Project description
Using Liberia as a case study, this thesis is intended to review and identify options for the post conflict management of issues that confront young people including ex-combatants in relation to peace and stability in Liberia through the application of the sustainable livelihood Framework. The factors that led to the war, the involvement of young people in the conflict, the problems of young people in the post conflict context and the policy recommendations to address issues affecting young people in Liberia will be discussed.

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the Degree of Master of Arts in Development Studies at Murdoch University.

I declare that this project/dissertation is my own account of my own research. It contains as its main content work which has not been previously submitted for a degree at any university.

Signed---------------------------------------------------------------
Youth, Livelihood and Development in Post Conflict States: the Case of Liberia

Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War there has been a trend on the part of the international community toward the portrayal of youth participation in violent conflict as criminal motivation with the desire of material gains in the general context of deprivation in the form of poverty rather than political or ideological motivation. However, there is emerging empirical evidence that youth participation in armed conflict cannot be separated from the general political roots of these conflicts (Kunkeler & Peters 2011:277). It is suggested that youth participation in livelihood activities is an opportunity to address the material needs within the general context of youth deprivation in societies where youth suffer from lack of access to resources which constitute the foundation for intra-state conflict in many societies. This brings a new frontier in policy analysis in the area of youth policy development for the purpose of ending conflicts and sustaining peace in post conflict situations. Using Liberia as a case study, this thesis is reviewing the post conflict management of youth including ex-combatants in relation to livelihood development through the application of sustainable livelihood framework. The paper will examine post conflict situations in Liberia to identify the causes of intra-state conflicts and best practice to address those causal factors and make recommendations for development practitioners for the consolidation of peace and sustainable development in post conflict situation such as Liberia. This thesis argues that increasing the participation of young people in social, political and economic activities is fundamental to the sustainability of peace and development.
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Acknowledgement

This research could not move forward without the relentless support and patience of great people. I am pleased to extend thanks and appreciation to Dir. Ian Wilson whose keen supervision guided me through this research. I will also like to acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Yvonne Haigh for her support at the preparation stage of this research. I am also grateful to my family for the support and courage given to me over the years.

List of acronyms-
AIDS------------Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ACS--------------American Colonization Society
DFID------------Department for International Development
FGM-------------Female Genital Mutilation
FLY--------------Federation of Liberian Youth
GDP-------------Gross Domestic Product
GoL-------------Government of Liberia
HIV-------------Human Immune Virus
IMF-------------International Monetary Fund
LINSU---------Liberia national Student Union
LEEP-----------Liberia Emergency Employment Program
LEAP-----------Liberia Employment Action Plan
MRU------------Mano River Union
NYP-------------National Youth Policy
NGO-------------Non-Government organization
OECD----------Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRSP----------Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SCG-------------Search for Common Ground
STI------------Sexually Transmitted Infection
SLA------------Sustainable Livelihood Framework
SGBV----------Sexual & Gender Based Violence
UNDP---------United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO-------United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Purpose of the research

Using Liberia as a case study, this thesis is intended to review the factors that led to the conflict in Liberia and identify options for the post conflict management of issues that confront young people including ex-combatants in relation to peace and stability in Liberia through the application of sustainable livelihood framework. The paper will examine issues affecting young people, make recommendations for development practitioners for the purpose of consolidating peace and sustainable development in post conflict Liberia. This thesis argues that the participation of young people in the social economic and political lives of Liberia through livelihood development activities is fundamental to the sustainability of peace and development. The thesis will endeavour to answer four questions in illustrating the importance of youth participation in the social economic and political development of Liberia:

a) What are the causal factors to the conflict in Liberia?

B) Why young people participated in the conflict in Liberia?

c) What are the problems of young people in post conflict Liberia?

d) What policy framework is necessary to improve the lives of young people in post conflict Liberia?

The social, economic and political contexts that created mistrust between the ruling elites and the different social groups which culminated to the war between the key actors in Liberia will be reviewed for the purpose of learning lessons from the war to remind policy makers to take preventative steps to avoid repeating the tragedy of the past. It is important to prevent any of those causal factors from been repeated by making sure that they are identified and recommendations are made to prevent them from impacting on the peace and stability Liberia is currently enjoying. The problems that confronted young people leading to the onset of the war and how that instigated many young people to become active participants in the war will
be investigated to learn lessons for policy makers today and in the future. The impact of the conflict on young people who participated as either victims or perpetrators of the violence cannot be over emphasized. The needs of young people in the context of sustainable livelihood framework will be explored to address some of the core issues that affect young people in post conflict Liberia. In the Liberian context youth refers to young people between the ages of 15-35 years (walker et al, 2005:5). The official rationale behind such definition is that 14 years of war have left over-aged youth unprepared to cope with the stress of the post conflict challenges in the country. Therefore there is a need to focus resources on this age cohort.

Methodologies

**Literature review** – government policy documents, NGO discussion papers, Journal articles, reports, books and others will be reviewed to identify different perspectives as to what cause the conflict in Liberia, how the conflict attracted young people to become participants (perpetrators or victims) in the conflict. The problems of the youth will be identified and a theoretical justification as to why these problems must be addressed so as to avoid the country sliding back into the state of conflict. This means the theoretical connection of conflict to social issues will be the subject of the review to learn lessons from the conflict. Current policy will be analysed from the literatures to identify strengths and weaknesses that exist in current policy and to offer alternative policy options for improvement.

**Perspectives of conflict in Africa**

Young people are key participants in contemporary intra-state conflict such as those seen in sub-Saharan African states such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Kunkeler & Peters, 2011:277) These conflicts are global phenomenon rooted in the history of all regions in the world and Africa is no exception (Michailof et al, 2002:2) Over the last 60 years, the African continent had been affected by wars in various forms including (a) wars of independence from colonial exploitations of the indigenous populations which left social divisions within the social fabric of African societies. For example Namibia, Angola and Kenyan suffered terrible conflicts as a result of their desires to gain freedom. (b) Rebellions by armed guerrilla movements against central governments as witnessed in Uganda, Chad, Sierra Leone, Liberia and currently the Democratic Republic of
Congo as well as interstate conflicts between two or more sovereign states over border demarcations has led to the death of many people as experienced between Libya and Chad over the Aouzou strip from 1973 to 1994 (Michailof et al 2002:3).

During the Cold War, the Eastern block and the Western block competed for influence and supported client states through financial, military and political assistance and in some cases mercenaries (Michailof et al, 2002:3). These conflicts reflected the strategic concerns of non-African powerful actors who were pursuing their own interests rather than the interests of the African states involved in these conflicts. The end of the cold war was a disengagement factor for non-African actors which created an environment to settle some of the continent’s most bitter conflicts such as the Mozambique and Namibian conflicts (Michailof et al, 2002:3). However, by the time the cold war ended it has created a legacy of social tensions in most countries in Africa that became the source of internal divisions and violence conflicts which produced more internal conflicts in the African continent.

**Intra-state conflicts in Sub-Sahara Africa**

Since the end of the cold war there has been an increase in the number of intra-state conflicts in Sub-Sahara Africa including those seen in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and others (Forsther, 2011:1). These conflicts have been characterized with blatant violations of human rights including the death and displacement of millions of unarmed civilians (Forsther, 2011:1). These conflicts disrupted the social capital of the population of the affected countries and undermined national unity. For example, the ethnic cleansing of the Rwandan genocide; the killing and amputation of limbs in the Sierra Leonean civil war; the killings and rapes of innocent people based on their ethnic backgrounds in Liberia, the victimization of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the continual killings of innocent people in Somalia and Mali.

