Invisible No More?: An Analysis of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Programs for former 'Girl Soldiers who Become Mothers' and their Children

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Abstract

DDR is meant to bridge the gap between child soldiering and civilian life. The challenges in the delivery of effective DDR programs serve as barriers to adequate support for child soldiers. Increasingly, research has also considered the gender-specific challenges and barriers that former girl soldiers face and the limited (if any) support they receive through DDR initiatives. DDR supports for girl soldiers who have become mothers are even less likely to meet their complex needs. As such, 'girl soldiers as mothers' and their children remain outside the dominant DDR discourse and subsequently do not get the attention, they need in DDR programming documents. While the discourse within DDR programs has progressed to include sexual violence and some gender-specific needs, these additions are insufficient for meeting the diverse needs of girl child soldiers and their children. The result is girl soldiers who become mothers and their children remain unprepared for returning to their communities or society, and their communities continue to be unprepared to receive them.

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List of Abbreviations

DDR: Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration

LRA: Lord's Resistance Army

IDDRS: The United Nations Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Standards

SGBV: Sexual and gender-based violence

UNCRC: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Chapter One: Introduction

> *Most of us were too young to be mothers, but in the [National Resistance Army] there was no age. It was a crime for a child soldier to say: 'I cannot do this, because I'm a child.' Too many young mothers had to figure out how to be both mothers and fathers. (Keitesi, 2004, p. 210).*

The phrase 'child soldier' in lay discourse typically conjures the image of an African child, usually a boy, holding a gun. This is the image presented globally by the media. This image masks the reality of child soldiering and who a soldier can be. The reality of child soldiering is complex and much more than a boy holding a gun on the frontline. Any child can be a child soldier. A child soldier can be or do anything as part of his or her duties as a soldier. The above quote by China Keitesi reinforces the diverse duties of child soldiers.

Keitesi also offers an important glimpse into the extraordinary responsibilities and diverse challenges faced by girls and young women who were forced to serve as child soldiers, while also becoming young (and forced) mothers during conflict, what is referred to in this thesis as 'girl soldiers who become mothers' because they have become mothers as girls, and therefore at a very young age. In post-conflict environments, development programs must consider the gender-specific needs and priorities of young women and young men as they transition out of their roles as child soldiers. Doing so requires recognizing the life-changing experiences of serving as a child soldier and addressing diverse needs from mental and physical health to skills training and rehabilitation programs. Programs also need to consider the intersectional needs of different populations, such as young women who become mothers as a result of their roles as child soldiers. One of the most popular programs supporting former child soldiers is known as disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR). DDR programs offer a number of important services and training opportunities. However, as this thesis will document, these

programs fail to support the particular needs of girl soldiers who become mothers as a result of these roles, as well as the needs of the children born to these girls and young women.

To document the gaps in program support for girl child soldiers more broadly, this thesis involves a content review and critical discourse analysis of twenty-nine program documents to provide an important lens through which to consider the gaps in program delivery to meet the diverse needs of child soldiers, particularly girl soldiers who become mothers and their children. The findings offer vital insight into the limitations of current programming and the lack of attention to the needs of girl soldiers who become mothers, and by extension, the gaps in programming to support the children born to these girls and young women. This study provides important empirical research to advance our understanding of development programming geared to child soldiers, particularly in relation to the need for a stronger intersectional and context-specific lens in development programming, and thereby contributes to feminist postcolonial scholarship that advocates for greater attention to context-specific realities, and the overlapping nature of discrimination.

Overview of Child Soldiers Globally

According to the 2022 United Nations Security Council Report on Children and Armed Conflict, twenty-one situations, in twenty-two countries, had verified use of child soldiers either in non-state or state forces[1]. In total, 6,310 children were verified to have been recruited and used as child soldiers during the reporting period (August 2021 to July 2022), of which 85% were boys (United Nations General Assembly Security Council, 2022) and 15% (or 603) were girls.

[1] Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Russia, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen

The 2022 numbers reflect a decrease from the 2021 report which found 8,521 children in 22[2] situations were recruited and used as child soldiers, of which 25% (2130) were girls. However, these statistics only account for the recruitment and use of child soldiers that the United Nations verified through its Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism. As such, the current statistics do not present the full scale of children used in conflict-related roles. Therefore, the true number of child soldiers, especially girl child soldiers, is unknown.

It is estimated that "between one-tenth and one-third of all child soldiers" have been girls (Vastapuu, 2019, p.493). The current statistic of verified girl child soldiers does fall within this estimate. However, another estimate suggests that 40% of all child soldiers are girls (Tóth, 2018). This discrepancy between estimates obscures the reality of girl child soldiers. If there is no clear documentation of the number of girl child soldiers, then we are also likely to lack clear statistical information of the number of girls who become mothers while serving as child soldiers.

The category of 'child soldier' is used here in its widest sense to include a range of activities that contribute to conflict-related goals. While girls fulfil a variety of armed conflict-related roles within armed groups, they also often serve as sexual servants or forced wives (Baines & Gauvin, 2013; Denov, 2019; Denov & Lakor, 2018; Gustavsson, Oruut, & Rubenson, 2017; McKay, 2004; Kostelny, 1999; Shanahan & Veale, 2016; Vastapuu, 2019; Worthen et al., 2010). Recognizing the use of girls as child soldiers and their diverse roles in armed conflict is an important first step to understanding and documenting their unique needs during DDR, particularly girls who become pregnant and/or become mothers during their time in armed

[2] Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen

conflict. For these reasons, there are important gaps in our understanding of the experiences of girl soldiers, and especially of girl soldiers who become mothers. This lack of knowledge and data has implications for DDR. To fill this gap and to better understand whether current child soldier DDR programs address the needs of girls who become mothers and the needs of their children who are born as a result of the conflict, this thesis examines DDR programs through a content analysis and critical discourse analysis of program reports. Specifically, I consider whether DDR programs incorporate provisions on how to account for the particular needs of girls who become mothers and the needs of their children who are born into conflict, and if so, in what ways?

When integrating into civilian life post conflict, individuals face different needs not only because of the context, but due to their gender, age, role played during conflict, and multiple other factors. The attention to girl child soldiers has gained increased prominence within academic scholarship, pointing to a growing understanding of the particular needs of girls and young women who are serving – or have served – as child soldiers. While girls are now cemented firmly as child soldiers within the academic and child protection spheres, their integration within policy and programming is still inconsistent and insufficient. There is still one group of children that require greater focus and attention in DDR programming: child soldiers who become mothers and the children born to them.

In the literature review below, I provide an overview of the scholarship on girl child soldiers. I start with a review of autobiographies written by former girl child soldiers, followed by a summary of the scholarship specific to girl soldiers. Despite this growing literature on girl soldiers, there remain few studies exploring the experiences of girl soldiers who become mothers while serving. Building on a small but important body of scholarship on the experiences needs,

and programs available to girl child soldiers who become mothers, this thesis offers important new insights specific to the DDR programming currently available and the limitations of these programs for meeting the needs of girl soldiers who become mothers, and by extension their children.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The literature summarized in this chapter incorporates scholarly literature, United Nations reports and documents, as well as first-hand experiences from survivors who formerly served as girl child soldiers. The literature review is divided into three sections covering: 1). Autobiographies, 2). Definitions and Background Information, and 3). Gender-specific Insights into Child Soldiers Scholarship and DDR Programs.

The inclusion of autobiographies offers a valuable dimension to the literature review, bringing in the voices and experiences of women who have had direct experience as child soldiers or in conflict-related violence experienced by children, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Sharing these stories as part of the literature review is rooted in a feminist postcolonial view of knowledge, highlighting the value of "women's way of knowing, women's experiences, and women's knowledge" (Alcoff & Potter, 1993, p. 1). The inclusion of these perspectives also fills gaps in the silence of experiences from former girl child soldiers, and shines a light on the diversity of experiences all young women and girls have, challenging simplistic narratives of 'the Third World Woman' (Mohanty, 1988) and complicating some of the essentializing of experiences that has been widely criticized in feminist postcolonial scholarship (which I turn to in the next section of this thesis).

One of the limitations or considerations for using autobiographies as narratives for this study is that they cannot be verified. It is important to note that these narratives are not being used to state empirical facts and they may "display a marked ahistoricity, eluding context, time and space and blurring the boundaries between history, memory, and narrative truth" (Hynd, 2021, p. 80). Nonetheless, the autobiographies and narratives bring a rich dimension to the literature review by providing a space for young women's and girls' voices to be heard.

Moreover, by bringing in their voices this thesis will prompt the reader "to go beyond the vague, generalized category of [girl] "child soldier"" (Ebila, 2020, p. 534). Hnyd (2021) reminds us that the significance of child soldier narratives is not the relating of empirical facts, which are sometimes disputed, but rather in what can be called their affective truths and what they reveal about children's experiences of war. "[As well as] challeng[ing] dominant contemporary humanitarian discourses surrounding childhood and warfare to develop a 'victim, savage, saviour, campaigner' framework for their narratives" (p.77).

The narratives provided in two autobiographies are woven into the themes of this literature review as an opportunity to bring voice and experiential knowledge to the scholarly literature review. First, however, I provide an overview of the two autobiographies reviewed as part of this literature review: 1). *Child Soldier* by China Keitetsi; and 2). *I am Evelyn Amony: Reclaiming my life from the Lord's Resistance Army* by Evelyn Amony. These stories each offer rich insight into the lived reality of girl child soldiers. While their stories vary, there are common themes across the two, and when compared, highlight the differences in child soldiering.

Autobiographies

The use of autobiographies in this thesis in itself is a feminist postcolonial contribution to the literature and research on child soldiers. Integrating their voices throughout the literature review, introduction, and concluding chapters reminds us of the lived experience of girl child soldiers. They were not brought in as a data source for the analysis as DDR did not feature heavily in the books. As such, their stories are more useful in providing context for the literature review and what needs may be present during DDR.

The stories of China and Evelyn were chosen as they both became mothers during their time as soldiers. As well, there is an overall lack of autobiographies penned by former child

soldiers. Telling one's story so publicly not only brings the risk of increased stigmatization, but also the risk of publicly being branded a liar. As such, China and Evelyn were the only former girl child soldiers who became mothers that I found who wrote autobiographies. While there are additional autobiographies, as so much has been written on boy soldiers, the choice to focus on China and Evelyn was deliberate.

In the first of the two autobiographies reviewed, China Keitetsi provides her story of spending ten years as one of Yoweri Museveni's kadogo's, or child soldiers, during the Ugandan bush war and after Museveni's seizure of power in 1986. In 1984, at the age of eight, China joined the National Resistance Army after running away from her father's house. Over the next ten years, China consistently served as a child soldier. She did occasionally escape and attempt spontaneous reintegration. However, due to difficulties readjusting, China would always re-enlist. In 1991, China gave birth to her first child, a son Moses Drago Jr., at the age of fourteen. At this time, China was in an informal union, or "bush wife", with a man ten years her senior. While she writes the relationship was consensual, the age difference raises questions about power differences and the constraints within which true consent can take place. China documents that she eventually left her son with her sister so that she could return to serve with the armed forces but over time, her son was returned to his father. During her ultimate escape from the National Resistance Army to South Africa in 1995, China at 18, was pregnant for a second time. She does not detail the outcome of the pregnancy. It is unclear if she received an abortion or gave birth. Thus, the fate of the child is unknown.

After leaving behind her life as a soldier, China did not access any DDR processes. While in South Africa, China began to abuse alcohol and had little economic prospects. She alludes to turning to both stripping and prostitution in order to survive. It was not until 1999 when she

contacted the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in South Africa that she received any psychological support. Later that year, she was given refugee status in Denmark. It is unclear whether China was reunited with her son; however, it is not mentioned throughout her autobiography, so the reader is left to assume that she did not. China's spontaneous reintegration highlights the need for proper DDR programming.

It is important to note that after the publication of China's autobiography, the Ugandan Government branded her story a hoax and questioned the factual accuracy (Ebila, 2020). The publisher however maintained the story is genuine (Ebila, 2020). The themes that are visible in China's story are that of voluntary enlistment, spontaneous reintegration, agency, motherhood, sexual violence, informal union, addiction, struggle, and long-term soldiering.

