

'Mi At Don Poil': A Report on Reparations in Sierra Leone for Amputee and War-Wounded People



By Edward Conteh and Maria Berghs

Acknowledgements

We wanted the reparations programme to end with a symbolic ceremony, acknowledgement of wrong and some sort of social security for those who are suffering most from injuries sustained during the civil war. We have people in our communities who are paralysed, suffer severe mental health problems, have learning difficulties as well as have multiple injuries. They need long term care and social support. However, we are faced with a situation where some of us have received one off payments of 1400 dollars for medical, rehabilitation, and family support for the rest of our lives, while others receive nothing. The way in which this has been decided seems completely arbitrary, and sometimes those who have benefited are not even really victims of the war. We are expected to live peacefully together but our communities have been unsettled. Especially amongst the war-wounded there has been a lot of anxiety and dissent. Mark my words they will return to the streets.

We have always put the development of Mama Salone first, participated in various programmes and watched while ex-combatants received aid and funding first. We were asked to forgive and forget. This was very painful but we were promised pensions, free transport, and that our medical needs would be taken care of for the rest of our lives. While foreign charities, religious organisations and non-governmental agencies came to our aid, we waited ten years for the government to begin reparations. To date there has been no corporate social responsibility from the diamond or mining industries, nor any acknowledgement of harm. Many of us died in that time due to the conditions we were living in and nature of our injuries. Do not forget that some of us were ostracised by our villages, families, and friends before we had access to aid and shelter.

The current situation we face is counter to promises made in the Lomé Peace Agreement, recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and defies notions of justice and peace. For this reason we have not signed any documents delimiting our rights and ending reparations. Due to negative societal attitudes and public perception, corruption in the reparations programme and comparison to the rest of the country that has yet to see impact of development, we have felt a need to justify this position. After all, when most of the country is suffering so, what right do we have to ask more reparations? Fellow Sierra Leoneans do not forget that it was our images that stood for the suffering of the country to gain aid, our stories used to try and ensure peace and justice, our bodies that were used to develop medical and rehabilitative services, our skills programmes, water, sanitation and shelter programmes that you have also benefited from.

Plenti thenki to my brothers and sisters of the Amputee and War-Wounded Association for their patience and participation in this report. Plenti thenki to Mami Elisa Schanke and the Norwegian Friends of Sierra Leone for helping us to set up our own organisation, moral fortitude and aiding us in what matters most to our people. Plenti thenki to Dr. Maria Berghs for logistical support in compiling this report. Our finances are precarious and we have received no funding nor have the ability to pay for such reports to be written from our point of view.

On January the 6th in memory of our brothers and sisters who have died. We cannot forget and still taste the bitterness of war.

Edward Conteh, President of Amputee and War-Wounded Association (AWWA)

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Acronyms

APC – All People’s Congress

AWWA - Amputee and War-Wounded Association

CBR – Community Based Rehabilitation

CDF – Civil Defence Forces

DDR - Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme

ECOMOG - Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group

HRW – Human Rights Watch

ICTJ – International Centre for Transitional Justice

IOM – International Organisation for Migration

J6 – January the 6th 1999, the day that the rebels entered the east end of Freetown.

NaCSA – National Commission for Social Action

NGO- Non-governmental Organisation (NGO)

RUF – Revolutionary United Forces

SC – Special Court for Sierra Leone

SLPP- Sierra Leone People’s Party

SLASC – Single Leg Amputee Sports Club

TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNHCR – United Nations High Commission for Refugees

VTF – Victim’s Trust Fund

WB – World Bank

WHO – World Health Organisation

Introduction

“It is set in the Lomé Peace Agreement and TRC!” Lansana

When people became involved in the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) post-conflict, it was often with the explicit understanding of a benefit in terms of reparations to come. This had also been set out in the Lomé Peace Agreement of the 7th of July 1999 and the TRC Act of the 22nd of February 2000. Even if people did not always understand; the ins and outs of reparations, what testimony was exactly, or what the TRC was about, and/or confused it with other peace-building process, and/or the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SC), it was felt that their ‘participation’ would in some way improve their lives (Kelsall 2005, Shaw 2007, Millar 2011, 2013). Men, women and children had been given these assurances by their community leaders, civil society, non-governmental and international organisations, and national government. This was a part of a process of sensitisation of the population to ensure involvement of the main stakeholders in the TRC.

The former head of the Amputee and War-Wounded Association (AWWA), Alhaji Jusu Jarka has often stated that as a group of victims, his people initially refused to get involved in the TRC due to how they were treated post-conflict (Berghs 2007, 2012) A lack of sustainable planning in relief aid meant that people with any sort of injury had been put into special camps. The most famous was the Aberdeen (or Murray Town) camp, located near medical and rehabilitative services in the capital city. The conditions in which daily life transpired were abysmal. People reported deaths due to lack of; sanitation, water, food, adequate shelter and so on. For many years, these settings also only served to ensure segregation and created dependency as the impaired bodies and stories of people were used to gain relief aid. Strict medical identification (‘amputee’ or ‘war-wounded’) became self-ascription of ‘problem’ of impairment and thus linked to resources (Berghs 2010a,b). Another part of the ‘problem’ was that although impairments such as amputations were politically created and caused, people felt that they had been ignored by their government as ex-combatants were aided first (Sørheim 2010, Berghs 2012).

AWWA had to be convinced by then President Kabbah that the needs of people who had been amputated or had gained war-wounds would be taken care of post TRC (Berghs 2007). Assurances were given to people living in the camps that if they participated by giving testimony, they would be looked after by the government. The TRC final report (TRC 2004) thus contained recommendations on physical and symbolic reparations for victims. These recommendations were viewed in terms of socio-economic rights and not cash-payments. A Special Fund for War-Victims or Victim’s Trust Fund (VTF) would also be set up. This was to ensure that socio-economic rights would be respected and reparations, in these terms, were made.

There were certain stipulations for people who became injured. For example, injuries had to have been sustained as a direct consequence of the conflict, so between March 1991 and March 2002. The

TRC also had to delimit claims of reparations, so suggested that ‘loss of earning potential’ would be assessed medically. This meant that the loss of limbs would constitute percentages of loss of earning potential, “For example, the loss of an arm constitutes a 70% reduction in earning capacity” (TRC 2004: 244). In this way, priorities and hierarchies in terms of physical impairment were established with very little thought to multiple impairments, chronic conditions or mental health needs of victims.

The TRC final report states, “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” (TRC 2004: 244).¹ There were no such stipulations for women who had suffered sexual abuse, or in practice, with people who were lower or upper limb amputees. Additionally, recommendations were made to ensure free access to needed medical care, transport and education for those most severely injured. Recommendations were also made in terms of social protection and pensions for people who could no longer work due to their injuries. The money to fund reparations for the victims would come from donations and a tax on the mineral resources of the country (TRC 2004). Reparations were supposed to begin within 6 months of the TRC final report but were significantly delayed. Additionally, a reparations task force was created consisting of key government, civil society and victim stakeholders but ignored key participants such as women’s groups and co-opted others (Sørheim 2010). For years, there was a lot of attention placed on symbolic reparations by the government in terms of community events or memorials over any physical reparations to victims.

Despite the recommendations made by the TRC, it was philanthropists, religious organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that were aiding people with various forms of injuries. Aid was given in; the form of medical and rehabilitative care, skills training programmes, educational and vocational assistance, the building of shelter, as well as, part of the various programmes linked to the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (DDR), government pensions or compensation payments for injured soldiers. There was very little verification or understanding of people’s various identities or the fact that people (especially women) could have several impairments, chronic conditions and severe long term mental health issues. In many programmes, victims and ex-combatants with injuries, especially if they were young were accorded the same status. This situation continued for years post-conflict with aid and programmes that were disjointed and missing long term planning and sustainability.