In recent years an increasing body of literature points to three causal factors responsible for intra-state armed conflicts in Sub-Sahara Africa (Munive, 2010:324). Firstly, a high proportion of young people in a given population with no livelihood activities can make states susceptible to arm insurrection and undermine security (Munive, 2010:325). This is more relevant to the presence of large, unemployed and disaffected mass of young people who constitute igniting molecules for armed conflict being marginalized by their states with no opportunity for livelihood development.
Secondly, the forceful recruitment of young people (under-aged children) is a decisive factor in making young people to participate in armed conflict. This was the case with West Africa’s Mano River Union (MRU) countries Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast) where children were forced to fight for armed fashions as a survival mechanism. Arguably such children are victims of the conflict and should therefore be treated as victims instead of been stigmatised as violent aggressors.

Thirdly, youth deprivation usually lack of access to basic services for social, economic and political participation seen in many developing countries is the single biggest factor that represents breeding ground for young people to take up arms against their own government to demand a change of government usually out of poverty situation in their countries (Munive, 2010:325). This was also an igniting factor in Liberia and Sierra Leone where young people were deprived of employment opportunities as a result of lack of educational requirements to meet the demand of employers.

The nature of these conflicts in most Sub-Sahara African countries in the last decades triggered fragilities in the countries involved. Nearly all the countries that have been at war in recent decades are now fragile states and Liberia is one of those cases (Walker, et al, 2009:6). According to the Organization for Economic Corporation and Development (OECD), a fragile state is one in which governments and state structures lack the capacity and political will to deliver safety and security, good governance and poverty reduction to their citizens. There are many drivers to fragility and countries that experienced conflict are more likely to attract these drivers of fragility (Walker et al, 2009:6).

The causal factors to the Liberian civil conflict

The civil conflict in Liberia began on the eve of Christmas in 1989, when a group of rebel fighters supported by Libya, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast attacked Liberia through Nimba County (Utas, 2003:10) The armed rebel fighters referred to themselves as the “National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)” headed by Charles Taylor who later became President of Liberia and now serving a 50 years sentence for his role in the perpetration of war crimes committed in neighbouring Sierra Leone. The conflict in Liberia claimed the lives of more than 200,000 people, displaced most of the population internally and send hundreds of thousands of refugees to neighbouring countries (Munive, 2010:325).
There are many causal factors to the Liberian civil war but the most prominent of these includes bad governance by small group of elite Americo-Liberians (Congos), the ethnic based (Krahn) nature of the Doe’s government in Liberia to the disadvantaged of other ethnic groups and particularly the prosecution of the Gio and Mano ethnic groups, how the rebellion mostly started with the targeting of members of the ethnic Mandingo who were perceived as supporting the government, the frustration of young people in the general situation of deprivation in the context of poverty and economic decadent among others contributed to one of Sub-Sahara Africa’s most barbaric civil conflicts (Oquaye, 2001:5).

The Americo-Liberians are the decedents of ex-slaves who were repatriated to Africa at the close of the abolition of slavery in America in the 18 century. They Americo-Liberian constitute just 5% of the general population but were in control of Liberia’s political and economic lives for well over a century and deprived the indigenous natives who constitute 90-95% of the population (Ngaima, 2010:136) This deprivation was particularly effective in preventing indigenous Liberians from accessing higher education which is necessary for active participation in the political and economic lives of a country.

**Young people and the Liberian civil war**

In the 1960s and 70s Liberia was considered the utopia of West Africa, described by elders as the *normal days* a period before the political agitations that characterised expression of opinions by Liberians outside the ruling elite bracket (Woods, 2011:18) It is the period in which young people had no influence in the policy formulation of the government, although marked by high level of deprivation of young people, it was very difficult for people outside the ruling bracket especially youth to comment on political issues until the Liberian government announced an unpopular policy about the price of rice, the country staple food.

In 1979 the government of Liberia announced an increase in the price of rice from $20 to $30 for 50 kilograms bag of rice when the average civil servant salary was $50 a month (Woods, 2011:18). This provoked a bloody riot in the Liberian capital Monrovia leading to the death and injuries of many Liberians. Young people under the banner of the Liberian National Student Union (LINSU) stood up against the government and demanded to be heard with the removal of unjust policies such as those of increasing the cost of the country’s staple
food (Woods, 2011:18). This riot marked the awakening of the Liberian youth in their desires to play a role in the political, social and economic lives of Liberia.

Within a year after the rice riot, a group of young soldiers led by 28 year old master sergeant Samuel Doe staged a bloody military Coup against the government of President William Tolbert whose body was mutilated and displayed to the public. This was followed by the execution of 13 senior officers of the deposed government.

Ten years after the military coup, Liberia descended into a brutal civil war in which young people became active participants both as victims and perpetrators of the war (Woods, 2011:19). Many young people in Liberia are confronted everyday with psychological problems due to their exposure to the trauma that characterized the Liberian civil war. Due to the prolonged civil war in Liberia, young people were unable to attend schools on a regular basis; therefore many young people lack the skills and professional backgrounds necessary to compete on the job market at local, national and global levels (Woods, 2011:22). This has created a situation in which young people are marginalized and left with limited or no opportunities to meet the cost of living which if not corrected, may drive young people to rebel against the system that deprived them from gaining access to legal means of meeting the cost of living. For example, the illegal mining of diamond and gold are on the increase in Liberia.

Young people in post conflict states are often seen as threat to peace and stability as a result of the nature of their participation in the conflict (Kunkeler & Peters 2011:277). Under aged and youthful combatants are the main participants in contemporary intra-state armed conflict, therefore, the sustainability of peace and stability in any post conflict context lies in how young people are disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated into the social, economic and political lives of their societies (Peters, 2007:35) This aspect of post conflict development can easily go out of control due to limited resource and lack of capacity. The high number of young people who took part in the war in Liberia makes it imperative that policy makers must take into account the needs and aspirations of young people including ex-combatant in the development strategies of post conflict Liberia (Peters, 2007:38). This requires the creation of livelihoods opportunities for young people to have alternative legal means of gaining income within the context of sustainable livelihood framework.

**Youth policy context in Liberia**
The creation of a National Youth Policy in Liberia marks the beginning of the engagement of young people in the policy formulation in the history of Liberia (Woodrow Wilson Center for scholars, 2007:17). This represents a major step in the engagement of young people in the political process and in particular policy formulation. The Nation Youth Policy (NYP) was developed by young people and is been processed through the policy cycle of the current government. It is intended to address issues that affect young people and create opportunities that reflect the interests and aspiration of young people in Liberia. The proposed policy mentioned issues such as access to education, prevention of gender violence, economic sustenance, conflict resolution and self-esteem among many others.

The policy seems to support the positive aspects of youth development and demonstrates that young people can have positive impacts on the post conflict reconstruction of Liberia and reduce the negative perception against young people as threat to peace and stability (Woodrow Wilson Center for scholars, 2007:17). However, there are some limitations on the process and the need for inclusiveness particularly for regional youth who are less concerned about politics and are more interested in building their livelihoods.