In the second autobiography, written by Evelyn Amony, she explains how she was abducted in 1994 at the age of eleven by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda and forced to become one of Joseph Kony's 'bush wives. Evelyn spent eleven years as a child soldier. She was not released until her capture by the Ugandan Peoples Defense Forces in 2005, which occurred just days after she gave birth. Throughout her time as a child soldier and 'bush wife', Evelyn gave birth to three children. Her first daughter, Bakita, was born in 1997 when Evelyn was fourteen. Three years later in 2000, her second daughter, Winnie, was born. Winnie was lost during the chaos during one battle at the age of four. Evelyn does not know what happened to Winnie or whether she is even still alive. A third daughter, Grace, was born in 2005, 10 days before their capture by the Ugandan Peoples Defense Forces.

Evelyn underwent targeted DDR programming. She stayed at a World Vision funded rehabilitation center for 8 months, and was reunited with her parents, who accepted her back into their family. During her time at the center, Evelyn was given vocational training. Evelyn does not

state whether Bakita or Grace stayed with her while at the center. She also does not provide information on whether her two daughters received any care or DDR elements. She was employed by different international non-governmental organizations with programs designed to help LRA women returnees find employment. Furthermore, as one of Kony's wives, Evelyn played a prominent role in communication with Kony and attended the Peace Talks in Gulu. As such, the amount of support Evelyn received even after DDR was drastically different than that of China. The themes that stand out from Evelyn's story are abduction, motherhood, child, early and forced marriage, sexual violence, DDR program support, grief, international recognition, and long-term soldiering,

The general experiences of China and Evelyn are not unique. There thousands, if not tens of thousands, of girls who faced similar situations and grappled with similar choices and struggles. These two girls – now women – shared their story with the world and thereby offered important insights into the experiences of young women who served as child soldiers and became 'bush wives' and mothers to children born as a result of the circumstances of conflict. In sharing these stories, both women were highly criticized, and their stories were scrutinized. For example, China was singled out by the Ugandan government as a liar and the details of her life experience have been carefully dissected. Given the age of these girls when they became child soldiers and the difficulty of keeping track of events in such difficult conditions, it is impossible to offer detailed accounts of life in the bush. What we can take from these autobiographies, however, is a general sense of the experiences these young women encountered and to hear their stories from their own perspectives.

Including quotes from these autobiographies also allows me to include the voices of China and Evelyn, and in doing so, demonstrates an effort to offer a more inclusive set of

experiences and a somewhat less western-centric approach to this research topic. Their voices show us that despite all having the same label of child soldiers, the experiences are diverse and unique. The experience of soldiering, and life subsequently after, is dependent on various factors that require a feminist and gender-focused lens.

The three sections of the literature review serve as important contextual information for carrying out research on development programs and the exploratory content analysis and data collection carried out for this thesis. In particular, this thesis uncovers whether DDR programming pays attention to the needs of girl soldiers who become mothers and the particular supports they and their children require for reintegration into their communities.

Definitions and Background Information

Across the scholarship on child soldiers, there are important concepts and definitions that help us understand key terms. In this section, I provide an overview of the key themes of 'childhood' and 'child soldiers', as well as normative frameworks surrounding the broader scholarship on child soldiers. There is disagreement within the literature on these key terms and through the discussion provided below, I offer an overview of how key terms are understood and used in this thesis and the rationale for doing so. In this scholarly literature review section, I also provide an overview of key findings in the literature as they relate to core themes in the study of child soldiers more broadly. In summary, the themes examined here include the following: Conceptualizing Childhood and Child Soldiers; and International and Policy Frameworks.

Conceptualizing Childhood and Child Soldiers

The legal definition of a child soldier is any child used in "armed conflict by armed forces and armed groups, including as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies, or [for] sexual purposes" (Vancouver Principles, 2017, p.2). A child is defined as anyone under the age of

eighteen (Haer, 2017). There are no universal policies regarding DDR. Rather, the Vancouver Principles and The United Nations Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) are the two guiding documents for DDR planning, implementation, and standards.

The notion of 'child soldier' is, however, contested since there is no universal agreement on what it means to be a child and what constitutes a soldier (Wessells as cited in Stark, et al. 2009, p. 524). International law takes a universalist approach whereby anyone under 18 is considered a child. This is also known as the 'straight-18' approach (Stark et al., 2009). This conceptualization "strongly *idealizes* children as vulnerable and innocent without any responsibility attached to their actions" (Vaha & Vatsapuu, 2018, p.228).

International law awards children special protections under numerous doctrines such as The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children (UNCRC), due to this perception of children being vulnerable and in need of protection. As such, a criticism of the straight-18 approach is the perception of children as weak, incapable of making decisions, and vulnerable, which fundamentally undermines their agency and brands them as victims (Vaha & Vatsapuu, 2018; Mouthaan, 2015). By viewing child soldiers through this lens, the understanding of child soldier is simplified as they are almost exclusively viewed "through the lens of victimhood and never seen as active agents or even successful resisters" (Mouthaan, 2015, p.93).

While the straight-18 approach is advocated for by many scholars and NGOs, Bewicke, (2013) reminds us that under international law, voluntarily enlistment of children ages fifteen and above is still legal. As such, Bewicke, (2013) argues that this is a legal loophole where it is unclear if voluntarily recruited children, especially girls, between fifteen and eighteen have their rights "seriously or grossly violated" unless they are subjected to a different legal harm (p.200).

Despite commitments to a straight-18 approach, the transition to adulthood in many parts of the world may be "shaped by economic contexts or marked by rites of passages and ceremonial acts" (Stark et al., 2009, p. 524). These rites of passages and ceremonial acts are "often related to the ability to attain some kind of financial independence, employment, or income and finally starting a family" (Hauge, 2020, p.212). This may occur well before one turns 18 as the age that these rites of passage and ceremonies take place can greatly differ. For example, Sudanese girls undergo female genital cutting (as a rite of passage to womanhood) around the age of 12, and Angolese girls are deemed ready for marriage around the age of 14 (Stark et al., 2009). In this context, childhood is viewed as a social construction which is determined by the social, cultural, and political meanings in any given society (Norozi & Moen, 2016). As such, what it means to be a child must be understood within a specific context as there are multiple meanings of childhood. It is important to note that in considerations of rituals such as child marriage or female genital mutilation, there are other factors that must be acknowledged. The first being that these are harmful practices with global efforts of eradication, including from girls and advocates from the Global South. Moreover, young girls are not biologically ready for pregnancy and childbirth, nor mentally prepared for motherhood. Therefore, consideration of age is important when discussing girl soldiers as mothers as there are specific physiological considerations to consider.

When girl soldiers become mothers, culturally, these girls may be seen as adults due to their motherhood, or drawing on the prior example of Angola, they may have reached the age in which they are deemed ready for marriage and motherhood, thus entering adulthood. The challenges arising from different definitions of childhood make it difficult to determine whether former soldiers can benefit from adult or child DDR programs. As well, youth who are under 18

who consider themselves adults may feel disempowered if they are forced to undergo child soldier DDR rather than DDR programs designed for adults. Therefore, child soldier DDR must "identify ways to provide appropriate assistance to individuals under 18 who do not perceive themselves as children and are living in communities where they are regarded as adults" (Stark et al., 2009, p. 524).

Utilizing the straight-18 approach does mean that "the maximum number of young people receive treatment and protection intended specifically for child soldiers, including girls" (Fox, 2004, p.468). While this is a simplified lens, the UNCRC, the Vancouver Principles, and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Conflict provide much needed protection and rights by defining someone a child if they are under the age of 18. It is important to note that UNCRC Article 5 recognizes children's evolving capacities. That is, the recognition of a child's evolving maturity and capacity for making decisions on an individual basis. Therefore, while UNCRC cannot account for the social, cultural, geographic, and political realities of an individual, it does not assume a universal lack of agency and recognizes children as rights-holders.

International Policies and Global Commitments to Ending the Use of Child Soldiers

The Vancouver Principles, a political commitment from the United Nations and its member states on the prevention and recruitment and use on child soldiers was adopted in 2017. It is preceded by The Paris Principles (2007) and the Cape Town Principles (1997). The Vancouver Principles reverts from the Paris Principles' usage of the term 'Children associated with an armed force or group' back to the term 'child soldier'. As such, this is the term utilized throughout this thesis. It is important to note The Vancouver Principles is heavily focused on peacekeeping and child soldiers, whereas The Paris Principles and Cape Town Principles focus

more so on the recruitment and use of child soldiers themselves. As such, while the Vancouver Principles are the current guiding principles, there are sub principles within the Paris Principles that are more comprehensive and better relied upon than the Vancouver Principles. Thus, the two Principles should be applied in tandem.

The Vancouver Principles are meant for peacekeepers to "prioritize and operationalize the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers" (2017, p.3). There are seventeen principles and twelve mandates but only one speaks explicitly to DDR. Under this mandate, child soldiers are highlighted as a priority for all United Nations DDR missions (Vancouver Principles, 2017, p.5). Moreover, the Vancouver Principles (2017) outline that DDR needs to consider child soldier specific needs "including those based on gender, age, and other identity factors, to assist in their successful transition to normal life, and to prevent their re-recruitment" (p.5). However, there is no guidance given on how to do so. Thus, accounting for these factors is still up to the discretion of States and organizations implementing DDR.

IDDRS underwent a review period from 2017-2019. While the revised United Nations Approach to DDR was officially launched in 2019, IDDRS still has not been fully revised. Many of the modules, including 'Women, Gender, and DDR', are still under revision. The two most pertinent modules for this thesis, 'Children and DDR' and 'Youth and DDR' are still pending copy editing. As such, this thesis considers the 2006 IDDRS and 2014 Operational Framework as the official guidance.

IDDRS is meant to "provide direction and guidance to those engaged in preparing, implementing, and supporting DDR" (2014, p.13). Moreover, it offers a common strategic framework for all DDR programs. As such, it is a lengthy document and covers a wide array of subjects but does provide a module for children and DDR, and youth and DDR. Under IDDRS,

the term youth is defined as an age category between 15-24 years as they "fall between the legal categories of child and adult, and their needs are not necessarily well served by programmes designed for mature adults or very young children" (United Nations, 2014, p.1). This could be problematic due to the straight-18 model of childhood used to define child soldiers. However, it also offers an opportunity to provide more nuanced programming. Yet, due to straight-18, most under 18 tend to fall into child soldier DDR and those over 18 into adult DDR.

There are four guiding principles under the IDDRS for child soldier DDR programs. These are the

> child's right to life survival and development: The right to life, survival and development is not limited to physical integrity, but includes the need to ensure full and harmonious development, including the spiritual, moral and social levels, where education plays a key role; non-discrimination: states must ensure respect for the rights of all children within their jurisdiction – including non-national children – regardless of race, sex, age, religion, ethnicity, opinions, disability, or any other status of the child, or the child's parents or legal guardians; child participation: children should be allowed to express their opinions freely, and those opinions should be 'given weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child'. Children should be consulted at all stages of the [DDR] process. In particular, children should participate in making decisions with regard to family reunification, and vocational and educational opportunities; and considering the child's best interest at all times: Actions that affect the child should be based on assessment of whether these actions are in the child's best interests (United Nations, 2006, p.4-5).

These guiding principles are then integrated within how child soldier DDR should be planned and implemented. However, there are no instructions or guidance on how to incorporate

these principles and recommendations within an actual DDR program. This does leave room for states to contextualize the principles and recommendations for the specific conflict and needs of the child soldiers. Yet, it also runs the risk of being too generalized to be able to be implemented effectively. Moreover, as these are not policing but guiding frameworks, there is no mechanism to ensure that the frameworks are followed. As such, there is uneven implementation. This can occur at the global level but more importantly nationally. Within countries, multiple DDR programs run by different organizations can occur concurrently. Thus, if there no mechanism to ensure the full and equal implementation of the Vancouver Principles, the Paris Principles, and IDDRS, and therefore, the maximum benefit of DDR cannot be realized.

United Nations Normative Frameworks

2021 marked the 25th anniversary of the United Nation's children and armed conflict mandate. The 1996 Graça Machel Report on armed conflict and children resulted in the creation of the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict[3], the tabling of annual reports to the United Nations Security Council, the establishment of a Security Council Working Group, and the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict in 2000. The Optional Protocol prohibits the conscription of children under the age of 18 and ensures that military volunteers under the age of eighteen are exempted from direct participation in hostilities. The Rome Statute (2000) further designates the recruitment of children under 15 years of age as a war crime by state and non-state forces.

In addition, there are numerous United Nations Resolutions marking the importance of children in armed conflict. Notably, the first resolution to address the issue, United Nations

[3] Appointed in 2017, the current Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict is Virginia Gamba de Potgieter of Argentina.