Reparations for specific categories of victims such as; 1) children, 2) war-widows, 3) sexually abused women, 4) amputee, and 5) war-wounded people only really began in earnest in 2008 -2009 with a registration and verification process held across Sierra Leone. This was only after a \$3 million donation by the United Nations (UN) Peacebuilding Fund to start an initial one year programme. The National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) was the government implementing agency and in charge of the verification and registration process. Oversight and technical assistance was given by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and International Centre for Transitional Justice

¹ For a discussion, see Sørheim (2010).

(ICTJ) but most victims had very little insight into how much money had been given or how it was going to be budgeted (Sørheim 2010).

There were lots of problems with the verification process, for example, its inaccessibility and location in mainly urban centres. This for disabled people who could not afford transport fees from rural areas, sometimes had no documentation (i.e. did not participate in the TRC, SC, NGO programmes or were not members of AWWA), were illiterate and/or immobile. There were further issues with sensitisation processes, lack of mobile teams and information given to people by NaCSA about what exactly reparations would comprise (i.e. cash payments, medical care, shelter etc.) and who would be eligible (i.e. widows of amputees). There was also confusion about what categories people should register in, for example, there were sexually abused women who were also war-wounded. Likewise with children who had been amputated and registered as 'amputees' or orphaned children of 'amputees' not being able to register. Many people fit in several of these categories, had been former ex-combatants or disabled and thus not 'victims'. People also reported widespread external and internal corruption. For example, some officials needed payments to get a name on a list, people with no documentation had paid off leaders in communities, and family members of community leaders had benefited.

In total, NaCSA estimated that there would be 55,500 victims for reparations but only 29,733 people registered, with 1,285 'amputees' and 4,675 'war-wounded' (Summa & Correa 2009: 9). People were given initial cash-payments of 300,000 Leones (\$100) after lobbying NaCSA for this urgent aid (Berghs 2012) because for years, despite promises of social protection in the TRC (2004), there had been nothing or aid had been tied to charity, religious or NGO priorities. Yet, \$100 while welcomed by the 'beneficiaries', was not enough to ensure transformational change in people's lives (Sørheim 2010). While some relief medical aid was given, it was delimited by the Ministry of Health. Thus, only in terms of physical aid of the supposed most severe cases linked to sexual abuse. Most people received no consistent healthcare or mental health services (Summa & Correa 2009). There were also issues with a lack of funding or sudden funds becoming available but with strings attached. For example, in 2010, there was focus on gender and 'transformative justice' by the UN Women that singled out 650 female victims of sexual violence for skills training, micro-credit grants and counselling but this came after the initial verification process and payments had begun. No real sustained and long-term attention was given to socio-culturally sensitive means of reintegration of sexually abused or disabled women in the DDR or TRC (Berghs 2011, Asiedu & Berghs 2012).

This was over 10 years after the war had ended. The long term rehabilitative and health care needs of those most severely affected victims, the setting up of pensions, free transport and educations for some victims and children of severely affected amputee and war-wounded people was ignored (Summa & Correa 2009, Sørheim 2010). Despite reiteration by the ICTJ (Summa & Correa 2009) that reparations needed more funding, more planning, a five year programme as well as long term sustainability in terms of pensions, this did not happen (Sørheim 2010). By 2013, the most severely affected amputee and war-wounded people were all given payments of \$1400 and asked to sign documents giving assurances to NaCSA that they would not request any more reparations.

Historical and Political Background

Sierra Leone is a country located on the West African coast with a population of 5.6 million (CIA 2013). A former British colony, it became independent in 1961. The majority of the population, of around 60%, are Muslim, 10% are Christians and 30% practice indigenous religions (CIA 2013). The country is home to many different ethnicities such as the; Mende, Temne, Limba, Kono, Sherbro and Krio people. Yet, the main two ethnic groups are the Mende who live in the south of the country and the Temne who live in the north. The main political parties are also organised geographically and along ethnic lines with the All People's party (APC) representative of the Temne north and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) of the Mende south. A wide variety of different languages is spoken but English is the official language, and Krio the lingua Franca.

The climate is mainly tropical. There is a hot and humid rainy season from May to December and a hot dry season from January to April. There is only a brief respite of cooler weather when the Harmattan winds come December to January. The hot tropical climate means the country is typified by lush and rich vegetation and mainly agricultural activities. Most of population participates in the informal economy with petty trading, agricultural production, fishery and small livestock, although mining, factory, petroleum, biofuels and forestry industries are present. The country is rich in mineral resources such as diamonds, bauxite, rutile and oil has been found off its shores. Despite this mineral wealth, Sierra Leone is characterised by deep inequality with most of the population living in poverty. The country also has a young population which is affected by unemployment and high rates of illiteracy especially in the rural areas and amongst women (CIA 2013).

Post-independence, Sierra Leone was buoyed by a brief period of prosperity under its first Prime Minister, Milton Margai of the SLPP. This was followed by many years of autocratic government rule begun by his brother Albert Margai and typified by tribalism, cronyism, violence and endemic corruption. This trend continued when in 1967, the APC's Siaka Stevens came to power. He ruled until 1985, when Joseph Momoh gained power, ensuring the APC's political hegemony. Autocratic rule combined with global economic policies (structural adjustment) that lead to the imposition of austerity, fall of prices for certain resources, privatisation of diamond trade and internal budget mismanagement that brought the country into protracted decline. Lack of democracy, rising youth unemployment and the increase of inequalities between people under President Joseph Momoh's many years in power, were some of factors that led to a civil conflict. Grievances and greed intermingled and for some people formed diffuse and disparate reasons for joining a youth led movement against the government (Keen 2005).

The conflict began on the 23rd of March 1991 when the rebels, the Revolutionary United Forces (RUF), supported by Charles Taylor of Liberia², attacked the village of Bomaru in the Kailahun district in eastern Sierra Leone. The east of Sierra Leone and especially Kono and Kenema are known for their diamond wealth. As diamonds became implicated and were used to fund the conflict

² Aided by Guinea and Libya.

transnationally and to buy small arms, they became known as ‘conflict’ or ‘blood’ diamonds. The RUF were responsible for most of the atrocities committed during the war but all warring parties committed abuses. This was inclusive of the mercenaries, the government soldiers, who were known as ‘sobels’, or soldiers by day and rebels by night (Richards 1996), as well as the militia forces who later joined the war to protect their communities.

Ten years of war left no family in Sierra Leone untouched. War profoundly changed socio-cultural, economic and political relations between people as rebels gained or lost territory, people switched allegiances, were captured or joined differing forces or militias, villages fell under rebel control and/or people were forced to flee rural areas for urban cities; like the capital Freetown, Bo or Makeni. Terrorised by a seemingly unending war, a brain drain began, as many educated and wealthy professionals, Lebanese and Krio elites left for the diaspora. The fears of the conflict’s consequences on individuals and communities was real, as the war was typified by the indiscriminate burning of villages, murder, sexual violence, forced marriage, torture, conscription of children into armed forces and massive population displacement (HRW 2003, Reis 2007). Symbolically, elite men in positions of power and women’s bodies were intentionally targeted through rape, mutilation and torture.

While amputation seems to have initially been imported almost circumspectly by Liberian fighters armed with ‘cutlasses,’ it became part of a myriad of strategies of terror later in the war (Christodulou 2004). Amputation (i.e. limbs, fingers, toes, lips, ears, noses, genitals etc.) was used as a weapon of war by all sides but was mainly instigated by the RUF. The RUF had particular techniques (i.e. ‘one love’) and victims were sometimes asked if they wanted ‘long or short sleeves’ (i.e. Christodulou 2004, Berghs 2007).³ Especially the cutting of hands was linked to President Kabbah’s election slogan, “The future is in your hands.” People were often told explicitly that they were being amputated to send a political message to ‘Pa Kabbah’. The majority of the lower limb amputations occurred indirectly due to gunshot wounds where limbs later had to be amputated (Christodulou 2004).