The development of the National Youth Policy was mostly dominated by elite urban youth who have greater access to education or training and other services than their counterparts in the country side (rural Liberia) (Woodrow Wilson Center for scholars, 2007:18). While the policy considered more gender issues to be addressed, female participation in its formulation was very limited and important issues relating to peace-building were not prioritized. For example, conflict resolution and peace education were not prioritized (Woodrow, 2007:18).

This chapter has been able to review the perspectives of conflict in Africa from interstate to intra-state conflicts and identifies the influence of external powers and legacy of colonization as sources of social tensions and violence that impact on the lives of young people (Michailof, 2003:3). The social tension in the African continent affects young people in the form of deprivation of accessing resources and services needed to express their potential as citizens of their individual countries (Munive, 2010:324). This deprivation comes about through poor governance and incapacity of most African states to develop and implement good policy for the social, economic and political development of their population particular young people.

The Liberian conflict was a result of social exclusion of the indigenous population by the minority Americo-Liberia, poor governance by successive governments and the deprivation
of young people from accessing resources to improve their lives (Munive, 2010:324) The recognition of these causal factors is important to any government in Liberia because these factors represent a lesson for the future stability of Liberia. The development of youth policy is important because it enable young people to share their aspirations with policy makers which can then be taken into account in the development of national policy which impact on young people.

CHAPTER 2: Historical background to the conflict in Liberia.

This chapter intends to discuss the social economic and political context of the Liberian conflict rooted in the founding of Liberia as a nation state. Historical accounts of how particular groups came to be deprived of accessing resources will be discussed to draw lesson for policy makers today and in the future. The current state of the Liberia economic will be reviewed to give an understanding of how the government of Liberia is addressing some of the factors that contributed to the conflict.

The social, economic and political contexts in most African countries remain the root causes of most of the continent’s conflicts particularly in the form of deprivation of segments of most African societies from development to the pleasure of elite groups (Munive, 2010:325). The Liberian situation is no exception as the conflict dynamic reflects deprivation of some segments of the population such as young people and some indigenous ethnic groups to the benefits of elite group such as the Americo Liberians population and those of former President Doe’s ethnic Krahn people.

The susceptibility of young people as actors in conflict situation cannot be over emphasized as young people can easily be manipulated and recruited into armed factions to rebel against their own government especially in the context of general deprivation and lack of sustainable livelihood (Woods, 2011:19). This is particularly relevant to the use of young people in the Liberian conflict given the manner in which young people were deprived of utilizing their potentials based on their social identities as indigenous and as members of particular ethnic groups which contributed to the participation of young people in the conflict.

The failure of successive governments to develop policy that reflects the needs, aspirations and wishes of young people for many years contributed to government been out of touch with young people and attracted the appeals of the leaders of armed factions (Munive, 2010:325). This led to ethnic formation of armed factions who appealed to members of particular ethnic
group to join their ranks to control different parts of the country to the abuse of innocent people and the exploitation of natural resources to sustain the war which negatively impacted on the economy during the war years and made it difficult for political settlement of the conflict. Warlords (heads of armed groups) used the social stratification of the Liberian society to attract and recruit young people by encouraging ethnic hate among different ethnic groups in Liberia.

**Liberia as a nation-state**

Liberia is located on the Atlantic coast of Western Africa and occupies a land mass of 43,000 square miles. The country shares its Western border with the Republic of Sierra Leone, Northern border with the Republic of Guinea, Eastern border with the Republic of Ivory Coast and in the south with the Atlantic Ocean. There are 15 counties (political sub-divisions of the country) and each county has a historical claim to it by particular ethnic group(s).
Historically Liberia became an independent state in 1847 as a result of the fear of being colonized by the British and the French who have colonised territories once considered part of Liberia but, nowadays constitute parts of Guinea, Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast (Ngaima, 2003:103).

The supreme law of Liberia is the 1984 constitution which took effect in 1986 and is modelled on the political and legal system of the United States of America but with a unitary system (Cook, 2010:34) The Liberian government is made up of three branches that exercise separate powers and authorities. Although the constitution provides for a check and balance system among the three branches of government, the executive branch has historically exerted extensive influence over the legislative and judiciary branches. Historically Liberian presidents have had exceptional extra-constitutional powers and closely controlled the legal system, the security forces, and the economy as well as headed major ruling parties (Cook, 2010:35). This means Liberians have for a long time suffered from the effect of public sector corruption and a tradition of political patronage resulting to an uneven urban-center socio-economic development to the deprivation of rural indigenous population (Cook, 2010:35).

The founding of the modern nation-state of Liberia was influenced by the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade from Africa to the United States of America (Dun-Marcos 2005:4). In the early 18 century, a group of prominent Americans decided to work on a plan to return freed black slaves to Africa (Dun-Marcos 2005:4). They founded the American Colonization Society (ACS) in 1822 for the purpose of assisting to return freed black African slaves to Africa. The group of black slaves who were settled in what constitutes today’s Republic of Liberia are referred to as the Americo-Liberians or Congos. The Liberian nation-state was established as the first black Republic in the African continent in 1847. Its political and economic lives has been dominated by the Americo-Liberians throughout most of its history.

**Social stratification of the Liberian population**

The social stratification between the Americo-Liberians on the one hand and the indigenous population on the other hand is well rooted in the early days of the founding of Liberia (Dun-Marcos, 2005:4). This stratification was the result of the competition for power to control trade routes and the labours of indigenous Liberians which led to a number of conflicts between the Americo-Liberians and the indigenous population of Liberia. However, the superior military organization of the Americo-Liberians and the occasional supports of the
United States provided the Americo-Liberians the opportunities to shaped and institutionalized that stratification in ways that maintained their dominance over the political and economic resources of Liberia for well over 100 years (Dun-Marcos 2005:5). The Americo-Liberians controlled the political and economic resources of Liberia to the deprivation of the indigenous population who constitutes more than 95% of the total population (Dun-Marcos, 2005:5).

The Americo-Liberians settlers who represent Western culture fed the need to replace the inferior culture, values, customs and political institutions of the indigenous population with their superior values, practices, religion and institutions; the indigenous Liberians in turn considered the Americo-Liberians as freed slaves who are inferior to the Indigenous population (Dun Marcos 2005:3). This has always been the main conflict factor for Liberia since its founding days.

The social stratification of the Liberian population is not limited to the Americo-Liberians and indigenous divide, there are various accounts of occasional disagreements and conflicts among the indigenous population well before the arrival of the Americo Liberia (Dun-Marcos, 2005:4) This does not mean that the indigenous population did not live together in peace and harmony before the arrival of the Americo-Liberians but, the competitive nature of how they lived together before the arrival of the settlers sometimes resulted into occasional ethnic conflicts.

Competition for the control of market and trade routes between the Mandingo from the hinterland in what is now Lofa County and the Gola from the coastal areas of present Bomi County led to ethnic rivalries (Dun-Marcos, 2005:7). By the 19 century the rivalry led the country to divide into two competing confederations. The Mandingo confederation with it headquarter in Bopolu and headed by King Sao Bosso Kamara known as King Boatswan controlled the traffic to the coast through the St Paul river while the other rival of the Gola ethnic group was based in the Kongba under the leadership of chief Zolu Duma. By 1822, the Americo-Liberians arrived at the height of the competition between the Mandingo and the Gola ethnic groups of present day Liberia.