Security Council resolution 1261, was adopted in August 1999. Resolution 1261 does not specifically define girls as child soldiers. However, girls are recognized in the need for "all parties to armed conflicts to take special measures to protect children, in particular girls, from rape and other forms of sexual abuse and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict and to take into account the special needs of the girl child throughout armed conflicts and their aftermath, including in the delivery of humanitarian assistance" (UNSCR, 1999, p.2). It was not until 2003 with the adoption of Resolution 1460 that girls were specifically included in the definition of child soldiers. Moreover OP13 affirmed the need for "Member States and international organizations to ensure that children affected by armed conflict are involved in all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, taking into account the specific needs and capacities of girls, and that the duration of these processes is sufficient for a successful transition to normal life, with a particular emphasis on education, including the monitoring, through, inter alia, schools, of children demobilized in order to prevent re-recruitment" (UNSCR, 2003, p.3).

Notably, Resolution 1261 in 1991, established the 'Six Grave Violations Against Children During Armed Conflict'. The recruitment or use of children as soldiers is included as a 'Grave Violation'. There are additional Grave Violations that child soldiers are especially vulnerable to such as killing and maiming of children, sexual violence against children, and abduction of children. In 2005, the Security Council established a Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism to systematically monitor, document, and report on Violations committed against children in situations of concern around the world. While there is no accountability mechanism linked to the monitoring and reporting, there is legal basis for the Grave Violations in relevant international law, encompassing international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and

international criminal law. Moreover, The United Nations Security Council's resolutions provide the United Nations with tools to address Grave Violations against children through the Secretary General's global annual report, listing of parties responsible for Grave Violations, the creation of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, and the requirement of dialogue with listed parties on the development of concrete and time-bound action plans to halt and prevent violations. While these mechanisms themselves do not inherently provide recourse, they do add accountability for parties using child soldiers.

Due to the legal basis of the Grave Violations, there have been notable examples in the International Criminal Court indicting persons for the recruitment or use of child soldiers. Notably, the first person arrested under an International Criminal Court warrant for the recruitment and use of child soldiers, Congolese militia leader Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, was found guilty of abducting children for the purposes of using them as child soldiers in Eastern DRC (International Criminal Court, n.d). Since then, the Special Court for Sierra Leone was the "first international criminal tribunal to prosecute individuals for the war crime of recruitment and use of child soldiers" (Oosterveld, 2019, p. 74). Notably among those convicted during this tribunal was former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor who was convicted for aiding both the Revolutionary United Front and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council in recruiting and using soldiers (Oosterveld, 2019). While these are just two examples, they highlight the gravity of the use of child soldiers, the potential for legal action for those who recruit and use child soldiers, and the need to protect children and child rights.

However, during the Lubanga trial , the International Criminal Court decided that "domestic work would only be considered [child] soldiering within the meaning of the Rome Statue 'when the support provided by the girl exposed her to danger by becoming a potential

target'" (Bewicke, 2013, p.203). The implication of this decision was that sexual violence was not considered as sufficient to deem a girl as a child soldier (Bewicke, 2013). Thus, while the conviction was noteworthy for child protection overall, the decisions made by the International Criminal Court were gender-blind and excluded the reality of many girls.

From Policy to Practice: Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Programs

DDR is the daunting process of 'unmaking' a soldier. For child soldiers this "is a process in which [they] transition into civil society and enter meaningful roles and identities as civilians accepted by their families and communities" (Brooks, 2012, p.293). Further, they are vital to the "initial stabilization of war-torn societies [and] their long-term development" (Casey-Maslen, 2019, p. 452). Therefore, DDR is considered vital to the peace process and is used in all United Nations peacekeeping operations (Higgs, 2020). However, the successes of DDR, particularly along gendered lines, are contested.

Disarmament

Disarmament refers to the physical removal of weapons and collection of information regarding the size and capacity of an armed group (Haer, 2017).

Demobilization

Demobilization is the second stage of the process in which armed groups are disbanded and soldiers are removed from their control (Haer, 2017). Demobilization can involve providing urgent support services such as access to health care, food, and education services (Vastapuu, 2019). As a result, the demobilization stage can last for as long as a year (Vastapuu, 2019). Within the IDDRS, the United Nations has two stages of demobilization – demobilization and reinsertion. Under this, demobilization refers to the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants and may include the processing of individuals to temporary centers. Reinsertion then

refers to the transitional assistance offered prior to reintegration. That is, the short-term material or financial assistance to meet the immediate needs. These first two stages, disarmament and demobilization, are also meant to "create the security and trust necessary for implementing peace agreements" (Luna, 2019, p. 454).

Reintegration

Lastly, reintegration is the process in which combatants "acquire civilian status and support services to reintegrate into civilian life" (Muldoon et al., 2014, p.2). This is the most complex stage of the process as it is highly demanding. Reintegration can take several years as soldiers have to be reintegrated into civil society in a sustainable manner (Vastapuu, 2019). Thus, there is a need to consider the individual soldier and the broader social context into which they are reintegrating.

Casey-Masen (2019) highlights the evolution of DDR over time and argues that DDR programming is now in its fourth generation. The first generation of DDR began in the 1980s across Latin America and Southern Africa (Casey-Maslen, 2019). These programs were "cookie cutter" with the goal of breaking the "command and control" within armed groups (Casey-Maslen, 2019, p.453). The second generation of DDR emerged in the 2000s and "reflected a broadening of focus from 'a narrow preoccupation' with the demobilization and reintegration of former fighters to the far more expansive –and expensive – goals of building the conditions for sustainable peace" (Casey-Maslen, 2019, p.254). Thus, this generation saw alignment with the emerging peace, security, and development nexus. The third generation of DDR which emerged in the 2010s, was implemented during conflicts with the aim of "promoting – or even forcing – peace" (Casey-Maslen, 2019, p.255). While DDR has been implemented throughout ongoing conflicts previously, this third generation was reconceived as working with the political

processes rather than as stand-alone programming (Casey-Maslen, 2019). Casey-Maslen (2019) argues that the fourth generation, is more accurately described as "Disengagement, Disassociation, Reintegration and Reconciliation" (p.455). Accordingly, previous DDR conceptions are insufficient in some ongoing conflicts, such as Nigeria where Casey-Maslen (2019) bases their research. They further argue that Disengagement, Disassociation, Reintegration and Reconciliation must be connected to child protection and accountability measures. While this argument of a fourth generation is interesting and may show the future of DDR, for the purposes of this thesis, the widely accepted notion of DDR is that of the third generation.

Spontaneous Reintegration

There are two methods that can be used for reintegration into society. As discussed above, the formal process is that of DDR. However, not all child soldiers enter the formal DDR programs or access any formal activities and instead rely upon self-reintegration or spontaneous reintegration (Alam, 2019; Coulter, 2009; Muldoon et al., 2014; Tóth, 2018). Barrett (2019) notes that abduction length can impact whether a child soldier accesses formal DDR. For example, children who were in the LRA for a brief time were especially likely to return straight home rather than access formal DDR (Barrett, 2019).

The reasons why girls do not access DDR and instead spontaneously reintegrate are largely structural. At the beginning of DDR, participants had to present a weapon in order to qualify (McKay, 2004). Girls who served primarily in support roles were unable to produce weapons and thus unable to qualify for DDR (McKay, 2004). A second structural barrier is that girls are often unaware that DDR programs exist (McKay, 2004; Vastapuu, 2019). Information regarding DDR is largely disseminated through high-level soldiers, who are usually men who tell

other men and boys (Vastapuu, 2019). These high-level soldiers can also be asked to make a list of other soldiers, and once more, men and boys are more likely to be on these lists (Vastapuu, 2019).

Even if girls are aware of DDR and there are no entry barriers, they may choose not to participate (McKay, 2004; Muldoon et al., 2014; Vastapuu, 2019; Whitman, 2019; Worthen et al., 2010). One reason for this is the potential for SGBV and insecurity within DDR facilities (Denov & Ricard-Guay, 2013). Not all DDR camps are gender-disaggregated, which increases the vulnerability of already vulnerable girls. As well, girls may fear stigmatization (Denov & Ricard-Guay, 2013). By choosing DDR, girls are agreeing to label themselves as child soldiers and present in society as former child soldiers, which can be heavily stigmatized.

Gender-Specific Insights into Child Soldiers and DDR

Gender is a social construction, intrinsically linked to culture and norms and which permeates all aspects of life. The structural factors that perpetuate gender inequality in societies are present within conflict and post-conflict settings. Within conflict, the centrality of gender as a construct that affects all individuals, and all aspects of life may even be more pronounced. For example, conflict can "exacerbate pre-existing gender dynamics, rendering them more regressive or restrictive [,it] can also upend traditional gender norms" (Kapur & Thompson, 2021, p.22). Therefore, studying gender norms, gender power dynamics, gender relations, and gender-specific experiences of conflict and post-conflict is vital to understanding different experiences and the impacts of programming on diverse individuals. In this section, the cross-cutting theme of gender inequality is examined in relation to a range of factors that determine DDR programming priorities and/or the impacts or gaps left behind as a result of gendered DDR initiatives.

Due to notions of militarization and masculinity, and gender and age-related biases, initial DDR programs assumed only adult men were soldiers (Fox, 2004). Child soldiers were not considered a threat in post-conflict settings (Haer, 2017) and they were not particularly visible as they often did not wear uniforms or any clothing that would link them to armed groups. Supports through the DDR initiative were often reserved for those who were handing in military weapons. Child soldiers may not have had weapons to turn in, and for those who did, the children would often turn their weapons in to more senior soldiers who would then relinquish all weapons to authorities during peace processes. The lack of presence of young soldiers turning in weapons then translated into a set of assumptions about who constitutes a soldier and who needed DDR. Young women and girls were even less likely to have weapons to turn in, meaning they were often left out DDR programs for some of the same reasons noted above (Bouta, 2005; McKay, 2004; Wessells, 2019). Furthermore, since the recruitment and use of child soldiers is illegal, it was strategic for senior fighters to find ways to ensure child soldiers remained invisible in peace processes and therefore, the reintegration of child soldiers was a strategic move to not *see* child soldiers as a priority for peacekeeping programs (Haer, 2017). Following the passing of United Nations resolutions on sexual and gender-based violence in conflict (Resolutions 1325, 1880 and others), and the growing sanctions against armed groups using rape as a weapon of war and the use of child brides, the hiding or invisibility of young women and girls serving as soldiers was also strategic. The combination of militants strategically not drawing attention to child soldiers and the invisibility (resulting from international donor's perception of who constitutes a soldier) meant that children, overall, lacked access to DDR and especially girls and young women. Over time as more awareness grew about the use of child soldiers, DDR programs began to include boy soldiers and aimed to better meet the needs of this demographic (Fox, 2004). Young girls,

however, continued to be left out of DDR programming and even in programming that was offered to girl child soldiers and boy child soldiers, it was largely in underfunded and ill-conceived programs (Haer, 2017). There were disagreements between policy makers and organizations on how and which services to provide for child soldiers (Cohn, 2004). Evaluations and critiques of early DDR processes has shed light on the specific needs of child soldiers and over time, new programs have replaced the initial activities that constitute DDR processes (Haer, 2017).

According to the Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers (2020), DDR programs must be child-centered and rights-based. DDR must ensure children's' rights to "resources such as psychosocial support and education", the right to protection (Wessells, 2019, p.471), and the right to participate in decisions that affect them (Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers, 2020). Child soldier DDR further differs from adult programs in the programmatic approaches as well. Firstly, no formal peace agreement or process is needed for child soldiers to enter DDR (Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers, 2020). Secondly, children are to be "viewed and treated as victims of the conflict, whose involvement takes place along a continuum of coercion involving, pressure, manipulation, and the threat or use of force" (Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers, 2020, p.5). However, War Child UK (2019) cautions that focusing on children solely as victims runs the risk that they will be seen only as recipients of services, rather than as members and participants in their community. As well, "failing to recognise the difficulties communities face accepting children back when children have committed atrocities undermines the importance of truth, reconciliation and justice as part of peacebuilding" (War Child UK, 2019, p.9).

Child soldiers experience the 'perpetrator status' which can affect their return as it "affects their acceptance and the process of that acceptance. Families and communities can find it incredibly difficult to accept children back and want to see retribution and justice, particularly when children are perceived to have 'voluntarily' join armed groups" (War Child UK, 2019, p.10).