There were several campaigns of violence involving different forms of amputation and also special ‘cut hand’ units within the RUF. Yet, ‘Operation No Living Thing’, when the RUF attacked Freetown and the ECOMOG forces on 6th 1999 (J6) was the most devastating. During the two weeks of fighting in Freetown’s east end over 1000 people were amputated before the ECOMOG troops managed to stop the rebels (Danish 2005). The amount of amputations was due to discovery of a World Food Programme (WFP) store filled with machetes (‘cutlasses’) by the RUF (Christodulou 2004). Most of the people injured on J6 died because heavy fighting meant a lack of access to medical care. To date, it remains unclear how many people were amputated and how many still survive (Christodulou 2004) with estimates given by NGOs working with ‘amputees’ (strictly looking at direct impairment) at under 1000 people.⁴ However, if you take into account indirect amputation, differing war-wounds and mental health issues, the figure exponentially increases to several thousands.

³ For a discussion, see Christodulou 2004.

⁴ The initial verification process for reparations registered over 1, 285 ‘amputees’ (Summa & Correa 2009: 4).

In 1999, The Lomé Peace Agreement was signed between the RUF and the government to end the conflict. Part of the agreement involved the setting up of a Human Rights Commission and Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Yet, conflict still rumbled on in Sierra Leone. When the RUF captured UN peacekeeping forces, the British government intervened and the first inroads to peace had begun. President Kabbah announced that the war was finally over on the 18th of January 2002. By the end of the war, it was estimated that conflict had caused ‘70,000 casualties and 2.6 million displaced people’ (Kalder with Vincent 2006: 4) with over 300,000 Sierra Leoneans living in neighbouring countries as refugees (Sperl & De Vriese 2005). After the war had ended, the international community, with the help of a democratically elected government, tried to ensure security, national healing and justice. As the security of the country was the main priority, a Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme involving ex-combatants was begun in 2000. This was to make sure weapons were collected and the combatants retrained and reintegrated into society. To ensure national healing, a TRC was implemented in 2002 to document the abuses of the war and understand why it had happened. The TRC’s recommendations to the government were made in 2004. Lastly, in 2004, a Special Court for Sierra Leone (SC) was also instantiated to bring to justice those people who were held most responsible for the war.

Relief services and institutions unintentionally created different moral hierarchies and groups in society; such as ‘ex-combatant’, ‘victim’ or ‘war-wounded’. There were widespread community misgivings about how relief was catered towards individuals and not everyone who had ‘suffered’. In particular, the prioritising of aid packages and repatriation of ‘ex-combatants’ was felt to be unfair (Sperl & De Vriese 2005, Sørheim 2010, Berghs 2012). This had allowed the ex-combatants to create monopolies on certain businesses like *okada* (motorcycle) taxi services, cassette selling, remodelling and fixing of transport vehicles, car-washing services, and second hand ‘Belgium’ or ‘Jew Man’ businesses (Sperl & De Vriese 2005). Likewise, there had been no real gender or disability mainstreaming after the conflict meaning that needs of female ex-combatants and differing categories of impairment were ignored by institutions, and so they were felt to be discriminating (Asiedu & Berghs 2012). The role of ‘incentives’ such as payment by the SC also meant that ‘giving testimony’ or assuming a ‘victim’ identity or ‘showing’ physical injury could become a link to resources, especially for elites who spoke English. This caused corruption and competition to access services, misunderstandings linked to identity as well as impairment, and strict categories of ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ which could not always be adhered to. A lack of insight into planning of rehabilitation, vocational, prosthetic and other services for the existing population of disabled people only compounded a humanitarian situation where abuses were becoming rife.

People who became wounded during the war or who gained amputations had also been involved as ex-combatants and/or voluntarily and confidentially gave testimony to the TRC as ‘victims’ and were involved as witnesses in the SC. Some people with amputations had been civilians, some fighters and some both at different moments during the war. Likewise, some people with indirect amputations had been involved in RUF fighting as ‘small boys’, others gained injuries in militias such as the Civil Defence Forces (CDF), and some people had gained these amputations before the war. Some women too had difficult identities, for example, a woman could be captured by RUF, suffer sexual abuse, used to cook food and carry loads but also fight in battles. Despite many

misgivings, victims of the war like ‘amputees’ and people who suffered war-wounds became involved in various institutional processes, such as the TRC. They did so because they were promised reparations and aid by the international community and their government.

They also got organised in groups linked to their impairments which were formed in the camps such as; AWWA and the Single Leg Amputee Sports Club (SLASC). These organisations flourished and became powerful brokers due to their links to philanthropists, NGOs, religious and international organisations. After the war had ended, people with amputations or who had become war-wounded had been given homes and resettled in special resettlement sites on the outskirts of urban centres all over the country. People chose to live together for various reasons, such as to ensure access to land, links to medical or prosthetic services or in terms of friendships they had made in the camps. While some people settled in these new sites, other people seemed to engage in migration, rented or sold homes or continued to live in cities with their families or friends. Some of these settlement sites were like ghettos and promoted segregation whilst in others, where people ensured strong links to NGO resources, they flourished. With access to water, education and medical facilities, villagers built around settlements and they became reintegrated into communal life. However, the well-being and reintegration of settlements remains precarious, as do the ability of organisations to advocate on behalf of the people they represent. While they are patrimonial in nature, a big part of their legitimacy is linked to ensuring access to overall NGO resources, political favour and much needed reparations for the most vulnerable in their communities.

Research Methods and Methodology

The research methods and methodology were intended to be transformative (Mertens 2009) and emancipatory (Oliver 1992, 1997, Barnes 2014) through a participatory approach (Whyte 1991). This paradigm seeks, "...not how to empower people but, once people have decided to empower themselves, precisely what research can then do to facilitate this process" (Oliver 1997: 3). Openly participatory, a qualitative research project was planned and conducted with AWWA during a ten day period in October 2013 at their explicit request. The researcher was invited to aid the organisation to design their own research according to the association's priorities.

AWWA suggested that research should focus on two things;

- 1) The end of reparations for amputees, and
- 2) The lack of reparations for certain categories of people who had become wounded during the conflict.

The questions to guide and plan interviews according to these themes were gained through informal conversations with amputee and war-wounded people in the capital city of Freetown. A major city and village setting in the south of the country were also chosen by people in AWWA. We tried to ensure representation of; age, gender, socio-economic class, religion and type of impairment and tried to attend community events to ensure diversity. To check people's priorities were in line with the association, informal and private conversations with individuals would always contain an open-ended question linked to reparations but in terminology that people would understand i.e. "What did you do with the NaCSA money?" A NGO capacity building workshop with head chairmen and women from communities all over Sierra Leone was also attended in the south of the country to gauge priorities of the research design and see if and what questions linked to reparations would come up. We also talked to religious leaders and NGO workers about impact of reparations.

In agreement with AWWA, this led to the development of six key questions in line with what had been people's priorities linked to reparations. AWWA stipulated that there should not be too many questions; and they should be easily understood and simple to answer. This was so that people gained 'courage' and confidence answering questions and to ensure that we did not take up too much of people's time, did not cause psycho-social harm and that people felt happy in responding. As the main interviewer was a member of AWWA, questions also had to be able to be remembered easily, as they would not be written down. Interviews would also be informal in nature and take place inside or outside of people's homes, ensuring that we accessed people who had mobility problems. We decided to interview people in the north of the country to certify representation of ethnicity in the research design.

Interviews were conducted mainly in Krio by AWWA with the researcher present. In a participatory spirit, the questions were used as a framework but not imposed too strictly on people enabling a conversational approach and follow-up questions. This allowed the main interviewer to 'come

inside' the research and point to what he felt was important in agreement with participants. To ensure transparency of the research process the main interviewer would orally translate from Krio to English. This allowed notes to be taken by the researcher and people to check translations and sometimes add to interpretations of what was being said. Interviews were also digitally recorded and transcribed outside of the field, allowing a further check of the Krio translations made during interviews.