Well before the arrival of the freed black slaves from North America, the sixteen indigenous ethnic groups of what constitutes Liberia today were governed by their ethnic leaders under their indigenous political systems (Dun-Marcos, 2005:6). However it was possible for two or more ethnic groups to inhabit one region. For example the Lorma and the Mandingo lived
together in present day Lofa County for generations before the arrival of the Americo-Liberians. Although two distinct groups and with different language, cultures and tradition, they managed to live in peace and harmony, often calling each other nephews and uncles.

One of the origins of the conflict in Liberia can be traced back to the economic deprivation that characterized the country for most of it past (Radelet, 2007:1) The founding constitution of Liberia was mainly designed to serve the settler population to the subjugation of the indigenous population; land and property rights of the majority indigenous were severely suppressed with most infrastructures and basic service concentrated around the elites settlers in Monrovia (Radelet, 2007:1) This fuelled an uneven development and a dualistic economy.

The ways in which political and economic elites of Liberia (Americo-Liberians) controlled the resources of the country to their personal benefits leading to economic gaps between the social classes of the Liberian society promulgated ethnic, religious and class rivalries which destroyed the fabrics of the social capital of the country and undermine national solidarity (Radelet, 2007:2). By the 1970s, the Liberian economy started to decline partly due to the 1973 oil crises and a drop in the price of Liberia’s key export commodities which weaken the ability of the government to subsidize the cost of the country’s stable food rice triggering resistance to years of political and economic deprivation in Liberia. This led to a military coup d’tate by 17 low ranking soldiers of the Armed Forces of Liberia led by Samuel Doe (Radelet, 2007:2). The Doe administration in Liberia was marked by continuous decline of the Liberian economy characterized with high youth unemployment and violent suppression of attempted coups. In 1989 the resistance to Doe has taken the form of a rebellion war which decimated the economy during the conflict years (Radelet, 2007:2). The GDP fell as low as 90% between 1989 and 1995. The economy began to stabilize after cessation of the violence in 1996 and election were held in 1997 but, the war soon re-ignited and the violence reached its peak in 2002-2003 (Radelet, 2007:2).

Following the election in 2005 and the subsequent inauguration of Africa’s first elected female president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf; the pace of economic activities has been accelerating (Radelet, 2005:2). Liberia is determined to build an economy from the ruin of 14 years of conflict. This would be a daunting task for any country particular for Liberia where there is severe capacity constraints due to lack of skills and experience among its youth population due to the unavailability of schooling in most parts of Liberia during the 14 years conflict. Young people including ex-combatants and returning refugees need jobs or economic
activities for their livelihoods to prevent the disenchantment and resentment that could grow rapidly in the fragile environment of Liberia into the resumption of violence (Radelet, 2007:3).

Liberia as a fragile state going through post conflict reconstruction with the assistance and support of the international community is making effort to recover from the devastations of years of conflict (OECD, 2008:363). In the face of war induced constraints and impediments including a collapsed infrastructure, degraded capacity of institutions and loss of skilled manpower, the Liberia economy has been making steady recovery since the cessation of hostilities in 2003 (OECD, 2008:363). As outcomes of the gradual improvement in security in rural areas, agriculture production has improved and there has been resumption of mining and forestry activities (OECD, 2008:363). These measures and strong macroeconomic policies, strengthening institutions and debt relief are assisting to stabilize the Liberian economy but, there are vulnerabilities that need to be addressed.

CHAPTER 3: The problems of youth in post conflict Liberia.

This chapter will discuss the problems that young people face in post conflict societies like that of Liberia. Each of these problems will be discussed in relation to the various drivers of the civil conflict in Liberia and the fragility context of the post conflict environment existing today. Youth face particularly risks of being recruited into clandestine armed groups to rebel against the legitimate government of Liberia to certify the greedy motives of would be warlords (Mac-Ikemenjema, 2008:146). This is of particularly concern for Liberia due to high proportion of young people in the population who are not employed and have limited livelihoods to sustain themselves through legal activities. It is this lack of employment and livelihoods for the youth which represent the biggest threat to the sustainability of peace and stability in Liberia.

During the Liberian conflict warlords used ethnicity, regionalism and religions to mobilize young people to join armed groups to fight against each other which led to unwanted destruction of the country; those who organize armed groups have no interest in the lives of young people but, instead they are more interested in how they can exploit the resources of the country for their personal benefits and the sustenance of their political lives (Ngaimai, 2003:136).
Inspite of the efforts of the Government, national and international partners, Liberia remains a fragile state that needs to consolidate the gains made since the end of the war in 2003. This largely depends on how issues affecting young people are addressed. An attempt to identify the problems of young people in Liberia will have to take into account the socio-economic and political disenchantments that drove the country into one of the most barbaric civil conflict in the African continent (Munive, 2010:327).

There are different vulnerabilities and drivers of fragility affecting young people in Liberia and it is important to recognize these in order to understanding the problems of young people in post conflict Liberia. Lack of access to education, economic activities, governance and other basic services like health and social wellbeing make it difficult for young people to participate in the socio economic and political development of the country (Munive, 2010:327).

Firstly, the acute educational fragility in Liberia is the result of 14 years of civil war and the social economic and political deprivation that drove the country into the civil war (Walker et al, 2005:4). The inability of successive governments to fund capital or recurrent educational expenditure is a major driver of educational fragility which affect the ability of young people to gain access to employment as the results of lack of prerequisite educational or skills training to carry out the available jobs on the market and it also undermines the ability of young people to undertake entrepreneurial role in the economy.

The employment sector in Liberia is not certain of the outputs of the educational sector in term of the qualifications given to graduates from different levels of the education system as a result of the lack of trustworthiness in the education systems (Walker, 2005:4). Report of teachers taking bribe from students to provide pass mark continue to surface in the Liberian education system. This is translated in the limit place on the legitimacy of qualifications from public schools and institutions around the country. It is this lack of recognition that impact on young people for employment even if they have gone through skill training program through the demobilization process.

The high number of illiteracy in Liberia remains one of the main challenges of the government for post conflict reconstruction of Liberia. (Walker et al, 2005:4) The youth cohort of the war years lacks the necessary skills and educational background for today’s job market and this in the long term has implications for socio-economic and political stability.
Secondly, like other social groups in Liberia, young people find it difficult to access basic health services with many of the existing health service not “youth friendly” especially in relation to sexual and reproductive health (Walker et al, 2005:5). This lack of access to health services that are youth friendly is leading to teen aged pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Although the Liberia health sector is steadily recovering from destruction of infrastructure, dislocation of health personnel looting of equipments, drug and supplies, it remains highly fragile and limited in addressing the health needs of young people especially on the critical area of mental health (Walker, et al. 2005:5). Ex-combatant were disarmed and demobilized without effectively addressing their mental health needs. This is reflected in the level of sexual violence and aggressive behaviour directed at women in the Liberian society. With all the efforts of the government and the support of international organizations, armed robberies remain a major challenge to the government and the population of Liberia due to the high number of mentally ill young people with little or no support to address their health conditions. Lack of mental health services for young people makes it difficult to resolve the issues of anti-social behaviour.

