officer were handed back to the Chief Authorizing Officer in Brussels in 1994, though an EC office remained operational in Monrovia. The EU opened consultations with Liberia in July 2001, in accordance with Articles 96 and 97 of the Cotonou Agreement, and in 2002 the government made a number of commitments designed to address the EU's concerns (see European Commission, *Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme, 2004–2007, Liberia*, 2004, para. 86). This proved to be a largely wasted effort, however, as conflict intensified in 2002 and 2003, culminating with former President Charles Taylor's departure from Liberia on 11 August 2003.

³ European Commission, *Financing Conditions between The European Commission and The People of Liberia: Post-conflict Rehabilitation and Capacity Building Programme*, Financing conditions no. 9063/LBR, 2003, annex II, pp. 1, 6.

⁴ The terms DDR and DDRR refer to the same basic process involving the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants and can be used interchangeably. While in Liberia the programme is labelled a DDRR programme, the generic term used is DDR.

⁵ The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, known as the Brahimi Report, was written in 2000 and refers to 15 peacekeeping operations that featured DDR in the 10 years leading up to its publication. Since then, DDR programmes have been, or will be, featured in peacekeeping operations in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Liberia and Sudan. General Assembly/Security Council, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, UN document A/55/305–S/2000/809, 21 August 2000, para. 43.

⁶ For an overview of DDR and weapons collection programmes, see Small Arms Survey, *Small Arms Survey 2005: Weapons at War*, Graduate Institute of International Studies, 2005.

⁷ General Assembly/Security Council, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, UN document A/55/305–S/2000/809, 21 August 2000, para. 42.

⁸ The National Commission for DDRR is comprised of representatives from the three armed factions, the UN, ECOWAS, the National Transitional Government of Liberia, the European Commission, and the United States.

⁹ Civil war broke out in December 1989 when Charles Taylor led his rebel group, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), in an invasion of north-eastern Liberia—the first step of a plan to topple President Samuel Doe. In 1997, years after Doe had been killed and the country plunged into chaos, Taylor was finally elected President and a brief period of calm came to Liberia. This was shattered in 2000 when a new rebel group—Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)—launched their armed campaign to remove Taylor from power. In March 2003, MODEL

- (Movement for Democracy in Liberia) emerged as a second rebel group bent on regime change. They were closely linked to LURD, but based in Côte d'Ivoire.
- ¹⁰ Many assumed that the decision to start disarmament was driven by pressure on UNMIL to demonstrate operational readiness to donors, particularly since an International Conference for the Reconstruction of Liberia was to be held in New York, 5–6 February 2004. Senior UNMIL officials also claimed, though, that Chairman Gyude Bryant of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) pushed for disarmament in response to violent threats from combatants who were impatient to hand in their weapons in exchange for cash (Interview with UNMIL officials, Monrovia, 22 September and 24 November 2004).
- ¹¹ On the opening day of disarmament, UNMIL officials expected to process 250 ex-combatants, but well over 1,000 showed up—overwhelming both UN staff and NGO service providers. A slow start meant that by nightfall, 500 people were still lining up outside the camp, weapons in hand. A lack of food and water, coupled with widespread confusion led to mounting frustration. Many fighters mistakenly assumed that when they turned in their arms they would instantly receive their cash payment of US\$ 150. As dissatisfaction boiled over, the ex-combatants began brandishing their weapons and subsequently took over the camp. Shots were fired and many disgruntled fighters returned to Monrovia, riding atop vehicles and waving their guns. Angry ex-combatants set up roadblocks and a general period of rioting ensued in the capital and surrounding areas for the following two days, resulting in the deaths of nine citizens.
- ¹² Interview with UNMIL DDRR official, Monrovia, 21 September 2004.
- ¹³ The orientation sessions dealt with topics such as career counselling, health awareness, civic education, peace-building and reconciliation. Women were also provided with reproductive health and sexually based gender violence counselling. The non-food item kit included a mat to sleep on, a bucket for washing and some basic clothing and toiletry items.
- ¹⁴ Prior to being discharged from the cantonment sites, ex-combatants received a one-month food ration and were paid US\$ 150, the first instalment of their TSA. Child combatants also received a TSA, though this was paid only once they were reunited with their parents. The second instalment of the TSA, another US\$ 150, was subsequently paid to the ex-combatants after a period of three months.
- ¹⁵ In order to be eligible for the programme, participants had to either present a serviceable weapon or ammunition that satisfied certain criteria, or be a woman or child associated with the fighting forces, which were generally considered to be those who were wives and girlfriends, cooks, and general support staff for the armed factions. It was left to UN Military Observers to determine, through a series of questions, whether women and children seeking to enter the DDRR programme were legitimate applicants.
- ¹⁶ National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration, *DDRR Consolidated Report*, 24 November 2004, <<http://www.lr.undp.org/DEX/rep.htm>>; United Nations Mission in Liberia, UNMO SITREP, 24 November 2004, unpublished situation report acquired from UNMIL, annex E.
- ¹⁷ Interview with UNDP official, Monrovia, 3 March 2005.
- ¹⁸ Interview with EC Chargé d'Affaires for Liberia, Monrovia, 3 March 2005.
- ¹⁹ European Commission, *Financing Conditions between The European Commission and The People of Liberia: Post-conflict Rehabilitation and Capacity Building Programme*, Financing conditions no. 9063/LBR, 2003, annex II, p. 2.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, annex II, p. 3.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, annex II, p. 6.
- ²² Interview with UNDP official, Monrovia, 3 March 2005.
- ²³ UNDP Liberia, *DDRR Trust Fund Activity Report*, <<http://www.lr.undp.org/DEX/rep.htm>>, p. 7.
- ²⁴ Interview with EC Post-Conflict RR Programme Officer, Monrovia, 2 March 2005.
- ²⁵ Interview with EC Desk Officer for Liberia, Directorate General for Development, Brussels, 22 March 2005.
- ²⁶ Interview with EC Chargé d'Affaires for Liberia, Monrovia, 3 March 2005. Specific details on dates, locations and attendees of these donor meetings were unavailable.

