

"How are We in this World Now?"
Examining the Experiences of Persons Disabled by War in the Peace
Processes of Sierra Leone

by

Pearl Praise Gottschalk
B.A., University of Winnipeg, 2002

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Requirements for the Degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

This study provides an analysis of the experience of persons disabled by war in the peace processes of Sierra Leone such as the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration Program, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Special Court and the electoral process. The research findings are a result of participant observation and qualitative interviewing methodologies carried out over two months of intensive in-country field research. The main themes that resulted from the research are: Inclusion and Participation in Decision Making, Utilizing Unique Initiatives, Dissension among the Disabled, Justice Unfulfilled, Recognizing the Unintended Consequences of Peace Building, and Experiences with Policy Makers. The results of these findings are discussed in relation to current notions of peace, reconciliation, justice and retribution. Particular attention is paid to the current relationship between the international community and persons disabled by war in Sierra Leone, and recommendations are made by participants regarding ways to strengthen and build on that relationship.

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to all persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone who shared their stories, their lives, their food and their homes with me if only for a short time. This study is my way of contributing to your struggle in the hopes that you will not suffer in silence anymore.

I also dedicate this paper to my Mother who has been my mentor, best friend and closest ally. And to my boyfriend Johann who is the love of my life.

Chapter I

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to report on the experiences of persons disabled by war in the post-conflict peace processes in Sierra Leone. To understand this issue, the research involved traveling to the site of the study's location since the examination must be done with the people, on the ground and from the heart. Thus, I traveled thirty-two hours to arrive in Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone, where the journey began. The research goals were to gain understanding in two key areas. The first goal was to attempt to understand the experiences of persons disabled by war in the peace building process in Sierra Leone. The second was to discuss the implications of these experiences for larger peace building issues which involve persons disabled by war. It is my hope that this study will contribute to the disability dialogue currently underway in Sierra Leone and will address the challenges of achieving the rights of persons with disabilities during post-conflict peace processes.

The term, "peace processes" is used in this study to denote a range of peace building programs that were carried out in Sierra Leone in order to end the civil war, restore order and bring justice. These processes include such programs as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was implemented by the United Nations and which seeks to provide a historical account of atrocities and promote nation wide reconciliation. The second process was the Special Court which was established in 2002 and was mandated with the task of trying war criminals in an internationally recognized court. The third process was the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration process which began in 1998 and demobilized thousands of ex-combatants. This process laid the foundations of peace in the country. Fourthly, the electoral process of 2002 was another process that sought to bring peace and stability to Sierra Leone. Overall, these processes were implemented nation wide and involved a wide range of war survivors, including persons disabled by war, who are the focus of this study.

This study is groundbreaking in that it advances a body of knowledge on an under-examined issue in war-affected countries, namely the engagement of persons disabled by war in the peace building process. Conclusions of the study outline the importance of increasing the consideration given by academics, national and international non-governmental organizations, disabled persons organizations, government, and the general populace to the experience of persons who have been disabled by war in the peace building process.

This study takes place at a crucial time in history, as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) has entered into force, and the African Decade for Disabled Persons (1999-2009) is nearly finished. The international community¹ has put a spotlight on disability and begun fostering more awareness and attention to disability programs worldwide, especially in the poorest and most war affected countries.² The United Nations states, “Disability training must be fostered by United Nations leadership at this critical junction in time” (United Nations International Children's Education Fund, 2005).

With that in mind, the aim of this study is to contribute to the larger international disability dialogue by linking war-related disability and peace building together in one comprehensive report. Although, these three issues have been academically researched separately (as will be demonstrated in Chapter Four) there have been few studies which have linked these issues together, and explored the correlation between them and the impact they have on each other. Sierra Leone offers an example of a country where these three issues have become inseparable and have a profound impact on the tenuous peace that exists there today. This research is also concurrent with the political efforts of persons disabled by war who continue to lobby their government for the social support that the peace processes failed to bring.

¹ The term "International Community" refers to major bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors such as, but not limited to, the United Nations (and all its accompanying bodies), Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, World Bank, Food and Agricultural Organization, World Food Program, International Development Association and other related bodies.

² Roughly 80% of people with disabilities, roughly 500 million, live in low-income nations. Approximately 120 million are children (Helander, 1998).

Why Sierra Leone?

Sierra Leone was chosen as the context for this study because of the high numbers of persons disabled by war in the population. These individuals live with the consequences of the civil war that raged between 1991 and 2002 and its subsequent long and arduous peace building process since 2002. Presently Sierra Leone is struggling through a post-conflict reconstruction phase in addition to being the second poorest country in the world (United Nations Human Development Report, 2006). People living with disabilities in Sierra Leone face enormous challenges in participating in the social, economic and political life of their country. Sierra Leone is also host to a wide range of non-governmental organizations and disabled persons organizations which advocate for disability rights and provide services to persons disabled by war. Many of these organizations participated in the study, sharing invaluable insights.

Why "Persons Disabled by War"?

It is important to undertake a study specifically on persons disabled by war because their expectations of and their engagement and overall experiences in the peace building processes are unique from others. Their livelihoods, family status, mobility and countless other aspects of their daily lives have been irrevocably altered in crucially different ways than other war survivors. Persons disabled by war possess an intriguing story that is important to uncover because it reveals many important findings on the impacts of peace processes on these persons. Persons disabled by war were chosen to be the focus of this study because it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the experiences of *all* persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone. However, this does not imply that their experience is any more valid than other war survivors. Fair and equal treatment of all persons with disabilities is necessary and important to any study on disability.

Outline

Subsequent chapters will document the research journey. Chapter Two will outline the Research Design and will include the following; the research question, methodologies chosen, participant selection, data collection and the research goals and

objectives and ethical considerations. Chapter Three will provide the necessary background information pertaining to the civil war and the peace processes in Sierra Leone. In Chapter Four I will review the current literature relating to disability, war, peace building and the international human rights framework for persons disabled by war. In Chapter Five I reveal the research findings and in Chapter Six, I discuss the research findings. I conclude with a brief Epilogue to share lessons learned throughout the research process.

Chapter II

Research Design

Although the research process was challenging at times, it was an intriguing journey in which I encountered many amazing people. Certain practical considerations arose that I did not foresee such as the difficulties in doing research with persons with disabilities such as facilitating the interview process in a manner which was accessible to the host of different disabilities of the participants. Also, I encountered accessibility constraints such as transport to field sites. I also discovered the challenges of maintaining confidentiality in the research due to my living situation. These challenges are discussed at length on page thirteen and fourteen. I have also included my personal reflections from doing research in the field on pages fourteen to sixteen. These personal reflections include; difficulties in remaining neutral, difficulties in achieving benefits for the participants, and difficulties dealing with emotional issues. Overall, the research design worked well and yielded a host of valuable insights into the research question.

Research Question

The research question was altered and reframed through the course of the data collection from “How can the rights of persons disabled by armed conflict be better represented in peace processes?” to “What was the experience of persons disabled by war in the peace processes in Sierra Leone?” It became apparent through the course of the research that the latter question better suited the data collected as participants framed their responses in terms of their experiences and not necessarily as “rights”. Rights were still of great importance to the participants and the international human rights framework is mentioned throughout the study. However, in all aspects of my research I tried to be responsive to the direction that participants advised and what they felt was relevant to their story.

Objectives of the Project

As the participants came from a variety of backgrounds, a variety of different opinions were reported. Thus, this study attempts to respect those diverse opinions and to account for contradicting views at times. The thesis is more descriptive than prescriptive, and while criticisms of specific policies or actors may arise, no general evaluation of the peace processes in terms of success or failure will be attempted. Thus, the objectives of the project are as follows;

1. To examine the experiences of persons disabled by war during the post-conflict peace processes in Sierra Leone from 2002 onwards (Chapter Five).
2. To discuss the implications of these experiences on peace building issues which involve persons disabled by war (Chapter Six).
3. To establish a body of knowledge in an under-examined field (Chapter Four).

Research Methods

Qualitative Interviewing

Qualitative interviewing is a versatile and flexible tool to explore specific topics, events and social or political phenomena. Using qualitative interviewing as a tool for research is an “intentional way of learning about people’s feelings, thoughts and experiences” (Rubin and Rubin, 1995:13). Underlying my approach is the three guiding themes proposed by Rubin and Rubin.

The first theme is the importance of understanding culture which means understanding how people interpret the world around them and develop shared understandings. In the months leading up to the interview and during my time in Sierra Leone I sought to understand the local Krio, Temne and Mende cultures and the ways in which that might affect the data.³ The second theme is to be self-aware and to realize that I am not a neutral actor as the interviewer. My life history and culture will influence how I hear what is being said and how I decode and analyze it. In the context of this study, this is a crucial point in the methodology because due to my extensive research on Sierra Leone, I need to be aware of my own biases (this is discussed further in this Chapter on pages fourteen and fifteen). The third theme is realizing that the purpose of interviewing is to hear and understand what the interviewees think and to give them public voice. This

³ For example, the Krios are considered to be an elite class that is not indigenous to Sierra Leone. Additionally, the Temne and Mende tribes have long been vying for political power through opposing parties and hold grudges against each other (Richards, 1996). It is important to be aware of these cultural influences in the research.

is my main purpose for choosing interviewing as my methodology, so that through this research the participants can have a public voice that may go beyond Sierra Leone and into the public arena.

In addition I gained ethics approval from the University of Victoria ethics board in November of 2006 to conduct interviews with the chosen participants. In the process of selecting, recruiting and interviewing the participants I followed the ethics guidelines as mandated by the University of Victoria.

Data Collection through Qualitative Interviewing

Once on location in Sierra Leone, I contacted the ten most prominent non-governmental organizations and disabled persons organizations that have been involved with disability issues throughout the war and in peace times. In the interviews I sought to gather information using the life history form of interviewing (Bertaux, 1981) regarding the participants' lived experience of the topic and their recommendations based on the meaning they made from the experience. In the interview process, I was striving for what Siedman (1991) terms the "We" relationship in which the interviewer is an equal participant and the resulting discourse would be a conversation and not an interview (p.73). It was my goal to keep the focus on the participant's experience and not mine while acknowledging that neutrality is a key aspect of hearing the meaning of what is being said (Rubin and Rubin, 1995).

Qualitative interviewing was a very effective and formal tool for research with high level professionals⁴ as the interview process is a well known and respected process with many of these participants. The interviews were roughly sixty minutes each and the interview guide (see Appendix D) was used as a starting point. However, the interviews often took their own direction as participants suggested new ideas for discussion and I trusted their expertise and experience.

Documenting the content of the interviewing was accomplished by keeping handwritten notes. This was necessary due to several factors including a lack of access to adequate power and necessary technology, as well as socio-economic and cultural issues

⁴ "High level professionals" include such participants as; the heads of the major non-governmental organizations working on disability issues, directors of disabled persons organizations and the directors of United Nations sectors.

that arose from displaying and carrying around costly equipment. Although note-taking was challenging I had previous experience with it and did not find that it hindered the research. Any quotation made in this study I wrote down word for word during the interview and it was not a paraphrase of what they said. Participants were not bothered by this and were understanding of the extra time it took.

Participant Observation

Participant observation was added as a methodology due to the invitations I received from colleagues and participants in the interviews to observe the situation rather than only talking about it in interviews. The popular slogan of persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone at the time was, "Those who feel it know it" and "Nothing about us without us". Thus, many participants in the interviews felt that I had to go to the field and meet other persons disabled by war in their homes and communities in order to really understand the issue.

The act of observing, "consists of gathering impressions on the surrounding world through all relevant faculties" (Adler and Adler, 1998:80). Participant observation can be defined as the process of immersing oneself in the subject being studied (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). However, the technique also poses many challenges. One such challenge is validity since the researcher is forced to rely on his or her own perspectives, which will be strongly biased due to the subjectivity involved with interpretation (Adler and Adler, 1998). Bias is very difficult to eliminate and in this case my own bias was controlled by cross checking information with other participants and external sources, and including direct quotes so as to avoid paraphrasing what was said. However, often the researcher will have some degree of influence on the behavior of the participants and I could not avoid this entirely.

Being in the field and interacting with the participants provided depth to the issues that were discussed in the interviews. I realized that an externally conceived measuring device (such as my interviews) was not adequate to perceive the total reality of the participants. Thus, I attempted to seek out the meaning of the experiences of the group by studying the many differing opinions within it. I took the role of a "moderate participator" (Spradley, 1980:60) in which I actively involved myself in asking questions

and visiting the sites they took me to but did not actively live with them or assume that I was a member of their group.

Data Collection through Participant Observation

I appeared to have gained a level of trust with certain people in the disability community. My perspective is that this occurred because I was living with a well-respected man who was blind and his family. As a result I was invited to many places where white outsiders do not often go. I was brought to the streets to talk with persons disabled by war and data was collected on street corners, sidewalks, park benches and over food in a street stall. The formal interview process gave way to the informal act of sitting with these people talking, often for hours, of their struggles. The impacts of these field observations on me as a researcher and on the study in general, are discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter under the heading *Personal Reflections from Field Observations*.

Thus, an equal proportion of the data gathered was from direct participant observation through my role, not as a fully accepted insider, but instead as an invited observer to their homes and communities.⁵ It would have been inappropriate and difficult to take notes as we walked, talked, ate and played with the children. Thus, I either recorded my field notes in a journal I carried with me as we traveled between sites or typed up my field notes when I returned home at night. I tried to ensure that the field notes were rich, detailed descriptions of the visits and the context within which the observations were made. The field notes consisted of the data in my field journal, which consisted of observations on the living situation of the community, the interpersonal interactions within the group and any other details that were important. Excerpts from field notes are included in the research findings in Chapter Five.

Data Analysis

⁵ Field visits were made to the following areas; street homes for persons with disabilities who are forced to beg, centers for skills training for persons with disabilities, camps for blind beggars and their families, homes for amputee youth and youth with disabilities, communities of polio persons, associations for persons with epilepsy, homes for rescued orphans with disabilities, rehabilitation centers for persons disabled by war, schools for persons with disabilities (including blind and deaf schools) in the provinces, advocacy centers for persons with disabilities in the provinces, community gatherings for persons disabled by war and open meetings between persons disabled by war and non-governmental organizations.

An inductive approach was used for this study, which involved collecting data, data analysis, and subsequently forming conclusions about the evidence (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). This involved identifying patterns, themes and categories that emerged from the data during the analysis (Krueger, 1998). The data analysis was to present conclusions about the interviews and the participant observations in the field.

Once I had finished the interviews and participant observations, I compiled and coded the data to uncover the most prominent themes. The coding was done informally (not through computer programs) by reading through the data many times in order to pull out repetitive words and ideas presented by the participants. I knew I was finished pulling out themes when no new themes were identified and all the important data was accounted for in the six themes. The major themes that were uncovered through the research are; Inclusion and Participation in Decision Making, Utilizing Unique Initiatives, Dissension Among the Disabled, Justice Unfulfilled, Recognizing the Unintended Consequences of Peace Building and Experiences with the Policy Makers. For greater clarification regarding the thematic analysis see Appendix E.

The most commonly occurring statements from the research questions comprised the main themes and the sub-themes are issues that participants discussed in relation to that main theme. For example, when I asked the question, "Can you tell me about your experience in the peace process in Sierra Leone", a very common response was "I felt I was not included in...." From there the participant would discuss their experience with inclusion in relation to such issues as the Truth and Reconciliation commission or the peace conferences which are included as sub-themes under the larger theme of Inclusion. Organizing the themes this way was the most logical and coherent manner I could conceive and it emphasized those issues which were most important to the participants. I also included a section entitled Unique Comments at the end of Chapter Five in order to account for those comments which did not fit into any of the main themes and were not repeated by many participants. However, they are still important to include in this study.

All comments made with quotations are direct quotes from participants unless followed by a name and citation which denotes that they are public sources and not from the research collection for this study. Rather than use a quantitative presentation of the data (which would have been difficult to be precise) I have used terms such as "most" or

"majority" which means it was a finding from over 60% of participants. I have used the term "some" to denote responses that occurred roughly 30-40% of the time. If it was only a small amount of participants (under ten) that made the comment, then I state the exact number of participants.

Participant Selection

Participants were chosen based on three main criteria: they have been actively involved in disability and peace work in Sierra Leone from 2002 onwards; they were willing to participate; they represented a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. Overall, it was not difficult to find willing and eager participants to talk with. The majority of participants had endured the civil war except for certain employees of the non-governmental organizations who had been forced to evacuate for safety reasons.

The interviews were conducted with ten different people from various organizations that included both non-governmental organizations and disabled person's organizations. As such, the participants were both nationals (of Sierra Leonean descent) and non-nationals (not of Sierra Leonean descent) from a host of foreign countries. Of the ten people I interviewed, 30% were employees of non-governmental organizations (non-nationals of Sierra Leone) and 70% were representatives of disabled people's organizations (nationals of Sierra Leone), of which 50% were disabled by war, 30% were disabled by natural causes, and the other 20% were not disabled.

There were roughly one hundred participants observed in field visits although it is difficult to state the exact number of participants because often all the persons with disabilities in the village would come out to speak. Roughly 80% of the participants were persons with disabilities and nationals and 20% were non-nationals and non-disabled.

In addition, the participants emphasized that I should also include the opinions of ex-combatants who have been disabled by war. As I did not feel comfortable meeting with ex-combatants, and this was not advisable by my colleagues, they suggested that I speak at length with the spokesperson for the coalition of persons disabled by war, which had many ex-combatant members. This spokesperson was entitled to speak on their behalf as he was very knowledgeable about their opinions regarding the issues that we discussed for this study. This may not have been a perfect strategy, but collectively, my

colleagues and I felt that this was appropriate considering the situation. The spokesperson also assured me that he gathered consent from the coalition before discussing these matters with me.

Gender Issues

Overall, in the interviews 90% of participants were male and 10% were female and in field visits 50% were female and 50% were male, however, the disabled person's organizations and the non-governmental organizations were mainly staffed by men due to the lack of education and public recognition of the status of women with disabilities. Thus, the women's voices that are accounted for in this study are mainly from field visits and are women who may be less educated and less knowledgeable of advocacy issues. However, this does not imply that their experiences are in any way less important, and many of these women held strong opinions and important recommendations that have contributed significantly to this study. In the field visits, I tried to open up space for the women to speak up and directed conversation towards them in order to encourage their participation. Also, in Chapter Five I have included certain unique comments that the women made during field visits.

However, I did feel that some men with disabilities who were doing advocacy work in Sierra Leone may have resented me for being another white woman who has come to speak of something I have not lived. Also, I noticed that some women, especially those with severe and disfiguring disabilities, did not want to come out of their homes to talk. This could have been due to a number of factors including the fact that visitors in the past have had a negative impact on the community in some way, or could have been resentful that I had not come with gifts, or they may have felt embarrassment over their disability. They may also have been afraid I would pull out a camera and take their picture and use it for my own gain, like so many before me.

Validity and Reliability in the Data

Translation

Quotes made in this paper were either in English originally or translated from Krio, Mende or Temne which are the three main languages and cultural groups of Sierra

Leone. During the interviews, translation was not an issue as all the participants spoke good English. In field trips I was most often accompanied by my colleague and friend who was a highly respected man in the disability movement. He spoke perfect English, Krio and Mende and in the situations where the participant spoke Temne, there was usually someone in the village who could translate into either Krio or English for me. In total, only two participants spoke only Temne and the majority of participants spoke either Krio or English. As I do not speak Krio, Mende or Temne, I was dependent on my colleague's interpretation of what the participant *intended* to say. As my colleague was very familiar with disability issues and peace processes he was the best person to translate for this study. However, I cannot guarantee that what was translated was 100% accurate.

Practical Considerations

Certain issues arose in the research process which are important to mention.

Doing Research with Persons with Disabilities

When doing research with persons with disabilities it is important to be aware of the participant's disability before beginning the interview. At the time of the research design I was unsure if I would have participants with disabilities and what their disability might be and thus was unable to prepare for these difficulties. For example, many participants were blind, single or double hand/leg amputees, or afflicted with polio. The meeting place needed adjustment for their physical access and the consent forms could have been prepared in Braille. In the situation of a double hand amputee, the signing of the consent forms proved difficult and often required that their assistant signs on their behalf. Also, many participants were uneducated and could not read a consent form and in the cases of my field trips to observe the participants I had to do away with the consent form altogether, or get one representative to sign for the group of participants.

Accessibility Constraints

Also many interviews required traveling to the site of the organization which was often difficult to find and required many long hours navigating the streets of Freetown. My personal security became an issue as I could not afford to hire a driver and relied on

taxis and public transport. Also, accessing various employees of non-governmental organizations was difficult as they were already overworked and rarely responded to my emails that I sent from Canada. However, once my name was associated with the World Bank many people I approached were suddenly very eager to participate although they realized that this study was in no way connected to my World Bank work.

Confidentiality

Also, qualitative interviewing presented a host of problems. When the researcher lives with the participants and socializes with them every day, it is difficult not to include valuable aspects of daily conversation in the study itself. Thus, separating the usable data and what may have been said in confidentiality can cause confusion. In order to mitigate this, I repeatedly asked if that was “off the record” or if that could be included in the study. Also, all names of participants have been withheld in order to ensure the confidentiality of the participant.

Overall, the necessary ethical mandates for this study were met fully and at no time did I feel I was compromising my ethical standards or those of any participant.

Personal Reflections from Field Observations

My personal reflections from my time in the field are also important to note here because they reveal the challenges in doing field research in distressing situations with vulnerable people. The opportunities I had to do field work in villages, in homes and in the streets had an impact, not only on me personally, but on the research as well. The field visits had significant impacts on the research in three main ways; on my ability to remain neutral and unbiased in the research, on the expectations of benefits to participants, and the emotional well being of the researcher. In regards to each of these three impacts I have included excerpts from my field journal that I kept during my research.

Through the process of doing this research I became very sympathetic towards the plight of persons disabled by war and this affected my ability to remain neutral on the subject. I noted in one journal entry:

Remaining neutral is impossible and inhuman after all I have seen. The best I can do in this research is to try and present both sides of the issue because although I feel sympathetic towards them [persons disabled by war], there is no need to judge who is right or wrong, only to write as accurately as possible according to what I have seen and what they have told me.

Through the process of conducting this research I realized that my empathy for persons disabled by war did not necessarily imply that I was biased. I reported what participants told me as accurately as possible and did not make judgments for them or put words in their mouth. I made a significant attempt to speak with people who were neutral on the subject and had a great deal more experience with the issue than I did such as employees of non-governmental organizations and persons without disabilities.

I also spent enough time with persons disabled by war and persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone to understand how both groups sometimes use their disability and suffering to elicit pity, money and assistance from white foreigners. This only applied to roughly five percent of the persons with disabilities that I encountered but it was significant and helped me to control my overwhelming sympathy. I commented on this in my journal by stating:

I watch the way these amputees and these persons with disabilities interact with the whites in this crowd. It is a long established relationship and they know their role...I see them play with our emotions in subtle ways either to gain the attention of the journalist or the big donors in the crowd. From what I have been told, I also know that they can be very evil to each other in this fight for money and attention from the whites. I see both sides to this drama unfolding before me and it helps me understand the complexity of doing research with people who are very skilled at pulling heart strings.

Secondly, the field research also revealed the difficulties in bringing benefits to the participants who put hope in my visit. In a journal entry I stated:

They say to me, "Write this paper. Tell the world what is really going on" and I wonder what will ever come of this research. They all look at me like I am going to save them from some wretched fate. As if in our world, a paper has that power. It's hard enough just trying to do no harm to people, never mind trying to do "good".

Overall, I observed a desire, on behalf of persons disabled by war in particular, that my study would benefit them in some way. Many reporters have come to ask questions of persons disabled by war and then sold stories to newspapers abroad which

have been of great monetary benefit to the reporter, but not to the participant. Thus, I felt the need to explain to participants that how my being a “researcher” was different from being a “reporter”. Yet, they understood when I explained that as a student I could not promise any great reward to them for their participation and that was made clear from the beginning.

However, the expectation on behalf of persons disabled by war that this study would cause some *change* in their situation was more prevalent than participants expecting monetary gifts. I felt that this was one of the biggest challenges in the research because it was imperative to me that my research would not re-victimize them in any way. However, in comparison to the grand expectations for change that were raised by my work at the World Bank, the expectations for this study were small in comparison. Overall, I assured the participants that I could not promise them any significant change but I could promise to release my findings to all parties involved which included all participants, the government of Sierra Leone and certain members of the international community.

Finally, my work in the field with such vulnerable people caused a significant emotional response within me. I noted in one journal entry, "I can't smile. The world has broken my heart. I feel the sorrow of all those I have met, as if it were my own and it is excruciating". In some cases it was impossible to walk away from life or death situations that I was witnessing. In these cases, I contacted the organizers of the villages after the interviews and offered small donations to them from the funds I had raised before leaving. I found it particularly challenging to participate in someone's life as an "observer" and a "researcher" and then walk away and close my heart after the observation was finished.

The heartbreak I felt as a result of my field research, and from my time in Sierra Leone, caused me to be unable to write or reflect on the research for a month while I rested in Ghana. After the first draft was drawn up in June, I took a term off and spent time thinking about the study and evaluating my experience while I was no longer in Africa. In this way I managed to gain clarity and distance from the research that I could not have while I was in Africa. After my time away from the study I revisited the research and found that I could see certain things that I could not before, such as my bias

and my own emotional attachment to the subject. I feel that taking this time off lent more credibility and reliability to my data because I gained perspective and could think more rationally than I could while I was submerged in the subject.

Overall, my personal reflections from the field have demonstrated the challenges of doing research with vulnerable people while also being vulnerable as the researcher. In all aspects of the research process I did my best to respect the participants and the insights they shared with me and to conduct a research study which was ethically and academically sound.

Chapter III

Background to the Conflict: Sierra Leone's "un-civil" War, 1991-2002

Background Information on Sierra Leone

The civil war in Sierra Leone was certainly one of the bloodiest and most brutal wars in history. The war began in 1991 when the Revolutionary United Front (also referred to herein as the "rebels") invaded Sierra Leone in order to secure diamond and mineral rights. They were backed by Charles Taylor of Liberia and led by a former army corporal Foday Sankoh. Although the Revolutionary United Front began the war under the pretenses of freeing the population from the seventeen year long dictatorship of Siaka Stevens, their true motives for resource control and political power soon became clear.

According to Chris Squire:

The Revolutionary United Front was the product of bad governance in Sierra Leone. However, in the making of their "revolution", the rebels engaged in inhuman atrocities against defenseless children, women and men who had nothing whatsoever to do with the government and the corruption the Revolutionary United Front claimed to be fighting against...Limbs of people of all ages have been callously amputated, as well as whole communities burnt and properties destroyed or looted (2000:56).

Other armed factions included the Sierra Leone Resistance Army, the Civil Defense Forces, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and the Kamajors, though none were as brutal as the Revolutionary United Front. By July 1999 all parties agreed to and signed a regionally brokered cease-fire agreement called the Lome Peace Accord. However, the Lome Accord did not immediately stop the violence.

The Revolutionary United Front attacked the capital city of Freetown on January 6th 1999 in what they termed "Operation No Living Thing". Caught unaware, the Economic Community Monitoring Group (sent to fight the Revolutionary United Front by the Economic Organization of West African States) and the Kamajors fought hard to recapture the capital. Before the rebels could be forced out of the city, much of it was destroyed. Jeremy Vine states, "When the rebels reached the city, in a matter of days they are said to have amputated the limbs of around 1,500 people" (British Broadcasting Commission, 1999). However, in the blurred lines of warfare even the Economic Community Monitoring Group was to blame for the slaughtering of innocent civilians

which is evidenced in the new acronym that civilians gave them, “Every Conscious or Moving Object Gone” (Bergner, 2003).

The rebel leaders, Sankoh (Revolutionary United Front) and Koroma (Armed Forces Revolutionary Council), took up cabinet posts in a transitional government headed by Kabbah which administered the country until elections in 2001. Overall, the war had a devastating effect on the Sierra Leonean population - estimates of casualties from the war ranged from 50,000 to 75,000 (Corriero, 2002).

Peace Processes in Sierra Leone

The term "peace process" has been defined as "a political process in which conflicts are resolved by peaceful means" (Saunders, 2001:483). They are a "mixture of politics, diplomacy, changing relationships, negotiation, mediation, and dialogue in both official and unofficial arenas" (p.483). For the purposes of this discussion, the peace processes that are referred to in this paper ranged from justice seeking mechanisms such as the Special Court, to truth telling and reparations processes such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to processes aimed purely at laying the foundation of peace through the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration process.

The transition from conflict to peace brings many challenges for society especially the most vulnerable members of that society. The immediate concern for a successful transition to peace was to disarm combatants, compensate them financially and reintegrate them back into their communities. This was achieved through the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration program. In addition, the Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were instigated following the Lome Peace Accord in order to address the needs of war survivors for justice and to provide an accurate historical account of the civil war. In addition, peaceful elections took place in which persons disabled by war played a unique and intriguing role.

The Lome Accord and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Lome Peace Accord was signed between warring factions in 1999 although this did not immediately stop the fighting. The accord called for blanket amnesty for all

warring parties⁶ which was highly objectionable to the United Nations. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, instructed the United Nations representative Francis Okelo not to sign the agreement. However, Okelo was able to convince the United Nations that his signature was necessary for peace, and he signed with the stipulation that the United Nations would not recognize amnesty for acts of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, as per the request of the United Nations Security Council (Hirsch, 2001).

The Lome Accord specifically called for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to be established in Sierra Leone as a part of a larger process of peace building (Article 6:2(9)). The Lome Accord also promised the creation of a Special Fund for War Victims (Article 24) to be funded by the government of Sierra Leone and the international community to provide rehabilitation for war survivors. The Lome Accord did not specifically mention the rights of persons with disabilities. However, it did include design and implementation of a program for the rehabilitation of war victims and full protection of rights within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (Article 5:21-31).

The objective of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was “to create an impartial historical record of violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law from the beginning of the conflict in 1991 to the signing of the Lome Peace Agreement and to respond to the needs of the victims, to promote healing and reconciliation and to prevent a repetition of the violations and abuses suffered (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, 1:(10)). The Commission was established by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and was mainly funded by this office.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended that assistance to persons disabled by war is of urgent and extreme importance. The final report states:

⁶ Article 9:2 states, "After the signing of the present Agreement, the Government of Sierra Leone shall also grant absolute and free pardon and reprieve to all combatants and collaborators in respect of anything done by them in pursuit of their objectives, up to the time of the signing of the present Agreement".

The Commission determined the categories of beneficiaries who should benefit from the reparations program by considering those victims who were particularly vulnerable to suffering human rights violations. Most Sierra Leoneans agree that amputees, war wounded, women who suffered sexual abuse, children and war widows would constitute special categories of victims who are in dire need of urgent care. The Commission also considered those victims who are in urgent need of a particular type of assistance to address their current needs, even if this only serves to put them on an equal footing with a larger category of victims. The reparations program aims at contributing to the rehabilitation of those victims, even if complete rehabilitation is not possible (10:57).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended that a certain percentage of lost income (under the Workers Compensation Act) be accorded to the war survivors according to the type of their injury.⁷ However, this posed problems for survivors who were children or had never been formally employed before. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission also recommended non-monetary reparations. It recommended that amputees be provided with free health care for life, free prosthetic and orthotic devices, and free physical and psycho-social rehabilitation (especially for amputee children).

To oversee all these recommendations the Commission recommended the National Commission for Social Action as the implementing body to monitor the Special Fund for War Victims as recommended in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Special Fund for War Victims was to be established no later than three months after the handover of the Commission's report. The money for this fund would come from revenue generated from mineral resources, seized assets from convicted criminals of war, financial help from other countries that contributed to the war in Sierra Leone and other legal sources which become available (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, 5:227). The Lome Accord suggested that the "proceeds from the transactions of gold and diamonds should be public monies which should enter a special Treasury account to be spent on compensation for incapacitated war victims among other things" (Article 7:6).

Sierra Leone seemed to be heading in the right direction with a clear plan of

⁷ "The Commission determined that for certain benefits to be accorded to victims, the violation committed against the victim must constitute a 50% or more reduction in earning capacity. This can be the result of one injury or an aggregate of injuries that total or exceed the 50% benchmark. In making the decision to use the reduction of earning capacity as a cut-off point for some of the measures in the reparations program, the Commission was influenced by the practices employed by the Inter-American Court for Human Rights and the German Holocaust reparations scheme" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, 10:68).

action for persons disabled by war and a commitment to follow through with that plan. Yet, now in the year of 2007 the Special Fund for War Victims still has not been established and there have been no financial reparations for persons disabled by war as outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (World Organization against Torture, 2006).

The Special Court

The Special Court was set up jointly by the Government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations pursuant to the Security Council resolution 1315 (2000) of August 14, 2000. In this resolution, the Security Council recognized that “In the particular circumstances of Sierra Leone, a credible system of justice and accountability for the very serious crimes committed there would end impunity and would contribute to the process of national reconciliation and to the restoration and maintenance of peace” (2000). The Court was established in 2002 to bring to justice those who “bear the greatest responsibility for the atrocities committed in Sierra Leone” (Statute of the Special Court, Article 1:1). The Special Court operated under the principle of universal jurisdiction which applies to war crimes, crimes against humanity, slavery, and torture (Statute of the Special Court, 2002).