Child soldiers as 'vulnerable victims' and/or stigma for those re-entering communities are also gendered realities. The experiences for girls are distinct from that of boys. Girls face heightened perceptions of vulnerability and victimhood and distinct forms of stigma, particularly related to norms and expectations of 'virginity' for girls before marriage which can lead to a lifetime of loneliness and heightened poverty for girls who may be considered 'impure' or 'unmarriageable' (Denov & Ricard-Guay, 2013).

The growing attention and awareness about girl child soldiers has not been fully realized within DDR despite the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups attempts to "recognize and redress the historical invisibility of girls" (Kapur & Thompson, 2021, p.30). The Vancouver Principles goes further by acknowledging the need for intersectionality within DDR, including gender. The Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles (2019) also states the importance of conducting an analysis of the gender dynamics present within the use and recruitment of child soldiers. Yet, despite this, DDR programs are still generally designed with boys in mind or reflect broader gender stereotypes and norms (McKay, 2004; Wessells, 2019). Therefore, despite the realization that the ways in which child soldiers experience conflict is linked to the "socio-culturally prescribed norms, attitudes and expectations related to gender" (Kapur & Thompson, 2021, p.22), DDR is lacking this introspection. As such, according to Wessells (2019) DDR programs – and those who implement

them - are still largely unable to "take into account the gendered nature of girls' and boys' war experiences and their equally gendered perceptions about what they need the most" (p.476) .

There remain many ongoing challenges supporting girls (Cohn, 2004). Moreover, there are still pervasive myths around child soldiers and the role that girls play within conflict (Kapur & Thompson, 2021). These myths are linked to gender norms that regulate the roles that boys and girls are expected to play within society. As such, the legal recognition that both boys and girls can be child soldiers and hold a variety of roles does not reflect their lived reality post-conflict. Therefore, reintegration processes do not fully account for the specific needs of girls, and often fail to reach girls (Coulter, 2009; Denov, 2019; Haer, 2017; Kostelny, 1999; McKay & Mazurana, 2004; McKay 2004; Muldoon et al., 2014; Tóth, 2018; Vastapuu, 2019; Wessells, 2019; Worthen et al., 2010). The challenges of reintegration are discussed in more detail in the literature review section: Analysing DDR: Taking Stock of Its Benefits and Challenges.

Children Born to Child Soldiers and their Societal Integration

The children born to girl child soldiers also fit the legal definition of child soldiers, though many do not identify as child soldiers as they were born into the life rather than being recruited or abducted (Denov, 2019). For example, children born to girl soldiers during the conflict may view the bush, or the conflict setting, as home (Denov, 2019; Denov & Lakor, 2018). The bush is a prominent site of identity formation for these children and rather than a site of conflict, it is "a place of love, cohesion and [is] 'a way of life'" (Denov, 2019, p.245). Therefore, reintegration is not possible for children who were never part of a community outside of their lives in the bush. The end of the conflict can often mean the end of feeling at home or the only way of life they have come to know (Denov, 2019). Children born to girl soldiers therefore face unique realities that are often ignored within DDR policies and programs, including the

reality of not having a home or community to return to, and psychological challenges of belonging, among other social and psychological challenges (Denov & Lakar, 2018; Denov, 2019; Gustavsson et al., 2017; Shanahan & Veale, 2016; Worthen et al., 2010).

The challenges of starting a new life for children born of conflict become challenges for the mothers as well (Baines & Gauvin, 2013; Denov 2019; Denov & Lakor, 2018; Gustavsson, 2017; Shanahan & Veale, 2016; Worthen et al., 2010). The mothers of children born of conflict must grapple with the complexity of reintegrating themselves and their children, along with all the stigma that comes from these dynamics (Baines & Gauvin, 2013), particularly stigma associated with experiences of rape and having children outside of marriage (Baines & Gauvin, 2017; Kostelny, 1999; Shanahan & Veale, 2016). Young mothers are therefore among the most underserved populations within DDR (Denov & Ricard-Guay, 2013; (Worthen et al., 2010).

If there are access barriers to reintegration for former girl soldiers, then the barriers for their children are likely even more prominent (Denov & Lakor, 2018; Denov, 2019; Gustavsson et al., 2017; Shanahan & Veale, 2016; Worthen et al., 2010). For example, due to their place of birth, children born of war are intrinsically linked with conflict and often seen as "violent, psychologically disturbed, [and] dangerous 'rebel children'" (Denov & Lakor, 2018, p.227; Denov, 2019; Shanahan & Veale, 2016).

DDR programs have, in some instances, included girls with the expectation that the benefits of their participation will trickle down to their children (Denov & Lakor, 2018). However, these children have unique experiences and needs that cannot be fully addressed through supports to the mothers (Shanahan & Veale, 2016). Denying the unique needs of children born of conflict can increase the stigmatization and marginalization of these children (Denov & Lakor, 2018).

Rehabilitation and Local Ways of Healing

As discussed above, DDR is predominately a Western top-down instrument for peace-keeping and re-building societies. As the main actors supporting DDR programs are foreign donors, multi-lateral organizations such as the United Nations, and non-governmental organizations, the localized ways of healing are often overlooked (Akello, 2019). Local community healing strategies can offer valuable tools for the reintegration and rehabilitation of child soldiers and their children, while also offering support mechanisms and tools for psychological and emotional healing for the communities that are welcoming them home (Barrett, 2019). Local methods of healing are therefore important tools for peaceful reintegration.

Article 39 of UNCRC provides for measures to promote the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims of armed conflicts. The Paris Principles goes further and contains a specific reference to local ways of healing. Principle 7.53 states

> In some communities, children are viewed and view themselves as carrying bad spirits from their experiences with armed forces or armed groups. Appropriate cultural practices, as long as they are not harmful to children, can be essential to a child's reintegration and should be supported (2007, p.35).

The Vancouver Principles do not contain a reference to local methods of healing. The importance though of these cultural practices being within the UNCRC and the Paris Principles is the recognition of these practices and the important role they can play. However, traditional DDR is also useful as the Paris Principles recommends psychological support as a "combination of traditional approaches and opportunities for supportive conversations", that are beneficial for most children (2007, p.39).

Local ways of healing are also vital in overcoming local beliefs that may cause stigma towards child soldiers. For example, in Uganda the idea of '*cen'*, that is evil spirits, is commonly cited as a source of stigmatization (Akello, 2010; Atim et al., 2018; Baines & Oliveira, 2020; Barrett, 2019; Freeman, 2020; Stewart, 2021; Wessells, 2019). Barrett (2019) found that even when child soldiers in Uganda themselves do not believe in the healing rituals, or even *cen* itself, participating in these rituals assisted in acceptance and social reintegration. Further, for some communities in the absence of formal justice processes, these local methods of healing can be viewed as a source of justice and a way to cleanse child soldiers of spirits, and as such, are imperative for social reintegration (Barrett, 2019).

There are various local methods of healing, or healing rituals, that are used across Africa and in particular for child soldiers returning from the bush. In Uganda for example, the Amnesty Act of 2000 included a provision to "consider and promote appropriate reconciliation mechanisms in affected areas" (as cited in Barrett, 2019, p.414). Local methods of healing were included in the interpretation alongside religious and secular reintegration methods. These local methods of healing, or traditional rituals are used in Uganda, in Acholi culture, to strengthen social ties, replenish relationships with one's ancestors, and appease spirits who may interfere with the living in the face of moral transgressions (Baines & Oliveira, 2020, p. 15). There are various rituals within Uganda that may be utilized for child soldiers returning from the bush. The first, and most common, is that of '*nyono tong gweno'*, or stepping on the egg (Baines & Oliveira, 2020; Barrett, 2019; Shanahan & Veale, 2016). This simple ritual is used to welcome and clean someone after an extended absence from home (Baines & Oliveira, 2020; Barrett, 2019). Shanahan & Veale, (2016) found that girl soldiers as mothers often complete this ritual with their child as a way to welcome their children into the community.

In Sierra Leone 'purification' rituals are used specifically for girl child soldiers who were exposed to sexual violence. According to Kostelny (2004), purification rituals are a necessity for "girls regaining their right to participate in community activities, their eligibility for marriage, and the reputation of having 'stable mind' in the community that would allow them to engage in business activities" (p. 508). Honwana (2011) found that in Angola and Mozambique, healing rituals were frequently conducted at the behest of families, especially in rural areas. There are no set rituals such as in Uganda, however, there are two distinct categories of rituals. The first category are rituals that resemble rites of passage from adolescence or childhood to adulthood, that child soldiers missed (Honwana, 2011). During these rituals, child soldiers are "purified of pollution and given a new place in the family and community" (Honwana, 2011, p. 8). The second category of rituals are those that treat the specific "ills that afflict demobilized child soldiers and their relatives" (Honwana, 2011, p. 8).

Despite the prevalence of local ways of healing, and the important role they can play, there remains "a lack of global and national recognition for such a rich body of Indigenous knowledge" (Ochen, 2014, p. 249). Wessells (2019) further argues that governments, and NGOs are quick to diagnose traditional beliefs, such as *cen*, as mental health illnesses such as depression or trauma (Wessells, 2019). Thus, little attention is paid to beliefs such as *cen*, or to "local, sustainable treatments such as [local methods of healing]" (Wessells, 2019, p. 480). The result then is DDR continues to be a Western imposition, while useful, perpetrating Western beliefs and ways of healing. Including local methods of healing localizes and assists in de-colonializing DDR; however, they are underutilized, thus inherently lowering the potential of DDR for long-term sustainable reintegration. For girl child soldiers who become mothers, and

their children, local methods of healing are incredibly important as they may reduce the stigmatization they face.

Analysing DDR: Taking Stock of Its Benefits and Challenges

The Bureaucratic Nature of Aid

An underlying motivation of DDR is the stabilization and rebuilding of post-conflict societies (Wessells, 2019). Thus, there is a focus on rebuilding "physical, political, educational, and economic infrastructures, not rebuilding people's lives" (Mckay, 2004, p.20). Despite the recognition that reintegration is complex and requires several years, most reintegration programs last one or two years due to lack of funding (Wessells, 2019). Other funding priorities and areas in need of reintegration programs means there is a lack of sustainable support. The short term and cyclical function of aid hinders the ability of reintegration programs to provide adequate support.

Short term funding is compounded due to the lack of available funding globally. Funding needs to be predictable, sustained, and flexible to enable long-term programming that is adaptable to individual children and the context they are in. The lack of global funding is compounded by short-term funding cycles. Reintegration takes years, but too often NGOs receive grants for just six, nine, or twelve months of programming. With such short funding cycles, children are only partially-supported. Morales (2011) argues that when funding is insufficient, girls, in particular those in non-combatant and support roles, are the most likely to be disadvantaged (Akello, 2010; Atim et al., 2018; Baines & Oliveira, 2020; Freeman, 2020; Stewart, 2021).

Short reintegration timeframes are further compounded by the fact that reintegration programs are often top-down (Wessells, 2019; Worthen et al., 2010). The programs are designed

by “outside experts, who adhere to international standards” (Wessells. 2019, p. 476). DDR is then implemented within power imbalances between outsider experts and the local community (Wessells, 2019). These top-down approaches leave little space for gender-specific commitments. Donors often want quick results, which leads to programs being designed in a universal manner with little room to contextualize (Haer, 2017; Wessells, 2019). Moreover, children and girls are not invited to participate in both the design process and peace negotiations (Vastapuu, 2019; Wessells 2019). Under Article 12 of the UNCRC, children have the right to participation. Yet, Wessells (2019), states “reintegration programmes often discriminate against children by minimizing their voices and agency in the design and implementation of the reintegration programmes” (p.472). Thus, not only is the right to participation being ignored, but it also perpetuates the neocolonial idea that top-down, outsider-initiated approaches are superior. Moreover, lack of consultations and data collection to determine age- and gender-specific information about the composition of former armed groups makes it difficult to design programs that fully meet their needs (Vastapuu, 2019; Wessells 2019).

The Need for Context-specific Programming

Due to the short-term cyclical nature of aid and the complexities of DDR, it is not always possible to adequately design the programs as needed within local contexts. For example, as employable skills are often cited as a reintegration challenge, DDR programs often provide vocational training in order to bolster the chances of employment post conflict (Wessells, 2019). However, when the local context is not adequately considered, these skills-building courses can be futile. As Wessells (2019) found, in one project in Uganda, one hundred children were trained as bicycle mechanics. Yet, the area itself was only equipped for three or four bicycle mechanics (Wessells, 2019). “The expected jobs typically do not materialize since specific programs [such

as this example] do little to develop wider markets that are needed to enable sustainable job creation" (Wessells, 2019, p. 484). Not only then can DDR funding be used poorly and inefficiently, but actually cause more harm as children believe such training will bolster their employment opportunities and economic prosperity (Wessells, 2019). The larger implication then is that these trainings potentially reinforce a sense of hopelessness.