Consent was gained unanimously and everyone wanted to talk about this issue, illustrating its cogence for people. However, we assured everyone that interviews were confidential and voluntary so they could talk freely and express criticisms. In cases where participants refused to talk to a member of AWWA, the researcher stepped in to ensure that those people's concerns were heard in a private setting. This allowed critical remarks to be made about the head and the association too. Especially, women who gained war-wounds or women who were sexually abused made critical remarks or had their friends advocate on their behalf against the leadership of AWWA. These interviews were kept confidential and transcribed outside the field.

A total of 20 qualitative semi-structured interviews and one large focus group discussion (n=20) were undertaken in four different settlements and one town in the north of the country (see Appendix). The lead interviewer used his knowledge of the communities to ensure that we talked to a mix of people with differing types of; impairment, ages, religions, socio-economic backgrounds and women were represented. The main themes that came out of the interviews were checked and agreed in the field with members of AWWA. Then, the transcribed interviews and possible themes were checked outside of the field using the qualitative software package NVivo. We hoped that this kept the research process open and it also allowed us to reformulate themes and build more nuances into the findings.

Research limitations include a possible bias linked to the fact that AWWA led and asked for this research project. Obviously, the 'good name' of the communities and organisation was at stake but it was felt that corruption lay with a few individuals in the past and not everyone in the present. Concerns were also expressed linked to the fact that those who were doing well in the community or organisations (i.e. SLASC) could eclipse the needs of those less fortunate or resilient 'up line'. Likewise, the few 'bad', 'traumatised', 'fake', or 'not serious' could be taken as representative for the entire community or people would not see past occasional negative behaviours. Yet, it was felt strongly by the AWWA district chairmen and women that they needed to take this risk of showing diversity because they felt that NGO aid in terms of a general social protection mechanism was still needed.⁵ However, there was still hesitation amongst people about the broaching of sensitive themes such as night time economies, role in the war, secret society business or rituals, and 'domestic issues' (sexual or other forms of abuse), unless they were explicitly linked to reparations. If they did not come up during the research process, we agreed not to write about these issues.

⁵At the time we were doing this research, the Norwegian Friends of Sierra Leone and two other organisations had ended their support in communities and backing of AWWA. For many years, they were offering informal medical, educational, food, and other forms of support.

The lead interviewer was also a member of the organisation which meant people were eager to share communal issues and this wealth of information in one direction could have skewed results. There could also have been a bias linked to the fact the main interviewer was a man with an amputation and so those issues could have taken precedence. Most people we interviewed were men (n= 13/20) but statistics indicate that most people affected by amputation would have been men (Christodoulou 2004). The researcher was female and an outsider to try balance bias. However, she was generally felt to be linked to an NGO which could have influenced results. While most community leaders were men and had amputations, we heard and found that those who had missed out on reparations were women who had suffered sexual abuse and had other wounds of war. There were people who had mental health issues or learning disabilities who were living in communities that we accessed but they were only a part of a focus group discussion. We did not conduct individual interviews with them. Research was also conducted predominantly in urban areas and is not representative of the rural areas.

A report had to be written a short space of time with no funding available. This meant that the design of the research was constrained in its qualitative scope. We were invited to come and do research all over the country but time and funding constraints meant we had to make a choice about the areas in which research was conducted. Additionally, we found that it was easy to open up the research process to become more inclusive but not to ensure complete ownership. There was a possible bias within AWWA itself and people running the organisation not understanding that they had the resources and capacity to produce their own research but not wanting people with those skills in positions of power. Working with people with various impairments means that you need to find ways of making research inclusive, which was not always possible politically or economically. Additionally, the legitimacy of reports and research was felt to be connected to foreign NGOs or researchers hired as consultants. The researcher was asked to be a consultant to AWWA and do the main 'body writing'. AWWA gave their invitation, requests, and questions, aided in interviews, analysis as well as checked final report. Lastly, the report also had to be publically accessible and easily understood. This meant that we tried to focus on the main themes and give an overarching view of the issues encountered without retreating into jargon, detail or too much theory based in Western contexts.

Impact of Reparations

“We feel the same pain.” Patricia

Before reparations had begun and programmes implemented, amputee and war-wounded people indicated that their main social needs were in terms of; 1) Shelter, 2) Employment and Education, 3) Medical Care, and 4) Food Security (Berghs 2012). These were roughly in line with the socio-economic rights set out in the TRC final report and recommendations (TRC 2004). These needs were also similar to barriers that have been found that delimit social participation of disabled people living in poverty (WHO 2011). Thus, for example, people often alluded to discrimination and stigma stopping access to employment (Berghs 2012). This indicates that reparations, for people who gain impairments due to conflict, needs to be about more than just physical or symbolic reparations and needs considerable long term planning. Impairments interact with other identities in society - some of which are still stigmatised post-conflict. Therefore, we did not expect to find that stigma, nor discrimination for some categories of people had stopped, just because they had given cash payments.

We expected that reparations would have helped certain people to address basic needs, lead to income generation and also that within a heterogeneous community there would be marked differences between people according to; social standing, ethnicity, type of impairment, socio-economic background, access to resources, education, religion, extended family, society and village support, as well as business acumen. However, in such a short space of time we felt we could not pin down why some people were resilient (‘doing fine’) and others were still struggling to survive. This was due to the overall context of poverty, small emergencies, and patrimonial culture of indebtedness which affected people very differently. Additionally, we found that there was still a lot of pain and distress in the communities we visited. Some people still had ‘high temperatures’ and psycho-social problems, which were still outing themselves in use of alcohol, drugs, etc. Reparations had not seemingly affected those issues nor caused greater social harmony.

The impact of reparations of \$1400 or 6 million Leones on people’s lives has been profound in terms of the assurance of immediate basic social needs but it has to be kept in mind that this was building on sustained aid to groups of people by NGOs which has now largely stopped. This absence of a safety-net affects the sustainability of reparations and whether it will have a long term impact, especially in cases where things go wrong or people make bad investments. Furthermore, reparations, in terms of monetary payments, had had some unintended consequences. Firstly, overall, people stated that reparations had allowed them to ‘manage’ life in various ways, such as ensuring provisions for education and medical care and sometimes allowing people to build forms of social security for their families. Secondly, they stated that reparations also had some unintended negative consequences that they had not envisaged in terms of social and community relationships. Thirdly,

we found that there was a lack of information and decision-making linked to reparations that created tensions and added to distress. We discuss the findings in turn.

1) Managing life and ‘Small’ Reparations Money

Most people we talked to had been provided housing by the Norwegian Refugee Committee or later the Norwegian Friends of Sierra Leone and thus gaining shelter was no longer one of their overall main needs. Reparations money was thus not spent on shelter unless it was the provision of ‘additional buildings’. In this respect, despite many criticisms of the Norwegian programme in building far from urban centres and with limited abilities for farming land, Pa Bokarie said that, “We have been pulled out of shame.” Additionally, some of the skills programmes seem to have had an effect but this differed from settlement to settlement, as well as person to person, and was dependent on availability of resources to engage in income generation activities. Overall, people said that they were still concerned with ‘managing life’ and how reparations or lack of reparations affected this ‘management’.

There were individuals who had become immensely successful at managing life and fulfilling their basic needs. For example, Isatu had a petty trading business which she ran out of her house involving the selling of rice, oil, ground-nuts and *gara* cloth. With the reparations money, she also bought an *okada* which she rented out.⁶ The *okada* earns her 150,000 Leones per week or 25,000 Leones per day which she has now put in a bank account. She was quite a successful business woman and saving money. In contrast, Mariatu, a younger woman in her early thirties, who had been war-wounded, was not so successful. She had a large family and her partner had just left her. Most of her money had been ‘finished’ sustaining her large extended family and she had to ask AWWA for help to be able to pay for transport fees to get into town. Fatima too, had invested in satellite TV thinking she could start a cinema but had underestimated the costs and would have to raise more money or abandon the project.

Yet, overall, AWWA felt people were looking healthier than several years ago. In this part of the country, communities were also becoming more integrated and people were working, both formally and informally. When we stated this, everyone built in qualifications to those observations. They said that money had helped them immensely but it was just tiding them over. Fatima detailed that the money that they had been given for reparations was necessarily still dispersed in order to meet many of their basic needs first or paying school fees before they could consider income generation investments. Most people felt as if investing in their children’s educations was the best long-term security they could have. Therefore, the cost of school fees turned out to be a divisive issue that was stopping people spending money on investments or income generation activities. This was mentioned unanimously and also within focus group discussions as ‘a big challenge’.

⁶ We wanted to explore if *okada* businesses were becoming more heterogeneous and how they were interacting with the associations of former ex-combatants but did not have time for this.

1.1 Education

While initially people had been very supportive of cash payments since it allowed them to invest and spend money as they saw fit, the total of 6 million Leones was judged an ‘insult’ as a ‘one off payment’. People claimed that they were still ‘managing’ and cited that while there had been an impact of reparations this had been countered by the rising costs of living. This was why most people stated that the reparations money was ‘small’. To explain why this was ‘small’, Pa Mohammed stated,

I have five girls, a wife and two boys. Two of the girls are in college at the moment. I have to pay almost 2 million Leones for a year, for one child. At the same time, they get pamphlets, one day the teacher asks 20,000 Leones and the next day 15,000 Leones. Then I get three secondary children and two in primary school. So, if you see the money, it is too small to support all these school activities.

Likewise, Ali who was 41 and had two wives, told us:

Why I say that the money does not do? Right now I have six children in school and I have to pay school fees. What do I do to help myself? I repair bicycles and Hondas. When the 6 million came I had a plan to build a house but 6 million is never going to allow you to build a house. So, I bought a Honda and pump machine to make the tires (...) Each child has to be fed and this costs 5,000-6,000 Leones a day, each child.

The biggest concern was provision of school fees, ‘feeding’ and payment of extras like books or ‘pamphlets’ that the children and now teachers were requiring. Pa Bokarie explained that this became more of a problem as the children were going ‘higher’ in the educational system and money becomes ‘higher’ again. While teachers were seen as predatory, the parents did not blame them but the government. It was the government that made money ‘become small’.

Fatima explained that one year at university could cost over 5 million Leones and this was without ‘extras’ that the teachers required. This was because the teachers were not being paid salaries by the government. Not buying the pamphlets was not an option in terms of the huge investments that they had made in their children’s educations. Most people we talked to had polygamous or large extended families. Likewise, there were people we talked to that had invested all their reparations in their children’s educations, like Sorie. He was earning a living and decided that for him, education was the safest investment because the money could not take him ‘higher’ in Sierra Leone. Social upward

mobility in a developed Sierra Leone was viewed in terms of education, which for parents had sometimes been interrupted, not possible or part of their own 'successes' in life.

Consequently, people referred to how money could 'move' people up in the world but their reparations money was somehow not capable of this. This meant that people felt that money was 'small' and to do anything in today's Sierra Leone, you needed a lot of 'high' money. Several people had also sent their children to Freetown where they felt schools were better or back to the village to learn a trade if schools were not an option. Patricia, who had four children, could not pay the schools fees and she had not received any reparations money. She was concerned about the impact of lack of reparations on her children. They were living in a community where their friends could go 'higher'. Her friend, Fatima, argued that the government needed to create scholarships for parents whose children who could access university. Yet, she also noted that not everyone was able to look after their children, nor even themselves, because of problems of 'welbodi'. In this sense, she felt that the overall health of people was most important.

1.2 Medical Provision: Welbodi

People now informed us that they were paying their medical fees by themselves but felt that they had greater costs because of their injuries. They also argued that while many within their communities had numerous health problems and complaints, government hospitals were ill equipped to deal with such issues. People normally used a combination of traditional and/or biomedical healing depending on the problem but there were some issues linked to impairment that they felt only biomedicine had 'strong medicines' or 'injections' for. This was why, before starting our focus group, a community leader stated that he worried about 'welbodi' as people within the settlements often had complex health needs and some required long term care.

During the focus group discussion, it was clear that, as well as medical needs, there were people participating who had rehabilitative, reproductive, addiction, mental health issues and also learning disabilities. For example, while people were trying to put their viewpoints across during the focus group were sometimes riled by a young man with learning disabilities, as he was half listening to his loud music and half to us, he was also part of the discussion. Afterwards, worries were shared about his abilities to manage money and life outside of their community, in a joking manner, as he walked along with us. When the researcher asked about community based rehabilitation (CBR) or vocational centres, nobody knew what this meant or how it could apply to him, possibly illustrating no or limited service provisions in this area.

When talking about 'welbodi', people thought this primarily meant medical care and so there were several famous individual cases from across the country that people mentioned, noting that these were people who would need a lot of medical care. They had been given 'one off operations' or money but that was not enough, for example, if you had been paralysed or needed more than one surgery. Many people had also died and people stated that deaths would continue. The reasons why

people with impairments were so susceptible to death were left in the middle. One person suggested that the bodies were already weakened so could easily die from malaria or other illnesses. Off the record, witchcraft due to jealousy over aid and reparations was also suggested.

When the researcher privately asked a woman about HIV/AIDs, they declined to talk about it, stating that this was an issue but in other communities. It was noted that medical provision for HIV, while infrequent, was somewhat free at the government hospital. This was not felt to be a priority issue and some people did not know or pretended not to know what we were talking about. Instead, the AWWA interviewer asked the researcher to talk to priority cases, such as Abu who had a huge distended stomach. He was an elderly community leader and amputee. His eyes were also yellow and it was clear that his liver was failing. He had been in and out of hospitals and various NGOs had tried to help him. He poignantly told us that he had been told by NaCSA to use his money to ‘mend the body first’. Afterwards, we remarked that money had perhaps come too late for him because he was so ill. Sadly, he died two weeks after our interview. AWWA members felt such cases were not unusual and the head of AWWA recited a history of ‘amputee’ deaths.

In the past, people like Abu had NGO or philanthropic support for numerous medical complaints or surgeries, so Pa Bokarie stated, “We pray to God for another Moses to show us the way.” Winston, who was a double amputee in his fifties with various ailments such a high blood pressure (hypertension) and diabetes, noted that his ill health was connected to his double amputations forcing a sedentary lifestyle and only indirectly alluding to impact of war. Additionally, he noted a lack of rehabilitation, prosthetics, assistive devices, medicines and wheelchairs which NGO outsiders had provided - not the government. Overall, people reiterated that the government hospitals were ill-equipped and even dangerous to use but they had no other options or real choices. Some people stated that they wanted a medical clinic, like the one up in Kono⁷ which had initially been created for them but had expanded services to the general population. Despite some misgivings, they felt this clinic was better than the government hospital. Tamba stated that the concern with better medical services and payment of such services (user fees) was also because, as one of his friends believed, ‘Otherwise they will kill us freely!’

People also cited concerns about where their (re)settlements were located, far away from ability to get to hospitals. Some of the more rural settlements had histories of children and people dying because of lack of transport in evening hours. People told of babies that had died because mothers went into labour at night without an *okada* in the community. It was not surprising that several people had invested their reparations money in *okadas* to ensure access, transport, and a means of making a living. The government hospital was also viewed as corrupt and expensive. Fatima stated that for a recent visit with her child she had to pay 150,000 Leones but could not refuse because people knew she had received reparations money. While it was hard to save ‘small’ money, some people were now concerned enough about the NGOs pulling out and end of reparations to save their money in case of further medical or other emergencies.

⁷ See: <http://wellbodyalliance.org/>

1.3 Pensions, 'Man Can Tell' and Social Security

Especially, the older double amputees were worried about their failing health and ability to be breadwinners for their families. Pa Bokarie stated that he thought that the government should be providing pensions for them. He was a double amputee and wondered if they should not be given more support as had been previously promised. He noted that the only reason he could now look after himself was because he had a wife who took on several of the breadwinning and caring responsibilities. He felt that the success of his marriage was linked to his ability to provide for his family through reparations and his wife to stay 'strong'. Winston too had invested some of his money in petty trading, given some to his wife to start her own business but had also put aside some money for any emergencies or 'man can tell' (misfortune). When we asked about 'man can tell', we were told this could mean anything from bad business investment, ill health, death, extended family needs, abandonment, or witchcraft. It was often suggested that the reasons why people were not doing well was because of 'man can tell.' People felt that the end of reparations had added to feelings of insecurity and unjustness of life. This insecurity was also linked to social tensions in changing kinship (de-kinning) and familial relations. People suggested that this was linked to impact of the war, breakdown of community trust and lack of development leading to disenfranchisement.

One particular incident that occurred during our interviews seemed to describe this well for the AWWA interviewer. Mami Fatu, who was generally doing well, had decided to be safe and put most of her money in the bank. While we were interviewing her, a big screaming match broke out between herself and Adama, one of her daughters. Adama interrupted the interview and accused her mother of not helping her in life. We were shocked at how disrespectfully Adama was behaving towards her mother. Mami Fatu became upset and embarrassed. She stated that she was worried that her children would just 'eat' her money and drop out of school as they had done in the past. She was also worried that the main NGO had stopped operating so she was saving her money just in case of medical problems or other family emergencies. She was aging, had several children, no husband and was also looking after her mother. Adama stated that she had a man and wanted to get married. Mami Fatu was concerned about her ability to look after another child if the man should abandon Adama. This had happened to many young girls in the community leaving the families to look after the young mothers and children.⁸

This interview pointed to marked changes in social relations between generations. The younger generation pointed to the inability of the elders to create local and global opportunities for them. It was noted that the interruption was directed towards AWWA, Mami Fatu and the foreign researcher. The older generation pointed to the inability to trust the younger generation to care for themselves and show respect for the elders and each other. Discordant family and gender relationships meant that investment in educations or in children would not always pay off for young or old, more so if they were women. Suspicions and tensions within families can be amplified by giving money. In a

⁸ The leadership of AWWA was concerned about drop-out rates and negative impact of development (i.e. mining) adversely affecting the youth and young girls in particular. In some communities 'up line' health and social well-being had also been severely impacted by 'blasting' near resettlement sites.

context of overall poverty, social upheaval and mistrust, money can again profoundly alter relationships and instigate both gratitude and jealousy. This was also found in internal and external community relationships

2) Negative Impact of Reparations

People said that they had not expected that having money would form such ‘a challenge’ to the settlement sites and upset community relationships. There were several issues interacting to create tensions. Firstly, the NGO who had ensured their settlements and built homes had pulled out; secondly, some of these settlements had become attractive to live in, especially as urban centres grew and spread out into the peripheries and NGOs had ensured schools, water supplies and so on; and lastly, the community were widely seen as having access to money.

2.1 Land Issues

In this sense, people qualified that reparations had a positive and negative impact. It had allowed people to access basic needs, ensured social integration, and community support. For example, Pa Mohammed, who had always had a business selling fuel, used his reparations money to build an additional structure to his home to house his large family. However, his farming activities that used to help feed the family, were now under threat because the landowners wanted more money to rent land. This was not as extreme as the problems Brima and Sorie told us about, where landowners were seeking to reclaim the actual land the houses had been built on.

Despite the fact that in many cases land had been bought by an NGO (i.e. this had been negotiated with the paramount chief and village chiefs, and people had land deeds), the village elders and landowning families were widely viewed as trying to gain a slice of reparations. The head of a community told us that, “Land issues are a real challenge. They pest us every day. People are saying we attack them?” Other people told us that the land, on which houses had been built for amputee and war-wounded people, was being contested, especially if they were now being surrounded by villages and schools thus making ‘the place fine’. This discounted the reasons why the land was now attractive which was due to communities having been resettled there, and bringing resources and NGO aid with them. Secret society rituals were also being used against people in communities to stop them accessing land and to turn people against each other. There were people within resettlements who were also a part of the societies and in allegiance with the villagers. It was noted that some of these people were not real ‘victims’ and were trying to ensure political power in other ways. Due to all the internal and external provocations, AWWA had thus decided to make a complaint with the minister and at the police station so they would have a record. We heard about

how money was straining good relationships and previous community harmony everywhere we went.

2.2 Strained Relationships and Provocations

While they had problems with the landowners, instead of being supported by the surrounding villagers, they were being ‘discouraged’. In Sierra Leone, where most people live in poverty, people stated reparations had the unintended consequences of provoking resentment from the surrounding villagers. People thus spoke of ‘provocations’ that had resulted in violence. In one settlement, John asked AWWA’s help with a recent case where a young man had been beaten up and told that it was because he was an ‘amputee’. John wanted them to start a court case against a villager because they could not ‘bring it’ before the village elders anymore. The incitements had escalated too far. This added to feelings of insecurity and everyday ‘provocations’ which meant that one man (with a visible amputation), carried a knife everywhere that he went, in preparation of violence.

For this reason, Isatu argued that the government should still help them, to show people that they had that political support because people felt that they had lost it. Ali also talked about how a religious charity that had once supported them had now stopped because they had heard about the reparations. A climate of austerity and learning that the reparations programme had aided this group of people meant that several NGOs curtailed or cancelled projects. This also affected how they were viewed by villagers who felt that while they had money, they could no longer bring with them necessary development programmes.

Reparations to people within settlements had not been uniform and instead of bringing people and families together it was now upsetting communal ties and the patrimonial system. Anonymously, people told me that they were angry that people had benefited who were not really ‘amputees’ and that the elders had allowed this. This also created tensions within their communities and amongst people who had been wounded in the war. They could no longer speak ‘as one’ and the ‘war-wounded’ wanted to create a split and their own organisation.

Mami Fatu explained that despite these tensions, she could not go elsewhere, her Limba village had been targeted and burned down and she had lost her husband. In this way, links of ethnicity and kinship had broken. Patricia too said that while she still had a village to return to, that would mean being involved in farming again which she was too weak to do. She was worried about having to ‘strain’ too much if she was living in a predominantly rural area. Isatu said that relations with her family had become problematic. They had pulled all support since they had heard about reparations and she did not want to return to them. They had now come to visit her asking for their share. The money ‘did not do’. Susan too, had problems with her extended family. Her husband was now requesting additional support and money from her. She was afraid these requests would only increase if she returned to his village. The fact that villagers and extended families were unsupportive

(especially of women) had psycho-social consequences and explained why people felt their positions were so precarious despite reparations.

2.3 Slighted, Stereotyped and Marginalised

People felt slighted by villagers and like second class citizens in their treatment by the government. When we asked why, they pointed out that they were sure that the perpetrators had received more aid and funding but could not tell us how much. They thought that NaCSA and the government were intentionally hiding this from them. They were upset that people knew how long it had taken them to receive reparations but the legitimacy of reparations was being denied by the government. This feeling that they did not deserve reparations from the government was trickling down to society to cause resentment against them. They felt that informal customary systems of dealing with problems, '*wahala*' and communal issues could not be trusted because 'the society' was now against them. While we expected ethnicity and/or religion to be a connected factor, this was never openly expressed.

Overall, people thus still felt that they were slighted, stereotyped as 'useless', or marginalised and argued that the government 'owed' them 'something' more. When we asked Ali who was working as a mechanic and seemed to be doing well, why he felt he still needed support, he explained that he was routinely cheated out of money by the *okada* drivers. He felt that he could not do anything about that, nor ask for a price increase in the rent for the *okada*. He said that there was a lack of justice and regard for them in society. He noted that their *okadas* routinely got stolen so he always asked for his to be back at his home by nine in the evening. John explained, "One of the victims had a bike stolen in Kenema and the case is now at the court." Ali said that they had a 'bad name' everywhere that they went and were powerless against this stereotype. Now people 'again' thought they were 'useless'. In this way, he pointed to overall discrimination against them in their communities and in Sierra Leonean society but also a lack of justice that was affecting their abilities to manage life.

When we asked about how marginalisation could happen after reparations had been given, Pa Bokarie stated 'money was a slippery thing'. In a roundabout way, he spent some time telling us about his big family and how he was also going to construct an additional structure to create more room for them. He also told us about how he felt as if his petty-trading business that he ran with his wife was under threat. Then after indicating to us and perhaps to himself that he was a 'big man', he explained that what he was really afraid of was that if the reparations stopped, his wife would leave him. This had happened with his first wife and had a profound emotional and physical effect on his life. He stated, "Without money, the woman will leave. When I got my problem (lost my legs) my woman left me." This had made him feel less of a man and that his impairment was an issue but being a breadwinner had accorded him status, respect and a wife who stayed. Isatu told us the same thing. As soon as she had lost her leg, her man had left her. She was not able to find another husband, nor long term partner. Winston too stated that it was only with his wife's support that he

could be a successful businessman but did not seem perturbed about her leaving. Sia was more ambivalent when we spoke about reparations, stating that you could understand why people might leave a woman despite the money. When one of us asked a Sierra Leonean NGO worker about this gendered ambivalence, they noted that some men had forgiven ‘the shame’ of their wives being ‘spoilt’, indicating how social marginalisation was formed socio-culturally and still affected gender relations.

In one settlement, we walked into a big discussion about community relations being upset and strained not just because of reparations and landowners causing problems but also because it was hard to manage life for individuals. Mariatu, Sarah and Saidu explained how Osman was upsetting everyone by going into violent jealous rages against his wife and severely beating her. They condemned his behaviour and asked that he be moved out of the settlement. When we asked Osman, who had just come back from farming, why he was beating his wife, it was explained that he felt that she lacked ‘respect’ for him. This caused his ‘temperature to rise’. When we asked people to explain Osman’s behaviour, expecting his ‘hot temper’ to be explained in terms of ‘drinking’, trauma or reparations, it was clarified that there was no excuse but the community was ‘being provoked’ and this was causing people to become upset. Osman’s status and relationship was becoming something precarious and leading him to become upset at those around him. He was lashing out against his wife, friends, and community, because he was being ‘provoked’. We investigated what this ‘provocation’ was in greater detail by asking about reparations.

3) Lack of information, oversight and transparency of funding for the victims

“We never knew anything about the package. We went to meetings, to workshops, we tried to know, we asked questions. We tried but NaCSA was not able to tell us anything. They said after the verification, they would know who was eligible to get this package.” Focus Group

The expectations of people, for some, were framed within the idea of a ‘package’ linked to what they had understood the ex-combatants had gained in the DDR programme. This is akin to what Millar (2013) had noted generally about expectations connected to the TRC. We found that there was very little understanding of what exactly reparations entailed, budgeting of the VTF by NaCSA, as well as a lack of sensitisation in the general population. This lack of information became linked to gossip and rumours upsetting social relationships. Viewing gossip in terms of social control reveals some interesting things.

Ali told us about how he had been provoked by rumours stating that they had been given reparations of 25 million Leones. Likewise, there was no real information about how much money and what programmes the ex-combatants had benefited from, which also caused upset. Pa Mohammed reiterated in the language of the TRC that, “The perpetrators received more reparations money than

the victims.” When asked how much the ‘perpetrators’ got, Pa Mohammed stated, “They said 17 million, 18 million as much as 20 million!” There was also confusion about aid that they had been given by the NGOs with the government or Sierra Leonean president’s presence often suggesting to people and villagers that this aid had been ‘reparations’. When I asked people to tell me how much money NaCSA had used to employ themselves and what percentage of reparations this would be or how reparations were funded, nobody knew. They often suggested that the government should appeal to the international community if NaCSA had ‘eaten’ money.

In the focus group discussion, the lack of information linked to reparations came out the strongest as a theme. One man explained that they felt that the government had taken advantage of the fact that they were illiterate and just ‘poor farmers’. Another woman reiterated the ‘feeding’ and ‘educational’ pressures of having large families, so obviously they were happy with any ‘help’ but they did not understand how they had come to ‘the amount’ nor why they stopped this ‘help’ to the war-wounded. She stated, “We are not satisfied? What about the ones who did not get?” In one community of twenty houses, it was pointed out that only four had received any reparations money and that NaCSA had never informed them that this could happen with the ‘verification packages’. In this way, ‘benefit packages’ were just a provocation to people and good relationships. So, one man explained,

“In this community 3 amputees and one war-wounded who was severely injured, that is out of twenty households! (...) The TRC recommendations said that it should take care of our children’s education and give us free medical care, and free transportation but NaCSA now says they can’t do everything and they want to pay us off. No medical, no transport and no free education!”

NaCSA had also done some ‘capacity-building’ to advise people on how to spend their reparations money but while most people we talked to thought this was ‘fine’ they could not really remember what it had been about. Mami Fatu told us that during the sensitisation process they were told money was coming but an exact amount was never given. They were also told that once that money was finished or ‘chopped’, there was no other money coming. It is important to state that while people did not get information from NaCSA, the elites in the community understood in detail what the TRC final recommendations contained. They reiterated this to everyone else in the community. For example,

“It is a recommended thing by the TRC that someone who has been wounded in the war should be fifty percent, cannot be able to earn oneself, so fifty percent damage and then he will be given money.” Lansana

This cut-off point was selected by the TRC and people also stated that a medical doctor had to be called to verify this damage. How a medical doctor was to verify ‘potential to earn a living’ was unclear. People also stated that there were war-wounded people who had suffered a lot during the war but were being ignored.

“There are some cases which are more serious than me, myself, and I am an amputee. For example, (name) who lives in (place in the south) who had his penis cut off. For example, (name) who has had to have six operations until now.”

Then people would point to individual cases within their own community, such as a sexually abused woman who stated she was ‘war-wounded’ because she did not want people to know this ‘shame’. She had received nothing. A community member stated everyone knew they were hiding these people, just as they were hiding some former ex-combatants and disabled people. They saw themselves as promoting social reintegration but there was now a cost of having kept it hidden or past elites having benefitted from such relationships.

Elders would also point to the TRC recommendations and a tax on the mineral wealth of the country in terms of social corporate responsibility. Most people we talked to had no knowledge of this. They just wanted to understand what reasons had been given for reparations to stop. We stated that this was probably because of lack of funding but they wanted the government to explain it to them. They felt that they had no choice but to ‘sit down and wait’. In this way, dependency and marginalisation was instantiated again. While ‘amputees’ were upset that promises of education, medical care and free transportation were not being honoured, war-wounded people were incensed that they had been pushed aside. A woman who had been shot during the war said that, “She was not feeling well.” Her ‘blood swell’ and she wondered about ‘their fate’ now? A man replied that they had been ‘abandoned’.