Thirdly, youth unemployment stands at 88% which represents a major challenge to the government, national and international partners working to sustain the fragile peace in Liberia (Blattman & Annan, 2011:9). This is more relevant in the context of post war Liberia because of the obvious risk of the country sliding back into war. Unemployed young people are seen as a threat to peace, often blamed for all the wrong things from fights to crime, riot and other antisocial behaviour in the country. Ex-combatants in post conflict situation are particular concern to policy makers because of the social networks around them which constitutes potential armed recruiters (Blattman & Annan, 2011:9).

In Liberia a national demobilization program was implemented but, many thousands of young men and women were poorly served or unserved by the official program (Blattman & Annan, 2011:9) Many of these young people remain unemployed since the end of the demobilization process and their main source of income has been illicit activities such as unlicensed mining, logging, rubber tapping and the production and sale of marijuana.

The absence of a sustainable source of livelihood for young people particularly former combatants in post conflict countries makes it difficult to reverse the devastation experienced during the war and build an environment in which they can take responsibility of themselves in a just and sustainable community.
Fourthly, youth involvement in politics at community provincial or national level is an expression of their social engagement (Search for Common Ground SCG, 2012:72). Many Liberian youth have positive view on the government’s efforts and the enormous tasks on hand but, they express frustration at the failure of government to consult them on issues that affect them (SCG, 2012:72) This reflects a lack of avenue to express their grievances and access to decision making processes at community, provincial (county) and national levels.

At the community level, the main barrier to youth participation is the belief that young people are not as politically knowledgeable and motivated as their elders (SCG, 2012:72). This reflects the Liberian traditional belief that rationality is in the age of a person rather the characteristics of the individuals.

The lack of access to political participation at the provincial level is associated with the low level of coordination between youth organizations (SCG, 2012:73). Young people find it difficult to complement the complex nature of structures and communications between sectors and agencies involved with issues affecting youth as youth issues are cross-cutting between different sectors of government and Non-Governmental Organizations NGOs. For example, the ministries of Education, Health and Youth & Sport are involved with young people and the necessary coordination between those sectors is limited and further made complex with the participation of NGOs. Young people who are mostly illiterate find it difficult to make sense of the decision making processes in involved.

At national level, there is the issue of rural and urban divide which limit the participation of rural youth compare to their counterparts in the urban part of Liberia around Monrovia (SCG, 2012:80). Generally there is little room for youth to voice their concerns to the government except for few youth organizations based around Monrovia and well connected to power structures in the government (SCG, 2012:80). This means young people continue to face political exclusion based on rural and urban divide which was a contributing factor to the civil conflict.

Finally, the people of Liberia have made effort to promote gender equality by electing Africa’s first elected female president and an increase in the presence of women in the national legislation (Hanna & Alfaro, 2012:77). However, there are serious problem regarding the protection and safety of young women against violence. Rape and sexual violence against young women’s remain major crime problems in Liberia with 17.6% of young women experiencing sexual violence (Hanna & Alfaro, 2012:78). This makes young
woman susceptible to Sexually Transmitted Infections STIs including HIV/AIDS and impacts on the lives of young people in Liberia.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is widely practiced in Liberia especially the North and West of the country. The Liberian government has not been able to criminalize this inhuman treatment of young girls. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2001) up to 60% of young girls in Liberia are affected by Female Genital Mutilation. It is cited as the key factor for the failure of the National youth policy in the National legislature which has been amended. FGM represents an obstacle in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Liberia as the practice is one characterized with unhygienic use of the cutting instrument for more than one individual.

Young people in Liberia face a series of problems that need to be addressed in order for the youth to express their potential to move the country forward. The lack of education and skills for many young people as a result of the 14 years of war are impediments for the participation of young people in social, economic and political activities (Walker et al., 2008:4). As a result of the low level of literacy and skills, the unemployment rate among the youth is very high with up to 88% of young people unemployed which represent a threat to the fragile peace (Blattman & Annan, 2011:4).

The participation of young people in politics remains constrained due to traditional beliefs that political rationality lies in the age of a person, the lack of understanding of the cross-cutting nature of youth issues and regionalism with urban youth more active than rural youth (SCG, 2012:37). These represent sense of frustrations of the youth for lack of avenue to express their grievances and aspirations.

Although there have been some progress in the participation of women in politics in Liberia, there are serious issues that confront young women in Liberia. Young women continue to face serious problems with rape and sexual violence, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and Female Genital Mutilation (Blattman & Annan, 2011:4; Hanna & Alfaro, 2012:78; WHO, 2001:1). The resolution of these problems will go a long way in promoting the lives of young people and contributing to the peace and stability in Liberia.

Chapter 4: Current policy initiatives by government

The current policy of the government in relation to the youth of Liberia will be examined using key policy documents such as the poverty reduction strategy of the government of...
Liberia. The current policy on youth development will be the subject of objective examination for the purpose of identifying gains been made and drawbacks that need policy rethink for improvement. There are many problems confronting young people in Liberia but, the pressing area are unemployment, lack of education and skill training, health and social wellbeing, gender based violence against women and the marginalization of youth in governance. The policy objectives of the government in the different sectors are the subjects of this chapter.

**Education**

The Liberia government is determined to rebuild the education sector through the construction of school infrastructures such as school buildings and equip them with quality teachers and quality furniture (Government of Liberia (GoL) 2008:111). With a generation of young people missed out on education in the context of less than 50% of classes ready for instruction, the government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the donor community are working tirelessly to make available school infrastructures for young people to attend classes (GoL, 2008:111). This will contribute to the elimination of the high illiteracy rate in the country particularly among young people who missed out on schooling during the war years.

The goal of the government for the education sector is to increase young people access to education at all levels emphasizing the availability of primary education and the recognition of the needs of disadvantaged youth particularly girls (GoL, 2008:112). The government has put forward seven strategic objectives to achieve its goal of increasing access to education and these include the following policy:

1. Improve access to quality, safe and hygienic schools with the construction of 240 primary class rooms, 54 new secondary classrooms, rebuild or repair 200 existing primary classrooms, 72 secondary classrooms, provide 14,150 chairs, build 82 latrines and install 82 wells and hand pumps (GoL, 2008:112). The achievement of this policy would lead to increase access to employment through skill development.

2. The government is strengthening the curriculum to reflect the needs of employers through the compulsory core curriculum by nationwide implementation of this policy (GoL, 2012::112).

3. The government intends to recruit, train and deploy qualify teachers in the country’s schools. With a target of training 650-1000 teacher annually (GoL, 2008:112).Under
this policy the government intends to build houses for teachers in hardship localities in the countryside.

4. The government intends to improve the learning outcome and school completion rates by providing text books and take home rations for students (GoL, 2012:112).

5. At primary school level, the Liberian government has already begun implementation of a free compulsory primary education which enables all school aged children to attend school (International Monetary Fund IMF, 2009:39). This means parents with less or no financial resources that send their children to school can be assured that their children can have access to basic education free of charge.

6. The government of Liberia is strengthening the quality and accessibility of skill and vocational trainings to provide unskilled and unemployed young people with skills to increase their employment prospects (GoL, 2008:113). This means increasing funding to refurbish and equip four multilateral high schools, lend support to literacy training in youth centres with the participation of young people as teachers in their own communities and increase the number of skill training centre graduates by 50% annually.