Furthermore, these vocational trainings have a tendency to be gender-blind and designed for boys and men (Hauge, 2020). Hauge (2008) found that for girls and women undergoing DDR in Guatemala, any training provided in the provisional camps "was too short and superficial to function as a basis for later employment" (p. 303). As well, the course design itself did not consider their needs and what training they themselves wanted (Hauge, 2008).

DDR During Ongoing Conflict

DDR can also be affected by the circumstances surrounding the child soldier's participation. For example, if DDR programming is provided to a child soldier who has managed to escape during ongoing conflict, integration strategies may be impacted if the child fears re-recruitment, re-abduction, or retribution from the armed group for escaping (Higgs, 2020). Once the conflict has ended programs tend to be more long-term, whereas during conflict, they are still in the "immediate emergency phase" (Muldoon et al., 2014, p.6). As such, the quality of the programs can differ in different stages of conflict and peace. Thus, despite the progress that has been made for child soldier reintegration and the call for appropriate measures (Cohn, 2004), there are still limitations and challenges to be addressed.

For example, the DDR process in Colombia is unique as it is being implemented in parallel with transitional justice and the pursuit of peace (García-Godos, 2012). This is a challenge because "the success of the process depends on its legitimacy. Legitimacy in turn,

depends on the effective implementation of the components of both processes" (Garcia-Godos, 2012, p.220). However, the transitional justice process and pursuit of peace in Colombia is ongoing (Friedman et al., 2019). The Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) did sign a peace agreement, the Havana Accords, in 2016 but it still remains to be seen if there will be peace (Friedman et al., 2019). Further, the DDR process has been "conceptualized and created within a framework of 'post conflict' context", (Denov & Marchand, 2014, p. 230) when in fact is it being implemented in an ongoing conflict context. Moreover, though peace accords are signed, violence and conflict are ongoing in Colombia due to criminal drug groups, and militia and para-military groups who are not participating in the peace process (Martuscelli & Villa, 2018). Thus, there is a threat of recruitment or retribution for escape. The care aspect of the DDR program partly deals with this threat by placing children in foster homes away from their family and home communities. Yet, this does not guarantee safety and security. Denov and Marchand (2014) found that former child soldiers often had to relocate multiple times "often under dangerous circumstances and urgency" (338). Many former child soldiers have a fear of being recognized by guerilla or paramilitary members (Denov & Marchand, 2014). Constant displacement threatens reintegration success due to lack of stability and support, and constant insecurity. This is a flaw of the current DDR process. However, this flaw cannot be attributed solely to the DDR design. The violence and ongoing conflict are the primary cause of this displacement. The only way to ensure that these children have a secure environment is to either remove them entirely from the conflict situation or have the conflict end. However, due to the complex nature of conflicts, they are now often long-lasting and DDR during conflict is a reality, complicating the process.

Barriers to DDR

Multiple barriers for girl child soldiers' access to DDR still exist as previously discussed (Denov, 2019; Haer, 2017; Kostelny, 1999; McKay 2004; Muldoon et al., 2014; Tóth, 2018; Vastapuu, 2019; Wessells, 2019; Worthen, Veale, McKay & Wessells, 2010). There are numerous reasons as to why girls' participation in DDR is still lacking. Since women and girls are largely not involved within peace negotiations or DDR design, the entry criteria can prevent girls from participating (Vastapuu, 2019). Girls may unaware of DDR processes, or are unable to produce weapons (McKay, 2004). While it is no longer the case that weapons must be produced, there can be other weaponry tests. For example, in Sierra Leone, children were required to "strip down, reassemble and fire an AK-47" (Wessells, 2019, p.475). Girls in supporting roles were once again excluded due to this requirement despite the programs being designed for both genders (Wessells, 2019).

Even if girls are aware of DDR and there are no entry barriers, they may choose not to participate (McKay, 2004; Muldoon et al., 2014; Vastapuu, 2019; Whitman, 2019; Worthen et al., 2010). Girls hope that not participating will deter the stigmatization that comes with the label of child soldier (Whitman, 2019). All child soldiers face stigmatization post-conflict (Higgs 2020). Yet, girl child soldiers are stigmatized in a way that boys are not, largely due to the stigmatization of sexual violence (Whitman, 2019). The physical space of many DDR programs is centrally located and highly visible, which does not minimize stigmatization (McKay, 2004). DDR does not prioritize reduction of stigma, yet this is an identified barrier to societal reintegration for girls and their children (Denov & Lakor, 2018; McKay 2004; Wessells, 2019; Worthen et al., 2010).

The DDR barriers for the children of child soldiers are more acute. these children have experiences and needs that cannot be conflated to that of their mothers (Shanahan & Veale,

2016). It denies their reality and does not allow for their specific needs to be addressed. As such, the risk for challenges integrating into society are magnified.

Considerations for Improving DDR Programming: Understanding the Experiences of Child Soldiers

To improve DDR programming and meet the diverse needs of different populations, it is important to understand the experiences of child soldiers more fully. In this section, I provide a literature review of diverse needs of child soldiers with an overview of the gender-specific experiences of boy soldiers and girls soldiers.

Boys As Soldiers

As boys do still comprise the majority of child soldiers, a brief consideration to their role is warranted. McKay (2005) notes:

> Boys' experiences are both similar to girls and also differ as an effect of gender. As young children taken into a force, boys may carry out domestic tasks, be porters, and participate in terrorist acts. Although some boys are thought to experience sexual abuse, little is known about the extent of sexual violence perpetrated against boys by male and female commanders in a force; its occurrence is thought to be much less widespread for boys than for girls. Boys also may be forbidden to sexually approach girls and women until they attain rank, such as a commander, within the rebel force (p.391).

The social construction of gender impacts boys as well. The most apparent manifestation of this was the perception that only boys were child soldiers, and girls were passive victims and sex slaves. However, it is important to note that boy child soldiers may also be subjected to sexual violence. For example, in his autobiography former child soldier Emmanual Jal (2009) recounts

> after that I noticed things that I had not before seen – bigger soldiers getting into bed with a jenajesh [(child soldier)] at night, and pain in the boy's eyes the next morning… I learned to sleep with a paper bag inside my shorts and one eye open. The rustle of paper would wake me if anyone tried to touch me again (108-109).

Moreover, in the 2022 Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, of the 1,326 verified cases of rape and sexual violence, 28 were boys. While this shows that sexual violence is a reality for boys, the issue is much more prevalent for girls.

Boys do still have needs within DDR that differ from that of adults, but as DDR has largely been framed around boys, they are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, in exploring the needs of children born to child soldiers, boys may be discussed. In particular, the discussion will predominately center on their identity as children of child soldiers.

Girls as Soldiers

Despite child soldiers being a pressing international concern for nearly three decades both academia and international law and organizations were largely gender blind for the first two decades (Tóth, 2018). This is due to patriarchal norms favouring men as dominant, deserving of power, and worthy to fight, leading to the historical erasure of the of women's and girl's participation in armed conflicts (Brown, 2021). It was not until the past decade when a gender lens appeared due to increased academic attention towards girl child soldiers (Haer, 2017).

Due to increased research and advocacy, the perception of girl child soldiers has shifted within academia and international discourse. It is now widely accepted that girl child soldiers perform a variety of roles such as "fighting on the frontlines, being used as suicide bombers, intelligence gatherers, spies, porters, sex slaves, recruiters, messengers, and support functions such as caregivers … cooks, and domestic servants" (Whitman, 2019, p.30). The roles that girls

play are diverse and are multi-faceted (McKay, 2005). Girls are not constrained to one role within an armed force and may at different times assume different responsibilities or multiple. As such, "the categories of 'fighter' and 'bush wife' should not be considered as mutually exclusive" (Oosterveld, 2019, p. 82)

McKay (2005) reminds us that girls "ages, and how gender is constructed within the force, such as whether girls are viewed as 'equal' to boys" influences girls experiences and roles (p.389). As such, "the division of labour between boys and girls often mirrors context-specific gender roles and preconceived notions of relative strengths and capacities. Therefore, while boys and girls may share some of the same experiences, gender shapes the experience and cannot be ignored (Fox, 2004).

Girl child soldiers are not always abducted and forcibly made into soldiers. Martuscelli & Bandarra (2020) and Wessells (2006) note that in Colombia voluntary enlistment can be a source of empowerment for girls. They argue international discourse frames children and child soldiers as victims (Martuscelli & Bandarra, 2020). As such, girl soldiers beyond the discourse of victimhood are silenced in academia and broader policy discussions (Martuscelli & Bandarra, 2020). Brett (2004) further argues that joining an armed group is a form of exercising agency and exerting control. Through joining an armed group, girls may be escaping domestic violence, seeking protection (Bewicke, 2013; Brett, 2004) or due to political beliefs, poverty, obtaining resources, or even to seek revenge (McKay & Mazurana 2004). Brett (2004) explains that

> some [girls] seek to protect themselves directly by being armed. Others choose to which commander they will surrender, knowing that this will entail a sexual relationship but that in this way at least they have some measure of choice about their sexual partner, and they are likely to be treated better if they 'volunteer' than wait to be abducted (33).

It is also argued that "the distinction between voluntary enlistment and forced recruitment [is] a distinction without meaning, [as such] … we can never speak of voluntary enlistment in the case of child soldiers" (Haer, 2017, p. 456). However while there are debates on true agency and whether a minor can truly volunteer for armed conflict, Brett (2004) states the important aspect is that girls themselves consider it an act of volunteering, thus exerting their own agency. It is important to note that not all girl child soldiers are forcibly abducted as this discourse silences the voices and lived experiences of the girls who have volunteered.

SGBV and Rape as a Weapon of War

One aspect that is largely shaped by gender dynamics is that of sexual violence. Not all girls will experience sexual violence. In fact, in certain cases, sexual activity is highly regulated within armed groups (Fox, 2004). Boys do experience sexual violence, but the gendered dimension of this violence vastly differs as boys are not subjected to the role of wife and mother due to this violence. However, the high instances of sexual violence against girls cannot be ignored. Moreover, the use of girls as 'rewards' cannot be discounted as a gendered phenomenon (Gustavsson et al., 2017).

The use of SGBV within conflict is not a new phenomenon nor is it exclusive to child soldiers. In fact, conflict-related sexual violence is "one of the most reoccurring wartime human rights abuses" (Denov, 2015, p.62). It is used as a "strategic and tactical weapon" (Whitman, 2019, p.28). It is largely a gendered phenomenon, primarily affecting women and girls.

During conflict, sexual violence is a daily occurrence at individual, family, and community levels for girls and women (Amone-P'Olak et al., 2020). However, children are the most vulnerable (Denov, 2015). "War deepens already deep sexual divisions, emphasizing the male as perpetrator of violence, women as victim" (Cockburn, 2010, p.144). As such, it

legitimizes men as the perpetrators of such violence and women and girls as victims (Cockburn, 2010). Moreover, during conflict, women and girls' bodies become "literal sites of combat" (Denov. 2015, p.62).

Child Soldiers as Wives and Mothers

> *He called me again and said that I had to make the choice between life and death. If I wanted to live, I had to be his wife. (Amony, 2015, p.38-39).*

The LRA in Uganda is perhaps the most discussed group which used child soldiers in large part due to the Stop Kony campaign in 2012. While this brought the issue of child soldiering to larger public awareness, what was not discussed was a key military strategy employed by the LRA That is, the fact "forced marriage and impregnation was a key military strategy of the LRA" (Denov & Lakor, 2018, p.218). Girls and young women were married to commanders to create new families (Baines, 2014). The marriages were used to create a new generation of fighters and clan system (Denov & Lakor, 2018). As such, all sexual relations within the LRA were heavily regulated and any acts of sex, including sexual violence, outside of these marriages would result in beatings or death (Baines, 2014). Further, all interactions between opposite genders were forbidden if they were unmarried unless there was an official reason (Baines, 2014). The punishment for this included beatings, canings, imprisonment, or death (Baines, 2014). The ideology behind this was to reproduce by giving birth to a new nation (Baines, 2014). However, "without the consent of the woman and man, and without the formal processes cementing the relationships of their lineages, women are not only coerced into marriage, but have no rights or recourse within it" (Baines, 2014, p.409). Beyond rape, forced pregnancy, and motherhood, the implications of those are most seen when girls are attempting to reintegrate into society. This will be discussed in more detail further on.