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights specifically reminded all factions and forces in Sierra Leone of this principle, stating:

In any armed conflict including an armed conflict of a non-international character, the willful killing and *torture or inhuman treatment of persons* taking no active part in the hostilities constitute grave breaches of international humanitarian law (2000).

The Court states that perpetrators of war crimes must be held accountable for the country to “truly know lasting peace” and “peace has come through the restoration of a sense of the rule of law” (Special Court Agreement, 2002). The Statute of the Special Court did not follow the example of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court by authorizing the Special Court to award reparations for victims of crimes within its jurisdiction, including restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition. To date, only eleven people have been indicted by the Special Court.

Thus far, the cost for the Court is roughly U.S. \$104 million (Special Court Budget, 2005-2006) which is a lower cost than the International Criminal Tribunal in Rwanda or Yugoslavia which each cost roughly U.S. \$120 million per year (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda Budget, 2006; International Center for Transitional Justice, 2007). The majority of the funding for the Special Court has come from voluntary donations from states and the court was in charge of raising its own funds.

Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration

One of the foundations of the Lome Peace Accord was the creation of a Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration program for ex-combatants.⁸ This was carried out by the United Nations Mission to Sierra Leone which began in 1998 and was the largest peacekeeping force in the world, with 17,500 personnel at its height with a budget of 700 million per year (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2007: 37). The Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration program was implemented by the government of Sierra Leone with the support of the World Bank, the United Nations, donor governments and other international non-governmental organizations and institutions. The conclusion of the Disarmament and Demobilization of combatants from all warring parties in January 2002 marked the official end of the civil war in Sierra Leone. The Multi Donor Trust Fund was set up to fund the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration process and has since received over U.S. \$31.5 million dollars (World Bank, 2002) although the total estimated cost for the program was actually U.S. \$75 million dollars (Duchesne, 2001).

In order to enter the demobilization camp, a combatant was forced to surrender his weapon and upon discharge, ex-combatants received cash payments of up to U.S. \$215, a large amount in a country whose per capita income is U.S. \$500 (Refugees International, 2002). Ex-combatants were also given free access to vocational training in order to provide them with new livelihoods (Jung, 2006). As a result many ex-combatants

⁸ Article 16 states, "Upon the signing of the present Agreement, the Government of Sierra Leone shall immediately request the International Community to assist with the provision of the necessary financial and technical resources needed for the adaptation and extension of the existing Encampment, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Program in Sierra Leone".

in Sierra Leone today are driving taxis, working in well paid jobs and are earning a living from the trades they were taught.

Since the program began in Sierra Leone in 1999, 72,500 former combatants have been demobilized, 97 per cent of whom have now been reunified with their families and communities (Gberie, 2003). A total of 42,300 weapons and 1.2 millions rounds of ammunition were also collected through the process (Thusi, 2004).

The Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration process was not aimed toward addressing the rights of persons with disabilities and was instead focused on ending the conflict. However, as the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration process continues to be carried out in other conflict countries, the question of the impact of this process on persons disabled by war and the relationship between these persons and the ex-combatants remain pertinent.

The Electoral Process

In 2002, elections were one of the primary peace processes in Sierra Leone with Tejan Kabbah wining the majority of the vote. The participation of persons disabled by war in the elections has particular historical significance. During 1996, the Revolutionary United Front's "Operation Stop Elections" entailed the chopping off of hands and arms as a symbol of preventing people from voting" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 4:150). The slogan for free elections (promoted by Tejan Kabbah in 1996) was the picture of two hands voting and the slogan: "The future is in your hands". The Revolutionary United Front took this as their rationale for amputations and demanded their soldiers to dump all slaughtered hands at the steps of the presidential palace to make a statement to anyone who dared to vote.

Although Sierra Leone's Electoral Law provides for the enablement of voters with disabilities,⁹ participating in voting through disability friendly processes was a struggle in

⁹ Sierra Leone's Electoral Law states, "An elector who is unable to read or who is incapacitated by blindness or any other physical disability and is unable to cast his vote in the manner prescribed in this Decree, must apply in person to the Presiding Officer who shall: (i) in the case of an elector who is physically disabled, allow the elector to be accompanied by another elector of his own choice, who must guarantee the faithful expression of the vote of the disabled person and who shall be pledged to absolute secrecy" (Electoral Laws Act 2002:18: 1).

the 2002 and 2007 elections, even though various international organizations assisted with special voting procedures sensitized for persons with disabilities, (Bergner, 2003; International Foundation for Election Services, 2001) especially for double amputees. Some double amputees were even assisted to vote with their toes and special security was provided to ensure their safety to and from the voting sites.

The chart below in Figure 1.1 gives an overview of the processes discussed in this chapter.

Figure 1.1 Overview of the Peace Processes

Peace Process	Date Began	Date Finished	Implementer/Donor Body
1. Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration Process	1998	2002	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone and the World Bank Multi Donor Trust Fund
2. Lome Accord	Signed in 1999	n/a	Signed by all warring factions
3. Truth and Reconciliation Commission	2002	2004	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
4. Special Court for Sierra Leone	2002	Ongoing	United Nations Secretary General, government of Sierra Leone and voluntary donations from states
5. Electoral Process	2002 and 2007	n/a	Government of Sierra Leone, International Foundation for Electoral Services

Sierra Leone's Human Rights Framework

Sierra Leone has become one of the first eighty states to sign the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, Sierra Leone has a history of signing international conventions and not incorporating them into domestic law. For example, Sierra Leone has signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child but has failed to comply with Article 23 regarding children with disabilities

and has also failed to implement a National Child Rights Bill, despite efforts from advocacy groups. Putting the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into practice will be costly as Sierra Leone lacks the capacity and funds at the national level, and the national disability policy has not yet been enacted.

Persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone are fighting for a national disability policy which would guarantee their human rights and encourage a change in the attitude of Sierra Leoneans towards persons with disabilities. A report filed by the Sierra Leone Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour in 2004 states:

There was no government policy, law or program directed particularly at persons with disabilities. Some of the numerous individuals maimed in the fighting, or who had their limbs amputated by rebel forces, received special assistance from various local and international humanitarian organizations. Such programs involved reconstructive surgery, prostheses, and vocational training to help victims acquire new work skills; however, amputees complained that they did not receive sufficient assistance compared to ex-combatants, who received assistance through the demobilization process (p. 6).

As of yet, Sierra Leone does not have a national disability legislation or policy and this is due to a number of factors.¹⁰ There are drafts of the legislation and policy in place which need a final push to make them law. However, once this legislation is enacted into law it does not imply that the funds will be allocated to implement the recommendations which will be costly and require great political will.

Today the state of persons with disabilities, especially persons with war related disabilities, in Sierra Leone remains extremely dire. Ratifications on international conventions and treaties hold little meaning unless backed up by concrete action from the government and a cessation of human rights violations within the state and by the state.

This chapter has given an overview of the peace processes in Sierra Leone and a background to the civil war that has decimated the country. The various peace processes have had an enormous impact on the current day situation of persons disabled by war in Sierra Leone as well as its five million other citizens.

¹⁰ Such factors include: lack of funds for a national consultation process with all disabled person's organizations, lack of political commitment and lack of long term funds to carry out the requirements of the legislation.

Chapter IV

Literature Review

Introduction

In the field of literature regarding persons with disabilities, there are various streams which have received academic attention. These streams include: violence against persons with disabilities, medical and rehabilitation literature and psycho-social literature to name a few. However, there have been few studies which explore the connection between war related disabilities and peace building, both internationally and in Sierra Leone.

Overall, the literature review for this study is in three main areas. First, the literature on war-related disability is separate and not connected to issues of peace building. Secondly, the literature reflects the development of disability from a social development issue to a human rights based issue. Thirdly, the research conducted with persons disabled by war in Sierra Leone focuses on the bio-medical, psychological and social impacts of the disability. Apart from sensational media reports, the literature has been limited to reports from non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups with the aim to elicit funds for international support. In Sierra Leone there has been no academic study conducted with persons disabled by war which examines their experiences in peace processes.

This literature review demonstrates the need for a study that connects war-related disability and peace processes due to the lack of sufficient literature on this topic in general and the total absence of literature on this topic pertaining to Sierra Leone. The literature reviewed ranges from media publications, journals, books, academic studies, reports from non-governmental organizations and press releases.

War-Related Disability and Peace Literature

According to the World Health Organization, "Armed conflict and political violence are the leading causes of injury, impairment and disability and are primarily responsible for the conditions of over four million people who currently live with

disability" (2002:11). In addition, a report by Disability Awareness in Action states that the major causative factors of disability include:

- malnutrition (100 million, 20 per cent of all disabled people)
- accidents/trauma/war (78 million, 15.6 per cent)¹¹
- infectious diseases (56 million, 11.2 per cent)
- non-infectious diseases (100 million, 20 per cent)
- congenital diseases (100 million, 20 per cent) (1995:33).

Previous literature on disability and violence focuses on violence as a *response* to disability such as abuse and experiences in institutions (Human Rights Watch, 2001; Lansdown, 2003; Light, 2002). The literature on violence as a *cause* of disability has increased in the past two decades as a result of the international landmines campaign¹² (African Red Cross, 2000; Landmine Monitor Report, 2006). Also the literature on violence as a *cause* of disability has increased due to the rise in the use of small arms (Griffiths and Muggah, 2002; Wille, 2005) and a rise in the use of intentional maiming as a deliberate act of warfare (Buchanan and Widmer, 2006). In the recent study on "Violence against Disabled Children" (2005), Dr. Groce develops the concept of "Violence as a *precursor* to disability in the community" and stresses how violence against children can result in permanent disability. Under this stream she includes the following types of violence:

b.i.: Landmines: In communities where landmines are prevalent, children are more likely than adults to be permanently disabled by landmines and their injuries can be more severe;

b.ii.: Intentional maiming as acts of aggression: Warfare against civilian populations takes no more terrible form than in the intentional maiming of children. The chopping off of arms and legs, blinding or otherwise intentionally disabling children has been widely reported over the past decade.

b.iii.: Children permanently injured as combatants while serving as child soldiers

b.iv.: Disability as the result of crime, gang activity and other forms of community violence: In communities where crime, gangs and other forms of violence are rife, children and particularly adolescents are at risk of becoming

¹¹ However, the percentage of these disabilities occurring as a result of intentional acts of aggression is unclear and under-researched.

¹² Landmines constitute one ongoing cause of disabilities. Landmines alone injure a minimum of 20,000 people annually; mostly civilians and many are under 15 years of age. Globally, there are more than 350,000 disabled landmine survivors, and the majority are amputees (Landmine Monitor Report, 2006).

disabled as a result of injuries sustained. Communities – and nations – in which guns are readily available are of particular concern (2005:21).

The difference for persons who have become disabled as a result of violence is that once disabled- the person now becomes part of the population of persons with disabilities who are at an increased risk of subsequent violence. This causes a "double victimization" (Groce, 2005:21).

Additionally, the literature on war-related disability focuses on the greater risk that persons with disabilities face in mobility during attacks or raids (Disability Awareness in Action, 1995; Light, 2002; Human Rights Watch, 2003). It also focuses on the abuse of the most vulnerable members of the disabled populace, such as children and women, during war (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001; Human Rights Watch, 2001; Lansdown, 2003; Helander, 1998). The literature that does link war-related disability during peace times mainly addresses the psychological impacts of the disability after war (Verhey, 2001; Dyregrov et al. 2000; Dyregrov, A., Gjestad, R., & Raundalen, M., 2002).

Recently, the World Bank has begun to highlight the importance of incorporating disability into post-conflict management and development projects. It states:

In the past, the emphasis on disability has often been concentrated on the emergency phase after the conflict or catastrophe, or with a focus limited to certain issues such as land mines. While these areas remain critical, disability issues need to be examined in wider scope; functional limitations acquired during conflicts or catastrophes generate a more long-term need for continued integrated management, care, social support and reintegration into society. In the recent years, the actors operating in this field have attempted to embrace a more holistic approach that includes: data collection, analysis, monitoring and evaluation, along with continuing medical care, physical rehabilitation, prostheses and assistive devices, psychological and social support, employment and economic integration, capacity building and sustainability, legislation and public awareness, and accessibility interventions and policies (2007:37).

However, this recent study fails to mention the connection directly between war-related disability and peace processes directly.

Although national and international peace processes have grown substantially in the last fifty years in response to crisis intervention in civil wars, the academic literature

that examines the connection between war-related disability and peace processes is sparse and academic studies that link these two topics are much needed.

International Human Rights and International Law for Persons with Disabilities

Disability as an international human rights issue has been the main topic of recent disability literature. The increasing international acknowledgement of disability rights as human rights began with the International Year of Disabled Persons (1981) and the adoption of The World Program of Action concerning Disabled Persons (1983) by the United Nations General Assembly. The early 1990s saw the adoption of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (48th session, 1993) and the Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and the Improvement of Mental Health Care (46th Session, 1991). The right to a "standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family" is guaranteed for persons with disabilities in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948:25). Further, at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, 171 States affirmed that, "Special attention needs to be paid to ensuring non-discrimination and the equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by disabled persons, including their active participation in all aspects of society" (Vienna Program of Action, 1993:22).

The 2007 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the latest and most significant achievement in the field of disability rights. In the past, literature on disability often framed serious violations and infringements of fundamental human rights of persons with disabilities as a social welfare issue and not as a human rights issue (Disabled People's Rights International, 2003). The new United Nations disability convention reflects a "paradigm shift from a social welfare approach towards a more inclusive, rights based approach to disability issues" (Resende and Cremonisi, 2006) which has been called for by disabled persons organizations, academics, the international community and national governments. This convention also places more pressure on the state to act. Specifically, Article 16 recognizes that persons with disabilities are at higher risk of violence, injury, and abuse, and that States should take appropriate legal measures to, "Promote the physical, cognitive and psychological recovery, rehabilitation and social reintegration of persons with disabilities who become

victims of any form of exploitation, violence or abuse, including through the provision of protection services".

War-related disability is also mentioned under international human rights law. Article seven of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court¹³ defines crimes against humanity as, "Other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health" (7:k) and "torture" (7:f) are listed as crimes against humanity. "Torture" is defined as "the intentional infliction of severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, upon a person in the custody or under the control of the accused" (Article 7:2 (e)). Article 8 also defines War Crimes as, "Willfully causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or health" (8:2 (3)) and "Subjecting persons who are in the power of an adverse party to physical mutilation" (Article 8: 2 b (10)).

Background on Persons Disabled by War in Sierra Leone

A host of academic literature pertaining to the societal, psychological and physical impacts of disability as a result of war in Sierra Leone has been conducted by various non-governmental organizations. These studies are reviewed in this chapter. In Sierra Leone, however, the plight of persons disabled by war is largely a sensationalist media issue by international journalists and film media. These media have been instrumental in showing the world the shocking images of the amputees and telling their stories in order to urge international intervention and support for peace processes. Thus far, no independent research has been conducted with persons disabled by war which examines their experiences in peace processes.

Statistics

In Sierra Leone insufficient statistics exist for persons with disabilities which is an indication of how little interest is given to them by the state. There has been no national census on disability in Sierra Leone; thus, the numbers of persons disabled by the recent civil war is unknown. The statistics that have been gathered on persons with disabilities

¹³ Ratified by Government of Sierra Leone on September 15, 2000.

are mainly from non-governmental organizations working on disability issues and even these statistics often conflict. Many persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone are frustrated at the lack of quantitative data collected and published (Jarka, 2006). Such data helps to justify policies and programs that are needed to assist them in achieving their rights.¹⁴

The 2004 Sierra Leone census reported that war-related physical and visual disabilities account for about 10% of persons with disabilities but yielded few findings relating to disabilities in general (p.75). Since then, an unknown number have died from infection or associated injuries, isolated from any assistance by distance and insecurity. The Association of Amputees and War Wounded, one of the most prominent victim groups in Sierra Leone, estimates that 800–1,000 amputees survive today, the youngest of whom was less than 2 when her hand was amputated (Jarka, 2006). Handicap International, the foremost organization working with persons disabled by war in Sierra Leone, estimates the number of persons disabled by war to be as high as 20,000 (2005:4).