- ²⁷ Thokozani Thusi, "Learning from Sierra Leone", in Nelson Alusala and Thokozani Thusi (eds), *A Step Towards Peace: Disarmament in Africa*, Institute for Security Studies–Pretoria, 2004. Security Council, *Twenty-second Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone*, UN document S/2004/536, 6 July 2004.
- ²⁸ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2003: Sierra Leone*, 2003.
- ²⁹ Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, *Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, and Gender-based Violence in Sierra Leone*, 2002, p. 3.
- ³⁰ Eric Berman and Melissa Labonte, "Sierra Leone", in William Durch and Paul Stares (eds), *Twenty-first Century Peace Operations: The Critical Cases*, Henry L. Stimson Centre/U.S. Institute of Peace, forthcoming, pp. 48–49.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 45–50.
- ³² European Commission, *Financing Conditions between The European Commission and The People of Liberia: Post-conflict Rehabilitation and Capacity Building Programme*, Financing conditions no. 9063/LBR, p. 4.
- ³³ Interviews with EC officials in both Monrovia and Brussels failed to reveal concrete and specific answers regarding these issues of "previous experience" and "regional considerations", suggesting that neither played a significant role in planning Liberia's funding programme.
- ³⁴ Interview with EC Chargé d'Affaires for Liberia, Monrovia, 3 March 2005.
- ³⁵ Interview with donor government official, Monrovia, 4 February 2005.
- ³⁶ Interview with EC Geo-coordinator, EuropeAid Co-operation Office, Brussels, 23 March 2005.
- ³⁷ Interview with EC Country Officer, EuropeAid Co-operation Office, Brussels, 23 March 2005.
- ³⁸ Interview with EC official, External Relations, Brussels, 22 March 2005.
- ³⁹ Interview with EC Geo-coordinator, EuropeAid Co-operation Office, Brussels, 23 March 2005.
- ⁴⁰ European Commission. *Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme, 2004–2007, Liberia*, 2004, para. 156.

ACRONYMS

CESD	Community Empowerment and Skills Development
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DD	disarmament and demobilization
DDR	disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DDRR	disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration
DPKO	UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations
EC	European Commission
ECOMIL	ECOWAS peacekeeping force in Liberia
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDF	European Development Fund
EU	European Union
IDPs	internally displaced persons
JIU	Joint Implementation Unit
LOIC	Liberian Opportunities Industrialization Center
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
NGO	non-governmental organization
PCRCBP	Post-conflict Rehabilitation and Capacity Building Programme
RR	rehabilitation and reintegration
SLRRP	Sierra Leone Rehabilitation and Resettlement Programme
TSA	transitional safety net allowance
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	UN Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIDIR	United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia