REINTEGRATION OF CHILD SOLDIERS:

A LITERATURE REVIEW WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON GIRL SOLDIERS' REINTEGRATION IN THE DRC

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Abstract:

The present report seeks to impart key findings in existing literature on child soldiers' reintegration process, as well as to highlight areas and topics which require more research. The review describes available literature and research related to the reintegration of former child soldiers in general, but with a particular focus on girl soldiers and the reintegration process in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Attention is also given to how local civil society in the DRC contributes to such reintegration processes. The review presents summaries of more than one hundred texts on child soldiers and reintegration, and highlights some of the major recent trends and developments in the literature. Important issues addressed in gender-sensitive studies on reintegration are discussed, as well as other elements which need further research and understanding

Despite increased focus on child soldiering, research on the reintegration process of former child soldiers in the DRC is still largely missing. Girl soldiers have barely received any attention at all. Moreover, very little written documentation exists on local civil society's engagement in reintegration processes. Research must address these gaps in knowledge and, with in-depth studies, provide information that may improve the support given young girls and boys as they make their way back to civilian life.

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Key words: Child soldiers, reintegration, girl soldiers, the Democratic Republic of Congo, civil society

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Abstract

English

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French

Le présent rapport essaie à communiquer les résultats trouvés dans la littérature qui existe sur le processus de la réinsertion des enfants soldat, aussi bien que de mettre en relief les thèmes sur lesquels il faut encore faire de recherche. Le rapport décrit la littérature disponible et la recherche relative à la réinsertion des ex-soldats enfant en général, mais avec un accent particulier aux filles soldat et le processus de la réinsertion en République Démocratique du Congo (RDC). Nous avons aussi fait attention à la manière dont la société civile en RDC contribue aux pareils processus de réinsertion. Le rapport présente des résumés de plus de cent textes sur l'enfant soldat et la réinsertion, et souligne quelques tendances et développements dans la littérature. Des thèmes importants dans le domaine des études sensitives au genre sur la réinsertion sont discutées, ainsi que d'autres thèmes qui demandent une recherche et compréhension plus poussée.

Malgré le focus renforcé au phénomène des enfants soldat, la recherche sur le processus de la réinsertion des ex-soldats enfant en RDC est toujours largement absente. Les filles soldat n'ont pratiquement pas du tout eu d'attention. En plus, il existe très peu de documentation écrite sur l'engagement de la société civile aux processus de réinsertion. La recherche doit se pencher sur ces trous de la connaissance et, par des études profondes, fournir l'information, qui peut améliorer l'appui accordé aux jeunes filles et garçons lorsqu'ils s'engagent sur le chemin de retour à une vie civile.

List of acronyms

CELPA	Communauté des Eglises libres de Pentecôte en Afrique
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CR model	Companion Recovery model
DDR	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FARDC	Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo
FDLR	Forces Démocratique de Libération du Rwanda
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional – El Salvador
GUSCO	Gulu Support the Children Organisation
IDP	Internally displaced person
IDDRS	Integrated DDR Standards
IFESH	International Foundation for Education and Self-Help
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LRA	The Lord's Resistance Army - Uganda
MONUC	Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies au Congo
PTSD	Posttraumatic stress disorder
RCD (Goma)	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie
RUF	Revolutionary United Front – Sierra Leone
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNITA	National Union for the total Independence of Angola - Angola
NGO	Nongovernmental organization

1. Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has experienced conflict for over a decade with devastating consequences for its population. The armed conflict in Eastern Congo is characterized by mass displacement and systematic human rights abuses, including sexual violence and use of child soldiers. All armed groups in the conflict - foreign armed groups like FDLR (also called Interhamwe), RCD-Goma and other groups loyal to Laurent Nkunda, the national armed forces of the DRC (FARDC), and local Mai-Mai militias alike - employ children as soldiers. By mid-2007 some 30.000 child soldiers have been demobilised.[1] Thousands of others, including many girls, did not go through the official demobilisation programme but escaped on their own or were abandoned by different armed groups.[2] UNICEF estimated that approximately 11.000 child soldiers self-demobilised.[3] According to the Child Soldiers Global Report 2008, an estimated 7000 child soldiers remain with armed groups in the DRC. However, in some areas active recruitment has been reported in 2007, and it is assumed that recruitment of child soldiers has also taken place in 2008.

In 2005 the UN Secretary-General highlighted that "development of sustainable reintegration programmes including education, skills training and community-based projects for children released from armed groups remains a major challenge, particularly given the limited capacity to meet outstanding needs. In some areas, there is credible evidence of harassment and threats of re-recruitment of children released from armed groups, and lack of security continues to hamper reintegration."[4] Sadly, this is still the case today. Reintegration efforts in the DRC have consistently been under-funded or in many places entirely absent. Most reintegration programmes has been established in urban areas whereas the large majority of former child soldiers are based in rural areas.[5]

The present report seeks to impart key findings in existing literature on child soldiers' reintegration process, as well as highlight areas and topics which require more research. The first chapter gives account for the purpose, and how literature searches have been conducted. It also provides the reader with definitions of concepts used in the reviewed literature and gives a brief background to the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Chapter two presents a brief summary of each document included in the review. The third chapter addresses major findings and important discussions apparent in the literature on reintegration of child soldiers. A special focus is on gender-specific studies and studies on reintegration in the DRC. Concluding comments and recommendations for future research are presented in the final chapter.

1.1 Purpose and assessments criteria

The purpose of this report is to review existing literature and research related to the reintegration of former child soldiers in general, but with a particular focus on girl soldiers and the reintegration process in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Attention is also given to how local civil society contributes to such reintegration processes.

Literature and studies on conflict situations in Africa have been prioritized as it is assumed that these will be more similar to the situation in Eastern Congo than cases from Latin America and Asia. Studies focusing on the reintegration of adult ex-combatants have in most cases been excluded.[6] However, some of these studies have included children or youth

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[1] *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008*, http://www.child-soldiers.org/library/global-reports
[2] Ibid.
[3] UNICEF (2007) *Report of the national workshop on children's DDR*, Goma 12-14 April
[4] UN Secretary-General's 19th Report on MONUC (S/2005/603), page 51
[5] See for example *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008*
[6] For example Alden 2002 and Jennings 2008

in their research samples, thus the review also addresses some of these more general studies on reintegration.[7] As literature on girl soldiers is limited, the review contains some studies addressing adult female ex-soldiers' reintegration, as these may provide useful knowledge for the reintegration of younger girls. Particularly with regards to research on reintegration within the context of the Democratic Republic of Congo, or in contexts comparable to that of the DRC, the restriction to only consider reintegration processes of child soldiers has not been followed.

The review has an exclusive focus on the reintegration process, however, as the different elements of a DDR programme – disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration - are intertwined it has been sometimes difficult to detach the R from the D & D. Both reports and academic literature address to a large degree the DDR programme as a whole. Moreover, much of the research on child soldiering has a general approach to the phenomenon and addresses a variety of aspects such as recruitment, why children join, and their experiences within the armed group, how child soldiers leave the group, the impact of war-experiences, their psychosocial well-being, and psychosocial interventions. Other topics are planning and implementation of DDR programmes, important elements in the reintegration process, international law related to child soldiering, and how to prevent child soldiering. Some of these aspects, for example children's recruitment, reasons for joining and their experiences within the armed group, have a great impact on the children's reintegration process and experiences upon returning to their communities. Where documents cover a wide range of topics concerning child soldiering, the author has allowed herself a narrow focus, addressing only issues considered to be of particular value to the review's purpose. Summaries of the reviewed literature will hence not necessarily address all aspects and views put forward by the authors. As there is a vast body of literature on child soldiers in general lots of publications have not been included in this review as they do not particularly address the aspect of reintegration.[8] Additionally, when several texts present the same empirical data, only a selection have been included.[9]

The reviewed documents cover academic books and articles, research and evaluation reports, PhD dissertations and Master theses, as well as working papers. Journalistic books and autobiographies[10] are not included. Moreover, the review does not address documents providing tool kits and guidelines. With regards to Master theses only a few recent studies which have a particular focus on former girl soldiers have been included.

1.2 Search strategies

The review covers only recent studies and literature. Where possible electronic searches were consequently confined to cover the period from 2000 till today. Despite the narrow timeframe, the summary of Machel's study on the impact of armed conflict on children (1996) and Honwana's study on indigenous healing of war-affected children in Angola (1998) are included. The former due to its importance in putting the problem of child soldiering on the agenda, and the latter as it represented an important turn in how to view rehabilitation and healing of former child soldiers.

Literature searches were conducted in various electronic databases: WorldCat, ArticleFirst, Electronic Collections Online, Bibsys, and Google Scholar. In the Google Scholar search the key words "reintegration child soldiers" were used, and the search was confined to literature since 2000. The search gave 7300 results. Only the first 250 results were assessed in the selection process. A yet more limited search was made employing the

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[7] For example Porte et al. 2007
[8] For example McIntyre 2005, McMahan 2007, Häggström 2001, Fuhlrott 2008, and Human Rights Watch 2007
[9] For example Boothby in Intervention 2006, Honwana in Bond and Gibson 2002, Apio 2004
[10] For example Beah 2008, Keitetsi 2004, and London 2007

keywords "reintegration girl soldier democratic republic Congo". This search presented 593 (2000 to date). Again the first 250 were considered in the literature selection. The searches in WorldCat, ArticleFirst, Electronic Collections Online, and Bibsys based on the key words "reintegration child soldiers" gave much fewer matches, which made it possible to consider each document's importance to the review at hand.

In addition to the searches in electronic databases, I visited web-pages of relevant organizations and research milieus. In particular I would like to mention:

- The Institute for Security Studies (http://www.iss.co.za)
- Save the Children (UK, Norway) (http://www.savethechildren.org.uk and http://www.reddbarna.no)
- The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (http://www.child-soldiers.org)
- Nordic Africa Institute (http://www.nai.uu.se)
- Forced Migration Online (http://www.forcedmigration.org)
- Fafo (http://www.fafo.no)
- The Ford Institute for Human Security (http://www.fordinstitute.pitt.edu)

Lastly, bibliographies in recent studies on child soldiers, particularly girls, were also examined in order to trace down important research contributions in the field of reintegration.

1.3 The summaries

The review provides the reader with a brief summary of each document. The summaries present the methodological approach and purpose of each study, and some of the main findings and conclusions. The selection of findings is based on its relevance to the reintegration process of girl soldiers.

1.4 Concepts and definitions

1.4.1 Child soldier

The literature on child soldiers reveals an inconsistent use and a variation of terms and concepts. Authors speak of the children as soldiers, combatant, fighters, abducted or associated with armed forces or groups. As the non-targeted approach[11] has gained acceptance, former child soldiers are also addressed within the broader approach of children affected by war. In my opinion the weakness of concepts like combatant and fighter is that they may, by denoting the act of fighting, only be associated with one of the roles children have within armed groups. Soldier, on the other hand, refers to a wide variety of roles and tasks performed, as do the term children associated with armed groups.

Also with regards to girl soldiers the literature employs a wide variety of concepts. This is particularly the case when the girl soldier has been sexually violated. Concepts such as forced wives, bush wives, sex slaves, girl mothers, and forced mothers are used in the literature presented in this review. Another term introduced in Wessells' study of former girl soldiers in Angola is "forcibly involved girls" (Wessells 2007b). The girls in this study expressed that this term is preferable to that of "former girl soldier" as the former underlines that their participation was not voluntary. However, in other contexts research shows that some girls did join armed forces voluntarily, even though it is questionable whether they really had any other good alternative at the time of recruitment.

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[11] See page 60

Moreover, the terms child, youth, minor, under-aged and adolescent are often used interchangeably in existing literature, and despite some differences they often overlap (Veale 2003:11). Some authors prefer to address these young people as youth or adolescence rather then children because when and how transition from childhood to adulthood takes place is culturally dependable.[12] Others question the very focus on age and argue that it may not be the best approach to reintegration. As underlined in some of the studies, many of the young people that have participated in war view themselves as adults and don't want to be treated as children.[13]

The summaries presented below portray the wide variety of concepts used in the literature. However, without going further into the conceptual debate, the term "child soldier" will be employed in the review's own discussions and conclusions. The concept will be employed as defined in the Cape Town Principles (1997): a child soldier is "any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members. The definition includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriage." With regards to girl soldiers with children, the review will use the term "forced mother."

1.4.2 DDR programme

Also in relation to reintegration the literature reveals conceptual confusion and diversity. Reintegration is usually one part of a larger process that most commonly is called the DDR process, signifying the disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration processes. However, some include another R which either represents "rehabilitation"[14] or "reinsertion"[15], both using the acronym DDRR. Others, such as Chrobok (2005), addresses only what she calls the D&R process, indicating the process of demobilisation and reintegration. The most recent and broadly accepted definition of DDR is provided in UN's Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) of 2006. These standards define the DDR process as follows (IDDRS 1.10):

"Disarmament" is:

> **"the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programs."**

"Demobilisation" is:

> **"the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. The first stage of demobilisation may extend from the processing of individual combatants in individual centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas, or barracks). The second stage of demobilisation encompasses the support package provided to the demobilised, which is called reinsertion."**

According to IDDRS, reinsertion is, in other words, a short-term assistance offered to ex-combatants during demobilisation prior to the longer-term process of reintegration.

Reintegration is:

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[12] See for example Boyden and de Berry 2004 on social constructs of child and childhood.
[13] See for example International Labour Office report 2003
[14] For example Bragg 2006
[15] For example Knight and Özerdem 2004

"the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility, and often necessitates long-term external assistance."

The IDDR standards also address the particular reintegration of the child and state that it "includes family reunification, mobilizing and enabling the child's existing care system, medical screening and health care, schooling and/or vocational training, psychosocial support, and social and community-based reintegration. Reintegration programmes need to be sustainable and to take into account children's aspirations" (IDDRS 1.20)

1.5 The context of Eastern Congo[16]

The war in the Democratic Republic of Congo is sometimes referred to as the first African World War. Since the outbreak of fighting in August 1998 some 5.5 million people have died, either in fighting or by the consequences of the war, making the conflict the world's deadliest since World War II. The main fighting has taken place in the eastern provinces of Ituri, Katanga, Maniema, and North and South Kivu, and several neighbouring countries have been and still are involved in the conflict. Despite the signing of peace agreements in South Africa by the end of 2002, fighting has continued in some areas and periodically escalations of violence have occurred time and time again. A recent escalation of conflict took place through Laurent Nkunda's rebel offensive at the end of October 2008, causing a refugee and humanitarian crisis in North Kivu. The latest development in the conflict is the arrest of Laurent Nkunda through a common military effort of the DRC and Rwanda in January this year. His troops and most of the militia groups that fought against him were integrated in the national army and a few thousand child soldiers were demobilised, mainly in the province of North Kivu. Simultaneously and with heavy logistic support from MONUC, an offensive against FDLR started.

This situation of ongoing conflict and hostilities is the context in which the reintegration of child soldiers takes place. In addition, the entire civilian population that is to welcome former child soldiers as they return has been looted and exploited for years and is consequently also traumatised and heavily affected by the war.

2. Summaries

The reviewed literature is divided into two categories; empirical and theoretical/conceptual studies. The line between the two is rather vague as some studies do not clearly belong to either one of them. In other words, the categories are broadly defined. "Empirical studies" includes literature based on practical experience in the field of child soldiers' reintegration, while "theoretical/conceptual studies" includes studies primarily based on document analysis as well as scholarly debates on issues related to child soldiers.

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[16] The limited scope of this review does not allow us to include literature on the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The reviewer will nevertheless recommend some fairly recent academic literature and reports that address the conflict in Eastern Congo: Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers 2004, Lode et al. 2004, Borello 2004, Turner 2007, Bøås and Dunn 2007, Human Rights Watch 2007, Amnesty International 2008, Bøås 2008, Potter 2008, Moffet 2009, Baaz and Stern 2008

2.1 Empirical studies

Denov, M. and R. Maclure (2006) "Engaging the voices of girls in the aftermath of Sierra Leone's conflict: Experiences and perspectives in a culture of violence" in *Anthropologica,* Vol. 48, pages 73 – 85

Publication form: Article
Country: Sierra Leone

The article is based on data from a large research study conducted by the University of Ottawa in conjunction with Defence for Children International (Sierra Leonean NGO). Interviews and focus groups with 40 former girl soldiers were conducted. The focus groups were led by six female adolescent researches that all had been former child soldiers. The study benefited from these girls' participation in that they were able to foster trust and minimize power imbalances in the focus groups, in addition to contributing with their own personal experiences and reflections. The article underlines gendered effects of conflict, as well as providing a description of girls' perspectives and experiences of victimization, survival, perpetration of violence and modes of resistance. The narratives reveal that almost all the girls experienced sexual and other forms of abuse, but it also demonstrates their resilience, capacity and agency. The authors note that it is imperative that girl soldiers' capacity is acknowledge when designing social assistance strategies.

Gregory, J. and D. G. Embrey (2008) "Companion recovery model to reduce the effects of profound catastrophic trauma for former child soldiers in Ganta, Liberia" in *Traumatology,* Vol. XX, No. X

Publication form: Article
Country: Liberia

The article describes a companion recovery model (CR model) employed to reduce the symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in 130 former child soldiers in Liberia. It also presents case studies of two former child soldiers and their process of moving through the four stages of the model: victim stage, survivor stage, overcomer stage and victor stage. Through companion counselling, the CR model "teaches former child soldiers to access and draw upon a remarkable resource – their own trauma experience – as a powerful tool for rehabilitation" (p 3). Based on the findings in this study the CR model appears to reduce the PTSD symptoms. However, the authors underline the need for further studies and evidence.

Beneduce, R., L. Jourdan, T. Raeymaekers and K. Vlassenroot (2006) "Violence with a purpose: exploring the functions and meaning of violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo" in *Intervention,* Vol. 4, No. 1, pages 32 – 46

Publication form: Article
Country: the Democratic Republic of Congo

The article explores the functions of violence with particular regards to current demobilisation and reintegration efforts in the DRC. The focus is on North and South Kivu and on Ituri. The article is based on extensive fieldwork and includes interviews with civil society

representatives, militia members, traditional authorities and victims of violence. The authors address the establishments of informal governance structures and new power centres during the conflict in eastern Congo, and examine young people's participation in the violence. They note that this participation, and new identities that emerge due to the war, have important consequences for the social fabric and local culture. DDR programmes need to address these transformations. The article discusses a clinical and anthropological approach to trauma and violence, and presents successful examples of culturally and community-based rehabilitation strategies. However, it is underlined that war and conflict may weaken or destroy the effectiveness of ritual practices, and such practices needs to be carefully explored within their specific context before put into use.

Harris, D. A. (2007) "Pathways to embodied empathy and reconciliation after atrocity: Former boy soldiers in a dance/movement therapy group in Sierra Leone" in *Intervention,* Vol. 5, No. 3, pages 203 – 231

Publication form: Article
Country: Sierra Leone

The article presents an assessment of the use of dance/movement therapy to enhance empathy and reconciliation. The dance sessions took place from March to September 2006. 12 orphaned boys participated – only one of the former soldiers had received some support through a DDR programme. None had benefited from psychosocial intervention. The therapy sessions took place five years after the war had ended. The participants were interviewed by local counsellors once before the first session and later at one, three, six and 12 months intervals. The dance therapy consisted of 10 sessions, then a 12-week break, and six additional sessions after the break. The article describes in detail the activities and ex-soldiers responses, as well as the final public performance where the former child soldiers highlighted their dual role as both victims and perpetrators. Their reconciliation within the community was greatly advanced through this performance. "The youths, having learned to embrace and embody empathy for their victims, had in turn opened the way to empathy for themselves" (p 227). The outcome of the dance/movement therapy shows that it helped the boys in overcoming violent impulses and rediscovering the pleasure of collective endeavour.