The LRA highlights an example where forced marriage was a military tactic and highly regulated. However, the use of forced marriage is still present in other conflicts without being ingrained in the military strategies. For example, in rebel groups where there is no payment, marriage is a way to reward male soldiers (Gustavsson et al., 2017).

A 'benefit' of marriage included the potential of gaining authority over lower ranking and unmarried men and boys (Liu Institute for Global Issues & Gulu District NGO Forum, 2006). However, this authority was largely within domestic labour (Liu Institute for Global Issues & Gulu District NGO Forum, 2006). However, the largest 'benefit' cited is that of protection. Baines (2014), Coulter (2009) and Denov and Maclure (2006) discuss that forced marriages can also offer protection. Coulter (2009) and Denov and Maclure (2006) both found that in the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone, having a bush husband not only offered protection from rape – that is, from other men - and coerced consent featured within these marriages. Denov and Maclure (2006) further found that having a bush husband could also lead to less frequent rape. However, the authors also found that this privilege was closely linked to the rank of the husband as girls were treated according to the rank and status of their husbands (Denov and Maclure, 2006). Oosterveld (2019) further argues that becoming a wife during Sierra Leone's conflict could also be a matter of survival for some girls. Within the LRA in Uganda, Baines (2014) found marriages provided protection for the girls. As such, the gendered norm of men being the protector and women and girls of being vulnerable and in need of protection is replicated within these armed groups. Nonetheless, the 'protection' afforded through marriage to soldiers that some girls and young women experienced must be understood as a lesser of two evils.

The forced marriages prevalent in many conflicts replicate not only the traditions of marriage but the gendered dimensions of marriage including domestic and reproductive duties (Baines, 2014). Therefore, in addition to active front-line duties, "pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding were all part of women's every day wartime experiences, just like cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, and farming. Even during the war, the chores of everyday [need] to be performed" (Coulter, 2009, p.116).

Pregnancy

> *I wanted to get rid of the baby. There was an old Congolese woman who ground lots of red peppers very finely and told me to drink them. I drank it all, but the baby didn't come out. Instead, I experienced horrible pains in my waist and had to be taken to the hospital. The hospital suspected that I and taken some drugs, so they tested me. The pain was so much, my waist pained for a whole month. Kony said that if they could prove I had taken drugs, he would just kill me on the spot. But no drugs were ever found in the tests, and I never told anyone what I had done. (Amony, 2015, p. 39).*

As the quote above demonstrates, pregnancy was not always a welcome discovery. As a result of the forced marriages and rape, many girl child soldiers fall pregnant (Baines & Gauvin, 2013; Denov, 2019; Denov & Lakor, 2018; McKay, 2004; Oosterveld, 2019; Shanahan & Veale, 2016; Worthen et al., 2010). As previously stated, the LRA used impregnation as a military tactic to create a new generation of fighters and clan system (Denov & Lakor, 2018). However, due to the rampant culture of sexual violence and forced wives, many girls in conflicts beyond Uganda also experience pregnancy. Some girls were given contraception, but this was not a common practice (McKay, 2004).

Not every pregnancy resulted in a birth since abortions or miscarriages also happened to young women and girls during conflict (Coulter, 2009). When a pregnancy resulted in a birth, in some instances, children were welcomed by the fathers. Soldiers fighting in the LRA, for example, were often proud of these births as they were seen to contribute to the creation of the

new clan (Denov & Lakor, 2018). However, in other contexts, forced abortions also took place, such as in Colombia, as sexual relations between opposite genders (outside of formal marriage) is forbidden (Whitman, 2019). McKay (2004) further argues that pregnancy in fact increases risk to violence as some girls were forced to abort or had their fetus cut from their body. In other circumstances, abortions were self-induced with girls resorting to herbs or other methods (McKay, 2004).

The experience of being a mother while simultaneously serving as a soldier was a cause of much anxiety for girls and young women who expressed a sense of obligation to stay alive to care for the children they were carrying or had birthed. For example, as Keitesi says:

> *At some point I didn't care whether I died or not, but because of my son, I still tried to dodge the bullets (Keitesi, 2004, p. 211).*

For the pregnancies that resulted in births, due to their young age and lack of prenatal care, many girls died during pregnancy and childbirth (McKay, 2004). For the girls that successfully gave birth, the challenge of mothering in the bush began. During the Ugandan conflict, approximately 10,000 girl child soldiers became mothers to two or more children (Denov, 2019). It is also estimated that half of all forced wives in the LRA gave birth to at least one child (Shanahan & Veale, 2016). It was also common for girl soldiers who become mothers to experience the loss of their child (and in some cases, multiple children) while living in the bush (Gustavsson et al., 2017). Health challenges such as malaria, lack of medical care, poor sanitation, and exposure to wildlife (such as snakes) all contributed to the insecurities facing children. For these reasons, it is very difficult to produce an accurate figure of how many children were born to girl child soldiers in the bush. Denov (2019) estimates that there are thousands of these children currently in Uganda. If that was replicated throughout all conflicts

that involved child soldiers, then there could be tens of thousands of children born to girl child soldiers.

The relationship between girl child soldiers and their children born during conflict, and the feelings and emotions they have towards their children, are complex (Baines & Gauvin, 2013; Denov 2019; Denov & Lakor, 2018; Gustavsson et al., 2017; Worthen et al., 2010). Often, children were met with "hatred and love, being perceived as sources of both resentment and joy" (Denov, 2019, p. 250). Mothers could be severely punished for their children crying as this could reveal the force's location (Denov, 2019). Since mothers were responsible for their children and often carried them on their backs, this could prove dangerous in attacks and fighting as it slowed mothers down (Denov, 2019; McKay, 2004). Further, there was an acute awareness that children could hinder escape (Denov, 2019). However, children were often a reason why mothers kept fighting to stay alive (Gustavsson et al., 2017). Children were also a catalyst for mothers planning their escape as they recognized there was "no future for them and their children in the bush" (Gustavsson et al., 2017, p. 696).

Upon reintegration into civilian life, mothers face additional stigmatization due to their motherhood (Baines & Gauvin, 2017; Denov & Lakor, 2018; Kostelny, 1999; Shanahan & Veale, 2016). Children make it impossible for girl child soldiers to deny their experiences as soldiers and/or wives of soldiers (McKay, 2004). Moreover, girl soldiers as mother's perceive the identity of their children and belonging as one of the most pertinent challenges and issues during reintegration (Liu Institute for Global Issues & Gulu District NGO Forum, 2006).

DDR Needs for Former 'Girl Child Soldiers as Mothers'

A small but growing body of scholarship and reports are beginning to document the specific needs of 'former girl soldiers as mothers'. The main themes covered include: education

and economic opportunities (including skills building and training); health care; and societal changes to end discrimination and stigmatization.

Education and Economic Opportunities

Access to education or vocational programs is an identified need (Denov, 2019; Denov & Lakor, 2018; Gustavsson et al., 2017; McKay, 2004; Worthen et al., 2010). However, often there is a lack of childcare available for mothers to attend these skill-building programs (McKay, 2004). Moreover, even if skill-building programs are available, they are not always appropriate, leading to other challenges for economic security (Denov, 2019; Denov & Lakor, 2018; Gustavsson et al., 2017; Higgs, 2020; McKay, 2004; Shanahan & Veale, 2016; Worthen et al., 2010).

Health

Healthcare is an identified need for the reintegration process (Denov & Lakor, 2018; McKay, 2004; Worthen et al., 2010) and girls have particular sexual and reproductive healthcare needs that go largely unmet in the post-conflict context. For example, repeated rape (often by multiple soldiers) left many girl child soldiers with untreated sexually transmitted diseases (Kostelny, 1999; McKay, 2004). As well, due to going through pregnancy without any prenatal care and with small and underdeveloped bodies, many of the children of the girl soldiers who become mothers were born prematurely and/or the girl soldiers who become mothers had birth complications (Kostelny, 1999). Further, due to living in the bush, both mothers and children were malnourished due to enduring starvation and food insecurity (Denov & Lakor, 2018; Kostelny, 1999). Psychological trauma of abduction, rape, and violence manifested in "depression, suicidal thoughts", and post-traumatic stress disorder for mothers (Kostelny, 1999, p.507; Muldoon et al., 2014). Without a sense of self-worth, former girl child soldiers do not

view themselves as worthy of accessing community supports that can ease their reintegration (Worthen et al., 2010). Thus, psychological care, in addition to physical medical support in sexual and reproductive health is greatly needed for girl child soldiers and specific healthcare support is needed for malnourished children born in these contexts (Worthen et al., 2010).

Stigmatization

Girl child soldiers also face a great deal of stigma and discrimination. Addressing stigmatization and sensitization of families and communities is key to long-term support, according to many scholars and experts (Denov, 2019; Denov & Lakor, 2018; Gustavsson et al., 2017; Kostelny, 1999; McKay, 2004; Shanahan & Veale, 2016; Worthen et al., 2010). Communities may perceive that participation in conflict occurs by "the children's own volition to commit" violent acts, ignoring that these children are often indoctrinated, desensitized to violence, and commit these acts to survive (Whitman, 2019, p. 31; Higgs, 2020), while being too young to make informed decisions about their role as soldiers.

Girl child soldiers who returned with children "were not viewed as victims of wartime sexual violence and unwilling participants; on the contrary, a majority of women who had escaped the LRA found themselves in another form of captivity characterised by social marginalisation, stigma, and displacement" (Mutsonziwa et al., 2020, p. 237). A main reason for this is the idea that these girls and young women transgressed the acceptable gender and social norms of sexual purity (Mutsonziwa et al., 2020). The fact that often times the girl soldiers who become mothers returned home with children who were born of rape or coerced sex, adds to this stigmatization.

Experiences of stigma and the identity of girls becoming mothers during the conflict also impacts the feasibility and long-term sustainability of future romantic partnerships. Often times,

when girl soldiers who become mothers remarry, their husbands reject their children born during their time as child soldiers (Atim et al., 2018; Denov, 2019; Denov & Lakor, 2018; Liu Institute for Global Issues & Gulu District NGO Forum, 2006; Mutsonziwa et al., 2020; Shanahan & Veale, 2016; Stewart, 2021; Worthen et al., 2010). As such, girl soldiers who become mothers may be forced to leave her child or children behind with her maternal clan while she lives with the new husband (Denov, 2019; Denov & Lakor, 2018; Mutsonziwa et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is also common for the in-laws to reject the mother and her children, or just the children, which places pressure on the new husband to end the relationship (Mutsonziwa et al., 2020). In-laws also fear if the bush husband is alive that he may return one day, which would threaten the new family (Liu Institute for Global Issues & Gulu District NGO Forum, 2006). There is also societal pressure from the community at large for the husband to abandon the mother and her children (Mutsonziwa et al., 2020). As such, a large portion of divorces occur due to the stigmatization that is attached to girl soldiers who become mothers and her identity as a mother (Mutsonziwa et al., 2020). The stigma experienced further impacts a "mother's ability to parent including a lack of natal support, education and employment" (Mutsonziwa et al., 2020, p. 636).

Needs of Children Born to Girl Child Soldiers

The children of child soldiers are often not discussed in detail within academia. Often, they are discussed alongside their mothers. There are very few authors who focus solely on the children themselves, namely Denov and Baines. Thus, this section of the literature review relies heavily on the work of these two authors. As well, as pregnancy was a military strategy of the LRA, this section also relies heavily on research from Uganda. Some of the lessons from this research might have broader applications to other countries where children are born to child soldiers.

As children of child soldiers are either born in the bush, or while their mothers are fresh into the DDR process, these children have never been in 'normal' society. That is, a non-conflict setting. As such, these children cannot be easily reintegrated into society, and therefore 'reintegration programs' are insufficient. Alternative models are needed that begin with integration as the starting point for children born outside of typical societal parameters.

Furthermore, the children of child soldiers have unique and complex individual experiences and needs that are beyond that of their mothers. Yet, as discussed above, their needs are often subsumed into that of their mothers. The result is that the unique needs of children born in the bush to child soldiers are often overlooked. It then falls to the girl soldiers who become mothers to navigate and facilitate their own integration into a society, community, and new family with whom they may have limited or no meaningful relationships.