The potential of education and skill training in the post conflict reconstruction of Liberia cannot be over emphasized because it addresses many core issues for young people including unemployment and capacity constraint among other. Youth unemployment has been identified as the single most important threat to the peace in Liberia by the president and donors including the United State Agency for International development (USAID). Education is a stabilizing factor to this open threat to Liberia’s peace and stability.

**Health**

According to the government’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) the government’s goal for the health sector is to expand access to basic health care of acceptable quality and establish the building blocks of equitable, effective, efficient responsive and sustainable health care delivery system for all Liberian including young people through the achievement of the following objectives:

1. Rehabilitation of health infrastructures
2. Expanding access to basic health services
3. Building human resources in the health sector
4. Strengthening social health welfare programs
Developing support system in the health sector

Strengthening financial system in the health sector (GoL, 2008:145).

The infrastructure need of the education sector is been addressed by the government and its implementing partners through the rehabilitation and construction of health facilities in the country based on utilization, population distribution, access to roads and transportation, operational costs and socio-economic factors in order to determine the size and type of facilities needed for different localities for the future health care networks (GoL, 2007:28). This is intended to increase access to health for the population including young people.

The government hope to achieve the above objectives by upgrading the human resource of the health sector to reflect priority areas in relation to present and future staffing requirements (GoL, 2007:28) This means training staff on the job and designing the curriculum for health related skill training to reflect the demand of the population in particular the provision of youth friendly services to address issues such as mental health and HIV/AIDS problem affecting young people.

The government has expressed it willingness to commit more financial resources to health in compatible with its revenues (GoL, 2007:28) The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare will continue to closely monitor health expenditure, resource allocation pattern to identify financing gap for improvement to tackle the priority areas including the health needs of young people in post conflict Liberia.

Gender

Sexual and Gender violence deserve a lot of attention as Liberia moves beyond the effect of years of violence particularly perpetrated against women especially young women. The Liberia government established the Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) unit at the Ministry of Justice to address the critical issue of gender based violence (IMF, 2011:35). This is reinforced with the development of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for police and prosecutors in SGBV cases is completed and the drafting of the SOP for legal and the security sectors under the SGBV taskforce is also completed (IMF, 2011:35). A special court to hear SGBV cases has been established within the judicial system (IMF, 2011:35). These measures are intended to create awareness around sex crimes and gender based violence and to prosecute would be offenders. The Liberian government has set up a specific ministry for gender called the Ministry of Gender and Development which seek to promote gender
mainstreaming in the Liberian public and private sectors and promote the cause of gender justice for both men and women including young girls.

**Employment**

Employment for youth is one of the most critical issues the government and its development partners need to address as a matter of urgency (Munive et al, 2006:12). The Liberian economy with an unemployment rate of 85% is limited in the provision of employment opportunities for young people. It is within this context that the government in collaboration with other development partners including donors proposed to take measures to create job opportunities for young people through the Liberia Emergency Employment Program (LEEP) (Munive et al, 2006:13). These measures include the provision of labour market information, job counselling and training young people in skills that are in demand.

The implementation of the LEEP job creation measures is being carried out by a wide selection of partners including the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank, United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), United Nation Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and others. These agencies are working to promote employment prospect for young people and to consolidate the process into the Liberian Employment Action plan (LEAP) which is the longer term action plan of the government and its implementing partners. It points out six key areas for job creation in the Liberian economy and these are (I) Booster employment works, investments and skill trainings for young people (ii) facilitating the graduation of the informal economy to enable small and medium term enterprise sector (iii) labour statistics and labour market information and analysis (iv) promoting social dialogue and strengthen labour administration (vi) strengthen and make agriculture attractive to young people. These initiatives are intended to promote employment particularly for youth who constitutes the largest cohort of unemployed people within the population.

**Governance**

For many years, youth participation in the decision making process has always been an ad hoc issue often in reaction to an event at different times (SCG, 2012:79). In the post conflict context, young people have been able to come together to organise a consultative conference supported by government and NGOs (SCG, 2012:79). This conference attracted 150 young people from all 15 counties in Liberia and was held in the provincial city of Kakata under the banner of the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY).
Young people were able to develop and proposed a National Youth Policy (NYP) which gives priority to the wishes and aspirations of young people in areas such as education and trainings, unemployment, HIV/AIDS crisis and the deprivation which affect young people (SCG, 2012:79). Many young people in positions of authority in Liberia expressed their desire to translate this policy into law by legislation which if passed would make young people interests to remain on the policy agenda of the present government and future governments in Liberia. Despite the effort of young people and the attempt by the government to legislate the National Youth Policy into law; the bill was rejected by the National Legislature due to the policy’s demand for the abolition of the traditional practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and it demand for the adoption of universal education (SCG, 2012:79). This rejection of the NYP reflects contradiction of the interests of the different actors in the post conflict environment in Liberia. Most international development partners placed more emphasis on human rights while local people consider the abolition of any cultural practice as an invasion of local cultural practices. Again this has more to do with high illiteracy level among the local indigenous population of Liberia. As the Liberian government seek to develop a National Youth policy that reflect the aspirations of young people, it is important for the government to work with civil society organizations to educate the population on the importance of youth participation in the governing process and taking youth people interests into account in the post conflict development of the Liberia

Chapter 5: A critical analysis of the current youth policy in Liberia

The definition of a problem by policy actors give images to the problem that determine which solution is needed to solve the problem (Stone, 1989:282). In the process of assigning image to a problem, political actors find ways to blame someone for the problem by either casting the problem as a social construct or natural construct (Stone, 1989:282). This is important because it enable government to avoid responsibility of a problem if it can be perceived as natural or accidental (structural failure) in order to make the whole of society to take responsibility of the problem and avoid blaming certain individuals. The problems of young people in Liberia have been given different definitions and causal factors in the forms of well rooted deprivation of indigenous Liberian in the political, social and economic marginalization, ethnically based violence perpetrated by the government of Samuel Doe against other ethnic groups and the lack of access to basic services (health, education, employment opportunities) particularly for indigenous Liberian youth. It is within the context of these deprivations that Liberia was driven into 14 years of civil war which was mostly
fought by young people. The government and its development partners will need to take into account the deprivations that led to the war and the subsequent re-emergence of those deprivations in the post war context.

The current post conflict youth policy of the government is one that is crosscutting between different sectors of the government including education, health, youth & sport and gender (SCG, 2012:80) The crosscutting nature of youth issues have serious problems in terms of coordination and communication between different sectors of the government and between NGOs working to assist young people (SCG,2012:80). There is a need to increase coordination between the different sectors of the government and NGOs assisting young people and this can be done through network governance in which different sectors including the third sector and the beneficiaries negotiate shared values and policy ideas (Althaus et al, 2007;125). This means the government need to take less imperial style of sovereign authority to allow other actors to be involved in the process of addressing the problems of young people in Liberia.

There is a sense of marginalization among youth in regard to the current government crosscutting approach to youth issues with many young people expressing their frustrations at their marginalization and lack of access to basic services (SCG, 2012:79). This does not mean the government is not supporting young people in key areas such as education health and gender but, the processes in which that assistance are planned and implemented need to involve young people at all levels of the government so as to develop their sense of ownership in all geographical areas of the country.