Denov, M. and R. Maclure (2007) "Turnings and epiphanies: Militarization, life histories, and the making and unmaking of two child soldiers in Sierra Leone" in *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pages 243 – 261

Publication form: Article
Country: Sierra Leone

The purpose of the article is to provide a better understanding of the transition of children's identities as they undergo militarization into armed groups and demilitarization when returning to civil society in the aftermath of war. Life history narratives of two former child soldiers are presented, one boy and one girl, and the article reviews the turnings and epiphanies of these children's lives in the making and unmaking of a militarized identity as a child soldier. The authors argue that a life history approach can shed light not only on the children's experiences, but also "on their frames of mind as they recount and reflect on these experiences" (p 247). The stories of both the girl and the boy soldier reveal that through violence and threats they conformed to the new life within RUF, and they both developed

close and emotional relationship with the very people who had used violence towards them. However, their stories also reveal a gender difference. The boy soldier gained status and power, while the girl did not attain the same status. Her status was somehow elevated when becoming a commander's "wife", but she did experience multiple forms of gender-based violence and insecurity. The gender disparities continued in the demilitarization process. With the words of the authors: "Just as their lives were shaped and constrained by the realities of their sex during the war, so too were they differentially affected by the deep-seated gender-based cultural disparities that demilitarization has done nothing to reduce in post-war Sierra Leone" (p 258). Denov and Maclure underline the need to assist former child soldiers in adapting to civilian life and helping them to construct new identities.

Peters, K. (2007) "From weapons to wheels: Young Sierra Leonean ex-combatants become motorbike taxi-riders" in *Journal of Peace, Conflict & Development*, Issue 10.

Publication form: Article
Country: Sierra Leone

The article is based on research conducted in connection with the author's PhD thesis *Footpaths to reintegration: Armed conflict, youth and the rural crisis in Sierra Leone* (2006)[17]. There are many factors which influence the reintegration process, some of which will be personal and unique for each ex-combatant. The case story presented in the article, where urban-based ex-combatants start a new trade as motorbike taxi-riders, represents one of the multiple trajectories of reintegration. The author argues that the bike-riders have organised themselves as membership associations drawing some inspiration from structures and rules associated with fighting groups. The findings presented in the article point to the importance of not only creating employment opportunities for young ex-combatants but also building institutional capital to protect and advance those opportunities.

Corbin, J. N. (2008) "Returning home: resettlement of formerly abducted children in Northern Uganda" in *Disaster* Volume 32 Issue 2, Pages 316 – 335

Publication form: Article
Country: Uganda

The study used an exploratory qualitative research design, and a bioecological model was used to identify the reciprocal interactions that occur between the individual and his/her social environment. Interviews were carried out with 11 former child combatants (six males and five females) and 11 community members. The sample was recruited by word of mouth. The respondents, particularly the ex-combatants, represent a range of ages, a range of years of abduction and time since return. The researcher wishes to identify differences in resettlement experiences, and highlight aspects that need further study. The purpose is to convey the subjective resettlement experiences of former child combatants and to gain detailed information on factors that facilitates family and community involvements. The findings highlight four major factors that affect the reintegration experiences of the former child combatants participating in the study: 1) impoverishment resulting from armed conflict, 2) the important role of the family, 3) the harassment of former child soldiers, 4) the communities' inability to provide for the basic needs of ex-combatants. None of the former female combatants mention experiences of shame and stigma. This may be explained by lack of trust

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[17] For details about methodology see the summary of his PhD dissertation.

in the foreign researcher or by the use of a male translator. However, as Corbin's study on this point differs from what is found in most existing literature, she calls for further research on reintegration of females.

Betancourt, T. S., S. Simmons, I. Borisova, S. E. Brewer, U. Iweala, and M. de la Soudière (2008) "High hopes, grim reality: Reintegration and the education of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone" in *Comparative Education Review,* Vol. 52, no. 4

Publication form: Article
Country: Sierra Leone

This is a qualitative study using semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups, in addition to a follow-up survey. Grounded theory methods were used in the construction of categories. The data collection took place in 2002, in 2003/4 and in 2008. The data presented in the article represents one segment of this large research study. In addition to caregivers and community members, the sample consists of 260 former child soldiers (2002), all having belonged to the Revolutionary United Front. Female respondents constitute only 12 % of the sample. The article examines the role of education in the reintegration of former child soldiers. Several ways in which education presents a positive pathway for former child combatants, as well as other war-affected youth in Sierra Leone, are presented. Based on the collected data and literature the article argues that education represents a constructive activity which may prevent re-recruitment, it has a potential of helping heal past traumas and preventing future conflict, it increases the child's coping capacities and overall adjustment, it naturally creates peer groups of young people who can provide support to children that have lost family members, friends, neighbours, and it may also help to prevent social isolation and stigma.

Akello, G., A. Richters, and R. Reis (2006) "Reintegration of former child soldiers in northern Uganda: coming to terms with children's agency and accountability" in *Intervention* 2006 Volume 4, No. 3, pages 229-243

Publication form: Article
Country: Uganda

The article is based on ethnographic fieldwork taking place over 12 months. In the first phase in-dept interviews were conducted with 80 ex-combatants and six child mothers. In the second phase one former child soldier (girl) was selected for extensive follow up. Through comparing the approach of one Christian NGO towards reintegration with the ideas of formerly abducted child soldiers and community members the authors seek to find answers to why the reintegration process in northern Uganda has had limited success. According to this study counselling in line with the Christian ideals has limited success, as the "discourse on innocence, trauma, repentance and forgiveness is neither shared with the community, nor with the children themselves" (p 239). The stigma attached to being a former child soldier is discussed and traditional approaches to justice and reintegration are underlined as essential in restoring social relationships in Acholi lands.

Boothby, N., J. Crawford, and J. Halperin (2006) "Mozambique child soldier life outcome study: Lessons learned in rehabilitation and reintegration efforts" in *Global Public Health,* February 2006, Vol. 1, No. 1, pages 87-107

Publication form: Article
Country: Mozambique

The article is based on a longitudinal study of a group of former child soldiers stretched over a period of 16 years.[18] The study combines qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Initially the sample consisted of 39 ex-combatants (6-16 years of age), but the data presented in the article is based on 23 informants. The child soldiers participated in a centre-based reintegration programme at Lhanguene centre, brought there by the government in part for political reasons. The sample were therefore not randomly selected Assessments were conducted in 1988, 1989, 1990 and in 2003/4. No former girl soldiers are included in this study. In addition to the assessments with former child soldiers focus groups were conducted with family members, neighbours and village leaders. The aim of the study is to portray how former child soldiers have adapted over time, focusing on their psychological, social and economic functioning. The study finds that most of the former child soldiers had become trusted and productive adult members of their communities. The authors point to community acceptance and forgiveness, traditional cleansing and healing rituals, livelihoods and apprenticeships as aspects that support long term reintegration and self-sufficiency. They underline that, if provided by leaders in the communities, the restorative and healing elements could continue for a longer time, be more cost effective, and reach a larger number of children compared to what is the case when this is provided at the centre.

Shepler, S. (2005) "The rites of the child: Global discourses of youth and reintegrating child soldiers in Sierra Leone" in *Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 4, pages 197-211

Publication form: Article
Country: Sierra Leone

Data is collected during 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork from 1999 to 2001. The article does not indicate the number or the gender of respondents in the sample. The focus of the article is on the strategically use of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particularly its construction of childhood as innocent, which often is in conflict with local understandings. The author discusses reintegration of former child soldiers in the light of different versions of childhood, as well as how new meanings of youth are emerging. The article puts forward the view that the Western model of youth (innocence) ease the reintegration and the forgiveness by the community, but at the same time the former child soldiers loose the political agency that is absent in this model.

Burman, M. E. and S. McKay (2007) "Marginalization of girl mothers during reintegration from armed groups in Sierra Leone" in *International Nursing Review,* Vol. 54, pages 316 – 323

Publication form: Article
Country: Sierra Leone

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[18] Data from this study is also the base for another article by N. Boothby "What happens when child soldiers grow up? The Mozambique case study" published in *Intervention 2006.*

The article is part of a larger study of reintegration of girl mothers, and it is based on data collected in 2003 in northwest Sierra Leone. The study employs qualitative methodology and includes individual and group interviews, storytelling through singing, participant observation and photography. Interviews were conducted with community, religious, educational, ethnic and political leaders, healthcare workers, girl mothers/girl soldiers and family members. Most of the 19 interviewed girl soldiers had returned from fighting forces with children. The aim of the article is to view the experiences of the girls through Hall's (1999) conceptualization of marginalization. The authors find that the model is a useful tool in evaluating the girl mothers' experiences. However, not all aspects are consistent with the original conceptualization of marginalization, and needs further empirical and theoretical work. Seduction and Eurocentrism were two such aspects. The authors also underline other aspects such as girls' lack of voice and experience of shame and vulnerability.

McKay, S. (2004) "Reconstructing fragile lives: girls' social reintegration in northern Uganda and Sierra Leone" in *Gender & Development,* Vol. 12, No. 3.

Publication form: Article
Country: Sierra Leone and Uganda

The article examines the experiences of girls who have returned from armed groups in Sierra Leone and Uganda, and their experiences are compared with those of ex-female fighters in Mozambique. Five case examples are used to describe the girls' experiences. McKay states that the success of the girls' reintegration is linked to how they entered the armed group, their roles, how long they participated, and how they return (part of or non-part of the formal DDR process). Key aspects to promote girls' post-war well being are schooling and skills training, adequate health care, and psychosocial support. In order to reconstruct the girls' lives their agency needs to increase and gender-specific violence needs to be addressed.

Mazurana, D. E., S. McKay, K. C. Carlson and J. C. Kasper (2002) "Girls in fighting forces and groups: Their recruitment, participation, demobilization, and reintegration" in *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pages 97 – 123

Publication form: Article
Country: Multiple

The article draws on data collected through a wide variety of organizational and scholarly studies that deals with girls' recruitment to and involvement in armed groups. A special emphasis is on physical and psychosocial effects of their participation. The purpose is to illuminate the girls' experiences and some of the challenges they meet in the reintegration process after having left armed groups. The authors argue that "gender-specific physical and psychological impacts must be understood so that both boys and girls receive effective help" (p 98). They conclude that the realities which girls are facing both within the armed groups and within their communities do not correspond to the reintegration programmes developed both by international and national agencies. The need for more gender-specific knowledge on health consequences and long-term effects is underlined.

Bayer, C. P., F. Klasen, and H. Adam (2007) "Association of trauma and PTSD symptoms with openness to reconciliation and feelings of revenge among former Ugandan and Congolese child soldiers" in *JAMA,* Vol. 298, No. 5, pages 555 – 559

Publication form: Article
Country: The Democratic Rrepublic of Congo and Uganda

The article is based on a cross-sectional survey of 169 former child soldiers (11-18 years of age) from Uganda (Gulu) and eastern Congo (Bukavu and Goma). The sample is not randomly selected but selected from rehabilitation centres. The number of girls participating in the study is low. The research team used the Child Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Reaction Index to evaluate PTSD symptoms, and two small questionnaires to assess the children's feeling of revenge and openness to reconciliation. The result shows no significantly positive link between traumatic experiences and PTSD symptoms. However, children that showed higher scores of PTSD symptoms were significantly less open to reconciliation and having more feelings of revenge. The authors conclude that effects of psychological trauma should be considered in the children's rehabilitation and reintegration processes.

Geenen, S. (2008) "Les combattants au Carrefour. La reintegration socio-economique des ex-combattants au Burundi et en RDC" in Marysse, Stefaan, Reyntjens, Filip and Vandeginste, Stef (eds.) *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs. Annuaire 2007-2008*, L'Harmattan: Paris

Geenen, S. (2007) *Former combatants at the crossing. How to assess the reintegration of former combatants in the security and development nexus? Case study: Ruyigi (Burundi) and Kinshasa (DRC)*, conference paper at "Development policy and the security agenda in Africa: reassessing the relationship", 2 November 2007

Publication form: Article/paper
Countries: Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo

Both the article and paper are based on interviews and focus groups with 162 former combatants in Ruyigi and 30 in-dept interviews in Kinshasa. Respondents in Kinshasa are all male, and seven of them are former child soldiers. In Ruyigi ten respondents are women and 20 former child soldiers. In other words, neither child soldiers nor gender issues are the focus of this study. However, due to few studies on the reintegration process and programmes in the DRC, the paper is included in this review. The article links the aspect of security and development by focusing on the reintegration process of ex-combatants. It describes the current situation of ex-combatants in Burundi and in the DRC and identifies conditions that affect their reintegration. Both cases show that local context, immediate surroundings (family, land, house etc.), and personal capacities and background impact on the reintegration process. In order to address these conditions the DDR programmes should be coupled with other aid programmes. Tensions caused by delays in the execution of the programmes were obvious in both Kinshasa and Ruyigi. Some of the major problems noted in the case of Ruyigi are 1) delays in payments and its affect on the ex-combatants economic reintegration, 2) skills training within few professions and which sometimes are not based in the local economic reality, 3) jealousy towards ex-combatants often caused by misconceptions of the amount of assistance received. Hence, sensitization and information distribution to the communities in which the reintegration takes place is needed. The study also underlines that ex-combatants in Ruyigi tend to socialize with each other. The case of Kinshasa shows that the problem underlined that most was mismanagement and corruption within the DDR programme. Other

complications revealed in the study are that half of the beneficiaries of the programme disappear after receiving training and kit, that the reinsertion kit was insufficient and of bad quality, that the kit was often sold to obtain cash, and that the military spirit of the former combatants are difficult to change. However, none of the respondents in Kinshasa mentioned that they experienced jealousy from other community members.

Santacruz, M. L. and R. E. Arana (2002) "Experiences and psychosocial impact of the El Salvador civil war on child soldiers" originally published in Spanish in Biomédica 2002;22 (suppl. 2). Translated and reproduced The Coalition to stop the Use of Child Soldiers.

Publication form: Article
Country: El Salvador

The article draws on parts of the data material collected in the research project "Child soldiers: lessons learned"[19]. The sample consists of 293 former child soldiers, of whom 97 are female. Despite the number of females the study does not focus on gender differences. The majority was around 10 years of age at the time of recruitment and belonged to the rebel group FMLN (Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional). Both interviews and questionnaires were employed in the collection of data. The study investigates the former child combatants' emotional well-being and current life conditions nearly 10 years after the peace accords were signed. The findings show that the war has left a latent psychosocial impact on the young combatants. The impact was found to be related to three factors: 1) the depth of negative experience (particularly the loss of family members/breakdown of important networks and occurrence of disability), 2) acceptance or rejection by the community, and 3) their sense of deception and frustration (disappointment in the DDR process, with their personal lives etc.). Moreover, social dimensions like poverty, low level of education, zero or minimal access to basic services limit their current opportunities and do not help them to adjust and reintegrate. The authors stress that the socio-material conditions of former child soldiers need to be addressed. The section of the population that was directly involved in the war – in particular children and young people – should not be forgotten and further marginalised but receive the assistance they need.

Sendabo, T. (2004) *Child soldiers: Rehabilitation and social reintegration in Liberia,* Life & Peace Institute, Uppsala, Sweden

Publication form: Academic book
Country: Liberia

The study used various qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data material; questionnaire with 65 former child soldiers, observation, and interview with 16 child soldiers and 72 adult respondents (family members and relatives, members of the community, religious leaders, government officials, NGO personnel and social workers). The aim of the study is to promote better understanding of child soldiering, and the rehabilitation and social reintegration of former child soldiers. In addition to giving a literature review, the volume presents how reintegration and rehabilitation is defined by Liberians and identifies local coping mechanisms. Findings underline that a reintegration process needs to include all affected by war, that it is a long-term process, and that former child soldiers' self-respect and

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[19] The project was undertaken by the Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública de la Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas, under the auspices of UNICEF.

dignity can be restored through jobs or training. The lack of basic needs is a major frustration among young marginalised people, a frustration that may fuel future violence.

McKay, S. and D. Mazurana (2004) *Where are the girls? Girls in fighting forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their lives during and after war,* Rights & Democracy, International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development.

Publication form: Academic book
Countries: Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique

The publication is based on two extensive research studies[20] using both quantitative and qualitative research design. The purpose of the volume is to enhance the understanding of the experiences of girls associated with armed groups both during and after war. The volume underlines the various roles performed by girls in armed groups, as well as how their labour was a key factor with regards to the sustainability of the armed group. Among the study's key findings is that social reintegration is in particular difficult for girls and young women who return with children. Important aspects are health care for both the women and their children, and access to education and skills training that enable them to support themselves. The authors call for a holistic approach to the reintegration process, "one that takes into account the gendered physical, psychological, spiritual and social aspects of healing and reintegration" (p 122). Traditional healing and cleansing rituals are highlighted. The findings in the two studies also reveal governments' denying or attempting to cover up their own use of child soldiers during the war, and how the formal DDR processes have failed to recognise and include women and girl soldiers.

Brett, R. and I. Specht (2004) *Young soldiers: Why they choose to fight,* Lynne Rienner Publishers: Boulder

Publication form: Academic book
Countries: Multiple

The book is the outcome of a qualitative study of former child soldiers from ten different conflict areas: Afghanistan, Colombia, the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), the DRC, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland (British armed forces and paramilitary groups). The size of the sample in each of the areas is small and the authors' conclusions are therefore stressed as being tentative. In total 53 boys and girls, all of whom classified themselves as volunteers, were interviewed. Three interviews were conducted with each child soldier. The volume presents the former child soldiers' view on why they joined armed forces, and discusses how voluntary their participation really is. The authors identify three levels of environmental factors affecting on their decision to join; 1) general environmental factors, 2) personal history and 3) a specific trigger that pushes the child to make the final decision. The volume also draws attention to variations between boys and girls in which factors that lead them to join, and that these are mainly related to the status and role the girl enjoys in society. The volume also includes a thorough instruction on how to conduct the data collection with former child soldiers (appendix 1).

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[20] "Girls in Militaries, Paramilitaries, Militias, and Armed Opposition Groups" (Mozambique, Northern Uganda and Sierra Leone), funded by CIDA's Child Protection Research Fund, and "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Experiences and Roles of Girls in Sierra Leone and Northern Uganda" funded by the Policy Commission of Women Waging Peace. The methodology is described under the headline: Major studies.

Wessells, M. (2006) *Child soldiers: from violence to protection,* Harvard University Press: Cambridge

Publication form: Academic book
Countries: Multiple

The volume draws on the author's long experience with child protection and field research through the Christian Children's Fund, where he participated in interviews with more than 400 former boy and girl soldiers. The book has a psychological perspective and provides an analysis of causes and impact of child soldiering as well as how to address the problem. The children's narratives have a central space. With regards to the reintegration process, case studies of DDR programmes in Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, El Salvador and Afghanistan are presented. Case studies presenting former child soldiers outside formal DDR processes (Uganda and Angola) are also described, as well as DDR processes in countries with ongoing conflicts (the DRC). The volume addresses important aspects of the reintegration process, and touches upon community reconciliation, retributive or restorative justice and the protection of the child.