Types of War-Related Disabilities

The civilians in Sierra Leone's brutal conflict suffered war-related disabilities from direct amputations and from a host of other war-related causes. The Revolutionary United Front appeared to have selected victims whose maiming would most profoundly affect the social order. "It was the goal of the rebels to take away their role as men, fathers and husbands" (Onishi, 1999). Many people became disabled when armed combatants overtook their village or home, rounded up the villagers and made them line up for "long sleeve or short sleeve mutilations" in which the victim is either amputated at the wrists or at the elbow (Onishi, 1999).

Amputations are not the only form of disability resulting from war in Sierra Leone. Other violent acts that have resulted in disability include intentional blinding through the pouring of burning plastic into the victim's eyes or the deliberate gouging and removing of the eyes (Vision for the Blind, 2004). Combatants have become

¹⁴ Article 31:1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states, "State Parties undertake to collect appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable them to formulate and implement policies to give effect to the present Convention."

permanently deaf through the use of rocket propelled grenades and gunshots and others became physically disabled through forced labour, or physical torture. Other violent acts such as forced cannibalism, drinking human blood, murdering and raping members of ones family and tribal war initiations have resulted in mental disabilities and psychological damage (Heeren, 2003). These are only some of the wide variety of disabilities that were a result of war.

The Impacts of War Related Disabilities

Psychological and Physical Impacts

The literature on persons disabled by war is most often bio-medical or psychological in nature as in the case of Rwanda (Frantz et al. 2005). On psychological effects, Vignar reminds us that, unlike situations where injuries are sustained accidentally (e.g. in natural catastrophes), amputee survivors have experienced the “discovery of a human will which intentionally, methodically and calculatedly seeks to destroy” (1989:34). In regards to children, Sgoifo et al. (1999 in Schore, 2003) write about how social stressors are far more detrimental than non-social stressors, and therefore attachment or “relational trauma” from the social environment has more negative impact upon the infant brain than assaults from the nonhuman or inanimate physical environment. De Jong and Mulhern speak of the difficulties moving past the injury and state:

Failures to forget can sometimes be even more disabling than forgetting itself. Survivors often either want to be able to work with their memories or to be able to forget them (2000:21).

For persons disabled by war, their new disability leaves a physical, lasting inability to forget.

In Sierra Leone, there have been a host of reports on persons disabled by war which focus on both the psychological and physical impacts of surviving the atrocity that caused their disability (Lacoux and Ford, 2002; Handicap International, 2004). According to Heeren, three universally accepted taboos in human society have been violated in the war in Sierra Leone; murder, incest and cannibalism. By actively involving young

children in the transgression of these taboos, all existing social, cultural and psychological boundaries were taken away (2004:12). These taboos were deliberately broken in order to enable violence to be committed by children, neighbors, family and friends. The traumatic consequences of these violations were felt at the individual, familial and societal level (2004:11).

The double hand amputations which are symbolic of the cruelty of Sierra Leone's war render the victim completely helpless and unable to care for themselves. Most leg amputees can be equipped with prosthesis and regain a degree of self-sufficiency. The loss of one hand can be compensated by exclusive use of the other hand. A stump can support a functional prosthesis for working or else an aesthetic one (Colp and Rannsohoff, 1983). However, for amputees who have had both hands amputated, the concern is in the loss of touch that results in the loss of one of our five essential senses. It deprives the maimed of external and proprioceptive information necessary to the building of the body schema (Irmay, F., Merzouga, B. & Vettorel, D., 2000). This sensitive function of the hand cannot be replaced and no prosthesis can alleviate its absence (Colp and Rannsohoff, 1933). In the case of the severing of both hands, the person can no longer feed themselves, dress, or go to the toilet without help. They find themselves a burden to a group already struggling for survival and are in a state of utter depression (Heeren, 2003).

Societal Impacts

At the societal level, those who have been amputated or otherwise disabled by the war serve as constant reminders and proof of the atrocities committed. The common greeting in Sierra Leone is "How de body?" which reflects a culture that places its social and communal identity in the physical realm. Amputees have reported that they feel rejected by society in post-war Sierra Leone because the public does not want to be reminded of what they have done to others (Heeren, 2003). One amputee stated:

They say they will kill us amputees so that if the government no longer sees us, they will stop talking about the rebel atrocities.... We amputees are really discriminated against in Sierra Leone (Fofana, 2002).

The trauma of the amputees becomes situated within the “national trauma” which is the violent, sudden destruction of culture, daily life, social structure and family and community affiliations, all compounding individual loss (Gbega and Koroma, 2003). Gbega and Koroma state that symbols associated with the suffering were ignored or rejected often either by the family and/or the community/society and that this was an “effect of psycho-trauma: the unconsciousness of the traumatized group trying to control its environment and to avoid situations where its psyche would be overwhelmed, as it was during the traumatic events” (Gbega and Koroma, 2003:6). Consequently, the amputees found themselves in the similar plight as ex-child combatants, raped girl-mothers and others who were stigmatized visibly and socially by the conflict.¹⁵ Many people in Sierra Leonean society wanted to deal with this “problem” as quickly as possible and erase the reminders, thus exhibiting a ‘denial of reality’ whereby the person rejects and represses that which is unbearable to them and denies it belongs to them (Nijolla, 1996). The scars that amputees bear are a lifelong reminder of the power of their aggressors and they are indeed the “Scars of the nation” (Gbega and Koroma, 2003:4).

At the familial level, the Revolutionary United Front sought to destroy children's' ties to their families. Often in order to secure the child's allegiance to the fighting force, the Revolutionary United Front would force a child to amputate, kill or rape a member of his family or village. Once the act was committed that child was left to either run to the safety of the fighting force or remain to face an uncertain fate in his village. In this way, the Revolutionary United Front cut the child's familial and social ties and made him a member of a new community, that of the fighting force (Iacono, 2003). All standards of what was considered normal physical and moral behavior for a child were destroyed.

This review demonstrates the gaps in current knowledge in the field of war-related disability and peace processes and the situation of persons disabled by war in Sierra Leone. It also demonstrates the need to bring together the concepts of war-related disability and peace building within a human rights framework. Finally, there is a host of literature on the physical and psychological trauma of persons disabled by war, but a lack

¹⁵ Goffman (1963) outlined a framework in which to understand the process and implications of stigmatization. He defined stigma as a situation in which an individual is disqualified from full social acceptance; a person who has a failing or disability, and is therefore reduced in the mind of society as a tainted person.

of academic literature on their experiences in the peace processes. The rest of this study addresses these gaps in the literature by conducting first hand research with persons disabled by war in Sierra Leone.

Chapter V

Research Findings

Field research conducted in Sierra Leone between January and March 2007 sought to answer the research question; what was the experience of persons disabled by war in the peace processes in Sierra Leone? This question is seldom asked or reflected upon by government, policy makers or academics in Sierra Leone and abroad.

The data collection methods of participant observation and qualitative interviewing created a collection of interview texts and field notes. The analysis of these documents suggests that eight prominent themes emerged in response to the research question. These themes are:

- *Inclusion and Participation in Decision Making*
- *Utilizing Unique Initiatives*
- *Justice Unfulfilled*
- *Recognizing the Unintended Consequences of Peace Building*
- *Dissension Among the Disabled*
- *Experiences with Policy Makers*
- *Recommendations Based on Experience*
- *Unique Comments*

Each main theme is a summary of the most common verbatim responses made by participants in discussions and under each theme are sub-themes in which the participants gave further clarification and context of the idea stated in the main theme. When certain key terms arose such as "empowerment" or "justice", I paused to ask the participant to define each term before progressing and I have summarized the corresponding section. This is important because the way in which the participant defines the term is unique and specific to Sierra Leone and the context of their experience. For a diagram of the analytic framework of these findings please consult Appendix E which explains the relationships between the themes and the sub-themes.

Inclusion and Participation in Decision Making

The majority of participants with disabilities stated that their experience with inclusion and participation in decision making during the peace building process, both positive and negative, was the most important issue for them. Four specific areas regarding inclusion and participation in decision making that were important to participants were: the electoral process, the Truth and Reconciliation process, the Special Court, and engagement in peace conferences. It is important to note that questions regarding participation and inclusion in decision making were only asked of national participants (mostly participants with disabilities) who actually participated in these four processes and not of non-national participants who did not participate in them.

Participants repeatedly used such terms as, "equal representation", "appropriate consultation", "inclusion" and "accessibility". I asked each participant to define these terms when they arose and have summarized their definitions here. For participants, inclusion generally meant the opportunity to be involved in the processes that affect their lives. The terms, *equal representation and consultation* incorporate many aspects including; equal numbers of persons with disabilities as persons without disabilities at all stages of the decision making process (male and female, educated and non); equal opportunity to attend meetings held in accessible locations and with financial aid; equal opportunity to have their unique ideas and initiatives for peace considered in the planning stages. Also, participants stated that the term accessibility includes; an accessible location, language and method of discussion (for those who may be deaf or have learning disabilities) as well as an accommodation for the inclusion and access of people living in the rural areas. It is important to clarify how participants defined these terms before using them throughout this paper.

The Electoral Process

The electoral process brought both hope and disappointment for participants. The majority of participants with disabilities commented that their ability to participate in the 2002 elections (through donor assistance) brought them feelings of inclusion in the political process that would determine the course of their country's history. One participant stated, "They took my hand so I couldn't vote again, but that only made me

want to vote more." Another participant who was blinded by the rebels stated, "I got my revenge on them by voting to get rid of them."

Although the act of voting in the 2002 elections brought hope to many, the five years since then have brought disappointment as well. Other participants stated that they considered their inclusion in the electoral process to be a "sham" and a "publicity act for the media" because they voted for a government who made many promises to assist them and then never followed through. One participant felt "betrayed" because she risked so much to vote and then never received any of the promised benefits that would come from peace. Many participants voiced concern over the fact that they voted in the Sierra Leone People's Party because they promised to bring reparations to war survivors, and yet the Truth and Reconciliation reparations have still not been implemented.

The majority of these participants agreed that in retrospect little has changed in five years, and the government they elected in 2002 has made very little effort to ensure that the persons with disabilities are assisted in voting in the 2007 elections. One participant said this may be because, "the government knows they disappointed the disables and so they don't want us to vote again in 2007."

From my observations during the 2007 voter registration period, there was very little effort on behalf of the National Electoral Commission to travel to areas where large groups of persons disabled by war are living. Even the communities of polio persons which are easy to access from the capital city did not receive voter registrars to enable them to vote in the 2007, elections and they were largely left unassisted during the August voting day. One participant who was blind theorized that this was because the opposing party had a more disability friendly platform.

As we can see from these comments, the participants felt included in the process of voting in 2002 but experienced disappointment in the results of their political participation and in the opportunity to vote again and continue to exercise their right to vote.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a peace process which invited persons disabled by war to participate in the process but they were not consulted in the

project design. One participant expressed this sentiment by stating, "They invite us to participate in this Truth and Reconciliation thing but nobody asked us to be involved in making the decision to even have it in the first place". Many participants stated that they were "mistrustful of participating from the beginning" because it was a project "handed down from Geneva" and was not a local initiative.

One participant stated that he was hired by the government to "convince persons disabled by war to participate in the Truth and Reconciliation process" and as this was "the only option for participation in a reparations program, it was their only hope for securing benefits for their futures." He furthered this by using an interesting metaphor, stating: "The Truth and Reconciliation was the only game in town that promised rewards so if you wanted to win you had to play the game. He expressed concern for the persons disabled by war who participated because he assured them it would be beneficial to them. Yet the government continues to delay its responsibility to bring the reparations and this has caused resentment from amputees towards him personally as well as towards the government.

Over half of the participants spoke of their concern regarding the staffing of the government Task Force in charge of reparations which includes only one person disabled by war. They felt that such a committee should include an equal number of persons disabled by war as other members. One participant who had been closely following the reparations process mentioned that the inclusion of one disabled person on the Task Force was merely a:

government façade to appear to involve the war disables but they got to choose who would sit on the Task Force and they chose someone who would always be a "yes" man and do whatever they (the government) asks and not cause any problems.

We can see that the inclusion in decision making in the Truth and Reconciliation process was not satisfactory to the majority of the participants. Most participants who responded to this question stated that their participation did not yield the reparations they had hoped for.

The Special Court

In the case of the Special Court, participants were also concerned about consultation in the decision making process but more important for them was the issue of safety when testifying. Many participants were "terrified" and "afraid" of revenge from aggressors if they came forward to speak. One participant stated:

Nobody was really clear what the difference was in telling our stories to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission or the Special Court, they were set up side by side and we believed that what we told them was taken through an underground tunnel and reported to the Special Court. I decided it was only worth the risk if I knew that it would help justice come to Sierra Leone.

All those who testified at the Court were guaranteed safety through an anonymous testimony process, but most participants still admitted they were both scared for their physical safety and scared to risk everything only to be "let down again". In this way, participants gave a second meaning to the concept of safety. Thus, guaranteeing both *physical* and *emotional safety* was important and was a key requirement for their participation in the peace processes. One young female participant who had been a victim of rape and amputation in the war stated:

I expected that when I came forward and told the court what happened, then that would be enough to put him away forever...and now look, there has only been something like eleven people actually gone to jail. It makes me feel very bad. I should not have gone to the Court.

The majority of participants were also unhappy with the way in which persons affected by war, especially persons disabled by war, had been consulted in deciding which peace processes were good for their country. In one case, a participant stated that he was "angered" because he was never consulted on whether this was the best process for sentencing the war criminals. This participant had been approached by the Special Court through their community sensitization program which sought to educate the public about the mandate of the Special Court and encourage people who had survived the war to participate. He stated, "They began sensitizing us in the villages and telling us that we should come and testify and that it would bring us peace. What about our own ways of bringing justice?" Another participant stated, "The international people all tell us we need these things to bring peace but did anyone ask us, the real victims what we thought would best heal our wounds."

Still, a few participants spoke positively about their inclusion in the decision making process. Some of them stated that the ability to "exercise political will after war restored a sense of control and meaning to life and to the atrocity that happened" and allowed them to "publicly demonstrate their desire for peace."

Engagement in Peace Conferences

One participant spoke of his travels to peace building conferences for war-affected youth both internationally and in West Africa. He stated that in the past ten peace conferences he has attended, either one percent of the participants were persons with disabilities or there were no participants with disabilities at all. Together we reviewed the manifestos and invitations for various conferences from the past and for the future and there was no mention of special assistance or invitation for persons with disabilities to attend. He said that he continually inquired about the lack of participation by persons with disabilities at these conferences with the promoters and never received a valid reason as to why their participation had not been ensured, especially as they were often speaking of victim reconciliation in peace building after war. He stated:

How can we hold a peace building conference without war disabled victims? None of my disabled colleagues have ever been invited or received the funding for airfare or accommodation that I have even though they have been more involved in the field of peace building in Sierra Leone longer and more intensely than I. These conferences are often funded by the United Nations or other large international sponsors who are supposedly disability friendly. We need exposure for disabled people, to recognize them and ensure they have responsibilities in the peace building process.

He stated that in all of the youth funded initiatives for peace in Sierra Leone, there was no mention of equal participation of youth with disabilities. In the youth-led peace processes (such as the National Youth Council and Children's Forum Network, both funded by international donors) youth without disabilities would not sit at the same table as youth with disabilities. He said this made working together on peace issues very difficult and was very discouraging for youth with disabilities.

The participants comments reveal the importance of consulting persons disabled by war in the decision making process of peace initiatives that intimately affect their

lives. Participants revealed that certain issues were not considered in the decision making process, such as safety, inclusion in project design and representation in decision making councils, and equal opportunity to participate in peace conferences.

Utilizing Unique Initiatives

Another important theme to participants was how the peace processes could have drawn on their unique abilities and initiatives for peace. This recommendation is a direct result of the question posed by one participant, who stated, "Why did no one ask the victims what they needed for peace to come and why didn't they build upon our ideas instead of bringing in outside pre-conceived ideas of what we needed and wanted. We, the amputees, should bring the peace."

Under this theme, three issues arose. Firstly, participants with disabilities continually restated during interviews and field visits that their initiatives or ideas for building a peaceful country were never "valued" or "recognized as viable options for peace." Secondly, the participants felt that it was their unique responsibility to "work together for peace" and to build reconciliation through their own initiatives. Thirdly, I examine the difficulties in achieving funding for these unique initiatives.