Liberian youth have little sense of ownership over the provision of services being provided to them. Participation in planning and implementation promotes young people sense of ownership and empower them to play positive roles in solving problems that affect them (Tesoriero, 2010:151). The government needs to consult and reflect on the aspirations and wishes of young people in policy planning and implementation on issues that affect young people. Given that the causal factors to the Liberian conflict were lack of access to social, economic and political resources and ethnic suppression of certain groups in the Liberian society, it is understandable for one to be concerned about the sustainability of peace in the wake of massive youth unemployment, political marginalization and violence against a segment (gender) of the population. However, it is equally important to perceive young people in the post conflict context from a positive perspective because the more young people
are stigmatized, isolated and marginalized, the more it become complex to solve problems around them.

Despite legal provisions and various promising actions on the parts of the government and its development partners, barriers to education and health continue to disproportionally affect certain groups and individual on the basis of income, geographic location and gender (UNESCO, 2011:14). Young people who are mostly unemployed or live in remote Liberia continue to face barriers to education and health services as the results of limited schools and health facilities available in remote parts of Liberia and lack of trained teachers and health workers to provide high quality services unique to the needs of young people in post conflict situation (UNESCO 2011:14; National Health policy 2007-11:8) These limitations have serious implications for the peace and social stability in Liberia. Young people particularly rural youth who have no education or poor quality education need robust support in service delivery because of their very susceptibility to recruitment into rebellion organisations to undermine the peace and stability in the country.

Critical to Liberia stability is the availability of basic services in education and health and livelihood opportunities for young people which were denied in the past and led to the onset of the civil conflict in 1989 (Munive et al, 2006:12). Limited access to these services reinforces marginalization and exclusion of young people; conversely, access to these services mitigates sources of conflict and sustains peace in post conflict contexts such as those in Liberia. The current level of youth unemployment represents particular threat to the stability of Liberia because of the high expectation of young people from a democratically elected government that have used the promise of economic prosperity to come to power. Youth unemployment of 88% does not mean that young people are not working in Liberia, instead the works they do are not wage employment (Women Refugee Commission, 2009:2). The lack of wage employment for young people remains a major challenge to the stability of Liberia and the government and its development partners will consolidate the gains made so far if they would create employment opportunities for young people.

Liberia made some progress in promoting gender with the establishment of the Ministry of Gender and Development which mandate is to promote gender mainstreaming in Liberia, however there are drawbacks with the failure of the National Youth Policy due to the inclusion of the abolition of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and the provision of universal education (SCG, 2012:79) The failure of the National Youth Policy to pass into law
demonstrates the competing interests of international donors and the local indigenous belief system impacting on the human rights of women and girls. Again education will be instrumental in reducing the practice of FGM if the legislation can rewords the bill to ban the practice among under aged girls and accelerate the education of girls around this cruel practice before they are 18 years. The level of violence against girls is proportionally high and that more need to be done to promote the rights of girls to access protection of the law by strengthening the justice system against gender based violence.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

The work in this research will be summarized to give a general overview of content of the article. There will be policy recommendations for the purpose of improving on what have been done in the area of youth policy in Liberia learning from best practice in other post conflict situations in other countries.

Young people are key actors in intra-state conflicts such as those experienced in West Africa’s Mano River Union countries (Kunkeler & Peters, 2011:227) These conflicts are not restricted to Africa alone as all regions of the world have their own histories of violence conflict. Intra-state conflicts have been on the rise since the end of the cold war (Forsther, 2011:1). These conflicts have been marked by excessive violation of human rights including death and displacement of populations and in so doing these conflicts also disrupt the social capital of the affected populations.

Increasing body of literature points to three key factors that drives a country to intra-state conflict and these include a huge proportion of disengaged young people in the population who have no means of livelihood, forceful recruitment of young people into rebellion organisations and deprivation of young people of socio-economic and political participation as seen in many developing countries (Munive, 2010:24). Each of these three causal factors of intra-state conflict is represented in the Liberian context.

Out of the general deprivation of the indigenous Liberia population who constitutes 95% of the total population of Liberian, there was a general marginalization of young people from social economic and political participations in the form of lack of education, health and other services (Munive, 2010:25) This was translated into social tensions that led to the rice riot in Monrovia in 1979 and the subsequent over throw of President Williams Tolbert in 1980 by
uncommission young soldiers led by Samuel Doe. Doe who became the first indigenous president of Liberia was bias against other indigenous ethic groups particularly the Gio and Mano ethnic groups who were accused of several coup attempts over the years (Ngaima, 2010:36). This oppression of young people who were not members of President Doe’s Krahn ethnic group on top of the general deprivation served as the trigger points of the war with the NPFL led by Charles Taylor attacking the country on Christmas Eve in 1989.

The 14 year war continue to negatively impact on young people throughout the country with limited access to education, health, high unemployment and marginalization of young people political participation, gender based violence, HIV/AIDS and the trauma of the war among many other (Walker et al, 2005:4; Blattman & Annan, 2011:9; SCG,2012:72; Hanna & Alfaro,2012:78). These problems continue to constraint the government and its partners in consolidating peace in Liberia.

The government and its partners have been working to put in place strategies that assist to mitigate the problems that are impacting on the youth of Liberia. The goals of the government are to increase young people access to

I. education and the recognition of the important of primary education for all including girls
II. basic health care of acceptable quality and establish the building blocks of equitable, effective, efficient and sustainable health care delivery system for all including young people
III. Protection of girls and confronting gender based violence by strengthening the justice system to effectively respond to violence against women and girls
IV. employment opportunities for young people
V. increase participation of young people in governance by passing the National Youth Policy into law at the national legislation (Gol, 2008:111; Munive et al,2006; IMF, 2011:35

Policy recommendations -Sustainable livelihood Framework

Vulnerability context

The problems of the youth in Liberia can be addressed through the application of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework in the vulnerability context of high youth illiteracy, lack of youth friendly health services, youth unemployment and gender based violence against
young women and girls, increase teen aged pregnancy and HIV/AIDS in post conflict Liberia. These require commitment of the government and its development partners in the form of assisting young people to gain access to livelihood assets, transform structures and processes to develop strategies that lead to the desire outcomes of more income, increase wellbeing, reduce vulnerability, improve food security and more sustainable use of natural resources.

Given the relative small size of the formal economy compare to a large informal economy sector, it is of foremost important to assist young people gain access to livelihood assets to accelerate their graduation from the informal economy to the formal economy. Thus the application of Sustainable Livelihood Framework is a strategic necessity for national development especially when delivered in collaboration with traditional investments in health, education, governance and economic growth activities. The DFID Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) will serve as the basis of the policy recommendations of this paper.
According to the UK government’s Department for International Development (DFID) Sustainable Livelihood Framework comprises the capacities, assets and activities required for the means of living; a livelihood is sustainable if it can cope and recover from shock by enhancing it capacities and assets both now and into the future while avoiding to undermine the natural resource base (Farrington, et al, 1999:2). The Sustainable livelihood Framework work is organised around five main livelihood assets and they are human capital, social capital, financial capital, physical capital and natural capital (Farrington, et al. 1999:2).

Livelihood assets

Human capital- Liberian youth access to education, skills and health is limited due to the long social economic deprivation that characterized the country history and the 14 years of war (Walker Et al, 2005:4). In order to assist young people to increase their human capital, young people need to gain access to formal and informal education, skill trainings relevant to the need of the market, health and psychosocial support services that are youth friendly and located closer to young people throughout the country (DFID, 1999:7). Increase gender education to reduce the violence directed at young women in Liberia. These measures if
adopted will increase young people participation in the formal economy through employment and small entrepreneurship and increase productivity through new technologies.