Honwana, A. (2006) *Child soldiers in Africa,* University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia

Publication form: Academic book
Countries: Mozambique and Angola

The volume is based on the author's field research in Mozambique and Angola, but the two case studies are placed within a broader context. It provides a description of the political and historical context in which the conflicts arose, and the author also addresses methodological and ethical challenges associated with research in conflict and post-conflict situations. The main arguments put forward by the author are: 1) child soldiering is an old phenomenon which recently has increased in scope, 2) child soldiers are not only victims, but show resilience and agency, 3) local culture needs to be embedded in the healing and reintegration process, 4) reintegration depends in part on social development and the eradication of poverty. The author emphasises that the solution to the problems faced by child soldiers lies in addressing the total societal crisis the countries are confronted with.

Boothby, N., A. Strang and M. Wessells (eds.) (2006) *A world turned upside down: Social ecological approaches to children in war zones,* Kumarian Press: Bloomfield

Publication form: Academic book

Individual contributions to this volume are based on the authors' profession as psychologists and their experience from work with children in conflict zones. They use a social ecological framework developed by the Psychosocial Working Group (PWG). Emphasis is on human, social and cultural capital of the community. In other words they employ a resource-based model, not a deficit model. The child and the community are viewed as active agents or actors with skills and resources. "One of the main themes of this book is that in war zones, psychosocial assistance is often best provided through family and community-based supports that are guided by a holistic, socially situated understanding of children's well-being" (p 6).

The different chapters touch upon aspects like family, gender, separated children, education, livelihood, participation, and religion. Chapters by McKay[21] on girl soldiers' situation during and after war, by Boothby[22] discussing keys to reintegration using the case of Mozambique, and by Wessells on the importance of livelihood possibilities, are of particular interest for this literature review. Through presenting the case of Sierra Leone, Wessells describes how the youth participate in the rebuilding of the community through civic-works projects which provided them with skills training and monthly stipends. He further underlines the importance of providing the youth with microcredit in order to start their own business upon completion of the training. Wessells discusses how livelihood-support positively impact on psychosocial well-being, identity formation, healing and reconciliation.

Boyden, J. and J. de Berry (2004) *Children and youth in the front line*, Berghahn Books: Oxford

Publication form: Academic book

The editors of the volume address the narrow biomedical focus that has been prevalent in past research on children and war, and stress the need for research using a broader approach which encompasses environmental and relational dimensions of people's lives. Further research needs to be done on how political conflict affects economic and social integration, why children take up arms, what are their emotional/social support and strategies for coping, and on how culture perceives suffering and healing. The book aims to complement existing literature and provide new perspectives. The methodological approach is mainly ethnographic fieldwork with a particular focus on the narratives of the young children. The geographical approach covers countries like Guatemala, Liberia, Sri Lanka, Burma, Mozambique, Uganda, Jordan, Kosovo and Angola. The different chapters in the volume focus on the contexts of war, girls' vulnerability and resilience, social constructs like the child, childhood etc., children's narratives of their experiences as well as debating research methodologies and how they shape research findings. Boyden's chapter on "Anthropology under fire: Ethics, researchers and children in war" will be dealt with separately.

Cohn, I. and G. S. Goodwin-Gill (2003) *Child soldiers: The role of children in armed conflict,* Clarendon Press: Oxford

Publication form: Academic book
Countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Israeli occupied territories, Liberia and Sri Lanka.

The volume has a wide scope covering reasons for recruitment, prevention of recruitment, consequences of participation, and how to respond to such consequences and how to provide protection of the child soldier through law, programmes and policies. The study is based on secondary sources and first-hand knowledge from El Salvador, Guatemala, Israeli occupied territories, Liberia and Sri Lanka. Interviews were conducted with children and adults involved in or affected by hostilities, and with staff from the International Committee of the Red Cross, National Red Cross Societies, government agencies and NGOs. The authors suggest that prevention strategies need to address the factors motivating children to join armed groups, the root cause of the conflict, and that governments need to take legal action on

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[21] The chapter presents some of the findings in McKay and Mazurana (2004) *Where are the girls?*
[22] The chapter presents similar findings as presented in Boothby et al. (2006) "Mozambique child soldier life outcome study: Lessons learned in rehabilitation and reintegration efforts"

behalf of those forcibly conscripted. Interventions should be directed both at the children's ecologies and at the children themselves. The authors believe that how child soldiers come to grips with their war experiences is related to how conflicts are resolved (negotiated solution, amnesty, punishment etc), and they emphasise the need for further research on this topic. Other areas where research is needed are identity formation among child soldiers, how to adjust to a civilian identity, effectiveness of programmes and interventions, and whether existing models may be replicated in other contexts.

Coulter, C. (2006) *Being a bush wife: Women's lives through war and peace in northern Sierra Leone.* Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology, Uppsala University, Sweden

Publication form: PhD dissertation
Country: Sierra Leone

Coulter's PhD dissertation is an outcome of 15 months of anthropological fieldwork conducted in 1998, 2001 and 2003/4. More than one hundred formerly abducted women were interviewed, and the researcher worked more closely with ten of these women. Coulter explains in detail challenges and stresses particularly distrust, unease, and suspicion. The selection of interviewees was greatly influenced by her research assistant as the assistant knew many women within Coulter's target group. Additional data about the women was collected through a survey on marriage and migration histories conducted by the author. The fieldwork also includes interviews with members of the communities such as elders, religious leaders, politicians, and staff of local and international NGOs. The aim of the study is to examine war and post-war experiences of some abducted young women, with a particular focus on how they coped with hardship on personal, social and economic levels. It also focuses on how their stories "were shaped by and given meaning by the women themselves, their families, and their communities, but also by those humanitarian institutions that populate and to some extent dominate many post-war societies" (p 24). As this review focuses on reintegration of ex-combatants the rest of the summary of Coulter's study will only present some major findings in chapters discussing post-war issues.

The study shows that the DDR programmes were seen as unsuitable and shameful for women, In addition many women also feared that they would be sent to court, arrested and even executed if they participated. Some of the girls and women were seen as "damaged goods" when they returned to their communities, but the study shows that not all of the females were stigmatized. Coulter stresses that post-war behaviour is fundamental to how they would be treated by the community. "Whereas some women tried to conform to norms and conventions, to expected behaviour, others said that they did not want to return to a 'traditional' way of life" (p 383). The community had difficulties accepting those who did not want to adjust to women's traditional role. In contrast to many other war-torn countries there were according to Coulter, no traditional rituals in northern Sierra Leone that could 'wash' the fighters from blood, death and shame. The study points to that acceptance by family and community was heavily influenced by the women's ability to provide material as well as social resources. If not it would be more likely that their family saw them as 'unmarriageable' rebel women representing an additional economic burden to an already poor family.

Peters, K. (2006) *Footpaths to reintegration: Armed conflict, youth and the rural crisis in Sierra Leone*, Wageningen University, The Netherlands

Publication form: PhD dissertation
Country: Sierra Leone

The study employed an ethnographic approach using interviews as method for data collection. Three rural cases of reintegration are presented to show the diversity and complexity of the reintegration process. Findings show that both those who joined voluntarily and those who were forcefully recruited give the same causes of the war: lack of education and jobs, and exclusion and exploitation of the vulnerable, particularly the young, by the ruling elite. Peters finds that these reasons truly are an integral part of the Sierra Leone's history and society. After giving a description of the DDR process the author points to the programme's failure by not acknowledging or addressing the rural crisis for the young people, but often provided urban-oriented skills-training packages. The general conclusion is that rather than reintegrating ex-combatants into a failing rural society the DDR should target the entire rural youth underclass which should be followed by agrarian transformation.

Honwana, A. (2001) "Children of war: Understanding war and war cleansing in Mozambique and Angola" in S. Chesterman (ed.) *Civilians in war*, Lynne Rienner Publisher: London

Publication form: Book chapter
Countries: Mozambique and Angola

The chapter is based on ethnographic fieldwork in Mozambique (1993-1999) and Angola (1997-1998). The author discusses the limitations of the Western understanding of childhood, as well as limitations of international conventions in ensuring children's protection against war and violence. Honwana calls for a bottom-up approach that entails greater community participation. Local cleansing rituals are analyzed and the chapter shows and concludes that these rituals are instrumental in dealing both with the psychological and emotional distress in children affected by war. These rituals have a positive impact on (re-)building family cohesion. The author stresses the need to use available local means and argues that both child protection and international conventions have to be understood within and take advantage of local worldviews and meaning systems.

Apio, E. (2007) "Uganda's forgotten children of war" in R. Charli Carpenter (ed.) *Born of war. Protecting children of sexual violence survivors in conflict zones*, Kumarian Press: Bloomfield, USA

Publication form: Book chapter
Country: Uganda

The article[23] is based on a case-study that includes in-depth interviews with 69 children born in captivity, as well as their mothers or guardians. Data was also collected through focus-group discussions, interviews with key informants, document analysis, and a questionnaire. The aim of the study was two-fold; assess the impact of captivity on children born of the LRA, and evaluate whether reintegration programmes effectively addressed the needs of these children. This research shows that children born in captivity have particular physical and psychosocial vulnerabilities, but that their psychosocial needs are barely supported within

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[23] The article is based on the author's MA dissertation (2004) *Challenges of integrating children born in armed conflict: A study of children born of the Lord's Resistance Army, Gulu municipality 1990-2003.*

existing reintegration programmes which tend to be directed only at formerly abducted people. Apio stresses that the well-being of these children greatly affects their mother's psychosocial status as well. The author notes that children born in captivity is the most forgotten category of children in armed conflicts, and points to the need for both additional programming and research on these children's well-being.

Utas, M. (2005) "Building a future? The reintegration & remarginalisation of youth in Liberia" in Richards, P. (ed.) *No peace no war: An anthropology of contemporary armed conflicts,* James Curry Ltd: Oxford

Publication form: Book chapter
Country: Liberia

The chapter is based on qualitative fieldwork conducted in 1998. Three cases are presented; one rural, one semi-urban, and one urban, but the author underlines that these are analytical categories and that the borders between them are blurred. The focus is on demobilisation and social reintegration of ex-combatant youths, but as these youths were often already marginalised, Utas also describes a process of remarginalisation running alongside of the reintegration process. The cases illustrate different trajectories of reintegration and point to both how the different settings and individual differences influence the process. The rural case shows the most success; the ex-combatants had return to their families, were accepted and forgiven by their communities, worked on the farm (some having their own land), had large networks and in most cases had cut contact with other ex-combatants. Utas argues that the success is due to spontaneous and speedy local reintegration, not by external aid which he even argues could harm the long-term process. In the urban case the situation was different. Despite numerous international and national aid organisations the ex-combatant youths remained jobless, they did not return to the place of origin but lived separately as a subculture with military structure intact. The semi-urban case falls somewhere in between and portrays a group of ex-combatants working hard towards acceptance and reintegration. Some wished and planned to return to their families but would not return empty-handed. Their social ties were dominated by a war-friend network, but most were also active in church. Utas points to how international or national aid organisations may harm the reintegration process for example by providing vocational training that in the end proves useless. External aid to the reintegration process needs to be context-specific.

Verhey, B. (2001) *Child soldiers: Preventing, demobilizing and reintegrating*, World Bank Working Paper Series No. 23

Publication form: Paper
Countries: Angola and El Salvador

Drawing from in-dept case studies in Angola and El Salvador, as well as experiences from other country programmes, the paper shares lessons learned in DDR programmes for former child soldiers. Data is collected through semi-structured interviews and focus-groups, as well as through a review of documentation. Three components are highlighted as important for reintegration: family reunification, psychosocial support and education, and economic opportunity. Among lessons presented in the paper we find that child soldiers must be protected and separated from military authority during demobilisation, they should remain in reception centres for as little time as possible, and community-based networks are essential

for reintegration. The important role of healing and cleansing rituals is also underlined. Verhey emphasises two aspects that have not been adequately addressed; the impact of drug use by child soldiers and the needs of former girl soldiers.

McKay, S., M. Robinson, M. Gonsalves and M. Worthen (2006) *Girls formerly associated with fighting forces and their children: Returned and neglected*, Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

Publication form: Paper
Countries: Uganda, Liberia and Sierra Leone

The paper presents country-specific analyses of views and experiences of girls associated with fighting forces in Uganda, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The investigations were undertaken as part of the preparation for the Bellagio workshop on girl mothers in 2005. The paper outlines challenges to a successful reintegration, and presents key issues discussed at the workshop. Issues touched upon include the girls' resilience, their relationship with their children, ex-combatants, families and communities, programming considerations, community focus. The workshop highlighted the necessity for more knowledge and research particularly on the needs of the "at-risk" children of former child soldiers, and on girl mothers' identity. The need to discuss how to change DDR processes to become more inclusive of girls, or if other mechanisms are better suited for the reintegration of girls, is also emphasised.

Gislesen, K. (2006) *A childhood lost? The challenges of successful disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of child soldiers: The case of West Africa,* Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt (NUPI), Paper No. 712.

Publication form: Paper
Country: Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire

In addition to interviews with key policy makers and implementers in Sierra Leone, the paper draws on academic literature, NGO publications and official documents related to the DDR process, West Africa and child soldiers. The report examines challenges of a successful DDR process for former child soldiers, and suggests how such problems can be overcome. The dilemma between the need to include as many child soldiers as possible (without requiring handing of weapons) and the need to collect as many weapons as possible is discussed, as well as the difference in African and Western approach to distress and trauma treatment. The author points to the need to take local circumstances into consideration and to address the needs of the entire community.

Castelli, L., E. Locatelli and M. Canavera (2005) *Psycho-social support for war affected children in northern Uganda: Lessons learned,* Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

Publication form: Paper
Country: Uganda

The paper gives a description of the psychosocial support provided war affected children by Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale (AVSI) in northern Uganda. The paper is based on data from AVSI's own evaluation of aspects of their programmes and on the

progress of each individual child. The most important lesson learned is that education – formal or informal, basic or advanced, technical or general – improves the wellbeing of the children. School is argued to be a means of going back to a normal life. Other lessons that are highlighted are: 1) humanitarian interventions will best benefit the individual by addressing the family and the community, 2) singling out, for example child soldiers, should not be done as it contributes to stigmatization and jealousy, and 3) educational support must be continuously evaluated and responsive to the community.

Apio, E. (2008) *Bearing the burden of blame – the children born of the Lord's resistance army, northern Uganda,* Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

Publication form: Paper
Country: Uganda

The research study[24] has a qualitative research design, and 69 children born in captivity were interviewed as well as their mothers/guardians, community leaders and agency staff. The paper deals with the impact of captivity on the children, the experiences of both mothers and children upon their return, and it suggests mechanisms to facilitate their reintegration. Parenting, both during and after captivity, is challenging for these mothers, and the findings show that the wellbeing and the social status of the children are heavily influenced by their mothers' association with fighting forces; their names often reflecting their mothers plight, their nationality is sometimes questioned, many construct an emotional defence around themselves, a majority of these children continue to be preoccupied with their past (revealed through games and play), and they are stigmatized and discriminated against both due to their fathers' rebel status and that they are viewed as "illegally conceived". The girl mothers express that they do not want to be treated as children and that economic empowerment and independence is most important. Apio underlines the need to cater for the psychosocial needs of these children in the design of reintegration programmes, as well as using cultural practices to counteract the stigma these children experience. The needs of children born in captivity have been largely neglected by researchers and reintegration programs alike.

Carlson, K. and D. Mazurana (2008) *Forced marriage within the Lord's Resistance Army, Uganda*, Feinstein International Center.

Publication form: Paper
Country: Uganda

Fieldwork was undertaken between 2001 and 2007, and the authors interviewed 103 women and girls formerly abducted and forced into marriage within the LRA. Additional interviews were made with a wide range of other respondents from parents to former LRA commanders. The focus is on the experiences of the forced wives within the LRA and upon returning to their families and communities, and how these experiences impact on their attempts to reintegrate in civilian life. The study reveals that some of these women and girls are not accepted back into their families and communities. Half of the girls who were forced into marriage bore children, and these women are particularly vulnerable. The findings show that economic hardship pushes some of the forced mothers into unhealthy or non-providing relationships with men. According to the researchers Acholi leaders claim that the girls wish

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[24] The paper is based on the author's MA dissertation (2004) *Challenges of integrating children born in armed conflict: A study of children born of the Lord's Resistance Army, Gulu municipality 1990-2003.*

to continue the forced marriage. However, the study found no such evidence. On the contrary some girls and women are intimidated by ex-combatants reclaiming their wives. Carlson and Mazurana question the ability of traditional and culturally practices to deal with the harm and brutality committed during the conflict, and note that forced wives and mothers did not feel that traditional cleansing addressed the crimes they had experienced. Lastly, the authors argue that forced marriage should become a codified crime in international law.

Wessells, M. (2007b) *The recruitment and use of girls in armed forces and groups in Angola: Implications for ethical research and reintegration,* The Ford Institute for Human Security, "Child soldiers initiative: Building knowledge about children and armed conflict".

Publication form: Paper
Country: Angola

With reference to a research study examining girl soldiers in Angola, Wessells presents a potential model of ethical research design, as well as the study's key findings. The Angolan case was examined through focused, semi-structured, individual interviews with 40 young women from 13 to 34 years of age. The study employed a snowball sampling process following the Do No Harm principle: respected local elders identified some girls they believed to be in a "position to talk," and these pre-selected girls identified again others. As researchers were only led to former girl soldiers that had been identified as in a "position to talk", the risk to harm the girls through painful questions was reduced. Despite this precaution the research team used a trained social worker who met with the respondents the day after the interview. Key findings show that the recruitment of Angolan girls is systematic and widespread and happens primarily through abduction. Sexually abuse occurred in most armed groups. The former girl soldiers often served as domestic servants, porters and labourers, but they also performed all-night dancing often followed by forced sex. Very few were combatants. The girls' testimonies also portray an unusual high level of stigmatization, and consequently their attempts to remain invisible. The fact that girls experience a greater degree of stigmatization necessitates gender-sensitive methods. Wessells stresses that predetermined random sampling or interviews may "prematurely end the girls' anonymity."[25] He points to that methods need to adapt to the local context.

UNICEF (2003) *Analysis of the reintegration of demobilized child soldiers in Rwanda*

Publication form: Report
Country: Rwanda

The methodology used is statistical analyses of data collected through follow-up interviews conducted by Save the Children social workers. Data was collected from 336 children who participated in a follow-up project of demobilised child soldiers (Baratashye project - UNICEF and Save the Children, (UK). Only two girls were demobilised between 2001 and 2003, however, they did not receive any support as it was deemed inappropriate for them to live in the same centre as the boys (p 4). Consequently, the sample does not contain any female child soldiers. Additional data was collected through more in-depth interviews with 12 former child soldiers and some Save the Children staff. The aim of this report is to identify factors that contribute to successful reintegration of former child soldiers. The report also describes the economic and psychosocial situation of the children. The findings show that the

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[25] Wessells 2007b:20

children do better when they are reintegrated into larger households, when they are reintegrated with parents, and when they have had experience with education prior to taking part in hostilities. The author underlines the need for further research on these factors, as well as the reason why they seem to matter the most.

Verhey, B. (2003) *Going Home: Demobilising and reintegrating child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo*, Save the Children (UK)

Publication form: Report
Country: The Democratic Republic of Congo

The document is an external evaluation of Save the Children UK's work with demobilising and reintegrating former child soldiers in the DRC. The timeframe is August 1999 till December 2002. The author carried out five weeks of field evaluation, and the fieldwork included discussions and focus groups with demobilised children, local organisations, community child protection networks, partners and key stakeholders. The report stresses a community-based approach to reintegration, and points to the fact that reintegration should be view more holistically. The report discusses vocational training versus livelihood training, and concludes in favour of the latter. Only nine girls had been part of the formal demobilisation process from 1999 till 2002, hence the gender aspect is not part of this evaluation report.

Verhey, B. (2004) *Reaching the girls: Study on girls associated with armed forces and groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo,* Save the Children UK and CARE, IFESH and IRC.

Publication form: Report
Country: The Democratic Republic of Congo

Data material is collected through two months in-depth fieldwork covering five Provinces of Eastern Congo. The design used includes interviews with key UN, government, military and civil society organisations, 19 focus groups with local women's associations, civil society organisations and child protection networks/committees, focus groups with 89 girls and 103 boys, individual interviews with five girls, and a peer survey conducted by girls at each location reaching more than 600 girls in addition to those participating in the interviews and focus groups. This study examines the situation and attitudes of girls associated with armed groups in the DRC. Its particular focus is on why girls are not reached in the efforts to release children from these groups and to support their reintegration. The seriousness of the situation is exemplified through presenting the very low numbers of girls participating in reintegration programmes run by four international NGOs.[26] The study concludes that, partly due to its military-oriented conception, "only a minority of girls will be reached through the formal process of the DDR" (p 2). Moreover, socio-cultural conceptions of girls within the armed groups represent obstacles to the girls' release, and the community's conceptions of girls constitute obstacles to their reintegration process. In order to succeed in reaching the girls these socio-cultural conceptions and attitudes need to be addressed. In line with what the girls say themselves, the study stresses that in order to reach the girls broader and more flexible community-based mechanisms need to be the basis for the reintegration programmes.

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[26] Save the Children, for example, has had 23 girls as compared to 1522 boys, participating from 1999 through 2003.

Amnesty International (2006) *Democratic Republic of Congo: Children at war, creating hope for their future,* AFR 62/017/2006

Publication form: Report
Country: The Democratic Republic of Congo

The report is based on research conducted in 2005 and 2006, where delegates from Amnesty International met with "scores of children" formerly associated with armed groups, as well as families, teachers, representatives from NGOs, UN agencies, the World Bank and the DRC government. The methodological approach is not made further clear. The report highlights the many children that are unaccounted for in the DDR programmes and without any support, in particular the large number of girls missing. Moreover, it underlines children's need and right to education. It points to the lack of suitable economic activities and reintegration programmes, and stresses consequences such as feelings of drift, isolation and helplessness among children released and reunified with their families.

Muggah, R., P. Maughan and C. Bugnion (2003) *The long shadow of war: Prospects for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration in the Republic of Congo.* A joint independent evaluation for the European Commission, UNDP and the MDRP Secreatriat.

Publication form: Report
Country: The Republic of Congo

The report is an evaluation of three separate DDR efforts[27] and their short and long term impact. The evaluation team employed mainly quantitative data collection methods; public health statistics, questionnaire administered to schools, household survey and ex-combatant survey. In addition on-site inspections, key informant interviews and primary literature reviews were conducted. In short, the evaluation concludes that the short term impact of the DDR programmes had been generally positive or moderately satisfactory. However, the positive effects were declining. The results related to the long term impact are mixed and unclear, as insecurity remains pervasive. The report points to the need for a national DDR plan.

Denov, M. (2007) *Girls in fighting forces: Moving beyond victimhood,* CIDA's Child Protection Research Fund, Canada

Publication form: Report
Countries: Angola, Sierra Leone, Mozambique and Uganda

The report is a summary document and part of the dissemination process following the conclusion of CIDA's Child Protection Research Fund (2001-2005). It draws on findings in three former studies[28] funded by CIDA's Child Protection Research Fund, and examines the perspectives and experiences of former child-soldiers as victims, participants, and resisters of violence. The three studies revealed the invisibility of the girls both during conflict and in the

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[27] Implementation agencies: 1) Comité de Suivi, 2) the UNDP-IOM (International Organisation of Migration), and 3) the HCREC (Haut Commissariat pour le demobilisation et reinsertion des ex-combatant).

[28] Stavrou, V.: *Breaking the silence: Girls abducted during armed conflict in Angola*, Denov, M.: *Child soldiers n Sierra Leone: Experiences, implications and strategies for reintegration,* McKay, S. and D. Mazurana: *Where are the girls? Girls in fighting forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone, and Mozambique: Their lives during and after war.*

post-conflict context. Despite that they are rendered invisible by governments, national and international NGOs etc, it is clear that the girls' roles remain critical to the functioning of armed groups. The girls are subjected to grave violations of their human rights, and are also forced to participate in brutal violence. Through these experiences the girl ex-fighters are victimized. A secondary form of victimization takes place through socio-economic marginalization when returning to their communities. However, the findings demonstrate that the girls are active agents with their own coping mechanisms, resilience and skills. The author calls for an alternative approach on how these girls are perceived and conceptualized, and argues that it is crucial that the girls' agency and skills, as well as their voice, are included when developing post-conflict policies and programmes.

Barth, E. F. (2002) *Peace as disappointment. The reintegration of female soldiers in post-conflict societies – a comparative study from Africa,* International Peace Research Institute, Norway

Publication form: Report
Countries: Mainly Eritrea and Sudan

Data was collected through interviews with ex-fighters and civilians in Eritrea, a fact-collecting trip to Sudan, and reviews of reports, articles and books on female soldiers. The aim is to contribute to increase knowledge on female ex-combatants, and to analyze the demobilisation and reintegration process of these soldiers. The report portrays perspectives of both ex-fighters and civilians. In order to reach the girls one needs to actively seek them out, and the report suggests to use women's networks, church groups, health centres rather than newspapers and radio. Women's lack of information both with regards to their demobilisation rights and the possibilities for employment and training is underlined. The author notes that the changes the women have gone through sometimes make them reluctant to go home. Female ex-fighters in such situations should be assisted to find alternative ways of living. Childcare opportunities and education and training are highlighted, as is the need to value the skills that ex-soldiers have acquired within armed groups.

Keairns, Y. E. (2002) *The voices of girl child soldiers: Summary,* Quaker United Nations Office

Publication form: Report
Countries: Angola, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Colombia

The study includes fieldwork in four different conflict areas in the world. In total 23 former girl soldiers were interviewed. Separated reports on Colombia, Sri Lanka and the Philippines are available as is a summary of the larger study. The aim of the study was to the listen to the stories of former girl child soldiers and to use this knowledge to better understand how to effectively meet their needs. The report provides the reader with insight on becoming a child soldier, the experience within the armed group, and the girls' view of the future. Local environment and personal circumstances are important factors when becoming a soldier. Poverty and abusive treatment within the family are particularly stressed. The findings show that whether or not the girls felt empowered, or whether or not they were sexually abused within the armed groups varied depending on the conflict area. Sri Lanka: nobody within the armed group was allowed to have love affaires and sex. Angola: girls were forced to live with and sexually serve male soldiers. The Philippines: men and women were not allowed to be

alone together. Colombia: girls decided whether to consent to sex. Keairns notes that their roles and how they were used within the armed groups directly influence their needs during demobilisation and reintegration. When talking about their future girls from all countries saw education or vocational training as essential for moving on. However, the educational process presented many challenges such as lack of infrastructure, finances, humiliation, and low attendance due to other obligations at home. The girls felt anger towards the enemy that had killed their comrades as well as towards those who had mistreated them in the groups to which they had belonged, but they were not seeking revenge.

Mazurana, D. and K. Carlson (2004) *From combat to community: Women and girls of Sierra Leone,* Women waging Peace and The Policy Commission.

Publication form: Report
Country: Sierra Leone

The study draws on both qualitative research and quantitative survey data. The aim is to assess how consideration for gender issues can improve DDR processes, as well as to document women's participation in formal and informal reintegration efforts. The key findings in this study reveal that women and girls participated in armed forces on both sides but that they are significantly underrepresented in the official DDR process. The report discusses how the handing in of weapons as a qualification for entry into the DDR programme to a large extent excluded girls and women. Moreover, many of these women were classified as "dependents" and therefore excluded from benefits given to "combatants". The authors underline the danger of increased level of insecurity and significant social consequences if girls are not included in the DDR process. Improvements in the DDR programmes should be made based upon the acknowledgement of the girls' multiple roles within the armed group, their agency and initiatives, and the skills and coping strategies they have developed. Findings also show that civilian women were active agents opposing the war, and that they in the aftermath of the war play an essential role in the reintegration of former combatants. Particularly with regards to those ex-combatants who were excluded from official programmes.

Porto, J. G., I. Parsons and C. Alden (2007) *From soldiers to citizens: The social, economic and political reintegration of Unita ex-combatants*, Institute for Security Studies, ISS Monograph No 130

Publication form: Report
Country: Angola

The volume is based on a case-study of former UNITA combatants from three provinces in Angola. The fieldwork was conducted over a period of 18 months, using both quantitative and qualitative methods (in-depth surveys, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews). More than 600 ex-combatants participated in the survey. The study does not have a particular gender perspective neither does it focus on former child soldiers. The aim of the study is to study the social, economic and political reintegration of ex-combatants and to reveal factors influencing the reintegration experience. Based on the collected data material the study highlights five aspect in the reintegration process; 1) vulnerability (former combatants' limited resources and choices are largely similar to other returned groups, however, in conflicts where there is high risk of ex-combatants returning to war the

reintegration of this group is particularly important), 2) identity (two years after the end of the war and ten months after arrival at current residence, approximately 50 % of the respondents still hold non-civilian identities), 3) social capital (the ex-soldier has limited social networks beyond immediate family), 4) sustainable livelihoods (challenging to establish in a post-war context), and 5) political participation (a sizable minority of the ex-combatants are members of political organisations, and political activism is seen as a means to improve economic opportunities). The authors point to the lack of systematic studies of the transition from war to peace and that "the content of substantive reintegration, from the point of the target group remains fundamentally unexamined" (p xvii). They also underline the need for the development of adequate methodologies so a comprehensive assessment of reintegration processes can be achieved.

Veale, A. (2003) *From child soldier to ex-fighter: Female fighters, demobilisation and reintegration in Ethiopia,* Institute for Security Studies, Institute for Security Studies, ISS Monograph Series, No. 85

Publication form: Report
Country: Ethiopia

The study seeks to identify gender specific issues facing young women in demobilisation and reintegration. Focus is on how having been an ex-combatant impacts on the women's social relationships, their self-concept, their reintegration experiences, and how it challenges the traditional role for women in Ethiopian culture. The study employed semi-structured interviews (11 respondents) and repertory grid analysis (six former female fighters and four other women). All the former fighters had joined the fighters as children. The author notes that due to the small sample size, these repertory grids can only be regarded as exploratory. Moreover, the women were fighters in a highly specific context, that of the rebel forces of the Tigrean People's Liberation Army. The author emphasises that the experiences of these women are atypical of that of females within fighting forces in Africa in general, where available research indicates women are highly exposed to sexual exploitation and gender-based violence (p 64). Findings reveal that the female ex-combatants' constructions of what it means to be "female" are shaped by their military socialisation experience. The women's experiences become central to their identity, but by leaving the military group they may be placed in a power struggle with traditional gendered expectations for women in civilian society. The young women viewed themselves as empowered by the military experience. Veale notes that this finding challenges the taken-for-granted assumptions about the impact of entering military forces as a child, and the long-term impact of being a "child-soldier".

Veale, A. and A. Stavrou (2003) *Violence, reconciliation and identity: The reintegration of Lord's Resistance Army child abductees in northern Uganda,* Institute for Security Studies, ISS Monograph Series, No. 92

Publication form: Report
Country: Uganda

This is a qualitative study which focuses on the lives of formerly abducted children two years after they had returned to their communities. The respondents had all participated in reintegration programmes run by GUSCO or World Vision centres. Seven boys and three girls were interviewed, and staff at the two centres was responsible for the selection of youth

respondents. Data was also collected through focus groups with teachers, local authorities and parents and key informant interviews with staff at the two reintegration centres, local authorities, one IDP camp worker and one traditional healer. The authors point to the fact that the former child soldier may return with a changed identity. According to this study parents and other community members sometimes fear that former child soldiers have an aggressive and violent behaviour, however, teachers and community leaders note that some of them show signs of increased confidence upon their return. Veale and Stavrou argue that reintegration has to involve a reciprocal 'readjustment' by both the individual soldier and the community. They claim that this element of reintegration has been largely overlooked.

Honwana, A. (1998) *Okusiakala ondalo yokalye: Let us light a new fire. Local knowledge in the post-war healing in reintegration of war-affected children in Angola,* Christian Children's Fund

Publication form: Report
Country: Angola

The report is the outcome of a research project named "The impact of traditional healing practices in the social reintegration of war-affected children". The fieldwork took place from July 1997 to April 1998. Data was collected through interviews and meetings with elderly members of the community, traditional chiefs, traditional healers and leaders of religious congregations. Life histories of children themselves were captured through interviews with children, relatives, teachers, friends and neighbours. However, the study did not manage to articulate as many women's voices as had been intended. The research identifies local traditional concepts, beliefs and practices related to healing, cleansing and social reintegration of war-affected children, and shows that there is a vast body of local knowledge regarding healing of social wounds of war. Honwana argues that the local Angolan approach is holistic in that it incorporates political and social elements in the community as well as treats the individual as a whole. He warns against the blind use of western psychotherapy, and claims that the most appropriate approach is "a kind of pluralistic approach which combines forms of therapy from different healthcare systems, and which preserves the cultural identity of the people involved" (p 42). At the same time the author underlines that some traditional rituals may be dangerous and harmful, and therefore not acceptable.

UNICEF (2005) *The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of children associated with the fighting forces: Lessons learned in Sierra Leone 1998-2002*

Publication form: Report
Country: Sierra Leone

The report is based on statistic data material from two databases: one developed by the National Commission for DDR (includes both children and adults) and one developed by Child Welfare Secretariat (all separated children including demobilised children). A number of difficulties connected to the data collection is described (p 43-44), the major ones being the risk of duplication and re-registration, poorly trained data-entry clerks and interviewers, a too lengthy questionnaire, and poor monitoring of data. In addition the "children's database" that was developed did not include the large number of former child soldiers that did not register in the formal DDR programmes. The report draws attention to the risk of disconnecting the act of the short-term demobilisation from the process of the long-term reintegration process,

and points to how a successful reintegration may prevent recruitment and re-recruitment. One lesson which is highlighted is that "centred-based care should give way to community based reintegration support as soon as possible" (p 39). Education should be a priority as it increases educational capacity in the post-war context and reduces stigma attached to former child soldiers. Skills training and job opportunities are also underlined and the report suggests that such opportunities should be coordinated with the adult component of the DDR.

Annan, J., C. Blattman, and R. Horton (2006) *The state of youth and youth protection in Northern Uganda: Findings from the Survey for War-Affected Youth*, Phase I, Survey of War-Affected Youth.

Publication form: Report
Country: Uganda

A large-scale survey with more than 1000 households and nearly 750 males between 14-30 years of age serves as the basis of this report. In addition, qualitative in-depth interviews with 40 of the sample's boys and young men, and members of their families and communities were conducted. The study suggests that despite the tremendous violence experienced, the psychosocial health of male youth is robust, with 90 % of the respondents reporting fairly high levels of social functioning. Family connectedness, social support and peer support are important factors to psychosocial well-being of youth. The findings show a gap in well-being between formerly abducted and non-abducted youth with the former group having three times as many serious injuries, a year less education, lower wages and poorer and more risky employment situations. According to this study, the economic consequences of war are most severe for formerly abducted male youths, and disparities worsen according to the length of abduction. With regards to education and illiteracy those 20 years of age and older are worse off than younger ones, and only few youths make the transition from primary to secondary school. The welcoming back to family and community is for the large majority reported as positive. The researchers argue that a shift in programme design and targeting is needed. They particularly point to the need to broaden the focus from children to youth, and the need to change from targeting categories, such as formerly abducted, to targeting specific needs. Annan et al. further argue that there has been an over-emphasis on psychosocial care, and suggest that this should shift to giving priority to age-appropriate education and income generating activities.

Annan, J., C. Blattman, K. Carlson, and D. Mazurana (2008) *The state of female youth in Northern Uganda: Findings from the Survey of War-Affected Youth (SWAY),* Phase II, Survey of War-Affected Youth.

Publication form: Report
Country: Uganda

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research design; 619 females between 14-35 years of age were selected for the survey study, and in-depth interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of the survey respondents, their friends, community members and family. Employment among young women, both abducted and non-abducted, is very low. Income is also reported to be low, however their wages are comparable to those of men. Illiteracy is high, and it is much more difficult for young women to move on to secondary school. Those returning with children have less education than other groups, and are less likely to return to

formal education. The authors stress that vocational training should be offered alongside for example schooling, and underline that women should be offered other possibilities than tailoring. Very few forced wives were released by the LRA; according to this study 83 % organised their own escape, and hardly any of them are living with their captor husbands. With regards to psychosocial well-being findings point to the fact that forced wives and mothers reported higher rates of experienced sexual violence, as well as higher levels of distress. Traditional cleansing ceremonies are not reported by forced mothers as being of any help in their recovery. However, most abducted females, including forced mothers, show resilience rather than trauma. Nonetheless, the study shows that there are urgent needs for medical treatment among these young women, both formerly abducted and non-abducted women and girls. According to this study, two-thirds of abducted youth have not applied for formal reintegration support packages. The researchers note that the available support is inadequate. Based on their findings the researchers claim that the categorisation such as abducted and non-abducted, forced wives and forced mothers are poor predicators for vulnerability and that support should rather be targeted to measurable needs.

Chrobok, V. and A. S. Akutu (2008) *Returning home. Children's perspectives on reintegration: A case study of children abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Teso, eastern Uganda,* Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

Publication form: Report
Country: Uganda

The report is based on interviews and focus groups with 116 children and youth formerly abducted by the LRA. It portrays their experiences within the armed group, but the main focus is on their return home and includes their views on how reintegration programmes can help returnees. Regardless of how long time the children were abducted, they were all affected by their experiences within LRA, and all needed reintegration provision and support. However, the findings indicate that those who had grown up within the group and identified strongly with the group may need special provision. The hardship these children have experienced clearly affected their health and well-being, and the report concludes that provision for emotional, physical and sexual or reproductive health should be an integral part of future programmes. Other findings reveal that the returned children suffer stigmatization and rejection by their siblings, peers and communities. The children and youth in the study point to that provisions made particularly for them created jealously among other children and underline that programmes should include all children affected by war. Approximately two thirds of the sample had gone through reception centres before returning to the villages. These children expressed that the time spent there as well as the support received were important for their readjusting process, and they emphasised particularly counselling on how to understand and deal with trauma. Other needs articulated by the children were education, earning a living, being accepted by and allowed to contribute to their families and communities.

Uvin, P. (2007) *Ex-combatants in Burundi: Why they joined, why they left, how they fared*, Working Paper No. 3, The Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP)

Publication form: Report
Country: Burundi

The report presents findings from interviews with 63 ex-combatants in three rural communes and in the city of Bujumbura. Eight of the respondents are former child soldiers. The focus is mainly on the process of their reintegration. Uvin argues that the impact of funds to ex-combatants depends on various variables: whether the ex-combatant lives in rural or urban areas, whether or not the ex-combatant returned to a family that is itself returning, the economic situation of the family, and the health situation of the ex-combatant. Age and gender are also important factors. The author notes that all in all the DDR programme in Burundi has worked well, but suggests that it needs to address how to support the self-demobilised, eliminate the administrative delays, and provide specialized assistance to rural and urban contexts.

Taouti-Cherif, R. (2006) *Beneficiary assessment of the social and economic status of the "Child Soldier" Special Project Beneficiaries in Burundi,* The Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP)

Publication form: Report
Country: Burundi

The study presents former child soldiers' personal perceptions concerning their living conditions. The data was collected through the use of a quantitative research method, and the sample was selected through a weighted selection process of the target population. All in all, 228 former child soldiers answered the questionnaire, as well as 57 civilian peers who made up the control group. Only nine girls participated in this study. The study shows that beneficiaries of the special project are in a similar or better situation than their civilian peers, particularly economically but also socially. Even though the target support has reduced vulnerability the author notes that community support may be even better as it prevents resentment from community members. The need to prevent dependency and provide equal access to basic services such as medical care and education are underlined. The study also reveals that difficulties in the reintegration process may depend on which armed group the child belonged to. However, Taouti-Cherif stresses that these findings need further and deeper research.

International Labour Office (2003) *Wounded childhood: The use of children in armed conflict in Central Africa*

Publication form: Report
Countries: Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo, and Rwanda

The report is the outcome of "rapid assessments" of the situation of child soldiers in the four countries. The assessments addressed the causes of child soldiering, recruitment, living conditions within the armed groups, their release and prospects of reintegration. Information was obtained through questionnaires, individual interviews and focus groups, and the sample consisted of children in armed conflict, former child soldiers, children who were never recruited, parents of children in armed conflict, parents of former child soldiers, and parents of those who were never recruited. With regards to the aspect of reintegration the report points to the fact that the former child soldiers experienced physical and psychological trauma, are vulnerable to disease, and that the violence they have seen or committed makes relationships with both adults and other children difficult. Findings also show that more than 80 % of parents interviewed believed that former child soldiers represent a danger to the rest

of the population. The need for reintegration programmes to target child, family and community simultaneously is emphasised. Rehabilitation and reintegration programmes must also be aware of the risk to "infantilise" former child soldiers in their upper teens.

Hobson, M. (2005) *Forgotten casualties of war: Girls in armed conflict,* Save the Children UK

Publication form: Report
Country: The Democratic Republic of Congo, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire

The report is based on findings from research and programme information from several regions in the world where children and particularly girls have been heavily involved in and affected by war. The research was conducted by Beth Verhey, Emily Delap, Ratiba Taouti-Cherif and Abraham Sewonet. The report points to the fact that, even though girls count for approximately 40 % of children associated with armed forces, very few girl soldiers go through the formal DDR process. "Fewer than 2 per cent of children passing through Save the Children's reintegration programme in the DRC have been girls" (p I). The report points out that the military aspect of the DDR process causes the reintegration element to disappear. Reasons for the failure to reach the girls are said to be: 1) that the success of the DDR process is often measured by the number of weapons handed in, 2) under-funding, 3) the girls' fear of stigmatization once being identified (through the DDR programme) as former soldiers, as well as 4) that the girls don't see themselves as child soldiers but rather as "wives" or camp followers. The report heavily stresses the need to strengthen the communities in general, and support the girls within their community settings.

Lode, K. (ed.), B. L. Oneshiphore, and A. B. Musafiri (2007) *Réinsertion des enfants soldat: Un expérience du Congo*, SIK-rapport 2007:2, Centre for Intercultural Communication

Publication form: Report
Country: The Democratic Republic of Congo

The report gives a description of an ongoing reintegration project of former child soldiers in the DRC run by The Community of Free Pentecostal Churches in Africa (CELPA) in cooperation with the Norwegian Pentecostal Foreign Mission (PYM). 4000 former child soldiers have completed the programme since its start in 2003, and the reintegration programme has succeeded in including 35 % female participants. The programme consists of family reunification, psychosocial training and information about human/children's rights, vocational training, re-entering school, and follow-up. The report underlines the importance of community-based reintegration programmes that secure a good dialogue between the project leadership and community members. The authors point to a sometimes challenging collaboration with other NGOs.

Coulter, C., M. Persson and M. Utas (2008) *Young female fighters in African wars. Conflict and its consequences*, Policy Dialogue No. 3, The Nordic Africa Institute

Publication form: Report
Country: Multiple African countries

The authors provide an overview of the situation of young women in African war and post-war situations. Gender-sensitivity in the DDR programmes is of particular focus. The report describes the difficult reintegration process that many of the former female combatants experience, and notes that "surviving war does not automatically mean surviving peace" (p 28). Different reasons are mentioned; young female fighters have been denied access to DDR programmes, they see no benefit in participating, and they fear being socially stigmatized when being publicly identified as ex-fighters. How the community receives the ex-fighters seems to be related to gender. Female ex-combatants have transgressed their gender role through violence and sometimes sexual abuse and are therefore more easily rejected and stigmatized. The men, on the other hand, often seem to have strengthened their gender role through their participation in war. It is noted that female ex-combatants in liberation wars tend to find it more difficult to readjust back into traditional gender roles than what is the case for those participating in rebel groups. The report emphasises that the DDR programmes need to address stigma, safe demobilisation, health, and education in much more gender-sensitive manners. The DDR programmes should also take into consideration women's agencies both in war and in the aftermath of war. "DDR programmes in their current forms do not seem to be the most effective way to identify, register, demobilize and reintegrate female fighters" (p 40).

UNIFEM (2004) *Getting it right, doing it right: Gender and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration*

Publication form: Report

The report draws on case studies on DDR in Liberia and Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, as well as a desk review of the UN's involvement in DDR processes, and presents findings and recommendations related to the integration of women's needs and perspectives in the planning and execution of DDR programmes. The report underlines women's right to freely choose where to settle down: "Women and girls should be free to choose where they will live, electing to return to land from which they or their partner came, or to move to semi-urban or urban areas where they may have more freedom from traditional gender roles" (p 37). Some of the difficulties in readjusting back to civilian life are touch upon, with particular focus on the social and the economic reintegration of female associated with armed groups. The authors point to that it may be hard for these women to readjust back to traditional roles after having become accustomed to a relatively independent and egalitarian life. Moreover, those who have experienced gender-based violence face particular difficulties and are more likely to face rejection by their families and communities. The need to acknowledge, respect and use the expertise and skills of female ex-combatants is also emphasized.

Machel, G. (1996) *Impact of armed conflict on children. Report of Graca Machel, Expert of the Secretary-General of the United Nations: Selected highlights,* United Nations and United Nations Children's Fund, New York

Publication form: Booklet

Based on the main report - *Impact of armed conflict on children* – this booklet presents the highlights and focuses on some of the report's main recommendations. The child's mental, physical and emotional development is affected by armed conflict, and programmes of assistance must address each of these aspects. Machel recommends community-based

solutions drawing on local culture integrated with modern understanding of child development and children's rights. Building on the child's own strengths and resilience, as well as empowering families and communities is important in the process of healing. Special concerns that the report addresses are the urgent need to demobilise and reintegrate child soldiers, the need to assist displaced and unaccompanied children, the need to protect women and children and prosecute the perpetrators of gendered and sexual violence, the need to protect children and other civilians against landmines, the need for a special focus on adolescents, and the need to promote human rights of children.

Abatneh, A. S. (2006) *Disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of Rwandan child soldiers,* Master in sociology, University of South Africa

Publication form: Master thesis
Country: Rwanda

The empirical research in this study employed qualitative semi-structured interviews and group discussions to collect the data. The sample consisted of ex-combatant youth (17 boys and nine girls) and other stakeholders. The focus is on the cross-border DDRR (disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration) of Rwandan youth associated with armed groups in the DRC, hence interviews took place both in Rwanda and in eastern Congo. The research questions address why and how youth joined armed groups, the effects of their participation and if the DDRR process addresses their specific needs. One of the main conclusions drawn from this study is that the current rehabilitation and reintegration interventions provided by aid agencies is inappropriate as it over-emphasise psychological trauma treatment while neglecting the youths resilience and coping abilities. The author notes that sometimes such interventions "further stigmatize and isolate youth ex-combatants as psychologically and socially dysfunctional" (p109). The study also reveals that most girls have self-demobilised outside the official DDRR programmes – from 2001 until this research took place only two girls had passed through the official programme.

Ollek, M. O. (2007) *Forgotten females: Women and girls in post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs,* Master in Political Science, McGill University

Publication form: Master thesis
Country: Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Sudan

The study draws on academic and policy literature on female's participation in DDR programs in Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Sudan. In addition 19 semi-structured interviews (answered by electronic correspondence or by phone) were conducted with professionals within academia, NGOs, UN agencies, government, World Bank and with two independent consultants. The data analysis addresses the absence of females in DDR programmes, and asks why programmes continue to marginalize women and girls both in their design and implementation. Findings reveal that gender-aware peace agreements, a broader definition of combatants and flexible eligibility criteria, and gender-sensitive policy guidelines and frameworks contribute to more gender-sensitive DDR programmes. However, they do not guarantee female participation. Ollek highlights institutional responsibility, budgetary constraints, and the agency of both commanders and girl combatants as major explanatory factors to the absence of girls in the DDR programmes. The need to focus on DDR as a demilitarization process and social transformation rather than a security-driven

process is emphasised. Among the cases examined in this study Sudan's DDR programme is the one which has established the most gender-sensitive framework. Ollek also stresses that the separate treatment of women and girls may not be beneficiary and that more research is needed to clarify the benefits and potential drawback of community-based programmes for female ex-combatants.

van Gog, J. (2008) *Coming back from the bush. Gender, youth and reintegration in northern Sierra Leone,* Master in Cultural and Social Anthropology, Utrecht University, in African studies collection 9, African Studies Centre, Leiden

Publication form: Master thesis
Country: Sierra Leone

The thesis is based on literature study and empirical data gathered during six months of fieldwork in Sierra Leone. Participant observation, formal interviews and informal conversations were methodologies employed, and one provincial town and one village were selected for data collection. The study focuses on the reintegration of formerly abducted female youth who had been forced to marry combatants in the RUF rebel group. van Gog uses an actor-oriented approach and investigates how ex-combatants social identities as youths and females had impacted on their reintegration, and how relations to the communities were established. Whether relations with immediate kin and original community could be re-established is central to the women and girls' reintegration, and the findings show that the longer time spent away from home the more difficult to restore former relationships. The women's decision on whether or not to return to their home communities are influenced by their identities as daughters and wives. The women and girls that reintegrate in another community than where they come from tend to do so through existing social networks with other former combatants. Moreover, the study shows that many of the female youth were concerned with their status as unmarried; a status that distinguished them from other women and gave them a less privileged position. Marriage, therefore, becomes both a tool for and an indicator of successful reintegration for many of these women. The thesis clearly demonstrates that female youth can reintegrate themselves outside the DDR programmes.

2.2. Theoretical/conceptual studies

Heyzer, N. (2003) "Gender, peace and disarmament" in *Disarmament Forum,* Vol. 4, pages 5 – 16

Publication form: Article

This article focuses on women's experience of armed conflict, particularly on their roles in conflict prevention and disarmament. The author highlights three trends regarding gender in DDR processes: 1) programmes are designed for male soldiers, 2) the programmes don't recognise women who have performed non-combat roles, and 3) the special needs of the dependents of armed groups are not understood and resourced. The article focuses mainly on disarmaments and gender efforts within the United Nations.

Farr, V. (2003) "The importance of a gender perspective to successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes" in *Disarmament Forum,* Vol. 4, pages 25 – 35

Publication form: Article

In this article Farr asks what inclusion of women in DDR processes should look like in practical terms. The article reviews recent DDR processes in Africa, drawing from conversations with DDR field practitioners and planners within UN agencies, and from academic accounts of DDR. Farr points out that there is a significant gap between policy commitments to the practical implementation of the inclusion of a gender-perspective. "The difficulties experienced by women associated with fighting forces are generally exacerbated, not alleviated, by DDR initiatives as they are now implemented", she argues. The article stresses the need to view women as individual members of the fighting forces rather than dependents of male combatants. In order for women to become supportive and effective participants of the peace-building processes they should be given relevant training.

Willibald, S. (2006) "Does money work? Cash transfer to ex-combatants in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes" in *Disaster*, 30 (3), pages 316-339.

Publication form: Article
Country: Multiple African countries

The study is based on document analysis and interviews with informants in key institutions involved in implementation of DDR programmes, as well as academic literature. The article compares selected theoretical assumptions on the use of cash in the DDR process with lessons learned from experience in selected African countries. It focuses only on the disarmament and reinsertion stages in the DDR process, and not on the long-term reintegration. Theory shows both pro's and con's to the use of cash assistance, and the author shows that some of these holds up in practice, while others most likely do not. The author argues that the use of "cash in DDR is less a question of 'if' but more one of 'how'" (p 333).

Peuchguirbal, N. (2003) "Woman and war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo" in *Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* Vol. 28, No. 4, pages 1271 – 1281

Publication form: Article
Country: The Democratic Republic of Congo

The article stresses that women are often overlooked both as victims of war but also as resourceful survivors of war. However, documentation on their victimhood is more accessible than documentation of their coping mechanisms and increased independence and self-confidence. Even though Congolese women have taken several initiatives in the peace process, the author claims that they remain largely untapped, and sometimes deliberately excluded resources. The author calls for women to be included in the peace process at an early stage, and argues that if this does not happen it will be more difficult to insert them at a later stage.

Ismail, O. (2002) "Liberia's child combatants: paying the price of neglect" in *Conflict, Security & Development*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pages 125 – 134

Publication form: Article

Country: Liberia

The author notes that very little attention has been paid to child combatants in the post-war period in Liberia. The peace accords in 1991 and 1993 did not recognise the special needs of child soldiers. The DDR programme was undermined by the absence of a clear framework and lack of funding, and Ismail argues that it managed only to satisfy the disarmament objective. The author notes that only 89 % of the 4306 disarmed child soldiers were reintegrated. Child-care agencies' approaches to rehabilitation of former child combatants have been successful but have only reached a limited number of children. The result of this failed reintegration of former child combatants has resulted in increased numbers of street children, high incidence of armed robbery, and prostitution among the young. The author claims that "child soldiers who have not been rehabilitated provide a means for disgruntled political elites to settle their differences through violence" (p 133).

Knight, M. and A. Özerdem (2004) "Guns, camps and cash: Disarmament, demobilization and reinsertion of former combatants in transitions from war to peace" in *Journal of Peace Research,* Vol. 41, No. 4, pages 499-516

Publication form: Article

The aim of this article is to present an assessment of various disarmament, demobilisation and reinsertion programmes. The focus is on three specific issues: 1) disarmament as a social contract, 2) demobilisation with or without cantonment, and 3) the relevance of financial reinsertion assistance. This résumé includes only the last point. The authors conclude that cash payments might be an effective tool, but that it should be part of an overall reinsertion package (for example clothes, domestic tools, food, agricultural tools, health support etc.). When planning cash reinsertion assistance mobilization of funds, differentiation criteria, allowance amount, financial education and the development of systems to identify corruption should be addressed.

MacMullin, C. and M. Loughry (2004) "Investigating psychosocial adjustment of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone and Uganda" in *Journal of Refugee Studies,* Vol. 17, No. 4, pages 460-472.

Publication form: Article
Country: Sierra Leone and Uganda

The article describes and discusses the methodology used in two studies conducted by the International Rescue Committee on constructing a research instrument capable of measuring the psychosocial adjustment of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone and Uganda. The concerns they discuss are regarding the use of quantitative instruments, the idea of adjustment, and the relevance of the results of these adjustment studies for agencies. The authors point to the need for participatory and qualitative methods when examining the former child soldiers' adjustment with their peers, and within their family and communities. The lack of systematic evaluations of reintegration programmes is emphasised.

Specht, I. and L. Attree (2006) "The reintegration of teenage girls and young women" in *Intervention,* Vol. 4, No. 3, pages 219-228.

Publication form: Article

Drawing on former studies and involvement in DDR processes in several countries, the two authors stress that the current approach of many DDR processes is inappropriate for girls and young women. Different aspects that need to be addressed in the planning and implementation of the process are "the motives of girls for joining up, their various roles in armed forces, the factors which encourage and discourage their demobilisation and their needs in terms of socio-economic reintegration" (p 226). The authors point to that current gender-specific reintegration is often limited to mean a few special measures for women, such as vocational training courses in traditionally accepted women tasks. The need for a more detailed consideration of the specific needs of former girl soldiers is underlined.

Zack-Williams, T. B. (2006) "Child soldiers in Sierra Leone and the problems of demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration into society: Some lessons for social workers in war-torn societies" in *Social Work Education,* Vol. 25, No. 2, pages 119-128.

Publication form: Article
Country: Sierra Leone

The study is a result of three fieldwork visits to Sierra Leone. Data was collected through observations and visits to agencies dealing with demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration, without conducting any interviews or using any questionnaires with former child soldiers. The author discusses ethics related to research with child soldiers, and points to "research interrogation fatigue" among former child combatants. The main focus of the article is problems and challenges faced by social workers working with traumatised children in war-torn African countries. The author argues that the approach of DDR processes is often Eurocentric, and he underlines the inability of the Western psychological approaches by pointing to how the African understanding of trauma differs from that in the West. The author uses Tonnies' dichotomy of Gemeinschaft (community) and Gesellschaft (society) as the framework of his discussion.

Schroeder, E. (2004) "The window of opportunity in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Incorporating a gender perspective in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process", in *Peace, Conflict and Development Issues,* Vol. 5, Issue 5.

Publication form: Article
Country: The Democratic Republic of Congo

The article examines the planning process of DDR programmes, and it focuses on how gender perspectives have been incorporated into the DDR programme. Schroeder gives an overview of disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation stages by exploring gender mainstreaming successes, gaps and opportunities. He argues that gender sensitivity in each component of the programme is essential, and that gender mainstreaming of the DDR process in Congo is crucial to its success.

Wessells, M. (2005) "Child soldiers, peace education, and postconflict reconstruction for peace" in *Theory into Practice,* Vol. 44, No. 4, pages 363 – 369

Publication form: Article
Country: Sierra Leone

The article has two purposes; first to explain why children become soldiers, and secondly it seeks to provide direction for child soldiers' reintegration back into society. A particular focus is on how peace education can facilitate a successful reintegration process for the children as well as contribute to reconstruction of war-torn communities. The author stresses that peace education should have a strong practical focus and that it should stimulate empathy, cooperation, and reconciliation. A reintegration project in Sierra Leone run by the Christian Children's Fund is used to exemplify a successful reintegration programme with practical peace education as an essential element.

Borzello, A. (2007) "The challenge of DDR in Northern Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army" in *Conflict, Security & Development*, Vol. 7, No. 3, pages 387 – 415

Publication form: Article
Country: Uganda

In this article the author poses the question: "What, after all, does 'reintegration' mean to former abductees sent back to live in the squalor of a 'protected camp', and in an environment of ongoing insecurity?" (p 401). She underlines the need for knowledge about the particular conflict and context in which the DDR process takes place, as this may explain both the nature and challenges. Moreover, four crucial issues need to be addressed in order to obtain an effective long-term DDR: First, resettlement and rehabilitation which demand extensive funding and long-term commitment both by the Ugandan government and international donors. Second, justice and reconciliation are both crucial aspects of long-term peace. Punishment (punitive justice) versus forgiveness (restorative justice) as approaches to justice is briefly discussed, and the author points to that the latter is closest to the Acholi traditional culture. The third aspect that is stressed by Borzello is the regional context and politics which includes countries such as Sudan and the DRC. And lastly, the author notes that political stability and a democratic climate are crucial to succeed with DDR efforts.

Marriage, Z. (2007) "Flip-flop rebel, dollar soldier: demobilisation in the Democratic Republic of Congo" in *Conflict, Security & Development*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pages 281 – 309

Publication form: Article
Country: The Democratic Republic of Congo

This paper addresses three aspects of the situation in Congo; 1) the informalisation of politics and economy, 2) the exercise of power through violence, and 3) the multiple crises in which people are living. The focus is on how these elements impact on the demobilisation of former soldiers. The article discusses demobilisation of adult fighters, child soldiers, and foreign troops, and gives a specific description of the demobilisation programme in Ituri. The author points to several drawbacks within existing demobilisation programmes; the lack of regional focus, the lack of attention to internal dynamics of armed groups, dynamics between groups and their different interests, no development agenda to facilitate reintegration, not addressing

ex-combatants motivations, and not meeting the ex-combatants' needs. Linked to the three aspects mentioned earlier, the author notes that the situation in Congo is extreme both in "its scale and intensity", and that "the magnitude of the obstacles is unlikely to be matched in other contexts" (p301).

Brett, R. (2004) "Girl soldiers: Denial of rights and responsibilities" in *Refugee Survey Quarterly,* Vol. 23, No. 2, pages 30 – 37

Publication form: Article

The author describes how girls, if recognised at all, are perceived as "abductees", "sex-slaves", "concubines", and treated as "dependents" and "camp followers" without agency. This categorisation has led to many girls being excluded from demobilisation processes. Brett underlines the few choices left to former girl soldiers: speak out and risk stigmatization or stay silent and lead a "normal" life, but be denied their proper status. She argues that the discrimination of girls that drove them into the armed groups, either through abduction or voluntary recruitment, has not changed or been reduced at the time of demobilisation. The girls' prospects are probably worse.

Williamson, J. and M. Robinson (2006) "Psychosocial interventions, or integrated programming for well-being?" in *Intervention,* Vol. 4, No. 1, pages 4 – 25

Publication form: Article

The authors discuss the concept "psychosocial" and "psychosocial issues" and how psychosocial issues often are seen as a distinct and secondary sector in humanitarian interventions. Maslow's hierarchy reinforces this view. Williamson and Robinson argue that biological and physical issues (primary sector) cannot be addressed effectively without simultaneously giving attention to psychosocial dimensions, and propose an integrated framework of well-being. Their framework of collaborative analysis and planning consists of safety, participation, and development as three contextual issues necessary to address, and seven inter-related, and to some extent inter-dependant, aspects of well-being; biological, material, social, spiritual, cultural, mental, and emotional aspects.

Dyregrov, A., L. Gupta, R. Gjestad and M. Raundalen (2002) "Is the culture always right?" in *Traumatology,* Vol. 8, No. 3, pages 135 – 145

Publication form: Article

The authors address the major criticisms on the use of western models in the trauma field of non-western contexts, and argue that some of this criticism is misplaced. Adult denial of children's painful experiences and trauma are evident among parents, local communities, international communities as well as among professionals, and the article warns against becoming too culture-relative, as it entails the risk to reinforce cultural denial of children's trauma. Moreover, local and cultural mechanisms also have their limitations as they may sometimes be rendered useless due to ongoing conflict, or a culture may not have traditional coping mechanisms applicable to such terrible war situations. The authors do not argue for western models to be a substitute to local healing mechanisms, but rather a supplement.

Professionals should "work closely with national counterparts to secure a sensitive application of methods" (p 137), but also be aware of potential negative effects of traditional practices.

Hill, K. and H. Langholz (2003) "Rehabilitation programs for African child soldiers" in *Peace Review,* Vol. 5, No. 3, pages 279 – 285

Publication form: Article

The article discusses the psychological and social impacts soldiering may have on the children, both at the individual, family and community level. The psychological and social effects are interlinked, and both perpetuate violence in post war settings. The authors describe strategies and important elements to effectively reintegrate former child soldiers. They stress that the most important component is family reunification. This is the "therapy of choice" for many children. The authors note that children living with their family often show fewer psychiatric problems. Other elements or activities to release tension and promote children's mental and social development are sport, music, arts and drama. However, children tend to underline poverty, lack of food and education as their major concerns – not counselling – and the authors point to that reintegration programmes must address such underlying structural problems and provide children with alternatives to military or rebel conscription.

Williams, J. (2006) "The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers: social and psychological transformation in Sierra Leone" in *Intervention* 2006 Volume 4, No. 3, pages 185-205

Publication form: Article
Country: Sierra Leone

Main objective of this article is to give an overview of the DDR process in Sierra Leone. The author identifies nine important areas of intervention: 1) community sensitization, 2) formal disarmament and demobilisation, 3) a period of transition in an Interim Care Centre, 4) tracing and family mediation, 5) family reunification, 6) traditional cleansing and healing ceremonies and religious support, 7) school or skills training, 8) ongoing access to health care for those in school or training, and 9) individual supportive counselling and encouragement. The study underlines that despite the relatively effective DDR process, a serious failing was that a large number of former girl soldiers did not come through the process.

Barenbaum, J., V. Ruchkin, and M. Schwab-Stone (2004) "The psychosocial aspects of children exposed to war: practice and policy initiatives" in *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, Vol. 45, No. 1, pages 41 -62

Publication form: Article

The article is a review of existing literature on how war impacts on the development and mental health of children, as well as how to intervene and help war-affected children. The review shows that there are several controversies among researchers and professionals. For example we find divergent views on the duration of symptoms (enduring or short lived), on the applicability of Western therapeutic interventions, and on whether it is necessary with contextualized diagnostic considerations (or are symptoms of war-related distress universal?).

Moreover, the authors point to several research gaps; the lack of studies on the effectiveness of non-specific psychosocial interventions as well as on specific therapy techniques for war-affected children, lack of studies on strengths and weaknesses of evaluations, lack of attention to impairment in psychosocial functioning, and little attention to culture-specific symptoms and coping strategies. Treatment and psychosocial interventions need to be empirically founded. Methodological shortcomings such as widespread use of self-reported data, unrepresentative samples, lack of random-control and inconsistent use of terminologies are also mentioned.

Machel, G. (2001) *The impact of war on children*, Hurst & Company: London

Publication form: Academic book

The volume is a general introduction to how war impacts on children and youth. It draws upon the findings of the 1996 report, and assesses progress made and obstacles encountered during the five years that has past between the two publications. The book also indicates new aspects of importance that were not addressed in depth in the former volume, among which we find HIV/Aids, small arms and light weapons, women and peace processes, media and communications, and peace and security.

Singer, P. W. (2005) *Children at war*, Pantheon Books: New York

Publication form: Academic book

The book has a wide scope and addresses both underlying causes of war, recruitment of children, implications of child soldiering, prevention of child soldiering as well as disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration of former child soldiers. The DDR process is discussed in his chapter on "Turning a soldier back into a child". The approach is general and the author draws on examples from humanitarian organizations in several contexts. Singer underlines that the needs of child soldiers must be factored into peace agreements and post-conflict planning, and that DDR programmes must incorporate modern expertise with local culture in its planning and implementation. The focus of the book is more on the child soldiers' vulnerability and victimization than their coping mechanisms and resilience.

Boyden, J. (2004) "Anthropology under fire: ethics, researchers and children in war" in J. Boyden and J. de Berry (eds.) *Children and youth on the front line*, Berghahn Books: Oxford

Publication form: Book chapter

In his paper Boyden argues for anthropological theory and ethnographic method's appropriateness in the field of research on children in context of war. He believes that ethnographic research may bring about better understandings of how armed conflict affects "the gendered social and political roles of the young" as well as their development. The children's agency and their insights of their situation must be taken into consideration. However, Boyden is aware of and underlines that anthropology has little experience in research with children. Other challenges that he addresses are the impossible use of participant observation on which ethnography normally heavily depends, the validity of the

data, how to establish trust between researcher and respondents, and the risks involved both with regards to children and researcher.

Bragg, C. (2006) "Challenges to policy and practice in the disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and rehabilitation of youth combatants in Liberia", *Sussex Migration Working Paper no. 29.* University of Sussex

Publication form: Paper
Country: Liberia

The article focuses on the current DDRR (disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and rehabilitation) programme in Liberia, and whether targeted or non-targeted assistance is appropriate at each stage of the programme. Bragg concludes that a targeted approach may be appropriate for the short-term processes of disarmament and demobilisation, but that a non-targeted community based model of reintegration and rehabilitation will be more successful with reference to long-term reconciliation and security (p 4). The article underlines areas that must be included in any reintegration process: psychosocial support, education, vocational training, income-generating activities and youth empowerment. Moreover, in order for the DDRR process in Liberia to be a success, one needs to take into account why children and young people join the armed forces, and address these issues through the DDRR programme.

Peters, L. (2005) *War is no Child's Play: Child Soldiers from Battlefield to Playground*, Occasional Paper, No 8, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)

Publication form: Paper

The paper concerns several aspects connected to child soldiering: recruitment, root causes, prevention, and DDR programmes. It also focuses on international legal instruments and criminal justice linked to child soldiers, and international initiatives to stop the use of child soldiers. The paper is not context specific and does not have a particular gender focus. The author makes little reference to research/academic literature in the field of child soldiering.

de Watteville, N. (2002) *Addressing gender issues in demobilization and reintegration programs.* Africa Region Working Paper Series No. 33, World Bank.

Publication form: Paper

This paper focuses on the needs of women and girls during demobilisation and reintegration, and it distinguishes between several categories of women; female ex-combatants, abducted girls, wives of ex-combatants, and women in the host community. The paper starts with discussing the objectives of a DRP (demobilisation and reintegration program), and continues to identify gender specific needs at four stages of the process; targeting, demobilisation, reinsertion and reintegration. The impact of demobilisation on women in the host community is also addressed in the paper. The author concludes with some important implementation arrangements such as the recruitment of women and gender specialists, training of gender sensitive staff, and development of gender sensitive monitoring/evaluation tools.

Guyot, J. (2007) *Suffer the children: The psychosocial rehabilitation of child soldiers as a function of peace-building,* Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

Publication form: Paper

The author claims that "successful reintegration is a sign of successful rebuilding" (p 12). She calls for a "child-in-environment" perspective of the DDR processes for former child soldiers, a perspective which addresses the child within the wider community; their social, cultural, economic, and political contexts. This approach suggests that the children's strengths and resilience should be taken into account, and focuses on the empowerment of both the child and the community. Community-based "therapy" and rituals with cleansing and healing as their goal are underlined as facilitating reintegration and helping communities to forgive. The author notes that one-to-one therapy might not be appropriate in a collectivistic culture.

Green, E. C., and A. Honwana (1999) *Indigenous healing of war-affected children in Africa,* World Bank Paper, IK Notes no. 10

Publication form: Paper

The authors discuss to what extent western psychotherapeutic techniques for PTSD employed in psychosocial programmes to assist war-affected children is appropriate or effective in an African post war setting. By presenting examples from Mozambique and Angola they show that traditional healers use their cultural understandings of how war affects mind and spirit, and treat war-affected children and adults through cultural cleansing and purification rituals. The authors argue that these rituals are essential for reintegration and healing. The conclusion is that international NGOs and other organizations should take into account local understandings of trauma and indigenous strategies to treat such traumas. The proposed model is one that combines both indigenous and western-scientific approaches.

Denov, M. (2007) *Is the culture always right? The dangers of reproducing gender stereotypes and inequalities,* Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

Publication form: Paper

To add to the debate brought forward by papers of Honwana (1998) and Dyregrov et al. (2002), Denov points to one element that is not discuss by either of the two; the reality and importance of gender. Culturally accepted traditional gender stereotypes limits the potential of both males and females, and the author raises the question on whether gendered exclusionary customs, such as discrimination of women, should be accepted and perpetuated. She uses the DDR programmes in Sierra Leone as an illustration of how, due to traditional gender roles, girls were made invisible and excluded from the programmes, and thus reproducing inequalities and extending the gendered power differentiation as the girls and women are left alone to fend for themselves. Denov concludes that the pluralistic approach to psychosocial intervention must be gender-sensitive and avoid reproducing inequalities.

Wessells, M. (2007a) *Trauma, culture, and community: Getting beyond dichotomies,* Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

Publication form: Paper

The paper is a contribution to the debate brought forward by papers of Honwana (1998) and Dyregrov et al. (2002). Wessells addresses the dichotomous thinking where agencies and practitioners position themselves to address either issues like trauma or a wider array of psychosocial issues, viewing culture either as the problem or the solution. The necessity of an holistic approach is underlined, as well as the need to address each child individually as they have different reactions, coping strategies, social supports, needs etc. Wessells emphasises that a "one size fits all" approach based on local culture should be avoided, as should a static concept of culture. He claims that "effective programming requires flexibility, cultural sensitivity, a willingness to build upon but also add to indigenous psychosocial supports, and a self-critical attitude that steers a middle course between blind acceptance and premature rejection" (p 5). Lastly, Wessells addresses how implementation of such programmes is affected by the unequal power dynamics due to years of colonialism, the despair of war, and as a result of being treated like passive victims and beneficiaries.

Dowdney, L. (ed.) (2007) *Trauma, resilience and cultural healing: How do we move forward?* Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

Publication form: Paper

The paper is the outcome of responses by several experts[29] in the field of psychosocial intervention in war affected societies to the papers of Honwana (1998) and Dyregrov et al. (2002). It presents key points, ideas and suggested future directions. The contributors to this paper point to the need for evaluations of psychosocial interventions, focussed on their effectiveness and outcome. Some stress the necessity of empirically based outcome measures. The priority for the future is to obtain an evidence base for the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions.

Jareg, E. (2005) "Crossing bridges and negotiating rivers – Rehabilitation and reintegration of children associated with armed forces", Save the Children, Norway and Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

Publication form: Paper

The article draws on Jareg's experience as a child psychiatrist and as a programme adviser on children in armed conflict (Save the Children Norway). The author starts by defining the content of the terms rehabilitation – "to restore the child's functioning to 'as it was'" – and reintegration – "the child being reunited with his/her family and becoming a full member of the community" (p 2). However, she also points to the need to discuss with children and their families and communities what they understand by "reintegration". Some of the major points made in this article are 1) the lack of knowledge, hence the need of teaching, on human rights, 2) children should take part in the planning and implementation of their rehabilitation and reintegration, 3) necessity of interim care as well as an assessment tool of the rehabilitation process, 4) the need to address the children's physical and psychosocial health, and 5) children's need of education, vocational training/income generation, and recreation and play. Lastly, the author addresses how the girls have been neglected in current DDR processes.

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[29] N. Adok, J. Arias, L. Castelli, L. Cluver, C. Coulter, M. Denov, N. Heeren, E. Jareg, D. Lukeman, O. Oudwin, M. Robinson, P. Smith and M. Wessells.

Chrobok, V. (2005) *Demobilizing and reintegrating Afghanistan's young soldiers: A review and assessment of program planning and implementation*, Paper 42, Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC)

Publication form: Paper
Country: Afghanistan

The paper addresses debates and controversies of the DDR strategies put forward by different actors and partners involved in the process. Moreover, it examines the planning, coordination and implementation of UNICEF's programme for young people within the overall framework of the country's reconstruction process. The establishment of a separate programme for youth combatants led to tensions, and the author concludes that there was "no practical reason why two independent DD&R (D&R) planning and implementation processes in Afghanistan had to be established" (p 66). She also identifies weaknesses in the strategy such as minimal coordination and support among agencies and that views of the beneficiaries were neglected. Economic security is highlighted as an essential factor both to prevent future recruitment and to secure a successful reintegration. Chrobok recommends that skills training is turned into professions, and that both adults and youth are offered micro-credits.

Hart, J. and B. Tyrer (2006) *Research with children living in situations of armed conflict: Concepts, ethics & methods*, RSC Working Paper No. 30, Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford

Publication form: Paper

The paper addresses concepts of children and childhood based on their cultural variations, and based on such concepts continues to discuss children as agents and children as victims. Hart and Tyrer note that there are additional ethical and methodological concerns which arise when researching with young people in contexts of armed conflict. They underline that each research setting poses its own challenges, and consequently they do not attempt to present a standard approach applicable in all situations. Hart and Tyrer favour participatory research with children, both because of the direct benefits for young participants by enhancing their skills and awareness, but also because such research may provide "richer and more detailed data than a conventional, adult-led approach" (p 5). Several aspects that the researcher should keep in mind are addressed, such as power relations between adult and child as well as among peers, gender dimensions, confidentiality and anonymity, informed consent, and the representativeness of participants. Participatory research also needs to be appropriate related to the child's age and to the culture in which the research takes place.

MacVeigh, J., S. Maguire and J. Wedge (2007) *Stolen futures. The reintegration of children affected by armed conflict,* Save the Children UK

Publication form: Report
Country: Multiple

The report is the result of a call for assessment of the progress and remaining challenges related to the reintegration of children affected by war, and was a submission to the ten-year

review of the 1996 Machel study. The report is an analysis of Save the Children programmes, and based on reviews, evaluations and analyses of programmes conducted by partners, field offices and headquarters. The research addresses both children who have been through a formal DDR process and those who have not. The report also includes a brief examination of major obstacles to programming, and underlines continuing insecurity and inadequate funding as the two biggest constraints. Reintegration of children affected by conflict is not a short-term emergency relief assistance, but funding needs to be long term, predictable and sufficient in order to lead to successful reintegration. The authors argue that a community-based reintegration programme which includes other conflict-affected children is the most effective manner to organise reintegration. Important elements in ensuring a successful reintegration are education (formal or informal), vocational training based on market, situational and gender analyses, and programming with special consideration for girls. In relations to the girls' specific needs, the authors underline the need for further research and policy development with regards to female ex-fighters with children. Such research should address issues faced by both mother and child. Successful reintegration is, moreover, dependent on economic growth and development in post-conflict settings. The report concludes with several detailed recommendations.

Tefferi, H. (2003) *Reintegration and gender*, Save the Children (Sweden)

Publication form: Report

This study investigates the reintegration of both former child soldiers and former child commercial sex workers (both groups belonging to children engaged in "the worst forms of child labour"). It does so by reviewing documents on rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, through discussions with experienced professionals in the field and through the author's personal experience. Focus is on the rights of the child and the gender aspects of reintegration. Particular focus is on perceptions of girls and boys related to stigma, being a victim, and the motivation for girls and boys to demobilise and reintegrate. The author points to the need for further studies of the complexity of gender relations, power structures and childhood in relation to reintegration programmes for vulnerable children.