Value and Recognition

Certain participants commented on the fact that the international community and the national government refused to "value" their ideas for peace and to officially "recognize" their ability to come up with their own methods of conflict resolution. One participant stated, "Maybe they think that because we are now disabled, then we must be stupid and no longer worth listening to." This comment reflects the overwhelmingly prevalent attitude towards persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone who are treated as second-class citizens who are uneducated and worthless to society.¹⁶

Another participant commented on a massive peace radio project that was externally funded and carried out in Sierra Leone and stated, "We already have a voice

¹⁶ Beatings, human sacrifice and cruel punishments are only a few of the tortures inflicted on persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone due to cultural and social issues that are still prevalent. For more information see Vision for the Blind Annual Report 2007.

for disability and peace issues on the radio and instead of building on that they brought in something from outside and we had to shut down. Why didn't they just come to us and try to work together?" Overall, many participants spoke of the importance of achieving value and recognition for their unique initiatives for peace.

Working Together for Peace

Secondly, other participants were concerned mainly with the issue of finding their own ways to work together for peace and reconciliation. One participant stated, "Peace must begin with the victims so they can provide unique ways to forgive." A general feeling among participants was that the peace processes are in the past and now and "we must work together for peace." In order to achieve this, a host of different persons disabled by war formed a coalition, which includes the perpetrators of crimes, the military disabled from all sides, war wounded, amputees and an organization for the blind. The members believe that by working together the coalition can be much stronger than disparate groups in attaining justice and reparations. Thus far, the coalition has worked together to achieve reconciliation and forgiveness among its members and to show Sierra Leonean society that "reconciliation between victims and perpetrators is possible." However, despite their constant searching for assistance no donor has come forward to grant them funds for any of their activities.¹⁷

Since it was difficult to get interviews with ex-combatants who had become disabled, I spoke with a representative of the "Coalition for War Disables", which, as mentioned, includes many ex-combatants. He said that any study on persons disabled by war should include the ex-combatants because "in the spirit of reconciliation we should not judge and continue to treat both sides equally in peace times. In Sierra Leone the lines of victim and perpetrator were so blurred." He told the story of many of the ex-combatants who became disabled in the fight to defend their country, families and communities and who now face insecurity and fear of retribution because of their role in the fighting forces and stigmatization due to their recent disability. Many of these now

¹⁷ For further information see Juliet Ansunama, "War Disables Sensitize members on Reparation in Sierra Leone". April 18, 2007.

disabled ex-combatants were eager to confront their victims and work together in a coalition where mutual forgiveness could be fostered. He stated:

The various peace processes that we had in this country will not work for these ex-combatants because they are afraid to come forward and be prosecuted but at the same time want to make amends and come face to face with their victims to have some kind of closure or reconciliation. So we started this coalition on our own, funded by no one, and we have achieved amazing results, on our own terms, drawing from our own ideas about peace and how we can reconcile. I only wonder why no one values or funds that effort.

The spokesperson also commented on the importance of apology, and how the sincere apologies of the ex-combatants in the group, was the first step to reconciliation and healing among members. He stated, "What the big donors missed in the peace processes was the importance of apology. When the ex-combatants looked at us with teary eyes and said they were sorry, that's the moment we forgave and then we could have peace."

Overall, the participants had genuine desires for a peace process that was culturally and socially relevant for them. Not all participants were educated or politically active and many were simply struggling to survive, but within most I saw a spark of creativity and desire to end their suffering in a way that was meaningful for them. However, from my observations some participants were growing incredibly cynical about taking any action whatsoever and felt that everything was out of their hands and relegated to the national and international policy makers.

Difficulties achieving Funding

In order to discover why persons disabled by war felt that donors did not value or fund their initiatives, I consulted the non-national participants who were employees of large non-governmental organizations and donors. Many of these participants agreed that even in their disability work in peace times, their programs and policies were dictated by their higher authorities abroad. Three of the five participants suggested that local initiatives for peace that were proposed by disabled people's organizations were not valued or funded because large donors only want to fund peace processes that they have conceived, that they know how to implement and have proven successful in other countries (such as the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration, the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission and so on). The other two participants responded to this question by stating that Sierra Leone needed effective, internationally recognized peace processes which were capable of bringing nation-wide peace and reconciliation instead of each segment of the population doing what they felt was right. One of these participants stated, "In such lawless times as 2002 in Sierra Leone, the country couldn't wait for people who had just suffered horrendous atrocities to begin collectively working out a peace process and then doling out mass amounts of money for them. It just wasn't realistic." In addition all five of these participants agreed that the peace processes could have joined together with local initiatives to make a greater impact.

From my personal observations in Sierra Leone, one reason that local initiatives are not valued or funded is due to the policies of the larger donors who grant the funds. One major donor organization in Sierra Leone stated to me, "Our organization will not allow disabled people's organizations to direct the funds we give them." Although, the major donors have their reasons for this¹⁸, it remains a very serious problem that I witnessed in Sierra Leone and complicates the communication and programming for disability initiatives.

Overall, building on the unique initiatives of persons disabled by war in a way which fosters empowerment and dignity is an important element of peace building for the majority of participants.

Justice Unfulfilled

In all interviews and in the majority of field visits, the issue of justice was discussed. Participants had varying definitions of justice, but overall justice was loosely conceptualized by the participants who had been disabled by war in two ways. The first was retribution towards the aggressor which meant a public admission of guilt and accompanying punishment either through international or national courts. Roughly 5% of participants voiced their desire to extract a violent revenge on their aggressor. The second concept of justice was the public acknowledgment of their suffering through

¹⁸ Certain donors feel that the smaller disabled person's organizations cannot properly manage large amounts of money or may be corrupt with their spending of the money. In addition, if a disabled person's organization does not have three years of external audits (which is very difficult and costly to achieve) then they are automatically out of the running for large grants.

reparations. Many participants disabled by war stated that they could live without retribution if they could receive reparations, and that the longer they live without reparations, the deeper the injustice is felt. Overall, justice for the participants equaled some degree of public acknowledgement and action through either punishment through the courts or through reparations. The experience of persons disabled by war in attaining justice during peace building was discussed in regards to two major areas: the Special Court and the responsibility of the national government.

The Special Court

The entire institution of the Special Court promised a measure of justice for the victims as it was the only real prosecuting institution for the war crimes committed. However, the majority of participants agreed that the Special Court actually perpetuated injustice by building a court for war crimes that looks like a vacation resort. The locals refer to it as "Los Angeles" because it is the size of a full city block, with armed guards, the only site with twenty-four hour electricity, manicured lawns, gardens, restaurants and massive judicial halls. In addition, there was no mandatory policy to ensure equal employment of persons with disabilities at the Special Court. While I was in Freetown, one war criminal had been airlifted overseas in order to receive medical attention at an enormous cost and this brought much rage and anger to many participants.¹⁹ One participant stated, "The Special Court is a slap in my face and a constant reminder of the injustice I have suffered. The court keeps saying it has no money to help victims and yet it shelters, clothes and cares for the criminals inside. How fair is that?" Another participant said, "It's safer and better on the inside of that court than it is in the area I live in where I am always afraid."

One participant who was employed by the Special Court stated, "Justice is expensive but you should try going without it and you will see that the world needs criminal courts in order to keep respect for justice and order." He explained that while it

¹⁹ Prison conditions have come under some local public criticism for lenience, as they include satellite television, a well-balanced diet regularly tested and approved by the ICRC, a basketball court, and free medical care (as required by international norms), most of which are unattainable luxuries for most Sierra Leoneans. These issues present a key challenge for running a Court up to international standards in one of the world's poorest countries (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2006).

was not the mandate of the Court to provide reparations to war survivors, in response the growing outrage on behalf of victims, they held a Victims Commemoration Day and pledged U.S. \$20,000 towards public outreach forums, amputee sports and other initiatives for persons disabled by war. Participants that had been involved in this commemoration day stated that while the Court made a small attempt to satiate the injustice felt by the war survivors, the commemoration day acted “more like a bandage rather than a salve to heal the wound”. Overall, the issue of the Special Court was a favorite with participants as everyone had opinions about their experiences in this process.

Responsibility of the National Government

The majority of participants felt that as the responsibility for justice was allotted to the Special Court, then the government relieved themselves of bringing justice to the people. From my observations in Sierra Leone, the police barely function and the law courts and the Ministry of Justice do not serve to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. One participant who was disabled and has been repeatedly victimized in peace times stated, "Where do I turn? The government doesn't even pay the police half the time. If I go to the ministry of justice they laugh at me."

My observations validated this claim. I witnessed epileptic children who had been raped by witch doctors, polio children who had been robbed of their wheelchairs and amputees being beaten in the streets. During one field visit I encountered a blind woman who had just been beaten because she was blind. On another visit I encountered an amputee who was promised free medical care for life (through the Truth and Reconciliation reparations) but who was repeatedly turned away from hospitals because he was an amputee and no doctor would treat him for free.²⁰ He died three days later from the pain of the amputation. In another visit, I encountered a group of persons with disabilities, both persons disabled by war and polio victims, sitting in the mud because that morning the Ministry of Education had arrived and kicked them off their land and

²⁰ In Sierra Leone I witnessed the difficulties for amputees to attain medical care. When an amputee arrives for their promised "free medical care" they are turned away by doctors because the doctors will not receive any compensation from the government and the doctors know the amputees rarely have the money to pay for the drugs they will prescribe.

out of their houses because they wanted to build a school there. In all of the above mentioned cases there was no police investigation, court trial or punishment for the wrong. Indeed, a group of participants stated that when a case is taken to the police, the police required a bribe because their salaries were not sufficient or often not even being paid by the government.

One participant said, "Here in Sierra Leone we take the law into our own hands because we know the police will never help." Another amputee man of twenty years old stated:

The world sees that Sierra Leone is now a peaceful country, but that is because they never look long enough to see the injustices of our daily lives. How can there be peace without justice? How can there be peace while the people who did this to us are still roaming free? How can we call this peace when our government is refusing to help us and we are dying? When I hear someone say that Sierra Leone is a peaceful country I want to laugh.

Overall, participants felt that attaining justice through the Special Court and the government was a very important issue for them.

Recognizing the Unintended Consequences of Peace Building

In addition to the benefits that the peace processes brought to Sierra Leonean society, these processes also left negative consequences. As the participants have the benefit of hindsight, and as most of the processes are finished, they made many insightful comments in two main areas; feelings of jealousy and anger left behind by the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration process and the living situation of persons disabled by war due to the unfulfilled promises of the reparations process.

Anger and Jealousy

First of all, the majority of participants were especially critical of the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration process. Many participants acknowledged the limitations of the process, and that the process was not intended to provide reparations for the victims. However, an equal number of participants believed that the process further victimized persons disabled by war by creating an atmosphere of animosity and denial of survivor's basic human rights as a result of accommodating for

the combatants. Participants stated that this process left behind profound feelings of "envy, animosity, jealousy and injustice". One participant stated:

The camp of amputee children was oddly placed directly next to the camp of ex-combatant children who had just been demobilized and disarmed. Because the amputee children had heard wild tales of all the money the child soldiers received and saw that they were now living in an old resort center and playing soccer on the beach it made the amputee children very jealous and angry.

Other participants commented on the fact that this process assisted many ex-child soldiers to reintegrate into their communities and helped them find their parents while many children with disabilities from the war were left on the streets to beg with no such assistance. Many participants felt that the combatants were "rewarded for what they had done" as many ex-combatants are now driving taxis or holding down jobs while people disabled by war have not received any formal training or job creation scheme.

Living Situation

Secondly, due to the fact that persons disabled by war never received any formal skills training or monetary benefits from the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration process, many survivors are waiting for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reparations as their only hope for survival. One participant stated, "Now that I realize that reparations may never come, I become angry. There is no relief for this pain." One interviewee who contracted polio as a result of the interruptions in vaccinations during the war stated, "What about me? The reparations won't help me, the court won't help me, the government won't help me, the non-profits won't help me....every time I am refused I get more angry."

The lack of reparations or government assistance for persons disabled by war has left many of them in horrible living situations. From observing the homes and communities of persons disabled by war, I can report that their living situation is, in some cases, horrifying. Amputees lay dying of starvation on the floor, some had not eaten in days, they had no clean water and almost none were able to hold jobs or provide for their families. They survived on the kindness of visitors.

In my field notes from February 1, 2007 I noted my observations on this issue by stating:

When I arrived today in their community [of amputees and persons disabled by war] there must have been a hundred amputees around me, all clamoring to talk. When I asked them what they do to survive now they said, "We wait for reparations and many of us will not live to see them come." Indeed, a man had died the day before and they showed me his grave...they say he died of "the pain". I think this meant either from the amputation or starvation, just like the other man I saw dying. The conditions they were living in were obscene and no one was assisting them.

Many of the participants who were disabled by war agreed that life is "worse now than during the war". One stated, "At least during the war we had emergency shelters and relief aid to help us survive. Now nothing."

Overall, feelings of envy and jealousy among war survivors and a lack of reparations to provide a decent standard of living were unintended consequences of the peace processes in Sierra Leone that may have impacts for future peace in the country.

Dissension among the Disabled

Many participants, both nationals and non-nationals, had an opinion on the current conflict between different sectors of the disabled population of Sierra Leone. In this regard, peace processes appeared to actually bring conflict. As I probed further, I discovered that while this issue is important to reflect on, it is not a conflict that involves the majority of persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone. Something like 30% of participants made comments on this issue, while the other 70% of participants felt this conflict was not important and should be discarded in the effort to work together for peace. I was mainly an observer to this conflict and did not formally ask about it during interviews. However, it continually reappeared in discussions and I found myself caught in the middle. It is my observation that this conflict has a direct relationship to the work of various non-governmental organizations and the reparations process.

The Efforts of Non-governmental Organizations

First of all, certain participants who were not disabled by war often reported that the amputees as a group were receiving more than they were in terms of free houses and

media coverage.²¹ Among the amputees there was tension between those who received houses and those who did not and between those who were assisted by non-governmental organizations and those who were not. One group of polio persons I visited lived directly across the road from a community of shining new homes built for amputees while they were living in tin shacks as the rain poured in. One man stated:

Why do they get a home when most of them only go to the city to beg and don't even live in their homes? We don't even have a roof over our head but because we aren't amputees they say they won't help us. Everyday I wake up and look at those houses, sitting empty.

This comment reflects the policy of the house building non-governmental organization to deny housing to anyone who did not suffer a direct war-related disability. In my field notes I commented on this experience by stating:

I would not say these people were out rightly "angry", it was a quiet kind of indignation, more of a sadness....I could see an underlying tension in their words.

Conflict also existed between the disabled people's organizations and the non-governmental organizations working in the disability sector. Many non-national participants who were directors or employees of non-governmental organizations reported that they took on the role of advocating for the persons disabled by war and because of that they received resentment by many disabled people's organizations who felt that they should be doing the advocacy instead. In addition, as much of the money for peace related projects was funneled through large non-governmental organizations, this caused a level of mistrust among the intended recipients who felt that the money was being mismanaged.

The Reparations Process

The Truth and Reconciliation process also fostered dissension among persons with disabilities. The reparations program made many promises for persons disabled by war, such as free education and health care causing tension among other survivors who

²¹ The Norwegian Refugee Council implemented a nation wide plan to build homes for amputees after the war. Thus far they have built 420 houses countrywide. About 4000 persons (beneficiaries and family members) who were residing in Internally Displaced Persons camps in Freetown benefited from the Housing and Reintegration Program during 2000-2003 and another 100 amputees and war-wounded from remote villages became house owners during 2004 and 60 beneficiaries for 2007 have been identified (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2007).

felt it was unfair to give reparations to some war survivors and not others. One participant who was not disabled but a national of Sierra Leone stated, "Perhaps the disabled demand too much and sometimes they think they are more special than other victims and should be given more than others."

Overall the majority of participants believed that in the special case of post-conflict peace building, all groups implementing initiatives should ensure that they do not cause further dissension.²²

Experiences with the Policy Makers

All participants had a great deal to say about the interaction between persons disabled by war and the policy makers in the peace processes. The participants spoke of their dissatisfaction with the national government and also their gratitude towards the international community. However, within these general statements of "dissatisfaction" and "gratitude" there is a minority of participants that do not agree with these statements and their opinions are also noted accordingly.

Dissatisfaction with the National Government

The majority of national participants wished to make their unhappiness and dissatisfaction with the government clear. All national participants unanimously agreed that the current government in Sierra Leone has been unsatisfactory in its duties and obligations to bring peace and justice for all since the cessation of the war. One participant who lost her family in the war stated, "The government forgot about us and treats us as if we are in the way of their progress."

The dissatisfaction with the national government is mainly over the lack of implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation reparations. Most participants felt that the reparations are now a responsibility of the government to enact and not a responsibility of the international community²³ and cannot be considered to be "aid".²⁴

²² This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six

²³ The task of implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reparations was handed over to the government body of the National Committee for Social Action to implement in September 2006. Since then the reparations program has not been implemented.