Ending Stigmatization

Simply due to the location of their birth (often referred to as 'the bush'), children of child soldiers face pervasive stigma and marginalization. Their identity is intrinsically linked with conflict and they may be deemed inherently "violent, psychologically disturbed, dangerous 'rebel children', who had brought bad 'bush behaviours', chaos and bad spirits from the bush, which were believed to have a harmful influence on the family and other children" (Denov, 2019, p. 251). Within Uganda, one reasoning for this is that the bush is viewed to be "outside the moral boundaries of society and the children's mothers are considered to have transgressed moral and social norms by bearing children there" (Porter as cited in Stewart, 2021, p.115). Kiconco (2022) further explains that the stigmatization is due to three main factors. The first being conception in the bush and the lower moral status that is linked to the bush (Kiconco, 2022). Secondly, the association with the LRA itself and being blamed for the actions of their fathers

(Kiconco, 2022). “Boys are viewed as having inherited their fathers’ wild and criminal behavior and are thus more commonly stereotyped as ‘criminals,’ ‘uncivilized’ and ‘untamed,’” (Kiconco, 2022, p.8). Whereas girls are believed to have “inherited their mothers’ perceived ‘weak points’” (Kiconco, 2022, p.8). The third source of stigmatization is then their illegitimacy at birth (Kiconco, 2022). “Being born out of wedlock sees them negatively perceived and devalued, while having an unknown father makes this even worse” (Kiconco, 2022, p.8).

Stigmatization and marginalization permeate every social level of the children’s lives. At the individual level, these children face stigmatization from “their mothers, stepfathers, caregivers, and siblings born after the war” (Denov, 2019, p. 250). Within the extended family, there is further stigmatization from “grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles” (Denov, 2019, p. 250). In the community, if their identity as a child born in bush is known, they face stigmatization from “neighbours, community members, community leaders, their peers, teachers and school administrators” (Denov, 2019, pp. 250–251).

As a result, Denov (2019) found that many children of child soldiers interviewed, viewed their lives in the bush as better than post-conflict. This is due to the impacts on their physical, psychological, and social well-being (Denov & Lakor, 2018) arising from mistreatment by communities outside of the bush. Moreover, it is profoundly linked to the “material deprivation, exploitative labour, discrimination and social exclusion” for these children (Denov & Lakor, 2018, p. 227).

Due to stigmatization, children born during conflict are often not priorities in post-conflict familial structures (Denov & Lakor, 2018). If a mother remarries, the children may be rejected by their new stepfather and his relatives (Atim et al., 2018; Denov, 2019; Denov & Lakor, 2018; Kiconco, 2022; Liu Institute for Global Issues & Gulu District NGO Forum, 2006;

Mutsonziwa et al., 2020; Shanahan & Veale, 2016; Stewart, 2021; Worthen et al., 2010) and therefore experience further abandonment and shame, causing children to face deep hurt and confusion (Denov & Lakor, 2018). This is amplified if they have half-siblings who were born at home who are able to live with their mother (Denov & Lakor, 2018).

If the children are not forced to remain in their mother's maternal clan, they often do face ostracization within the new familiar structure. Children born at home are given preferential treatment when paying for school fees, and are often sent to better schools, or may have their material needs met first (Denov & Lakor, 2018; Mutsonziwa et al., 2020). Moreover, children born to girl soldiers as mothers may face discrimination in various forms such as "name-calling, to refusing the child basic needs (food, clean water, health care, clothing) and the right to education, to emotional and physical abuse" (Mutsonziwa et al., 2020, p. 640). They may also be forced to "perform more household chores, and more physical labour, and caregiving duties than children born from home" (Denov & Lakor, 2018, p. 229). This then leaves less time for an education - if they are allowed to attend school. For those who do attend school, they may be viewed as dangerous or as having the potential to 'contaminate' other children with *cen* (Akello, 2013). Akello (2013) noted in certain research sites, the children would be isolated and no "children would sit close to them" (p. 153).

Denov and Lakor (2018) further found children born of war may be forced to sleep separately from other children born in the home communities, may have less comfortable living conditions, or may even be locked out of the family home at night. Violence and systemic abuse from care-givers and family is then also a common experience for these children (Denov & Lakor, 2018).

The overarching impacts of stigmatization cannot be understated. As discussed, it has profound and long-term implications for these children. Who their parents are and their site of birth causes deep stigma that permeates into every aspect of their lives post conflict (Denov, 2019). Moreover, this creates a "sense of not belonging and integration failure among these children" (Kiconco, 2022, p.3).

Inheritance

> *Even my own children came and asked to be taken to their paternal home. It was then that I realized the issue of paternal identity is very important to the future of these children* (*Amony, 2015, p.170*)

Within patrilineal societies, men are inherently heirs. For agricultural-based societies, this is incredibly important as land is passed from father to son. As many of the conflicts that use child soldiers are located in Africa, where patrilineal societies are common, the issue of inheritance and belonging is incredibly important, especially for sons. Not only does land pass from father to son, but so does clanship for clan-based societies. The implications of not knowing the paternal clan are profound not only for inheritance but for identity. Recognition of children, especially boys in paternal clan systems where land comes from the father's lineage is often a reintegration priority for girl soldiers who become mothers and their children (Baines & Gauvin, 2017; Denov & Lakor, 2018; Kostelny, 1999; Shanahan & Veale, 2016).

Despite the possible benefits for their children, mothers and maternal clans may be relucent to try and find the paternal clan. One reason for this may be the identity of the father is unknown due to enduring multiple rapes or sexual coercion (Oosterveld, 2019). As well, in Uganda's LRA, it was common for abductees and commanders to use false names to disguise their identity, and their home villages (Baines & Oliveira, 2020). However, the reluctance may also be due to trauma experienced as a child soldier or trauma from having the fate of a child

while acting as a child soldier (Mutsonziwa et al., 2020). Moreover, a family may view the child as substitute bride price or "token acknowledging the wrong done by their daughter's abductor. In such cases, for the maternal family, finding the paternal clan is like sending their child back to the abductor" (Mutsonziwa et al., 2020, p. 242).

There is no guarantee that even if efforts are made to find the paternal clan, that the results will be successful. There is the risk that the paternal clan is not identified. There is also the secondary, but more impactful, risk of rejection. Rejection may occur due the belief that the children may commit the same crimes as their father (Mutsonziwa et al., 2020). Rejection may also result from the reluctance to take the children into the clan, and as such have the child receive land that passes through paternal lineages (Mutsonziwa et al., 2020).

Statelessness

The issue of statelessness has been identified in broader scholarship of children born of war but was not raised in scholarship specific to children of child soldiers. As many of these children were born in the bush, it is unlikely their births were registered officially. Moreover, as the identity of the father may be unknown, if a father's name is required on a birth certificate, mothers may be unable to complete the registration. If the father is known, mothers may be relucent to do so as "mothers are fearful that identifying children's biological father in mandatory documentation will stigmatise them and their children as victims of sexual violence and children fathered by the LRA and some children do not know who their biological father is" (Neenan, 2017, p.35). The implication of no birth certificate or national ID is that a child may be considered stateless. As such, the potential ramifications are far reaching, such as "register[ing] for and attend[ing] school, access[ing] healthcare or exercise[ing] their right to vote" Neenan, 2017, p.35). The implications of statelessness must be explored further.

Intergenerational Trauma

> *Today I spent a long time talking to my child Bakita. We talked about the past. She said she recalls the long journeys we took across the Imatong Mountains and how we walked on the rocks. I realized then she had not forgotten what we went through. These things happened sometimes back, and yet Bakita remembers them clearly* (*Amony, 2015, p.133*).

The lack of discussion of intergenerational trauma when it comes to girl soldiers and their children is troubling. The phenomenon of intergenerational trauma is well known and well discussed. While the mental health of these children is discussed, there is no discussion into whether any of the mental health issues may be tied into intergenerational trauma. As many of children of child soldiers, particularly from conflicts in the late 1990s and early 2000s, are now entering young adulthood and may be having families of their own, this is an area which needs further exploration. The cyclical impact of trauma is well known, and it is likely that intergenerational trauma will factor into the lives of children of child soldiers in some way. As such, this is a future area of study that is still unexplored and must be further examined.

Conclusion

The three sections covered in the literature review provide important context for understanding: definitions, context, international norms and frameworks for DDR; the experiences of child soldiers; and the specific experiences of pregnancy and motherhood of child soldiers, and children born of war to child soldiers. Across the scholarship, there are important insights and critical reflections pointing to the need for a more intersectional approach to understanding the diverse experiences of child soldiers, the gender-specific norms that affect the individuals who become child soldiers and shape both the tasks they are meant to perform, and their value during and after conflict as a result of societal norms and patriarchal influences. The older literature and policy documents on child soldiers tend to have more limitations in terms of failing to provide a nuanced impression of these diverse experiences, often leading to simplistic

interpretations of experiences and a homogenizing effect on child soldiers. Newer literature, especially that which brings in feminist theory and gender considerations does tend to be more nuanced. However, the critiques of essentialist interpretations of child soldiers' experiences, needs and priorities are supported by feminist postcolonial scholarship. In the section that follows, I provide an overview of the theoretical influences that guide the research and analysis in this thesis.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

Feminist Postcolonial Theory

Across feminist postcolonial scholarship, three major themes provide insights into inequality and injustices that need to be underscored. These themes include: 1). The homogenizing effect of simplistic notions of 'the Third World Woman' and by extension, "the Child Soldier"; 2). The essentializing character of this simplistic categorizations and the need for a more intersectional lens to document diverse experiences; and 3. The significance of voice and agency. I begin this section with a brief overview of what feminist postcolonial theory is and then turn to the three themes noted above, highlighting what previous scholars have offered in relation to these themes. I then outline how it is understood in international development scholarship

The theoretical framework that guides this research and analysis is feminist postcolonial theory. At its simplest level, post-colonialism is used to demarcate the shift from colonization to self-determination (Darian-Smith, 1996). As a theory, however, postcolonialism (without the hyphen) is concerned with the continuance and ongoing "veiled oppression by the West over the rest of the world" (Darian-Smith, 1996, p.292). Edward Said (1978), for example, argued that the West positions itself against the Orient, or the Other. In doing so, the colonizers, are positioned as more powerful. Imperialism then is alive despite colonized nations gaining independence as methods of domination are reproduced in new and different ways, along new "cleavages of asymmetry" (Darian-Smith, 1996, p.292). Postcolonial theorists such as Said and Fanon state the need to "destabilize the dominate discourses of [imperialism]" as they are ethnocentric and serve to reproduce the notion of the West and the Other (McEwan, 2001, p. 94). Feminist postcolonial theorists such as Mohanty, Spivak, and Narayan advance postcolonialism by recognizing the

homogenizing tendency of Western feminist thinkers in relation to theorizing gender. Rajan and Park (2005) state that feminist postcolonialism "is an exploration of and at the intersections of colonialism and neocolonialism with gender, nation, class, race, and sexualities in the different contexts of women's lives, their subjectivities, work, sexuality, and rights" (p.53). Thus, a main goal of feminist postcolonial theorists such as Mohanty and Narayan are to express the differences between women's lives and the lived realities rather than reproduce a homogenized image of the 'Third World Woman'.

The construction of a monolithic homogenized Third World Woman was first introduced by Mohanty (1988) in her essay "Under Western Eyes". It is assumed that the "average third-world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being 'third world' (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family-oriented, victimized, etc.)" (Mohanty, 1988, p. 65). This idea has been extended to portray Third World Woman as 'barbaric', 'savage', and 'backwards' (McEwan, 2001) and in need of saving from their oppression (Dogra, 2011). Further, this construction has seeped beyond Western feminism and academia and into dominant discourses.

The idea of the essentialized and homogenized 'Third World Woman' is problematic because it fails to account for complexity and situational contexts, and it also reinforces the binary between the First World and the Third World. This serves to further the imperialist notion of West and the East/Other, or us versus them. An important aspect of the colonialization process was the racialization and sexualization of the colonized, or the Other, in order to naturalize whiteness and affirm white superiority (Alexander, 1994). Colonialization was only possible through the creation of the white identity as superior (Thobani, 2007). Thus, a distinction between human and non-human, or Western and the Other was born (Lugones, 2010).

Through this process, both the colonized man and woman were deemed the Other. However, within Western society, a distinction between men and women also existed (Lugones, 2010). Men were the subject or agent, whereas the Western woman "reproduced race and capital through her sexual purity, passivity, and being homebound in the service of the [W]hite ... man" (Lugones, 2010, p.743), thus contributing to the idea of global oppression of all women (Mohanty, 1988). Nonetheless, white women continue to enjoy many privileges by virtue of the colour of their skin.