3.1 They want to kill us!

‘War-wounded’ people were extremely upset at the way they had been treated. Many held AWWA responsible and thus some people refused to speak to the interviewer. Patricia began to explain (at first in English but reverted to Krio),

“I will talk to you but I will not talk to him. I do not have blood or flesh in my life. I do not have a family. I came from far away. We and the amputees, we were suffering together. The NGO (name) made no difference between the ‘amputee’ and ‘war-wounded’, why is NaCSA

*now making a difference against us? So, they like to kills us! I will die. I do not have a husband. You have a problem and if you get pregnant they will leave you. I feel my pain (...)
In my at...I don't know how to talk. Mi at don poil."*

Most war-wounded people we talked to felt as if the 'amputees' were not doing enough for them and hierarchies were again being imposed based on physical impairment and not 'suffering'. Patricia argued that the amputees were not treating them as 'brothers and sisters' nor helping them with food or money. They had 'bad hearts'. Yet, she blames NaCSA for causing this 'stress' in her life and community. She states, "That's what made my life broke down." In a focus group, people also reiterated that, 'We do not know our fate' and that this was shocking considering those who had benefited had not always 'lost blood' for their country. One man in a focus group asked, "If you see your 'compin' (friend) benefiting, and you get nothing, how do you feel?"

Yet, Fatima stated that they did not always have money to pass around in the community and did try and help. Fatima also explained, "They are calling on us to help them. Recently they had a medical emergency and I had to help. They have borrowed money from us with no way of paying it back." It was felt that this was going to strain relationships and lead to a break between 'amputees' and 'war-wounded' people, as already evidenced in the language of 'they' and 'us'. In the focus group, the war-wounded were told not to 'lose hope' and that AWWA would take the matter to the president because it was just 'too unfair'. Other people suggested that they take to the streets to protest against reparations.

Patricia also remarked that just because the outside of her body only carried scars, it did not mean that the inside of her body was not full of pain where the bullets and shells had entered. Many war-wounded people expressed the idea that pain was something 'invisible' and how were you supposed to know what was 'inside' another person or what they had experienced during the war? This was impossible to 'forget'. Moreover, people did not like to talk about their war experiences and the AWWA interviewer steered conversations away from topics that could cause further distress to people.

A Sierra Leonean imam too questioned all the need for open talk and stated, 'Hell had come to earth and done the devil's business. As we now know this, why open the wound again?' He felt that the end of reparations was now causing rifts in society and asking about it was just getting people riled up. Elites, society elders and NGO outsiders also talked about the ramifications of sexual abuse and impairment and how it upset the harmony of the ancestors and spiritual realm and yet there had been no attention for such culturally sensitive or religious forms of psycho-social aid. Many people stated medical and rehabilitative aid that had been given was disjointed and purely focused on physical impairment because, as one community leader stated, "That was the visible problem." Yet, a Sierra Leonean NGO worker saw the giving of 'a one off payment' in a kind of continuum of 'present day corruption', where people who can 'cause trouble' or become problems are paid off. This was completely counter to understandings of the importance of impairment in terms of blood having been shed politically for the long term peace of a country. This was not recognised by the government nor

Sierra Leonean society in general and was leading to a kind of social death for people. “Our blood has been spilt’ stated one man in a focus group, and, ‘War destroyed plenty of things in this country, is it going to destroy us too?’”

Lack of Reparations, Justice and Peace

“They shuffled the list and shoved out our brothers and sisters!” Focus Group

The impact of reparations in terms of peace and justice had both positive and negative consequences. However, many of the positive benefits were curtailed by the rising costs of living and lack of impact of development, equality and social justice in Sierra Leonean society in general. In a context of overall poverty and where everyone has suffered during the war, it may seem unjust to benefit the ‘victims’. We can only speculate, but we did wonder if reparations had happened in a context where people could have seen more of the socio-economic benefits of development or the government had ensured more physical communal reparations (rather than symbolic), that reparations would not have created so much disharmony. Additionally, the length of time it took for reparations to begin and the fact that NGOs were very visibly aiding this group of people may have played a role in the widespread societal perception that they had benefited from the government’s help already. Negative societal attitudes towards ‘victims’ also existed in society, despite platitudes of sympathy and understanding, it was felt that the indiscriminate rewards of dependency (i.e. shelter, land etc.) could also form a ‘provocation’ and upset village hierarchies, secret societies, and relationships. In this way, dependency continues and marginalisation is enforced.

Within communities, we found that conceptions of justice were narrowing so that they now lay only within formal mechanisms (i.e. police, court systems) acknowledged as corrupt and which people did not always have the means to pay for. The ability of village chiefs, elders and even AWWA to advocate and mediate was now being limited due to the creation of social tensions. The end of reparations, lack of respect for the TRC recommendations, and the fact that people had been asked to sign papers delimiting their claims to any further reparations, had caused perceptions of injustice in society to increase for this group of victims. While there had been some abuse and corruption by a limited number of individuals, the vast majority of people indicated that felt as if their legitimate claims and promised reparations had been ignored. The broken promises of the government and international community meant a questioning of their roles and absence of valorisation within state and peace-building. The lack of social corporate responsibility gives credence of a second-class citizenship, elite connections to mining and business interests, and inflicts trauma again.

In terms of peace, reparations seemed to have a negative effect in that it severely upset individual and community relationships indicating that reparations have to create perceptions of social justice both externally and internally to Sierra Leonean communities and individuals. While reparations as cash-payments could instigate people to ask for more money, we found that they were mainly concerned with the long-term sustainability of basic needs (i.e. education and medical care) as outlined in the TRC (2004) recommendations. The need for access to transport came up a few times but was not a main theme.

Lastly, we found widespread intergenerational markers of distress and suffering in our interviews based on changing social relationships instigated by lack of reparations. There were some people who would always need long term care or psycho-social support but the structures that people had put into place to guarantee this were now being broken. We noted that social and individual disharmony was increasing, and there were now fears for the future. Peace had been broken in communities, instability had been created and people were worried about how they would go about finding social harmony again. The general consensus was that this recognition of social distress could only come from the government who was indebted to the ‘victims’ for putting aside their own needs to ensure the peace of the country.

Conclusion

“We shed the blood for Salone, so that peace could come. Now we are straining again, the government should help us. (...) the war-wounded, we appeal to the government that they find another way.” Focus Group

The concerns stated by AWWA mimic the issues that were brought up linked to reparations. As an organisation AWWA appeal to the government and international community to ensure that the recommendations of the TRC (2004) are respected and are implemented. We note that the risks are real that people will once again go to the streets and you will again see them at every street corner. Unless basic social needs are assured for this group of victims, social mobility will be curtailed and deaths will again occur. People who gain severe injuries during a conflict have long term health, rehabilitative and social care needs that must be prioritised in a sustainable way. The fact that victims’ rights have not been respected will have ramifications. It has also caused mistrust towards the government and international community about getting involved in peace and justice processes.

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Appendix

No.	Name	Age	Gender	Injury⁹
1	Pa Mohammed	50-60	Male	Amputee
2	Pa Bokarie	50-60	Male	Amputee
3	Isatu	30-40	Female	Amputee
4	Ali	40-50	Male	Amputee
5	Winston	40-50	Male	Amputee
6	John	20-30	Male	Amputee
6	Mami Fatu	50-60	Female	War-wounded and Amputee
7	Fatima	20-30	Female	War-wounded
8	Mariatu	30-40	Female	War-wounded
9	Patricia	30-40	Female	War-wounded
10	Abu	50-60	Male	Amputee
11	Tamba	30-40	Male	Amputee
12	Samuel	60-70	Male	War-wounded
13	Sia	30-40	Female	War-wounded
14	Brima	20-30	Male	Amputee
15	Sorie	30-40	Male	Amputee
16	Osman	30-40	Male	War-wounded
17	Sarah	20-30	Female	Amputee
18	Siadu	30-40	Male	War-Wounded
19	Mariatu	30-40	Female	War-wounded
20	Lansana	50-60	Male	Amputee

⁹ We do not give any details on ethnicity to protect identities. We have deliberately given all participants fictitious names.