²⁴ This is recommended in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report which states: "Government participation is vital to the success of any reparations program. For this reason, reference is made

One husband of an amputee woman stated, "We can't keep blaming the United Nations....the war has been over for five years, let the government show us whether they are serious about prioritizing reparations and justice for war victims."

Another participant stated:

Our government must take over the reparations program in order to symbolically show that they are making amends for their inability to protect their citizens in the war. The United Nations cannot be in charge of reparations, neither can any non-governmental organization. We need our own government that we elected into power to say that they acknowledge our suffering, that it is a priority for them and that justice will come for us. Unless they do that, the reparations will still be "aid".

Another participant who has been running a home for amputees and street children with disabilities stated, "The government is the only one to blame, they are sentencing these people to the grave unless they act soon."

However, not all participants criticized the national government. A small minority believed that, "The government is doing the best they can, considering the difficulties they are under." Another participant stated, "Kabbah in particular suffered during the war and still struggled for his people, he never gave up. The government has so many priorities after war, let's not be too harsh on them."

I observed that certain ministries in the government did care about the plight of persons disabled by war but were so overloaded by other tasks and a dire lack of funding, that they could only listen to their concerns. I also witnessed how the government would not even attend meetings when persons disabled by war invited them unless they would be paid extra and given lunch. I observed giant gatherings of disabled people's organizations and non-governmental organizations to advocate for disability rights but there was not a single government representative present.

Experiences with the International Community

throughout this report calling for government assistance. Government assistance requires the government to finance the measures prescribed in the program. It may also entail: (a) the government continuing a service where an organization or body does not have the capacity or the mandate to maintain its activities; and/or (b) the government seeking outside financial or donor support for any given measure mentioned in the program." (p.110)

When participants were questioned about their experiences with the international community during the peace processes the majority spoke of their gratitude towards the international community for stepping in to help end the war. I observed reluctance from participants to criticize the international community directly as they had criticized the government. I noted in my field journal:

They [the participants] are open to talk of their experiences with the peace processes in general but reluctant to criticize any one member of the international community specifically. They want to talk about how the policies of the international community can be changed and are eager to criticize the government but are less willing to criticize the international community.

While many participants were critical of the way in which the peace processes were carried out, they were also pleased with the effort made by certain members of the international community for their "steadfastness" and willingness to commit to "seeing the job through till the end." They especially praised the United Nations for their good conduct and honourable reputation in Sierra Leone and for their courage to step in to end the war. Some participants felt that we can learn much from the past but "should not be too hard" on the international community's efforts to bring peace, suggesting that they did the best they could, considering the enormous difficulties. One participant stated:

Many countries emerge from war and then everyone is left to suffer silently and piece their lives back together. But in Sierra Leone millions of dollars were spent to instill peace and security in our country and we should be grateful for that.

Not all participants expressed gratitude towards the international community. Roughly, 25% of participants did speak critically of their experience with the international community during peace processes. One participant called the international community "spineless" for their inability to apply enough pressure to the government to implement the reparations program. Indeed, many participants stated that during the peace processes the international community was instrumental in keeping peace and order, but now they have an important role to play in applying diplomatic pressure on the national government to enact the reparations program.

Other participants spoke of the lack of funding from the international community for projects created by disabled people's organizations (as discussed in Theme two). One participant stated, "During peace processes we tried to enter into dialogue with the

international organizations, but they wouldn't meet with us. They thought we were too small and would only speak to the disability union leaders which do not speak for all of us disables."

Overall, while most participants expressed gratitude toward the international community, other participants spoke critically of their experiences.

Recommendations Based on Participant Experience

The participants were eager to talk about making recommendations based on what their experiences in the peace processes. Under the theme of recommendations the participants spoke of two main issues; the importance of prioritizing disability in policy making through "disability checks" and building on good practices.

Repeatedly participants stated that, "disability is NOT a priority". Participants continually made comments such as, "disability was not at the forefront of policy making" and "disability was an afterthought once projects are in the works and the impacts on disabled people are not thought through ahead of time". One participant stated, "Disability awareness and consultation with the disability community must be a standard approach to any project carried out in Sierra Leone."

Disability Checks

When I furthered the discussion by asking how disability could be prioritized, the participants responded with many comments that I have collected and summarized here as "Disability Checks" based on their recommendations. I coined the title "Disability Checks" as a result of a comment made by a participant who stated:

We should have something like a checklist for disability projects and projects can only proceed when the disables go through the list with them and then give them the go ahead.

Certain participants stated that these checks should be required under international law to apply to any peace process before its inception. These checks represent important ways in which the participants felt that the injustices that occurred in Sierra Leone might "not be repeated in other post-conflict countries." These Disability Checks are as follows:

1. Has this process considered the extent to which it may further victimize persons with disabilities, particularly in the case of persons disabled by war? Could this

process in any way unintentionally violate the human rights of any group of persons or perpetuate further conflict?

2. Has this process considered what justice means to persons disabled by war? Will this process be committed to achieving that justice?
3. To what extent does this process provide for equal representation and consultation for persons with disabilities? Are there special measures in place to ensure their accessibility at all levels of the project design?²⁵

From my observations with policy makers in Sierra Leone, only a few institutions are making significant attempts to mainstream disability into their development projects and to consult with the local disability advocates before beginning their work on the ground.

In general, the majority of participants agreed that if peace processes, such as those used in Sierra Leone, were to be used again in a country with large amounts of persons disabled by war, then they must be aware of the potential they have to exacerbate the conflict. This is a key issue to this discussion because it reveals some of the unexpected conflicts caused by well-intentioned actions.²⁶

Building on Good Practices

To gain a more complete understanding of the issue I also asked participants about any "good practices" of the policy makers that were successful for them in peace times, and how to build on these. Such good practices include: consultation with persons with disabilities in project design and community sensitization and public education campaigns.

Despite the difficulties that persons disabled by war experienced with non-governmental organizations, the participants had great respect for those organizations that had been tirelessly trying to consult with them before implementing plans for allocating funds. Many stated the importance of having a good relationship between the non-governmental organizations, disabled people's organizations and civil society and the need to foster good communication and mutual trust. One participant commented on this by stating:

²⁵ These checks can also be modified to apply to all the various sectors of war survivors by changing the wording.

²⁶ This is discussed further in Chapter Six under the heading Re-thinking Peace Building: The Possibility of Relocating the Conflict.

We need to trust each other, both the disabled persons' organizations and the non-governmental organizations have to work together in a model of development and peace building that involves each other equally at all levels of decision making and consultation.

Three other participants felt that one good practice that existed in the peace processes was the efforts towards public education and community sensitization before beginning peace processes. As mentioned in theme one, many participants were critical of this effort to sensitize people to an externally conceived project. However, other participants felt that public education is very valuable to ensure understanding of the purpose of the process among the war survivors. A few participants commented on the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration process and what they term the "confusion" and "misunderstandings" that occurred in the process because the civilians of Sierra Leone were not made aware of why the combatants were receiving money or special housing in camps. One participant stated:

During the time of demobilization everything was chaos and everyone was hearing rumors about combatants being paid by the United Nations and receiving free shelter and food and nobody knew what was going on. Someone should have made it clear beforehand.

One participant commented that public education helps people to understand why certain decisions are being made in peace processes and makes the process more "transparent". This transparency was an important issue to participants who wanted to be educated about the processes in order to make a decision on whether to participate in them or not and in order to understand who was intended to benefit from them.

In addition, two participants who had been disabled by war recommended that all policy makers should "keep their promises" in peace processes. Especially in regards to reparations programs which may not "promise" anything but do raise the hopes of war survivors. Taken as a whole, the participants have certain key recommendations for interacting with persons disabled by war in peace processes as well as a respect for the good practices that have been implemented in Sierra Leone.

Unique Comments

Not all the comments by participants fit neatly into these six themes. There were many unique comments, and although they were not repeated often, they are valuable insights. One such finding was the importance of being aware of cultural issues. There has been a longstanding conflict between the rural dwellers (often from the Mende and Temne tribes) and the "Freetown elite" (mainly of Krio descent) and two participants mentioned that any research on persons with disabilities must respect this conflict and ensure equal participation of all cultures. She stated:

All you whites come to learn about Sierra Leone and talk to all the people in the capital, but no one ever comes to my town up north and talks with us to see what we think. Those Krios always run everything because the whites don't bother consulting the rest of us.

This is a crucial point because any inclusive and accessible process must be aware of the isolation rural dwellers face and ensure accommodation for them in the project design. In addition, the historical tension between the Mendes, Temnes and Krios was one of the factors that caused the war, and thus any peace process or research project on peace issues, should be considerate of equal representation of all three cultural groups.

Secondly, the participants also wanted me to ensure that in this study I included their comments in which they defined the terms "empowerment" and "dignity". One participant, who was forced to beg in the streets after being shot in the leg in the war, stated:

The constant struggle for reparations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has made everyone think of us as beggars...why will no one train us to become self sufficient or employ us with the skills we have? We are not useless to society now...I would rather be able to provide for my family than to sit and beg the government for reparations.

Many participants reinforced the concept that their sense of empowerment is linked to their ability to be a productive member of their society and the majority of participants agreed that it was "undignified" to be forced to beg after all they have suffered. Some said that begging was not limited to street begging but also begging from non-governmental organizations for assistance which made them feel like a "charity case" and contributed to their feelings of helplessness and disempowerment.

Thirdly, the comments made by female participants often included other issues that male participants did not speak of. Female participants who had been disabled by the

war spoke of their increased vulnerability after the disability and the risk of physical and sexual abuse that they faced in peace times, especially the danger of leaving their villages in order to travel to sites where they could participate in the peace processes. Female participants also voiced concern over their special need for reparations or permanent social support from the government in order to care for their children as their husbands often left them once they became disabled. Also, participants who had been disabled in the war as children spoke of their need for reintegration and sensitization in their villages because, in many cases, their parents forced them to leave their homes as they had become a financial burden. These youth depend on the help of non-governmental organizations to care for them in the absence of any familial or governmental support, or reparations program.

As the first theme reveals, persons disabled by war felt that they were largely excluded from the peace processes in Sierra Leone. However, the peace processes also left out many other categories of war survivors such as bush wives²⁷, rape victims, war widows and persons with psychological trauma to name a few. Persons disabled by war were not the only war survivors that experienced difficulty in the peace processes. I wish to acknowledge the suffering and lack of inclusion that these other survivors have faced and do not presume that the suffering of persons disabled by war was any more or less important. However, for the purposes of this study I was limited to examining only the experiences of persons disabled by war and I sincerely hope that other researchers are documenting the needs of other war survivors in peace processes.

The data presented in this chapter makes obvious a host of different opinions on the experiences of persons disabled by war in peace processes. In Chapter Six, I discuss the implications of these findings on larger peace building efforts that involve persons disabled by war.

²⁷ The Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration process faced challenges in including girls who had been victims of rape, sexual slavery and forced labour. For more information see Mazurana and McKay, 2004.

Chapter VI

Analysis and Discussion

The findings discussed in Chapter Five suggest that several important peace building issues require rethinking in light of the findings of this study. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the implications of those findings in relation to these larger issues. Major aspects of the peace process need to be reexamined; these include, firstly, the ways in which the concepts of peace, justice and reconciliation are understood; secondly, the character of the interactions between persons disabled by war and the policy makers in the national government and the international community; and thirdly, the ways in which disability can be made a policy priority of the peace processes, as suggested by the recommendations and conclusions of the participants themselves. Finally, this analysis must be undertaken within a rights based framework, one which accords full significance to the current struggle by persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone to achieve their human rights.

This chapter will undertake such an analysis under the following five headings; Rethinking Peace, Justice and Reconciliation; Interaction with Policy Makers; Peace Building as a Human Rights Issue; Suggestions for Future Research and Conclusions.

1. Rethinking Peace, Peace Building, Justice, and Reconciliation

Rethinking Peace?

While the peace building process was providing a better life for many in post-war Sierra Leone, persons disabled by war continue to suffer profound societal and physical injustices. As one participant stated, "Who said we have peace now? We have no more guns and the war has stopped but atrocities for us carry on the same as before....maybe worse now because everyone is enjoying peace except us."

This comment reflects the dichotomy that pervaded many conversations with persons disabled by war and is best reflected in the statement of one participant who stated: "How could peace promise so much good but leave behind so much bad?"

In Sierra Leone today there is a palpable desire for peace, it is felt in every corner of society but for persons disabled by war what does peace mean and peace for whom?

Is continued suffering, lack of medical care, lack of basic food and shelter, continued harassment, beatings and a life of begging on the street considered to be peace?

As the research findings have demonstrated, the living conditions of persons disabled by war in Sierra Leone today is less than peaceful. The kind of peace that participants spoke of is reminiscent of what Galtung referred to as "negative peace" which he defined as "merely the absence of war" (1969:3). In contrast, positive peace "involves the search for positive conditions which can resolve the underlying causes of conflict that produce violence" (Woolman, 1985:44). Reardon places global justice as the central concept of positive peace and asserts that "justice, in the sense of the full enjoyment of the entire range of human rights by all people, is what constitutes positive peace" (1988: 26).

Participants have clearly stated their desires for justice, reparations, equality and inclusion in order to achieve a positive type of peace that is sustainable. The International Development Research Center has developed a set of criteria to assess whether a country has successfully achieved a "sustainable peace". These criteria are:

1. Absence of actual or threatened widespread physical violence from armed force, including repression
2. Accommodative political processes that allow access to decisions affecting the population's lives and provide mechanisms for addressing social grievances of the kind that otherwise could produce major upheavals
3. Functioning government sufficient to provide essential public services, including security
4. Sufficient economic development to discernibly improve the well being of most people in the society and begin to reduce widespread poverty.
5. Absence of egregious social divisions and material inequalities. (Rettberg, 2003:26)

The statements of the participants have demonstrated that in Sierra Leone today only one criterion has been fulfilled; the absence of violence from armed force. This leads us to question whether the peace processes truly brought peace to persons disabled by war.

Evaluating the effectiveness of the peace processes in Sierra Leone is not within the scope of this paper. Such an evaluation in any post-conflict country is difficult as the effects of these processes often do not appear until the long term. One must be realistic about the extent to which peace processes can solve all of society's problems and must

consider that even once the foundation is laid, the achievement of sustainable peace will require long-term development and restoration.

Rethinking Peace Building: The Possibility of Relocating the Conflict

The participants have demonstrated a desire to utilize their unique ideas and initiatives for building a sustainable peace with a strong foundation. Lederach states, "Peace building requires a long term commitment to a process of societal and relational transformation and requires a solid foundation upon which to build" (1997:32).

Building on the ideas and initiatives of persons disabled by war would avoid what Bush terms the "commodification of peace building" which is characterized by initiatives that are mass produced according to blueprints that meet Northern or European specifications and short term interests, but that are usually only marginally relevant or appropriate for the political, social and economic realities of war-prone societies (2001:49). Thus, peace building is concerned with "the creation of opportunities, and the creation of political, economic, and social spaces, within which *indigenous* actors can identify, develop, and employ the resources necessary to build a peaceful, prosperous, and just society" (Bush, 1995).

Peace building is a complex and difficult process which is never static but always changing as the international community and development workers continually re-examine the impacts of peace processes (Anderson, 1999; Anderson, 2004; Bush, 2003; Miller, 1992). Bush defines peace building as, "those initiatives which foster and support sustainable structures and processes which strengthen the prospects for peaceful coexistence and decrease the likelihood of the outbreak, reoccurrence, or continuation, of violent conflict" (2003:33).

Thus, an important question to ask of any peace process is the following: does this peace process in any way perpetuate future conflict or generate hostilities between any sectors of society? In any peace process it is necessary to carefully consider the impact of securing rights for one group of people, who are considered "special" while not securing rights for other groups. Instead of bringing peace it may instead spark jealousy, animosity and anger between groups in society as the power dynamics and social situation of certain groups change.

For example, if reparations are implemented in the near future and funds become distributed nation wide to persons disabled by war, they may become more empowered and their economic situation may improve greatly. This may generate unforeseen conflicts between those who do and those who do not qualify for reparations²⁸ and between other groups of people who are accustomed to the current power structure in Sierra Leone which places person with disabilities at the bottom.

In addition, the "Disability Checks" recommended by participants in Chapter Five (p. 49) must also be examined in order to determine whether they might exacerbate the underlying conflicts in Sierra Leone in any way. If persons disabled by war achieve equal representation in the decision making process of peace policies and programs, then other segment of survivors should also receive equal representation. Such an equal representation and inclusion of all groups is important in order to facilitate positive interaction and communication between groups and also ensures that one group does not monopolize the decisions that are made or bias the policies. Although there are many challenges to equal representation from all groups in the decision making process, such an interaction could help to lessen unforeseen conflicts while also revealing underlying hostilities between groups that may arise. Encouraging equal representation from all groups at the very onset of the peace building phase and inviting people to participate in their own healing may have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the process.²⁹

This is not to say that the recommendations of participants should not be instigated; only that the international community be aware of the way in which altering the existing power relationships and changing the current socio-economic status of any one group in society can become sparks which further the conflict.