Máusse, M. A. and D. Nina (1999) *Child soldiers in Southern Africa,* Institute for Security Studies, ISS Monograph Series, No 37

Publication form: Report
Country: Mozambique and South Africa

This monograph has two distinct parts; 1) *The social reintegration of the child involved in armed conflict in Mozambique* and 2) *Children involved in South Africa's wars: After Soweto 1976*. The first part provides a description of some of the reintegration initiatives (both public and private) aimed at the social reintegration of children involved in the armed conflict in Mozambique. The study highlights the active and important involvement of families and communities, and the use of local symbols and traditions. Their deep involvement was partially imposed by lack of donor support and funds within the formal reintegration programmes, which according to the author made it difficult for these projects to continue successfully. However, the local involvement and use of traditional methods have proved to function with a positive result. The second part deals with child involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa from 1976 to 1994. The particular focus is on what makes

the South African experience different from other conflicts in which children take part. The study shows that the children participated in "a rather 'unusual' war fought in the streets of many communities throughout the country" (p 70). This "war" hardly involved weapons but involved a high amount of risk, brutality and physical harm. Their fight was often organised and led by children themselves, and their participation was based on need, choice and/or ideological conviction.

Eleke, I. D. M. (2006) *Effective reintegration of female child soldiers: Reality or rhetoric? Case study of Northern Uganda,* Master of Laws, University of Pretoria

Publication form: Master thesis
Country: Uganda

The objectives of the study is to increase the understanding of root causes to child soldiering, examine taken-for-granted assumptions on the impact of girl soldiering, and analyse the effectiveness of the reintegration process of former female child soldiers. It is a desk study, with elements of qualitative interviews conducted in Sierra Leone used as examples. The study has a legal framework. Eleke concludes that the moral imperative of the girl soldiers' reintegration has not been met in Northern Uganda. She claims that the role of female soldiers is hardly acknowledge, nor are their rights identified as explicit priority in the planning of reintegration programmes. The need for initiatives to be gender-oriented, non discriminatory and needs-specific are stressed. The author argues that a rights-based approach would better meet such demands.

3. Reflections based on the reviewed literature

During the last decade, there has been an increased focus on child soldiering. The review reflects, like noted by several authors,[30] that the largest bulk of research on children and war deals with trauma and emotional and psychological impact of war and violence. Related to this, an ongoing debate on Western versus traditional and cultural approaches to rehabilitation and treatment of distress and trauma is apparent in the available literature.[31] Many have stressed the inappropriateness of the Western psychological approaches by pointing to how the African understanding and treatment of trauma differs from that in the West.[32] Local traditional concepts, beliefs and practices related to healing, cleansing and social reintegration of war-affected children have gained increased attention and trust. The inappropriateness of current rehabilitation and reintegration interventions provided by aid agencies has been highlighted, particularly as it over-emphasises psychological trauma treatment while neglecting the youths resilience and coping abilities.[33] Such interventions may "further stigmatize and isolate youth ex-combatants as psychologically and socially dysfunctional" (Abatneh 2006:109).

Western concepts of child and childhood have also been challenged in recent literature. As noted by Wessells, "this emphasis on deficits, which overlooked children's resilience, is now giving way to an understanding that most former child soldiers are functional and, with proper support, can transition to positive lives as civilians" (Wessells

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[30] See for example Hart and Tyrer 2006, Wessells 2006
[31] See for example the ongoing debate at Psycho-social Forum, www.child-soldiers.org
[32] See for example Zack-Williams 2006 and Honwana 1998
[33] See for example Abatneh 2006 and Hart and Tyrer 2006

2006:x). Scholars and professionals do no longer only view the child as a victim of war but also as a survivor of war.

Increased attention has also been given to the context in which the child soldier finds itself. A "child-in-environment" perspective (Guyot 2007) of the reintegration process, a perspective which addresses the child within the wider community; their social, cultural, economic, and political contexts, is currently considered not only appropriate but necessary. Child and community alike need to be empowered to ensure successful reintegration and sustainable peace.

These are some of the important recent advances in the study of child soldiers. Nevertheless, one major weakness still remains; the lack of visibility of former girl soldiers in academic literature. As it is assumed that girl's account for approximately 40 % of armed forces in some contexts, female war participation needs to be addressed to a much greater extent in the years to come.

Based on existing studies on girl soldiers, the succeeding sections will address some important issues and aspects of the reintegration process of girl soldiers. In addition to presenting key findings, the discussion focuses on issues where more knowledge and research are necessary. The section starts by addressing the meaning of the concept reintegration, and continues by focusing on how different contextual elements may impact on the reintegration process. Studies on reintegration of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo are specifically addressed, with a particular focus on the review's findings related to civil society's involvement in reintegration processes and the reintegration of girls. Reference to the situation of former girl soldiers will be present throughout the discussion, but the last part will concentrate solely on gender-specific studies on reintegration.

3.1 What is "successful reintegration"?

As defined at the beginning of this review, the reintegration process of former child soldiers is commonly described as involving family reunification, schooling and/or vocational training, health care, psychosocial support and sensitizing and mobilizing the child's care system and environment.[34] It addresses the identity transformation from that of a soldier to that of a civilian. Reference to this identity transformation is evident in how reintegration is defined in the Paris Principles:

> **"Reintegration is the process by which children transition into civil society and enter meaningful roles and identities as civilians who are accepted by their families and communities in a context of local and national reconciliation. Sustainable reintegration is achieved when the political, legal, economic and social conditions needed for children to maintain life, livelihood and dignity have been secured. This process aims to ensure that children can access their rights, including formal and non-formal education, family unity, dignified livelihoods and safety from harm" (The Paris Principles 2007:7).**

Recent studies emphasise that from the point of the target group, the content of reintegration still remains fundamentally unexamined[35]. More studies which explore the children's lives from their own perspectives and address what former child soldiers and their families and communities understand by reintegration are needed.[36] Some recent studies have conveyed

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[34] UN's Integrated DDR Standards 2006: 1.20
[35] See for example Porto et al. 2007
[36] See for example Jareg 2005

the views of former child soldiers, particularly on their reasons for joining or how they were recruited, their experiences within the armed group as well as their experiences after escaping or demobilisation.[37] However, in-depth research addressing the local perspective on the content and the preferable outcome of the reintegration process is still largely missing.

In Wessells' study on former girl soldiers in Angola (2007b), the girls' testimonies shows an inherent problem with the term "reintegration" as it denotes resettling in one's community of origin. However, after the war many of the former girl soldiers in Angola chose to settle in a new environment where no one knew them. This is not the only case to prove this point.[38] In case of settlement in a new community the content of current reintegration programmes might need to be reconsidered - possibly also the term.[39] If the purpose of research is to provide inputs for more gender-sensitive programmes, future research must take significantly account of former girl soldiers experiences, views and aspirations.

Many questions remain both unasked and unanswered with regards to the preferred outcome of a reintegration process. How can the outcome of reintegration be appraised? By which criteria or standards may a successful reintegration be measured? In her paper Jareg defines the outcome of reintegration as "the child being reunited with his/her family and becoming a full member of the community" (Jareg 2005:2). As underlined by many scholars civilian identity is an important outcome,[40] but what exactly does a civilian identity entail and how can it be measured? Some studies employ the wellbeing of civilian peers as a measure.[41] In such studies former child soldiers are compared to their civilian peers in how they have fared economically and socially. However, whether comparison to civilian peers is the best way to assess child soldiers' reintegration success should be further explored.

The duration of a reintegration process is another aspect that needs to be further investigated. Scholars agree that reintegration is a long-term process, but future research should address how many years former child soldiers must receive reintegration support. What is preferable or expected outcome after two, five, ten and 15 years? As pointed out by Geenen (2007), long-term reintegration remains a rather unknown field. There exists few longitudinal studies on reintegration of former child soldiers, but one study stands out. This is a study of 39 former boy soldiers in Mozambique which stretches over a period of 16 years.[42] The study combines qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, and seeks to answer how former child soldiers fare as adults, why differences in life outcomes occur, and how to best assist young ex-soldiers to return to civilian life. More such longitudinal research is necessary to understand the long-term aspects of reintegration.[43]

Although, definitions and assessments criteria are necessary it is important to stress that a "one-size-fits-all" approach to reintegration will not be beneficial. Both the content and the outcome of successful reintegration are contextual. Culture, duration of war and conflict, degree of destruction caused by war, personal experiences and so on will all impact on a child soldier's reintegration process, as will the child's gender and age.

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[37] See for example Uvin 2007, Chrobok and Akutu 2008, Keairns 2002, and Boyden and de Berry 2004
[38] See for example Barth 2002 and van Gog 2008
[39] Apio (2008) uses for example the term "integration"
[40] See for example Veale 2003, Porto et al. 2007, and Veale and Stavrou 2003
[41] See for example Taouti-Cherif 2006 and Annan et al. 2006 and 2008
[42] See Boothby. Assessments were conducted in 1988, 1989, 1990 and in 2003/4.
[43] The review also includes Santacruz and Arana's paper (2002) on child soldiers' emotional well-being and life conditions 10 years after the signing of the peace accord in El Salvador.

3.2 Contextual dimensions of reintegration

Knowledge about the particular conflict and context in which the DDR process takes place is necessary as this may explain both the nature and challenges of the process.[44] Each situation presents its own unique profile with specific challenges, and consequently reintegration programmes should be "tailored to the needs of the societies in which they are implemented" (Porto et al, 2007: 110). Some important contextual realities that impact on the reintegration of former child soldiers are the country-specific conflict, whether the current situation is one of post- or ongoing conflict, whether the child soldier is reintegrating into a rural or an urban environment, and which armed group the former soldier belonged to. These aspects will be further addressed, drawing on literature and studies on reintegration. Focus is on whether lessons learned in one setting may be replicated in another.

3.2.1 Country specific research

The literature review displays that some countries and conflicts have received more scholarly attention than others. Looking at literature which focuses on country specific cases, one may conclude that war-torn West African countries have received quite extensive attention. This is particularly the case for Sierra Leone[45] but extensive research has also been conducted in Liberia.[46] Reintegration of child soldiers in Côte d'Ivoire, on the other hand, seems to have received relatively little attention.[47] Northern Uganda and child soldiers within the Lord's Resistance Army are clearly another area where researches in the field of child soldiers have conducted comprehensive studies.[48] In the southern part of Africa the conflicts of Mozambique and Angola have been the focus of several studies.[49]

With Uganda being the exception, studies and literature on child soldiers in the Great Lakes Region conflicts are scarce. Despite a few studies on child soldiers in Rwanda,[50] Burundi,[51] and the Democratic Republic of Congo[52] most of the accessible literature does not concentrate on child soldiers but on the DDR process directed at adult ex-combatants.[53]

Sierra Leone and Uganda are the two countries that have received most scholarly attention also with respect to studies concerning girl soldiers.[54] Moreover, certain studies have included Mozambique and Angola.[55] Keairns study (2002) in Angola, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Colombia is also worth mentioning. With regards to the Great Lakes Region, again with the exception of Uganda, studies concerning reintegration of former girl soldiers hardly exist.

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[44] See for example Borzello 2007
[45] See for example Coulter 2006 , Peters 2006, Mazurana and Carlson 2004, and Denov and Maclure 2006
[46] See for example Sendabo 2004 and Utas 2005
[47] One exception is Gislesen 2006 where Côte d'Ivoire is one of three country cases.
[48] See for example Annan et al 2007 and 2008 (SWAY), Corbin 2008, Akello et al. 2006, and Apio 2007
[49] See for example Honwana 2006 and Boothby 2006
[50] Abatneh 2006 and UNICEF 2003
[51] Taouti-Cherif 2006
[52] Verhey 2003 and 2004, Hobson 2005, Amnesty International 2006, and the International Labour Office 2003. These studies will be further discussed at pages 55 and 56.
[53] See for example Geenen 2007, Uvin 2007 and Beneduce et al. 2006
[54] See for example McKay et al. 2006, Carlson and Mazurana 2008, Annan et al. 2008
[55] McKay and Mazurana 2004 and Denov 2007

3.2.2 Post-war setting versus ongoing conflict

Most available research on reintegration of former child soldiers concerns post-conflict situations. This is understandable due to the serious challenges related to how to conduct the collection of data in an environment of conflict and war. Lack of security, restriction of movements, and breakdown of communications will undoubtedly complicate fieldwork, and sometimes even make it impossible. The most serious challenge is security, as research in contexts with ongoing conflict may put both former child soldiers and researcher at risk. These particular aspects must clearly be taken into consideration when planning and preparing fieldwork in a conflict setting.

As there are reasons to avoid research in contexts with ongoing conflict there are also arguments for the opposite. The weightiest argument is probably that in situations where conflict continues, there is also a greater possible danger of re-recruitment of former child soldiers. Studies point to how a successful reintegration may prevent re-recruitment, and a possible escalation of conflict.[56] It is consequently pertinent to gain deeper insights into the particular needs of former child soldiers amidst conflict, how to best cater for their needs and how to best support them in regaining a civilian identity. The environment in which the reintegration is to take place is an essential factor. As Borzello in her study in Northern Uganda aptly puts it: "What, after all, does 'reintegration' mean to former abductees sent back to live in the squalor of a 'protected camp', and in an environment of ongoing insecurity?" (2007:401).

3.2.3 Urban versus rural reintegration

Several case studies point to dissimilarities in the reintegration into urban versus rural communities.[57] Utas (2005) presents the trajectories of rural, semi-urban and urban reintegration process of former child soldiers in Liberia. According to Utas, the rural case shows the most success; the ex-combatants had return to their families, were accepted and forgiven by their communities, worked on farms or owned their own piece of land. Moreover, they had large networks and in most cases no contact with other ex-combatants. The urban case portrays jobless ex-combatant youths, who had not returned to their place of origin. They lived separately as a subculture with military structure intact, and with a social network mainly consisting of former soldiers. The semi-urban case falls somewhere in between and shows that some former soldiers wished and planned to return to their families but in fear of rejection they would not return empty-handed. Their social ties were dominated by a war-friend network, but most of them were also active in church. The case of male ex-combatants in Kinshasa is yet an example of urban based ex-combatants largely depending on a network of fellow ex-combatants.[58] Also studies of former girl soldiers reveal that women and girls who settled in a provincial town where they did not originally come from tended to do so through existing social networks with other former combatants.[59]

Many scholars underline that community-based networks are essential for reintegration of former soldiers.[60] Does this mean that ex-soldiers who resettle in urban areas, often not their community of origin, with a network consisting of fellow ex-combatants are

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[56] For example UNICEF 2005
[57] See for example Uvin 2007 and Peters 2007
[58] Geenen 2007 and 2008
[59] See for example van Gog 2008
[60] See for example Verhey 2001 and van Gog 2008

less likely to attain a civilian identity? More knowledge on different reintegration trajectories and outcomes depending on where former child soldiers settle down is necessary. What seems clear, however, is that research findings and programme design in rural settings cannot automatically be replicated in urban contexts and vice versa.

3.2.4 Group belonging

Taouti-Cherif's study (2006) on the reintegration process of former child soldiers in Burundi reveals that difficulties in the reintegration process may depend on which armed group the child belongs to. Findings show that children from one particular group seem to have a more problematic reintegration trajectory than former child soldiers in other armed groups. With reference to the reviewed literature it may seem like different experiences according to group belonging are especially visible related to girl soldiers. This can be illustrated through presenting some apparent dissimilarities when comparing experiences of female soldiers within liberation armies with those participating in rebel groups. Firstly, difference is obvious with regards to their recruitment. Young women in liberation wars are more likely to join voluntarily and sometimes out of ideological conviction, while women in rebel groups to a larger extent are forcibly recruited. Some may join voluntarily, however, the degree of voluntarism is often questioned by scholars as these girls often do not have any good alternative. Secondly, whether or not the girls and young women were sexually abused and which roles they performed within the armed group vary depending on the armed group and the conflict area (Kearins 2002). Thirdly, whether or not the girls feel empowered by their military experience also seems to vary depending on which kind of armed group they belonged to. The assumption is that women and girl soldiers participating in liberation wars are more likely to feel empowered by their military experience.[61] The experience of empowerment is also linked to the cause they are fighting for and their status within the armed group. Fourthly, studies indicate that females participating in liberation wars are more likely to be viewed as heroines rather than perpetrators, particularly if the liberation army wins the war. The risk of stigmatization and rejection from family and community is consequently likely to be reduced. And fifthly, female ex-combatants in liberation wars tend to find it more difficult to readjust back into traditional gender roles than what is the case for those participating in rebel groups.[62]

All these aspects (how and why they joined, whether they are sexually abused, their roles within the group, whether they feel empowered or not, their status and the degree of stigmatization upon returning, and whether they readjust to traditional gender roles) are all factors which impact on the young women's reintegration process as well as their particular needs in the aftermath of war. Planning and implementation of reintegration programmes need to take these elements into consideration. The same is true for research. Research should distinguish between different armed groups and conduct comparative studies that may provide a better understanding how group belonging impact on or determine the process of reintegration.

It is important to note that in many conflict situations girls also serve as soldiers in national military armies. Some researchers have pointed to how governments' deny or attempt to cover up their own use of girl soldiers during the war.[63] Not only in DDR programmes but also in research child soldiers who served in governmental armed forces are often

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[61] See for example Veale 2003 and Coulter et al. 2008
[62] See for example Coulter et al. 2008
[63] See for example McKay and Mazurana 2004

underrepresented.[64] It is pertinent for future research to address the reintegration process also of these young men and women.

3.3 Reintegration in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Reintegration of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo has barely been the focus of empirical research. International NGOs are the main contributor to studies concentrating on child soldiers in Congo. The main contributor is Save the Children (UK) (Verhey 2003 and 2004, and Hobson 2005). In addition, there is one report from Amnesty International (2006) and one from the International Labour Office (2003). Verhey has conducted two Save the Children studies on Congolese child soldiers, one focusing on child soldiers in general and the other addressing former girl soldiers. The latter was undertaken as a partnership between four international NGOs, Save the Children (UK), CARE, International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (IFESH) and International Rescue Committee (IRC). The DRC is also one of five country cases presented in Hobson's report on girls in armed conflict (2005), however the presentation of Congo is based on Verhey's empirical study in 2004.

With regards to independent research on the child soldiers' reintegration process in the DRC the numbers of studies encountered are even less. The Centre for Intercultural Communication (SIK – Norway), has published one report on the topic. The report provides a thorough description of an ongoing reintegration project of former child soldiers run by The Community of Free Pentecostal Churches in Africa (CELPA) in cooperation with the Norwegian Pentecostal Foreign Mission (PYM). The report is based on document analysis and experience from the field, and does not include in-depth data collection. Even within the extensive body of literature on psychological impact of war on children, former child soldiers in Congo are barely present in any research sample.[65]

3.3.1 Reintegration and local civil society in the DRC

Reintegration of former child soldiers in the DRC has to a large degree been the domain of international agencies and national DDR programmes. And as international NGOs also have been the main contributors to research studies on the topic most academic work has addressed programmes run by such NGO's. This is true for studies in the Democratic Republic of Congo as well. As civil society in this review is limited to only denoting *local civil society*, the work of these NGOs will not be addressed in this section.

Only one report in the review addresses a local reintegration initiative in the DRC (Lode et al. 2007). This reintegration programme is run by CELPA in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in cooperation with PYM. More than 4000 former child soldiers have completed the programme since its start in 2003, and the reintegration programme has succeeded in including 35 % female participants. Compared to less than 2 % female participation in reintegration programmes run by Save the Children (UK) in Congo, CELPA clearly demonstrates its ability to include former girl soldiers in the programmes.