Social capital- Liberian youth organisations are not very active in term of fostering a strong social capital among youth in rural and urban Liberia. There is no strong network among young people to form a strong bond mostly due to their limited participation in governance and policy process (SCG, 2012:79). However there are some social networks through schools, informal economic activities that young people carry out to gain livelihoods and the traditional or cultural institutions in some local communities.

Social capital brings about economic efficiency through its ability to build trust among people and facilitate income generating activities leading to saving and financial capital (DFID, 1999:8). In order for young people to build strong social capital in Liberia it is important to:

1. assist young people to improve on internal functioning of groups leadership and management
2. assist young people to participate in policy planning so that they form engaging relationships with policy makers to reduce their political marginalization (good governance)
3. organise to assist develop system to consult civil society organization
4. assist young people to play active role in the campaign against gender based violence
5. assist young people to play a central role in the HIV/AIDS prevention and care of infected people
6. assist young people extend external link with groups (DFID, 1999:10).

Natural Capital- Liberia has an abandon of natural capital including fertile farmland, fish stocks, forest, extractive minerals and the rational use of these resources constitute source of possible employment services (DFID, 1999:9). However young people are not willing to be involved in agriculture activities which remain the largest source of livelihood activities for most Liberia. It is important that young people are encouraged and train to

1. gain secure access to natural resources
2. better management of natural resources
3. assist in reforming organization, supply services to forest management, agriculture and fisheries
4. change institutions that manage and govern access to natural resources
5. Support market development to increase natural resource value
6. enforce environmental legislation (DFID, 1999:12)

Physical capital- young people access to physical capital such as school buildings, health facilities, adequate water supply and sanitation, affordable transport are very much limited in Liberia (Walker et al, 2005:5) This requires that Liberia invest in infrastructure development in order to deliver basic services like education and health services that remain in short supply due to limited facilities and staffing. There is a need for;

1. reform within managing ministries to accelerate infrastructure development
2. support sector strategies and regulatory frameworks
3. support the private sector for alternative development of physical capital
4. capacity building for community based construction and management (DFID, 1999:14)

Financial capital- Young people access to financial capital in Liberia is very limited as most youth are unemployed and they have no collateral to gain access to credit from financial institutions (Munive, et al, 2006:12). This makes it difficult for most young people to transit into the formal economy. In order for young people to gain access to financial capital it is important to:

1. support the development of financial service organizations (savings, credit, insurance)
2. extend young people access to financial service organizations
3. reform of financial sector legislation or regulation, for example, Financial counselling should be based on the best interests of clients especial young people rather than those of financial institutions)

Transforming structures and processes

Increasing young people access to the five capital assets will require the participation of all levels of government from nation to provincial and community where each level can work with civil society organizations to promote young people access to the various capitals that
will assist them to develop sustainable livelihoods. There are many ways to do this in the Liberian context including using laws or policies to change the roles of government at different levels. The law should commit government to increase young people access to the various assets by legislation and civil society organization can work with cultural group or institutions to assist young people to gain access to the capital assets using the influence of culture and other institutions. For example legislation may provide for free primary education and local civil society organizations can work with cultural institutions in the local context to encourage the successful implementation of the free primary education policy. This can offers opportunities for the participation of different stakeholders including young people in the policy development and implementations which will increase their engagement and sense of ownership of the livelihoods been developed. It should be noted that access to capital assets is a means not an end rather the end is the outcomes of Sustainable Livelihoods for young people.

Livelihood strategies

There are many strategies to employ for young people to develop their livelihood including nonformal education and skill training leading to their participation in the different livelihood activities of their desires.

Youth livelihood strategies for human capital include skills training and mentoring services in collaboration with public and private sectors to improve credit-ready young people’s access to financial capital to enable them start livelihood activities that must be built on the skills and the existing knowledge of the young person. This is why informal trainings will have to take into account the time available to the young person to participate.

The skill trainings need to be relevant to the local economy for the skills to be acceptable to employers. The provision of certification for the qualifications that young people will achieve must be easily marketable in the local settings. The barriers to the skills training need to be removed to allow young people to gain access to the skill trainings. The availability of employment services to act as links between skill trainings and employers which will also remove the barriers to accessing employment.

The livelihood strategy most effective for the acquisition of financial capital is microfinance. It use as a strategy to increase young people access to financial capital must be organised around four entry financial process. Firstly engage young people and build relationship
through outreach services in informal education and other services. Secondly, invest in capacity development through literacy work in small business practicum, apprenticeship, and intensive educational program in financial management by peer educator and supportive adult and market research with youth and support networks. Thirdly, mobilise the young people to increase their access to financial capital by savings, group credit and value chain, peer support groups. Fourthly, graduate and link young people to traditional microfinance organisations and their commercially important product and services, follow-up with livelihood coaching and an opportunity to serve as peer educator.

Youth livelihood strategy for social capital development must include peer support significant to the young person, service learning through community work, sport and recreation, membership to business or professional organisation that provide continuous coaching support, family reunification and community reintegration and peace building activities.

The livelihood strategy of accessing natural capital such as farm land to set up small farm business can be accomplished through collaboration with cultural groups who have native title on land in rural Liberia to provide farm land as has always been in the past. This can be more effective if young people can have skill trainings around effective agricultural training and the provision of farming tools. Liberia been predominately an agricultural economy, young people can contribute to the growth of the economy by ensuring food security. This can be more effective if government can assist to negotiate access to major markets for agricultural products from Liberia.

Young people can gain access to physical capital through the provision for their livelihood through skill trainings followed by the provision of small grant or low interest loan to assist young people including young women to buy tools, equipment, land or physical space to assist them set up livelihood activities.

**Outcomes**

Young people gaining more income from employment, entrepreneurship to the household increases youth wellbeing including sense of inclusion, empowerment, ownership, self-esteem, and physical security of household members and their health status and access to services. Livelihood activities to reduce vulnerability for young people who live in precarious situations particularly young girls will be able to live in more secure environment and be able
to access protection from the law and cushion themselves against the adverse effect of their vulnerability context. Livelihood activities can lead to improve food security for young people and the effect of hunger on their nutritional status. This is particular important in the post conflict context in Liberia. With the provision of skill trainings for young people, they will be able to make sustainable use of natural resource base of Liberia (DFID, 1999).

This thesis has been able to illustrate the causes of the conflict in Liberia in the form deprivation of the indigenous population from social economic and political development (Munive, 2010:327) The deprivation of the indigenous population was extended to young people in the form of lack of access to basic services and state violence toward young people based on ethnic affiliation which brought young people at the front of the conflict (Munive, 2010:327; Oquaye, 2001:5).

In the post conflict context the government and its development partner are making effort to improve the situation of young people but, young people remain marginalised in governance and their access to resources is limited in accessing education and health services particularly those in remote Liberia (Walker et al, 2005:4; Munive, 2010:327; Mac-Ikemenjema, 2008:146).

The main policy recommendation to the government is the application of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework in the form of increasing young people access to human, financial physical, natural and social capitals to enable young people to have sustainable livelihoods which have the best chance of removing the threat of the country descending back to conflict (DFID, 1999:2).

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