²⁸ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission report uses ambiguous language in its definitions of who should receive reparations. It states, "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommends the following groups of victims as beneficiaries of the specific measures of the reparations program: (1) amputees; (2) other war wounded (defined under the section describing the various categories of beneficiaries); (3) children; and (4) victims of sexual violence. The Commission also considered those victims who are in urgent need of a particular type of assistance to address their current needs, even if this only serves to put them on an equal footing with a larger category of victims (p.58).

²⁹ Bush discusses the way in which peace building projects can promote social communication between groups and help to build bridges between conflicting groups. He suggests that one question to ask is "Did/will the project increase contact, confidence, or trust between the communities? Did it dispel distrust?" (2003:30).

Re-thinking Justice and Reconciliation

In a region as volatile for a recurrence of war as Sierra Leone, the need for justice and peace for all cannot be understated. In Chapter Five we learned that justice for those disabled by war was defined as "public retribution" and an "acknowledgment of the wrong through action". Disability Check Two also recommended that any peace process incorporate what justice means to persons disabled by war and act to achieve that justice. According to Jarka:

Justice entails public recognition of our status as victims, public recognition of our suffering and the damage we have sustained, and a serious public effort to repair at least symbolically the harm done. It is a crucial instrument in allowing our society to get on with life (2006:2).

The findings showed that the Special Court did not achieve the public retribution that the participants had hoped for; however, it is important to be realistic about the ability of an international court to bring justice for survivors of such a long and protracted conflict. One participant stated, "How much justice am I willing to settle for?" To be realistic, it would be impossible in any post-conflict society to provide justice for all war survivors and thus the Special Court was mandated to bring to justice those bearing the "greatest responsibility". The government of Sierra Leone was incapable of bringing about justice in peace times as national laws did not encompass war crimes or crimes against humanity, and the government had inadequate funds to investigate and try crimes on this scale without international assistance (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2006:22). All these factors contributed to the government's willingness to cede jurisdiction to an international court. Perhaps the international community could consider a new model for large scale justice efforts which build on existing judicial processes that reach a greater percentage of society while continuing to operate under the jurisdiction of an international court to try war crimes.

On the other hand, the government of Sierra Leone wanted the international court to prosecute the main perpetrators as national, ad hoc tribunals would have caused instability and could ignite further violence in fragile peace times. In addition, the Court was funded largely by international governments such as the British, who had already

invested enormous sums to maintain peace. Therefore, experimenting with a new version of an international court would have proved difficult and the Special Court was already a hybrid. However, the findings reveal the difficulties that persons disabled by war have with a system of justice which is more symbolic than punitive. The findings reveal the desire on behalf of war survivors for a justice process in peace times which is more inclusive and accessible and which truly provides public retribution for crimes committed.

If the desire for public retribution is not met, then the possibility of cyclical violence recurring is likely, as people take justice into their own hands. Edward Conteh, whose lower arm was cut off by Revolutionary United Front rebels during an assault on Freetown, sees a risk of violence recurring. He stated, "I don't see peace in Sierra Leone because the daughters and sons of the victims are suffering. They are angry, waiting for the moment to take revenge" (Jung 2006).

Indeed, persons disabled by war were largely concerned for future peace in a society where the children suffer the injustice of their parent's disability. One amputee stated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings:

We the amputees, how are we in this world now? The government should not leave our case behind. It is not for us, it is for our children. If my child grows up and asks me who chopped off my hand, I will say these people did it to me. That will bring the war again. If you say peace should come, we the amputees should bring the peace. I can't be struggling and say that I am living in peace. That is why our case should be pushed forward. If our problem is left behind, the war will not end. We the amputees, we all have children (5:44).

To say Sierra Leone is now a "peaceful" country is erroneous to those whose suffering has not stopped. The state of persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone today is reminiscent of the situation before the outbreak of war. Many persons disabled by war have stated that they survived a horrendous war only to be subject to inequality in peace times. It should be remembered that deep social inequality initially gave rise to a strong sense of powerlessness in the population of Sierra Leone. Such social inequality could lead to further violence as peace is attained for some and not for all.

Secondly, we learned that, justice in the form of action through public acknowledgement and reparations was also important to the participants. Reparations aim to "decrease the suffering of the victim rather than increase the suffering of the offender"

and the role of reparations can be "pivotal to recovery because it achieves four things: it can help to repair damage, vindicate the innocent, locate responsibility and restore equilibrium" (Sharpe, 2007:28).

According to Jusu Jarka, Chairman of the War-Affected Amputees Association of Sierra Leone:

Reparations are a sign from the perpetrator of a wrong done to the victims and that the perpetrator is sorry for what has been done. That sign of saying "sorry" is most often done in a tangible way – in money, and materials... The symbolic and practical act of repatriations brings up hope that the perpetrator would not repeat what has been done (2006:1).

The continued lack of reparations for persons disabled by war makes reconciliation in society very difficult. Also, Simpson of the human rights group WITNESS stated:

The stakes are high in Sierra Leone, because the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations are designed primarily to address the underlying causes of conflict that are still present in society today. The government has a wonderful opportunity to implement these recommendations and set Sierra Leone on the path to a more peaceful, prosperous and progressive future. But if it lapses in its obligations, then the ultimate consequence could be another war just around the corner (Amnesty International, 2005).

Reconciliation aims to break a cycle of violence and promote peaceful co-existence. However, although justice is integral for reconciliation to occur, the people of Sierra Leone have proved that it is not mandatory. Reconciliation was evident in Sierra Leone inasmuch as acts of violent revenge for war atrocities remain rare even though war survivors and known perpetrators encounter one another daily, sharing taxis and working side by side in the marketplace and schools. This may be due to a number of factors including: religious faith that ensures justice in heaven, the fear that the slightest conflict could cause another outbreak of conflict, or fatigue from years of revenge killings and war. Perhaps persons disabled by war in Sierra Leone are demonstrating the ability to reconcile even without justice. As one blind participant from Sierra Leone stated, "At a certain point perhaps we have to just let it go. Move on and accept that there will never be justice for Sierra Leone...if I cannot accept this then I will never live in peace." The theme song of the amputee drama group was, "They cut my hand, they cut my leg, now I pray to God and wait for judgment day."

Reconciliation is a difficult term to define but one concept of reconciliation which applies well to post-conflict countries states:

At its simplest, it means finding a way to live alongside former enemies - not necessarily to love them, or forgive them, or forget the past in any way, but to coexist with them, to develop the degree of cooperation necessary to share our society with them, so that we all have better lives together than we have had separately (Rettberg, 2003:27).

Reconciliation is a long term process and is both an individual and a public process that involves everyone in society and requires coming to terms with a reality that is often imperfect.

The experience of Sierra Leone challenges our very ideas of what reconciliation means and how the concept of reconciliation is constantly evolving and being shaped by the experience of war survivors. This study causes us to question the sustainability of peace in Sierra Leone and to be aware of the challenges in achieving justice and reconciliation. Indeed, the international community is watching Sierra Leone to see if it proves to be a model for peaceful restoration or yet another state that falls back into war within a decade.

2. Interaction with Policy Makers: The International Community and National Government

The participants have challenged us to think of ways in which the policies of the international community and the national government of post-conflict countries may be more aware of disability issues in both peace processes and in policy making. In much the same way as the experience of child soldiers (Landry and Mosko, 2006; Custer, 2002), victims of sexual violence (Amnesty International, 2007) or bush wives (Mazurana and Mackay, 2004; Save the Children, 2005) in the peace process have become well researched issues, persons disabled by war should receive equal attention and research. This section will discuss the following issues; interacting with the national government, prioritizing for persons disabled by the war in special programs and policy making, and equal representation, consultation and accessibility in the decision making process.

Interacting With the National Government

The great difficulties on behalf of the government of Sierra Leone to bring peace to such a volatile country are enormous and the current government has been making strides to bring peace to the people despite a severe lack of resources. The Vice President of Sierra Leone stated:

The population's frustration in not getting the peace dividend immediately can be understood because the inability of the State during this period is aggravated by the dramatic fall in external support...Humanitarian services begin to wane. The result of this development is an enormous strain on the meager resources of a country emerging from conflict (Berewa, 2006).

Indeed, there is a delicate balance in post-conflict peace times to ensure that stability is maintained and justice is served.

As the government of Sierra Leone diverts money to a host of other priorities, little is devoted to the realization of a national disability act which would be the first major step towards the realization of rights for persons with disabilities. Accompanying the act must be a strong framework for implementation as there is a serious risk of the Act languishing in parliament. This is in accordance with Rule 20 of the United Nations Standard Rules³⁰ on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

The process of passing a disability act through parliament has been delayed for over five years now and many persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone have lost hope in it. Also many people are beginning to lose hope in the reparations process as well as the government of Sierra Leone fails to provide funding and expertise in order to gather statistical data on and location of persons disabled by war.³¹

Overall, the governments of post-conflict countries must take seriously the responsibility of bringing justice and reparations to persons disabled by war. It is their unique responsibility to do so as their own citizens are looking to them to show their commitment to peace and willingness to prevent future violence. Reparations programs are important for the state to undertake because reparations are symbolic for reconciliation between a person and their government and cannot be mistaken as aid from outside donors. One initiative of the government of Sierra Leone was to initiate a *Peace*

³⁰ Rule 20 National monitoring and evaluation of disability programs in the implementation of the Rules.

³¹ This is a direct violation of the right to Article 31 Statistics and Data Collection in the United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Article.

Consolidation Strategy, which was launched in 2006 aimed at "Solidifying gains towards peace and stability throughout the country, through better national institutional capacity, enhanced national reconciliation efforts and democratic governance" (p.2). The government of Sierra Leone is in close collaboration with the United Nations Peace Building Commission to establish this strategy.

Whereas the strategies for post-conflict peace building seem to be in place, it remains unclear if the resources to implement these strategies will be made available. It is interesting to note that no persons disabled by war have been involved in the making of this national strategy or are members of the Peace Building Commission council.

Many persons disabled by war have joined with the larger disability movement to continue to lobby for disability rights and for reparations. A recent gathering on the International Disability Day 2006 represented the largest cohesive gathering of all persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone to pressure the government to act. Although there was little response or action from the government of Sierra Leone, persons with disabilities continue to struggle for their rights, and to build a network that is committed to social action.

Prioritizing for Persons Disabled by the War in Special Programs and Policy Making

The obvious question that continued to arise in the research was how the modern, disability aware international community created and funded peace processes which could have been far more sensitive to the needs of persons disabled by war. Even today, the policies of many major donors to Sierra Leone do not prioritize disability or factor it into their programs in any meaningful way.³² In addition to the money spent on the United Nations, the international donor community pours approximately U.S. \$70 million a year into Sierra Leone for humanitarian assistance (Human Rights Watch, 2003). Within the overall humanitarian assistance program to Sierra Leone, only a small percentage of funding is targeted to programs for persons with disabilities.

The United Nations Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict also highlighted the dire needs of persons disabled by war. He stated:

³² For example, USAID, one of the largest aid donors to Sierra Leone, does not mainstream disability as a policy priority in its service delivery plans. The Sierra Leone Transition Strategy and program, managed by USAID/Guinea, does not directly fund any activities related to disability (USAID, 2003).

I have been particularly touched by the situation of the disabled, the blind, the victims of polio, particularly those who have been deliberately disabled during the war period, what in Sierra Leone you call the amputees, which is too large a segment of the population. All Sierra Leone in one way or another are victims of the war and all needed to be attended to. But this particular category of victims, because of the nature of what they're suffering, the permanence of their condition, deserve in my view special attention, special policies and programs. I hope that the government and the international community will take steps to provide skills and shelter for the amputees and education for their children (Ottunu, 2002).

Ottunu is clear in recommending that special policies and programs must be in place at the national and international level in order to attend to this "particular category of victims".

Overall, many participants stated that the international community has a critical role to play through applying diplomatic pressure on the national government to enact the reparations program.³³ In the case of the reparations scheme, amputees traveled to foreign governments to encourage them to pressure the government of Sierra Leone to act on the reparations scheme. This proved helpful and caused the reparations program to begin its planning phase. The United Nations Peace Building Commission has pledged U.S. \$3 million for the reparations. However, until the government begins taking action on implementing the reparations, the money will not be released.

In regards to funding from major donors, the funds are often earmarked for the "most vulnerable"³⁴ and often never trickle down to persons disabled by war. This is what repeatedly happens with major donors such as the British Department for International Development, who is the largest donor to Sierra Leone with a total of U.S. \$400 million being given each year directly to the government (Department for International Development, 2007). They allocate funds for disability projects under the funds earmarked for "war affected persons" and inadvertently the funds are never clearly marked for disability projects as a priority. Thus, the government of Sierra Leone can

³³ In 2005, Amnesty International, WITNESS, Campaign for Good Governance, Conflict Management and Development Associates, Centre for Democracy and Human Rights and the Sierra Leone Bar Association held a meeting to highlight issues of mutual and urgent concern around the Government's lack of progress in implementing the recommendations of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Amnesty International, 2005).

³⁴ The "most vulnerable" are referred to in many of the aid policies of the larger donors in Sierra Leone and include persons who suffered sexual abuse, war affected children, orphans, refugees, girl mothers and persons with disabilities.

choose to direct that money in any number of different ways which often neglect persons with disabilities for whom the money may have been intended.

Equal Representation, Consultation and Accessibility in the Decision Making Process

The sentiments of the participants regarding the lack of inclusion and consultation in the Special Court and Truth and Reconciliation Commission were mirrored by other groups as well. A report in 2007 on the effectiveness of the Special Court states:

However, many national groups felt ignored by the negotiation process, which was perceived to take place largely at United Nations Headquarters in New York. There were procedural and substantive concerns. Many nationals were furious at the lack of Sierra Leoneans invited to an expert group meeting on the relationship between the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court before the Special Court Agreement was signed. Although late attempts were made to include more locals in the process, this top-down approach aroused considerable resentment (p.20).

Disability advocates at the World Bank recommend that "inclusion" be a general principle to consider in any development program with persons with disabilities (2007:11). Such inclusion would ensure that:

Persons with disabilities should be accepted as equal partners in development and included as full participants in all development activities. Owing to historical, systemic, and physical barriers, disabled people, especially severely disabled, can only participate in the process of decision-making if they are included in the entire project phase (2007:11).

The African Decade for Disabled People mirrors this sentiment in their mandate:

Mainstreaming disability is about getting governments and development organizations to include disability into policies and programs, and to invite persons with disabilities to participate in the development of these policies and programs (Lindblom, 2006).

Inclusion is a central concept of the recent United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which states, "Ensuring that international cooperation, including international development programs, are inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities" (Article 32: (a)). In the 'Guidance Note on Disability and Development for European Union Delegations and Services' of 2003, one of the main recommendations was to, "Assess, as part of the mid-term review, to what extent the country program is inclusive of persons with disabilities" (2003:22). Perhaps

international donors could ensure that their programs are conceived in accordance with the local disability community in a way that respects their rights, their culture, and their unique ideas for development and peace.

However, while the unique initiatives of persons disabled by war for peace and reconciliation draw upon existing relationships and values and are cheaper than importing external models, this does not always guarantee their success. Neither does it guarantee that they will provide equal representation or accessibility for *all* persons with disabilities. Any indigenous process must be in line with international human rights standards, yet monitoring such processes can be difficult.

Overall, I wish to acknowledge the efforts of the people who implemented the peace processes and who were dedicated to achieving peace in Sierra Leone. I also wish to acknowledge the non-governmental organizations in Sierra Leone that are continually re-evaluating their work in consultation with disabled people's organizations and the larger disability community. This demonstrates that they are serious about entering into an egalitarian relationship that may end the 'charity model' in Sierra Leone for good. I also wish to acknowledge the good practices that I have seen in the disabled people's organizations and hope this study contributes to the recognition of that work. The ways in which I have seen persons with disabilities caring for each other and working together to conceive strategies for peace has been the inspiration for this study.

Overall, enabling equal representation, consultation and accessibility in the decision making process may enhance feelings of equality and empowerment for persons disabled by war.

3. Peace Building as a Human Rights Issue: The Right to Peace

A rights based approach to disability issues is crucial in today's modern world and in the interaction between disabled people's organizations in developing countries and the international aid community. The new United Nations Convention and other international human rights standards give persons with disabilities a collective voice in advocating for their rights. Duchesne states, "What people with disabilities need is a movement that channels these frustrations into articulate demands that evoke responses from the political process" (2001:7).