Knowledge is, however, needed on whether local civil society is more likely to succeed in including former girl soldiers than international NGOs and official DDR programmes. How local NGOs and other civil society organisations trace or approach former girl soldiers must be investigated. Attention should also be given to their understanding of

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[64] See for example Brett and Specht 2004
[65] The only example in this review is Bayer et al. 2007

what a reintegration process involves, and how participants in their programmes are supported.

3.3.2 Congo and reintegration of former girl soldiers

It is estimated that approximately 40 % of the child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo are girls.[66] Despite the high estimate, only nine girls had been part of the formal demobilisation process between 1999 and 2002 (Verhey 2003). The number of participating girls is also extremely low within reintegration programmes of international NGOs. Some self-demobilised girls have been traced and included in their programmes, but most former girl soldiers in the DRC remain without any support. For example, girls in Save the Children's reintegration programme in the DRC have counted for fewer than 2 % of children passing through the programme between 1999 and 2003.[67] One local community-based initiative run by the Pentecostal churches in Congo (CELPA) shows a much greater success related to the inclusion of girl soldiers. Since its start in 2003 their reintegration programme has succeeded in including 35 % female participants (Lode et al. 2007).

As noted earlier, the only empirical study that solely focuses on the reintegration of former girl soldiers in the DRC is Verhey's study (2004) on how to reach the girls through demobilisation and reintegration efforts.[68] This study conducted interviews with key UN, government, military and civil society organisations, and 19 focus groups with local women's associations, civil society organisations and child protection networks/committees. Data from former child soldiers was collected through focus groups (89 girls and 103 boys), individual interviews (five girls), and a peer survey conducted by young girls reaching more than 600 girls in addition to those participating in the interviews and focus groups. The in-depth fieldwork covered five provinces of Eastern Congo. Reasons for the large numbers of girls who are unaccounted for in official DDR programmes are found to be its military-oriented conception and the socio-cultural conceptions of girls (Verhey 2004). According to Verhey, the socio-cultural conceptions of girls within the armed groups represent obstacles to the girls' release, and the community's conceptions of girls constitute obstacles to their reintegration process. She claims that these conceptions and attitudes need to be addressed in order to succeed in reaching the girls, and emphasises the need for broader and more flexible community-based mechanisms as basis for the reintegration programmes.

Evidently, very little is known about girl soldiers in the DRC, hence there is an extensive need for further research. How girl soldiers are recruited or why they joined, their experiences within armed groups, and their experiences after having left the armed groups need to be addressed. The socio-cultural conceptions of girls in general and former girl soldiers in particular require further investigation in order to more fully understand both how such conceptions may restrain the girls reintegration and how to properly address stigmatization of girl soldiers.

3.4 Gender-specific studies on reintegration

Until relatively recently, the term child soldier meant in reality a "boy soldier." This is also apparent in academic work. Quite a few empirical studies do not include girls in their

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[66] See for example Lode et al. 2007 and Hobson 2005
[67] See Hobson 2005 and Verhey 2004
[68] See summary at page 24

samples,[69] and several others girls are only scarcely represented.[70] However, the body of literature concerning the situation of girl soldiers during war and in post-conflict context has gradually increased in recent years, although we still might say with the words of Wessells (2007b:3) that "research on girl soldiers is still in its infancy." Academic work has attempted to address different experiences of boys and girls, perceptions of girls and boys related to stigma and victimization, and the motivation for girls and boys to demobilise and reintegrate. Such studies point unanimously to the inappropriateness of current DDR programmes to reach the girls and meet their needs and special concerns.[71] They conclude that the realities that girl faces both within the armed groups and within their communities do not correspond to the reintegration programmes developed both by international and national agencies.[72] Governments and agencies need to construct gender-appropriate reintegration, based upon the acknowledgement of the girls' multiple roles within the armed group, the girls' agency and initiatives, and the skills and coping strategies they have developed.[73]

The reviewed literature points out that more gender-specific knowledge is necessary in order to secure appropriate reintegration assistance to former girl soldiers. Studies on girl soldiers also underline that some groups of girls have been neglected more than others, both with regards to inclusion in reintegration programmes but also in research. In other words, there are currently major gaps in knowledge related to the reintegration of former girl soldiers.

3.4.1 Self-demobilised girl soldiers

Studies on former girl soldiers draw attention to the huge absence of females in general in formal or official DDR programmes.[74] Often the girls have been excluded due to the military-aspect of demobilisation where the number of weapons handed in constitutes the ultimate sign of the process' success or failure. Moreover, many of these women were classified as "dependents" or "camp followers" and therefore excluded from benefits given to "combatants".[75] Some scholars emphasise the need to focus on DDR as a demilitarization process and social transformation rather than a security-driven process.[76] The agency of both commanders and girl soldiers are also explanatory factors of the absence of girls in the DDR programmes.[77] It is for example unlikely that the DDR process can fully eliminate the power and authority of commanders. DDR programmes seem to rely on information from commanders and consequently the commanders mediate access to such programmes. The denial of females' inclusion in demobilisation and reintegration processes is likely an expression of commanders' vested interests. "Military officials view girls as a form of possession and claim that girls are their 'wives' rather than 'child soldiers' they are obligated to demobilise" (Verhey 2004:2). The girls' own agency is shown through their personal choice of avoiding the DDR process. The fear of stigmatization once being identified as an ex-soldier is among the main reasons why girls choose to self-demobilise and self-reintegrate.[78] In other words, the community's socio-cultural conceptions of girls and women

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[69] See for example UNICEF 2003, Harris 2007 and Boothby et al 2006.
[70] See for example Betancourt et al 2008, Taouti-Cherif 2006 and Bayer et al 2007
[71] See for example Keairns 2002, McKay and Mazurana 2004, Verhey 2004, Coulter 2006, and Specht and Attree 2006
[72] See for example Mazurana, McKay, Carlson and Kasper 2002
[73] See for example Mazurana and Carlson 2004
[74] See for example Coulter et al 2008 and Mazurana and Carlson 2004
[75] See for example Mazurana and Carlson 2004 and Brett 2004
[76] See for example Ollek 2007 and Geenen 2007 and 2008
[77] See for example Ollek 2007
[78] See for example Hobson 2005 and Verhey 2004

constitute obstacles to their reintegration process.[79] In order to ensure a higher degree of anonymity and consequently seeking to reduce to risk of stigmatization and rejection, young women may choose to resettle in a new and sometimes larger environment.[80] Other scholars point to that the changes the women have gone through sometimes make them reluctant to go home.[81] Whatever the reason, female ex-soldiers who choose to settle outside their former communities should be assisted to find an alternative way of living.[82] "Women and girls should be free to choose where they will live, electing to return to land from which they or their partner came, or to move to semi-urban or urban areas where they may have more freedom from traditional gender roles" (UNIFEM 2004:37).

As the great majority of girl soldiers exit armed groups outside the formal demobilisation process, how to discretely trace and support these young women is an urgent matter to be addressed.[83] Moreover, some studies demonstrate that former girl soldiers have been able to reintegrate on their own outside formal DDR structures, and such experiences can provide important knowledge to girls' reintegration process.[84] Research should seek to convey resettlement experiences of former girl soldiers and to gain detailed information on factors that may facilitate family and/or community involvement.

3.4.2 Traditional gender roles

The restoration of the relationship to immediate kin and original community is argued to be central to women's and girls' reintegration.[85] The important role of family is also highlighted by many scholars.[86] Hill and Langholz (2003) note for example that children living with their family often show fewer psychiatric problems. A UNICEF's report (2003) on reintegration of child soldiers in Rwanda shows that the children do better when they are reintegrated with parents and particularly when reintegrated into larger households.

However, how families and communities receive former soldiers seems to be related to gender. Female ex-combatants have transgressed their gender role through violence and sometimes sexual abuse and are therefore more easily rejected and stigmatized.[87] The men, on the other hand, often seem to have strengthened their gender role through warfare. Coulter's study (2006) on being a bush wife finds that former girl soldiers who conform to traditional norms and expected behaviour upon returning from armed groups were more easily accepted back into their communities and families. Also Veale's study (2003) on female ex-fighters in Ethiopia shows that the women's military identity impacts on their reintegration experiences, making it difficult to conform to traditional gendered expectations for women in civilian society. Furthermore, many of the women in van Gog's study (2008) express concern about their status as unmarried, seeing marriage as both a tool and an indicator of successful reintegration. "Unmarriageable" former girl soldiers may be seen as an additional economic burden to an already poor family, and this may make it more difficult to be welcomed and accepted by the family.[88]

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[79] See for example Verhey 2004
[80] See for example Barth 2002 and Wessells 2007b
[81] See for example Barth 2002 and van Gog 2008
[82] See for example Barth 2002
[83] See for example Uvin 2007
[84] See for example Verhey 2004 and van Gog 2008
[85] See for example van Gog 2008
[86] See for example Corbin 2008 and Lode et al. 2007
[87] See for example Coulter et al 2008
[88] See for example Coulter 2006 and Verhey 2004

Brett (2004) aptly notes that reality seems to give former girl soldiers two choices: speak out and risk stigmatization or stay silent and lead a relatively "normal life." She argues that if the discrimination that drove the girls into armed groups is not changed in the aftermath of war then the girls' prospects are probably worse then before the war. There are obvious dangers of reproducing gender stereotypes and inequalities through DDR programmes which do not address culturally accepted, but discriminatory, gender roles.[89] In order to reconstruct the girls' lives their agency needs to increase and gender-specific violence needs to be addressed.[90] Consequently, reintegration should involve a reciprocal 'readjustment' by both the individual soldier and the community (Veale and Stavrou 2003). However, how best to support former girl soldiers' agency and how to achieve a reciprocal readjustment should be further addressed through cultural sensitive empirical studies.

3.4.3 Targeted versus non-targeted reintegration

Many of the current DDR programmes exclusively targeted former child soldiers. In so doing these programmes neglect the realities of a broader group of war-affected children who may face similar challenges in the aftermath of conflict.[91] Taouti-Cherif's study (2006) on the "'Child Soldier' Special Project Beneficiaries" in Burundi finds that the former child soldiers participating in the programme are in a similar or better situation than their civilian peers, particularly economically but also socially. Although the target support has reduced vulnerability the author still notes that community support may be even better as it prevents resentment from community members. Recent studies stress that singling out child soldiers contributes to stigmatization and jealousy,[92] and that they through special treatment may be viewed by the community as rewarded for their participating in warfare. Even child soldiers themselves express that programmes should include all children affected by war as it will reduce jealousy and rejection by their siblings and peers.[93]

As discussed earlier, former girl soldiers are particularly vulnerable to stigmatization and resentment by the community, and consequently seek to avoid to be identified with armed groups. Ensuring these girls access without having to identify themselves as ex-soldiers means that many otherwise invisible girls associated with armed groups will receive reintegration support. Some scholars and professionals argue that reintegration programmes should be designed related to measurable needs rather than different categories of children and youth. Annan et al. (2008) claim that categorisation such as abducted and non-abducted, forced wives and forced mothers are poor predicators for vulnerability and that support should rather be targeted to measurable needs. However, children's specific needs are often related to their particular experiences, for example sexual abuse and pregnancy. Whether targeted or not, reintegration programmes must be prepared to provide the help and support necessary to address these particular issues. As underlined by Santacruz and Arana (2002), the section of the population that was directly involved in the war – in particular children and young people – should not be forgotten and further marginalised but receive the assistance they need.

Long-term reintegration requires extensive and continuous funding. However, many of the studies included in this review underline that inadequate funding is one of the biggest constraints to providing child soldiers with proper reintegration support.[94] An important question to be addressed is consequently how an untargeted approach to reintegration, where

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[89] See for example Denov 2007 and Denov and Maclure 2007
[90] See for example McKay 2004
[91] See for example Chrobok 2005
[92] See for example Castelli et al. 2005, MacVeigh et al. 2007, and Sendabo 2004
[93] See for example Chrobok and Akutu 2008
[94] See for example Hobson 2005, Ismail 2002, and MacVeigh et al. 2007

all girls affected by war are included, may be implemented within evident financial constraints.

3.4.4 Age and reintegration

Conceptions of childhood and age are also crucial aspects to take into consideration in research on and design of appropriate reintegration assistance.[95] The generally recognised age at which childhood officially ends, and adulthood begins, is 18. However, does such a sharp distinction relating to years take into consideration culturally variations with regards to childhood and adulthood? Is there necessarily a great difference between the needs or capacities of a 17 year old and a 19 year old? Rehabilitation and reintegration programmes must be culturally sensitive and aware of the risk to "infantilise" former child soldiers in their upper teens.[96] Girl mothers in particular express that they do not want to be treated as children.[97] In many cultures giving birth to a child means that the girl has left childhood and entered into adulthood. To draw a line between and provide separate treatment of women and girls (under 18) may consequently be inappropriate,[98] as when or why one is viewed as an adult may vary greatly from culture to culture. Flexibility and cultural sensitivity related to age should be incorporated into studies on former girl soldiers and their reintegration process.

3.4.5 Forced mothers and their children

Currently, very few studies exist on forced mothers and their children, however, several researchers stress the distinct vulnerability of these two groups.[99] Undoubtedly, the needs of forced mothers and their children have been largely neglected by researchers and reintegration programs alike, especially the needs of the children born in captivity.[100] Their particular experiences both within the armed groups and when returning to civilian life must be addressed both in research and in programme design. While still within the armed group forced mothers' get "extra responsibilities associated with raising a child: feeding, clothing, fleeing from enemies, tending to a sick child, having no access to pre- and post-natal services and, as a result, the agony of watching one's infant struggle to overcome imminent death" (Apio 2007:100 – in Carpenter (ed.) 2007). Others on the other hand express that life in captivity became better after becoming a mother since mothers sometimes would be exempted from going to battle (ibid.).

Parenting after captivity also represents challenges to these young mothers. The economic hardship is obvious, but their children also have particular physical and psychosocial vulnerabilities.[101] The particular stigmatization experienced by the former girl soldiers returning with a child and the stigmatization experienced by the child due to its fathers' rebel status and because it is "illegally conceived" deserve further attention (Apio 2008). Quite a few of girls forcibly marriage within armed groups are not accepted back into their families and communities.[102] Findings in Verhey's study show that the girl may be 'physically' accepted to live with her family, but that her family would refuse to support her and the child (Verhey 2004:16). Another issue that needs further exploration is whether

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[95] See for example Boyden and de Berry 2004
[96] See for example International Labour Office 2003
[97] See for example Apio 2008
[98] See for example Ollek 2007
[99] See for example MacVeigh et al. 2007, Carlson and Mazurana 2008, and McKay and Mazurana 2004
[100] For literature on children born of war see Carpenter 2007 and Apio 2008
[101] See for example Apio 2008
[102] Carlson and Mazurana 2008

traditional cleansing rituals contribute positively to forced mothers and their children's reintegration process. Contrary to findings with regards to child soldiers in general, forced mothers in Uganda report that cleanings ceremonies are not of any help in their recovery.[103]

As the most forgotten category of children in armed conflict,[104] the well-being of these children and their mothers need both more research and additional programming. More knowledge and research is particularly required on the needs of the "at-risk" children of former child soldiers, and on girl mothers' identity.

3.5 Methodological approaches

Methodological approaches are linked to the profession or field of the research, and as the majority of literature on child soldiers stems from the fields of medicine, psychiatry and psychology the high prevalence of quantitative studies come as no surprise. The use of quantitative research instruments has been justified based on the assumption of children's universal responses to traumatic incidents.[105] Several methodological shortcomings in research on psychosocial aspects of children exposed to war are noted in the reviewed literature; for example the widespread use of self-reported data, unrepresentative samples, and lack of random-control.[106] The need for psychological treatment and psychosocial interventions to be empirically founded is underlined by several critics.[107]

As the current approach to the field of child soldiers also attempts to address the wider social dimensions of conflict, the need for more in-depth qualitative methods appears. One may speak of a shift in research emphasis "from the measurement of universal signs and symptoms of psychological and emotional distress towards reflection and analysis of subjective understandings and meanings" (Boyden and de Berry 2004:xviii). The most frequently used qualitative research method in the reviewed literature is that of the ethnographic research approach.[108] However, some studies on the DDR processes continue to rely mainly on quantitative data collection methods, such as questionnaires and surveys.[109] Others employ solely qualitative data,[110] while some combine the two.[111]

Participatory research with children in armed conflict has recently gained more attention.[112] Participatory research is argued to directly benefit the young participants by enhancing their skills and awareness, but this approach will also benefit research by providing "richer and more detailed data than a conventional, adult-led approach" (Hart and Tyrer 2006:5). Children's research participation is only evident in two studies in this review; Verhey's study (2004) on how to reach girls in the DRC and Denov and Maclure's study (2006) on child soldiers in Sierra Leone. In the former girl soldiers conducted a peer survey reaching, and in the latter adolescent former girl soldiers led focus groups consisting of other girl soldiers. Denov and Maclure emphasise how the study benefited from these girls' participation in that they were able to foster trust and minimize power imbalances in the focus groups. In addition they also contributed with their own personal experiences and reflections.

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[103] Annan et al. 2008
[104] Apio 2008
[105] Boyden and de Berry 2004
[106] Barenbaum et al. 2004
[107] See for example Barenbaum et al. 2004, MacMullin 2004
[108] See for example Akello et al. 2006, Shepler 2005, Peters 2006, Honwana 2001, Boyden et de Berry 2004
[109] See for example Muggah 2003, Taouti-Cherif 2006
[110] See for example Brett and Specht 2004, Utas 2005, Veale and Stavrou 2003, and Apio 2008
[111] See for example Verhey 2004, Annan et al. 2008 (SWAY), Boothby et al. 2006, McKay and Mazurana 2004
[112] See for example Hart and Tyrer 2006, Feinstein and O'Kane 2008 (Save the Children, Norway)

The field of girl soldiers would benefit from more participatory research with former soldiers, and future studies should seek to make such participation possible.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

The empirical evidence on the testimonies of young people is slowly increasing but there are still major gaps in knowledge and understanding related to the reintegration process of young adults. Many scholars underline the lack of systematic studies about the transition from military to civilian identity, and there is a serious lack of empirical information concerning long-term outcomes of reintegration programmes and interventions. Above all there exist very few gender-based analyses of the different experiences of girls and boys who have been involved with armed groups.

Related to the conflict of the Democratic Republic of Congo, research on the reintegration process of former child soldiers is largely missing. Girl soldiers have barely received any attention at all. Moreover, very little written documentation exists on local civil society's engagement in reintegration processes. Research must address these gaps in knowledge and, through in-depth studies, provide information that may improve the support given to young girls and boys as they make their way back to civilian life. A failed transition from military to civilian life will most surely be fatal for the individual child but also for the community at large.

With particular reference to the reintegration of girl soldiers and the involvement of local civil society in the DRC, future research should address:

- what successful reintegration means in a context of ongoing conflict and insecurity
- how former girl soldiers and their communities define reintegration
- how to discretely trace and support self-demobilised girl soldiers
- former girl soldiers' resettlement experiences – focusing on girls who return to their community of origin and girls who choose to settle elsewhere alike
- how to support agency and resilience of former girl soldiers
- how socio-cultural conceptions of girls in general and girl soldiers in particular impact on their reintegration process
- whether and/or why local civil society is more likely to succeed in including former girl soldiers than international NGOs and official DDR programmes
- the particular needs of forced mothers and their children and how to support them

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