Many participants in the study stated the importance of framing their experiences as *human rights issues* and *human rights abuses*. One participant stated, "If we want the world to listen to us then we must speak their language." By this she implied that disability advocates in Sierra Leone must keep current on international conventions and how to use these conventions to further their cause. One participant was reading the United Nations disability convention in Braille and told me that almost every right in the recent convention was being denied to persons with disabilities daily in Sierra Leone. Disability Check One recommends that any process that engages persons with disabilities does not violate any of their human rights.

Coleridge suggests that empowerment comes when persons with disabilities begin to take action on their own behalf in an attempt to change the current 'charity model' to a 'universal human rights model'. He suggests that what persons with disabilities want is for their rights as ordinary citizens to be realized (1993). A human rights approach runs contrary to the view that disability is an individual need and puts the emphasis on achieving a public solution.

The findings in Chapter Five demonstrate that six rights in particular were violated in the experiences of persons disabled by war in the peace processes: Access to Justice (Article 13), Health (Article 25), Work and Employment (Article 27), Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection (Article 28) and Participation in Social and Political Life (Article 28).

However, while the convention is important for Sierra Leone, the prominent concern for participants was that it will take too long to see concrete results as there is not enough political will on behalf of the government to implement the recommendations. Many participants felt that attaining a national disability policy and a state judicial system must be in place before the government talks of implementing international conventions. The protection of rights of the most vulnerable in post-conflict states is very important and requires a judicial and legal system that is equal to the task. Such a system does not yet exist in Sierra Leone.

Suggestions for Future Research

Although this study has covered a substantial amount of research on this topic in Sierra Leone, there is much that still remains to be investigated. It would be beneficial to conduct a country comparison of post-conflict states that are implementing reparations programs and compare and contrast their varying impacts on persons disabled by war.³⁵ Also, a study evaluating the effectiveness of peace processes in Sierra Leone in general would prove very interesting. There is also a need for further development on the topic of increasing the participation of persons with disabilities in peace processes at the international level. Perhaps a study done *by* persons with disabilities which draws on experiences from various countries across the globe could be conducted and submitted to the United Nations in order to raise awareness of how the current practices can be amended.

This same type of study could also be conducted for other categories of war victims such as rape victims, child soldiers, war orphans etc. in order to uncover their experiences in peace processes. Also, an entire study could be devoted to the question of whether the Special Court actually brought justice to the people of Sierra Leone.

Conclusion

To be sure, not all post-conflict societies will be similar to Sierra Leone, nor will the nature or extent of the atrocities be the same. However, the involvement of persons disabled by war will be an integral aspect of peace building efforts in all war torn nations. In this way, the findings of this study applicable to all other countries seeking peace after war. At the same time, the findings in this research also call on us to be flexible and creative in post-conflict peace building. There is no "one size fits all" process that can be applied to all countries. Reconciliation after war is shown to be a key element to peace (International Development Education Association, 2003:31) but that does not automatically necessitate instigating a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone because it may have been effective in South Africa.

The research has shown that war related disability and peace are intimately linked and that in national peace building efforts, persons with disabilities should be equally represented and consulted in decision making processes that are made accessible to them.

³⁵ For example, Iraq's United Nations Compensation Commission in 1991, Rwandan public reparations program and Northern Ireland. For more information see Maiese 2003.

The literature reveals some curious shifts in disability awareness and human rights discourse, reflecting the international efforts to mainstream disability and enhance rights for all persons with disabilities.

This study shows that the concept of peace is constantly evolving and persons with disabilities want to participate in the evolution of this concept. The majority of participants agreed that promoting the connection between disability and peace is vital to the empowerment of persons with disabilities. Both disabled and non disabled participants recognized the injustices at both the national and international level towards persons with disabilities and possessed unique and creative ideas of how to change this.

The importance of conducting this research was to foster discussion and consideration on behalf of academics, disabled persons organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the international community on the lessons that can be drawn from the experience of persons disabled by war in Sierra Leone. Through discussion and observation with the participants, new knowledge was generated on this topic and this study provided a forum for them to have their voices acknowledged and their views respected. It also provided a chance for them to make recommendations for the change they would like to see.

Coleridge asks, "Who creates the vision for society? Do we leave it to the men of power and violence? Do we leave it to the government or the international aid community with their policies dictated down from Geneva and New York? Or do we create a space for the silenced to speak and begin the process of transformation, of reconciliation and healing" (1993:27)? It is my sincere hope that I have created that space through this study. All those who shared their experiences and knowledge also shared a vision for Sierra Leone; a vision for a peaceful future and human rights for them and their children.

Epilogue

When I first arrived in Freetown, I asked my friend (who is blind) for his thoughts on the best way to go about this study. He said, "It depends on how much you really want to know. If you truly want to understand you will have to open up your heart enough to break it." This profound statement guided my time in Sierra Leone. In all the interviews and field visits I made I tried to keep my heart open. I was, what Behar terms, "the vulnerable observer" (1996), doing research with people who are themselves intensely vulnerable. I began to understand that in order to be a critical, analytical researcher I did not have to shut down my heart and de-personalize the research to the point where "I" did not exist.³⁶ Indeed, "I" was having a direct impact on what was being said, how it was being said and who was saying it. I discussed this in detail in Chapter Two.

I am also glaringly white and not visibly disabled, but people never treated me as if I could not understand the subject matter because of these differences between us. Everyday I reminded myself to seek to understand and not to be understood and to keep re-evaluating how my own actions may have stirred up conflict or left behind unintended consequences.

The All People's Congress became the new government of Sierra Leone in September 2007. Since then, many of the participants in this study have been discussing disability issues at great lengths with the leaders of the new party who have promised to install a newly appointed Task Force to begin reparations immediately.³⁷ Although they appear to be more sensitive to disability issues than the past government, and many persons with disabilities are placing great hope in them for change, it remains to be seen what they will accomplish. An abbreviated version of this study may be sent to them in the near future.

The "data" that I was working with were not concepts, themes or policy recommendations; the "data" were another person's pain. For their own reasons, they

³⁶ Behar states, "The tendency is to depersonalize one's connection to the field, to treat ethnographic work as that which is "other" to the "self", and to accumulate masses of data that can be compared, contrasted, charted, and serve as a basis for policy recommendations, or at least as a critique of existing practices" (2003:25).

³⁷ See Munu in *The Awareness Times*, October 5, 2007.

gave me their pain in the hope I would transform it into something good. Thus, this study for me is both the presentation of my work as an academic but also the story of people's lives and it has been my honour to share it with you in a way that I feel is dignified and respectful of their trust. I have been careful not to do the things that the participants advised against, such as making recommendations on their behalf. I hope their voice is clear in this study and that mine compliments what they have said by putting it all together in a readable and reflective format.

It is only now that I have returned to the safety of Victoria, writing this paper from the comfort of my own home, that I realize how deeply my heart has been broken. Of all the lessons I learned, the most important to me is this; the more you try to love, the more your heart will break, and the more your heart breaks the more you will know of love.

Thank you for being a part of this journey with me.

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Appendix A: Definitions of Terms

Disability

The United Nations estimates that approximately 10% of the world's population is affected by disabilities (United Nations Statistics Division, 2001) and 150 million

children throughout the world are disabled (Light, 2002). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines disability in the following way:

“Disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers which hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (United Nations, 2006:44). This definition reflects a social model of disability that is based on the interaction between the person and their environment. The principle significance of this social and interactive model of disability is that it challenges the traditional view that the 'problem' lies with the individual and instead insists that it is the social environment and culture which must change to include and provide support for the individually impaired person (Light, 2002). Adults and children are 'disabled' by prejudice and stigma, direct or indirect discrimination and a failure of society to adapt and accommodate their needs.

Disability Rights

Disability rights are defined as “the equal effective enjoyment of all human rights by people with disabilities”. Disability rights do not refer to extra protections or a separate and special category of rights, but refer to the full range of human rights available to all, as applied to the specific situation of people with disabilities (Disability Rights Promotion International, 2003: 8).

Peace Processes

For the purposes of this paper, the term "peace process" will refer solely to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Special Court, the Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration process, the Electoral process and other large scale international or national peace building efforts that are mentioned herein. It cannot critique the vast array of smaller initiatives by civil society or non-governmental organizations that have brought peace to Sierra Leone in their various ways.

Persons Disabled By War

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone defines persons disabled by war as, “victims who have become temporarily or permanently physically

disabled, either totally or partially, as a consequence of the conflict” (5:92). Amputees are defined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as "war-wounded victims who lost their upper or lower limbs as a result of the conflict" (10:90). However, other body parts such as the nose, ears, lips, genitalia and the toes were also amputated by rebels. In this study all people that suffer from a disability (amputees and other disabilities) that are a direct result of the war are termed here as "persons disabled by war" in order to clarify the distinction between these persons and those who suffer disabilities from other causes (natural causes, accidents and so on). Although I acknowledge that these are imperfect terms they are the actual terms that are being used by disabled people in Sierra Leone to refer to each other and these terms are not my own creation. They also call each other "disables" and "war disables" and these terms will often appear in direct quotes. I received permission from the various participants to use these various terms in my study in order not to offend anyone.

War Survivors

I also use the term "war survivors" which refers to anyone who was affected negatively by the war and thus can refer to a wide range of people. I use this term instead of "victims" because this is the common phrase used by people in Sierra Leone in order to break the cycle of feeling victimized and disempowered. When the word "victim" is used in this paper it is in a quote by a participant as it their right to use it as they see fit.

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form and Information Letter

Research Topic: Examining the Experiences of Persons Disabled by War in the Peace Processes of Sierra Leone

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Examining the Experiences of Persons Disabled by War in the Peace Processes of Sierra Leone that is being conducted by Pearl Gottschalk.

Pearl Gottschalk is a Masters student in the faculty of Dispute Resolution at the University of Victoria and you may contact her if you have further questions by email at pearlg@uvic.ca or phone at her local number in Freetown at 033787990 or in Canada after July 1st at 250-383-5535.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Dispute Resolution. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Patricia Mackenzie. You may contact my supervisor at patmack@uvic.ca or by phone at 250-781-9735.

This research will seek to explore the experience of persons disabled by war in the peace processes of Sierra Leone. The period of post-conflict peace building and the various peace processes (the Special Court, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the various peace building programs etc) will be the basis for analyzing their experience.

Through this study I hope to develop a field of study which is presently underdeveloped. I hope to contribute to an awareness of the need for inclusion and representation of persons with disabilities in peace processes. I intend that this study will focus particularly on this one question for this one group of people, thereby reinforcing the awareness of this group to be treated distinctly and with knowledge and respect. I hope this study influences the policies of all non-governmental organizations, government bodies, civil society groups and all those participating in or representing the needs of persons with disabilities in peace processes. Through this study I hope to contribute to the well being in the lives of persons with disabilities and the realization of their rights.

Participant Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are one of the most experienced and knowledgeable organizations/persons in this field and your input would be highly valuable. I have attained your contact information from the internet or another public source.

What is involved?

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a 30-60 minute interview, as well as time you will take to review the consent form and information letter. The research will be conducted through an informal interview following the guidelines of the questions listed below. The interview could be conducted in any place that you feel to be appropriate such as an office, café, meeting room etc.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including 30-60 minutes of your time.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. If there are any questions that you do not want to answer you may decline to answer at any time or stop the interview at any time and instruct me as to how you would like me to handle the previous data.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include furthering a field of knowledge that is very undeveloped and has little written literature on it. As for Sierra Leonean society, it is hoped that my research will help to raise awareness regarding the rights of disabled children from armed conflict

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation.

If you do withdraw from the study your data will either be removed from the data base and destroyed or will continued to be used ONLY with your permission.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity, no names of the participants will be released or known in any way to anyone besides me. The data and names of the participants will not be shared with other participants, government, or anyone other than me. In the paper you will only be referred to as a number and not a name. If you recommend someone to me as a possible participant then you must first check with that party and if they are further interested they should be instructed to contact Pearl Gottschalk at pearlg@uvic.ca.

However, due to the small number of non-governmental organizations working on this topic I can not completely guarantee anonymity. However, in no way will I divulge any information that is shared with me and if the participants find out each that each other have participated- it will be due to extraneous circumstances that are beyond my control.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by being stored in a locked drawer in my home or in a password protected computer file.

Dissemination of Results

No data or the names of participants will be shared with other participants in any way and shall remain completely confidential. All notes and names of participants will be kept under lock and key in my office.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of by destroying all computer files and paper copies of notes.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include the researcher Pearl Gottschalk at pearlg@uvic.ca or by phone at (250) 383-5535 or the Research Supervisor Dr. Patricia Mackenzie at patmack@uvic.ca or by phone at 250-721-8735.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria via email at ethics@uvic.ca or by phone at (250-472-4545).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers. If this form is received by email and an in person meeting is not planned for the future, then replying to this email will indicate that you are giving your consent to participate.

Signature of Participant

Appendix C: Amendment

I would like to amend my study to focus on all persons disabled by war not only “children”. This change takes place due to my intensive research in Sierra Leone and the realization that since the war has been over for five years and many of the crimes were committed in the 1990’s, the survivors are no longer children. The experts I spoke to have also voiced this concern and upon their advice I have changed the focus of my study. Focusing on children does not encapsulate the majority of the survivors who are now adults. Upon this realization I have changed my questions in my research (please see Questionnaire).

Thus, the title of my study will be changed to: Examining the Experiences of Persons Disabled by War in the Peace Processes in Sierra Leone

Progress to Date:

I have collected all my data through ten qualitative interviews and am ready to analyze it. The experts I interviewed advised me on how the questions could be altered and the focus of the study was more on adults and not children. However, children will still be a major focus of my study as the study takes place in hindsight, looking back on the experiences of the victims during the civil war at which time many of them were children and youths. I am beginning the first draft of my study pending approval of my amendment.

Added: Participant observation as a methodology

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Question Track #1 Learning from the participant's experience in peace processes in Sierra Leone.

Some sample questions for discussion:

Can you tell me more about your experience in Sierra Leone during peace processes and your views on how the peace processes impacted persons disabled by war?

What are some of the challenges that arose for you? What were some successful aspects of the peace processes?

How has it impacted your life now?

Do you feel that persons disabled by war have been sufficiently and appropriately involved in peace building in the post war period? Why or why not?

In each of the peace processes (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Special Court, Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration) how were the needs of persons disabled by war addressed or not addressed?

Question Track #2 What was your experience with the policy makers during the peace processes?

How do you feel about your relationship with the national government throughout the past five years?

How do you feel about your relationship with the international community throughout the past five years?

Question Track #3 Do you have any recommendations based on your experience?

Question Track #4 Is there anything else that you feel is important that we have not discussed?

Can you define the terms you are using?

Appendix E: Organization of Themes and Sub-themes of Research Findings in Chapter Five

Each main theme is a verbatim response which was made by participants and under each theme are different topics that arose in relation to that main theme. When certain key terms arose such as "empowerment" or "justice", I paused to ask the participant to define each term before progressing and thus their definitions are included here as sub-themes. I have also included these themes in a schematic diagram for better visualization on pages 101 and 102.

Question Track #1 Learning from the participant's particular experience in post-war Sierra Leone

1. Response: "Persons disabled by war were not included in...."
(Participants define terms: Equal representation, appropriate consultation, inclusion, accessibility)
 - A. Truth and Reconciliation Commission
 - B. Special Court
 - C. Electoral Process
 - D. Peace Conferences
2. Response: "We had our own unique ideas for peace."
 - A. Value and Recognition
 - B. Working Together for Peace
 - C. Difficulties in Achieving Funding
3. Response: "The peace process did not bring justice"
Participants define terms: Justice
 - A. Special Court
 - B. Responsibility of the National Government
4. Response: "Peace building left behind unintended consequences"
 - A. Anger and Jealousy from the Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration
 - B. Living situation due to lack of reparations
5. Response: "Dissension was created among the disabled due to the..."
 - A. The Efforts of Non-governmental Organizations
 - B. The reparations process

Question Track #2 What was your experience with the policy makers during the peace processes?

Responses:

- A. Dissatisfaction with the national government
- B. Gratitude towards the international community

Question #3 Do you have any recommendations based on your experience?

Responses:

- A. Recommended "Disability Checks"
- B. Build on Good Practices

Question Track #4 Is there anything else that you feel is important that we have not discussed?

Responses:

- A. Be aware of cultural issues, the rural/urban tension
- B. Clarifying the terms "empowerment" and "dignity"
- C. Responses from female participants

B. Schematic Diagram of Thematic Organization, see following pages