An assumption then that all women have always been "'powerless, 'exploited', 'sexually harassed', etc." exists (Mohanty, 1988, p.66). If women, are a homogenous group due to their shared oppression, then it would seem natural that women living in the Third World can further be homogenized into a singular group due to their shared oppression of colonization. Therefore, it can be said that the 'Third World Woman' is in a double bind due to her gender and location. As such, the crux of a feminist postcolonial argument is that specificity needs to be considered in order to truly understand and conceptualize reality.

Not only is the 'Third World Woman' a homogenized notion, the Third World itself falls into a trap of being culturally homogenized. Narayan (1997) states that through the colonization process, cultural differences between the Western colonizer and the Other were constructed. This was a deliberate political move to legitimatize colonialism and delegitimize the Other (Narayan, 1997). However, the basis of the cultural differences was based on "totalizations" which cast the "values and practices [of] *specific* privileged groups within the community as values of the 'culture' as a *whole*" (Narayan, 1997, p.15). Thus, what was deemed superior, and the Other was based on essentializing a culture and nation to one specific group (Narayan, 1997). This is problematic as it once again ignores the complexities of lived realities. Further, it creates a

distorted misrepresentation, which allow for further misrepresentations such as the 'Third World Woman'.

Narayan (1997) argues that current representations of the Third World are colonialist stances. The representations inaccurately depict cultural traditions in problematic and neocolonial ways (Narayan, 1997). Academia alone is not responsible for this as these misrepresentations have seeped into lay Western thinking (Narayan, 1997). Dogra (2011) states that many development agencies use women in their advertisements. However, these agencies rely on the crutch of the stereotype of the Third World Woman (Dogra, 2011). Narayan (1997) claims that these misrepresentations are due to erasure of history, ignoring specificity, remaining static, and overlooking colonial legacies. Through ignoring temporal, geographical, and other contextual features, false representations serve to not only erase history but to claim that these traditions and practices continue without any change (Narayan, 1997). Not only are cultures seen to be unchanging and stuck in time, the 'Third World' as a whole is collapsed into one monolithic culture (Narayan, 1997, p.50). As such, societies are viewed as "homogenous, self-contained, and discrete entities" and women are frozen in "time, space, and history" (Dogra, 2011, p.346). The effect then is to "naturalize, depoliticize, and dehistorize" the lives and struggles of women in the Third World (Dogra, 2011, p.346).

Despite the fact that there are locally based elites in the colonized countries, the colonized subaltern is often conceptualized as a homogenous group (Spivak, 1988). Spivak (1988) states that "for the 'true' subaltern group, whose identity is its difference, there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself" (p.80). This means that the subaltern cannot in fact speak. Spivak does not mean that they cannot physically speak, rather that, they do not have the ability to be heard and be taken seriously.

If the subaltern cannot speak then the subaltern woman even more so cannot (Spivak, 1988). It is the binary between man and woman that makes this possible (Spivak, 1988). The construction of gender and patriarchy forces the already oppressed subaltern woman to be oppressed even further due to her gender (Spivak, 1988). Thus, it is shown once more that the 'Third World Woman' is in a double bind due to her location and gender.

Rather than speaking for the subaltern, the West must learn to "speak to" the subaltern (Spivak, 1988, p.91). In order to do so, we must unlearn (Spivak, 1988). This is a systematic process which involves "learning to critique postcolonial discourse" and unlearning privilege (Spivak, 1988, p.91). Spivak has equated "[unlearning] one's privilege as one's loss" (as cited in Kerner, 2016, p.858). It is through this unlearning process that one can learn how to speak to and on an equal level (Kerner, 2016). However, as this requires a systematic process, it requires a serious effort from the West to (Kerner, 2016). It is up to the West and Western feminists to unlearn to be able to engage in productive dialogue where the subaltern can in fact speak. The first step to unlearning privilege is to recognize that one does in fact have privilege.

By ignoring colonial legacies, Western feminists and academics rely on the idea of a monolithic culture and ignore how the 'Third World' was positioned as culturally inferior. Narayan (1997) argues that despite some Western feminists having knowledge, they unwittingly reproduce misrepresentations as they do not understand the gravity of this. An author can create a colonialist stance or representation without believing in Western superiority (Narayan, 1997). A colonialist stance or representation then can be unintentional yet have far reaching impacts. As a Western feminist, it is imperative to realize that colonialist stances and representations may occur unwittingly. Therefore, feminist postcolonialism is vital as a theoretical framework.

Assuming a universal sameness and Otherness is dangerous as it oscillates between colonialism, cultural imperialism, and cultural relativism (Rajan & Park, 2005, p. 56). Feminist postcolonial theory disrupts this by attending to the nuances of women's lives. Women are not a universal category and cannot be treated as such. By detailing and attending to the specific historical, geographical, and situational contexts in which women live, feminist postcolonialism avoids the trap of essentializing and homogenizing. In doing so, it allows the subaltern to be heard and have their lives more accurately represented. As such, this is an incredibly vital lens when conducting research in 'postcolonial' settings.

Many DDR processes are conducted by the West through international and non-governmental organizations; thus, feminist postcolonial theory will be able to critically account for the power dynamics that are inherently present within the research material. DDR is largely designed by "outside experts, who adhere to international standards" (Wessells. 2019, p.476). These frameworks are further designed with a "European or northern developed, rational, and individualistic context in mind" (Richmond & Pogodda, 2016, p.3). DDR is then implemented within power imbalances between outsider experts and the local community (Wessells, 2019). Programs are also designed in a universal manner with little room to contextualize (Wessells, 2019). Moreover, children are not invited to participate in both the design process and peace negotiations (Wessells 2019). As a result, the needs and wants of child soldiers in a specific context are often unknown (Wessells 2019).

Development itself is "unconsciously ethnocentric" and represents the dominant Western view (McEwan, 2001, p.94). Therefore, it is crucial to understand how girls and women are conceived within DDR, as it showcases ideologies and power imbalances between the Global North and South (Dogra, 2011). Hynd (2021) argues that

> The image of the innocent and brutalized child soldier as victim in these contemporary humanitarian campaigns therefore ‘‘repeats [a] colonial paternalism where the adult Northerner offers help and knowledge to the infantilised South’’, positioning non-governmental organizations as better able to provide for the needs of children than their own families and societies, and pathologizing children’s agency in socially navigating conflict environments (p.76).

Feminist postcolonial theory enables me to see if this rhetoric is present within DDR. This framework provides insight on whether programs created and run by Western organizations are an adequate mechanism for DDR – particularly to attend to the specific needs of girl child soldiers and their children.

As feminist postcolonial theory guides this thesis, a universal approach to childhood that assumes victimhood and a lack of agency cannot be applied. However, this thesis does accept the broad definition of a child as anyone under the age of eighteen but emphasizes the need for taking into consideration the evolving capacities and context of the child. Further, this thesis does “systematically take into account the social contexts in which child soldiers operate and are recognized— and, as is more often than not the case with girl soldiers in particular, not recognized—as agents in their own right” (Vaha & Vatsapuu, 2018, p. 229).

Using the term ‘child soldier’ creates a “paradox”. It combines the ideas of vulnerability and innocence of the child “with the extreme violence associated with armed conflict and armed forces” (Mouthaan, 2015, p.93). This paradox is further complicated by the notion of girl child soldiers as “girl soldiers are not only children coerced into battle, but also girls, that is biologically female. In this manner, they challenge prevalent notions of women’s and children’s victimhood and innocence in wartime from two overlapping directions” (Vaha & Vatsapuu,

2018, p. 224). Denov and Ricard-Guay (2013) further problematize the term child soldier as childhood is a social construction that varies across local understandings and values. Further, "the term 'soldier' tends to conjure up archetypical symbols of uniformed men with extensive military training in active training" (Denov & Ricard-Guay, 2013, p.475). As such, these images conceal the reality of child soldiering, the gendered aspects of conflict, and the various roles that child soldiers – especially girl soldiers – play (Denov & Ricard-Guay, 2013).

Denov and Ricard-Guay (2013) argue that girl child soldiers are "subjected to a double invisibility" on the basis of their age and gender (p. 473). Martuscellia and Bandarra (2020) further this argument by stating girl child soldiers and their agency is triply silenced due to their intersecting identities of children, girls, and child soldiers and how these ideals connect to victimhood. They argue that the triple silencing comes from "first, within the category of 'child', because of their specificities as 'girls'. Second, in the category of 'child soldiers', which focuses on male components and activities (Martuscellia & Bandarra, 2020). Third, within the category of 'women', as they belong to a young age" (Martuscellia & Bandarra, 2020, p. 226). As such, the discourse of girl child soldiers illustrates how the narrative of "victimization is often intertwined with agency" (Denov & Ricard-Guay, 2013, p.485). It is within these multiple intersecting identities that girls must navigate life both during conflict and afterwards.

Chapter Four: Methodology

The feminist postcolonial theoretical framework guides the research methodology with its emphasis on critical analysis, attention to relationships of power and inequality, and deconstruction of the binaries/dichotomies, and of essentializing girl soldiers as mothers and their children. This theoretical framework guides the content and discourse analysis of DDR programs studied. Moreover, it guides how the data was analyzed.

This thesis analyzes various programmatic documents related to DDR in order to gather a broad scope of programs offered. In total, twenty-nine documents from seventeen organizations were analyzed. A programmatic approach rather than a country-specific approach is taken as many non-governmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations are active in more than one country. The current literature and scholars tend to focus on one specific DDR program or the approach a country takes to DDR after a conflict. This approach does offer one way to focus research. However, what the programmatic approach offers is a wide variety of DDR programs in various countries. This lends itself to broader analysis across country lines, and to see whether certain conflicts are implementing more successful DDR. In order to critically analyze the DDR program documents, I carried out a content and discourse analysis of all programs.

Content Analysis

For this study I undertook a qualitative content analysis in conjunction with critical discourse analysis. The content analysis allowed me to count key pieces of information within and across the twenty-nine DDR programs studied and to organize these content-related findings into categories. Creating the categories was done by "construct[ing] a set of mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories that can be used to analyze documents, and then [recording] the

frequency with which each of these categories is observed in the documents studied" (Buttolph Johnson et al., 2016, p.270). This allowed me to see what each document says in terms of girl soldiers who become mothers and their children.

To find the program documents for analysis, I conducted an internet search of DDR programs and looked for the organizations facilitating these programs. I examined these organizations websites for the availability of program documents such as mandates, training manuals, and program guidance. Documents were chosen based on project relevance and document availability. Documents used are technical in nature (policy documents, program guidance documents, and training documents), and not for fundraising, advocacy, and awareness purposes.

Twenty-nine documents produced between 2001 and 2020[4] were used for this study. Documents from seventeen organizations and ten countries were analyzed. Fourteen documents were non-country specific and were overall programming guidance or recommendations. The 5 United Nations Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) modules analyzed are viewed as separate documents. While ideally IDDRS as a whole would be used as guidance the fact that modules are available separately means that practitioners may pick and choose which modules to consult. The purpose of including these broader documents was to see how these documents present girl soldiers as mothers and their children as organizations may be utilizing them to plan their own DDR programs.

Part of the content analysis included developing two classification spectrums. The first measures gender integration, that is the roles of girls and boys and how DDR addresses their needs (see table 1).

[4] See Appendix A for full list of documents consulted.

Gender Blind	Gender Neutral	Gender Aware	Gender Sensitive	Gender Responsive
Do not see girls as child soldiers Programs exclusively targeted at boys	Do not acknowledge any difference between boy or girl and relies on the use of child Unclear if girls are accounted for	Aware that girls can be soldiers, but do not acknowledge the multiple identities possible Programs emphasis girls' sexual abuse and promote traditional gender roles	Aware of the multiple identities' girls take on Programming does not provide specific guidelines to addressing the gendered challenges	Aware of the multiple identities' girls and boys take on Programs acknowledges the specific gendered challenges and provides specific guidelines for these challenges

Table 1: Gender Considerations in DDR

The second classification system measures how the children of child soldiers are viewed, and how DDR addresses the specific needs of girl soldiers as mothers and their children (see table 2).

Not Integrated	Barely Integrated	Integrated	Targeted	Fully Targeted
Does not acknowledge that girl soldiers become mothers	Acknowledges that girl soldiers may give birth but no further mention	Acknowledges that girl soldiers may give birth and highlights how motherhood may complicate DDR. Does not acknowledge the child beyond their mother.	Acknowledges children of child soldiers face challenges in their own right. Does not provide programming guidance.	Provides programming guidance specific for children of child soldiers

Table 2: Considerations of Girls as Mothers and Their Children

The purpose of measuring overall integration was to see if there was a correlation between higher ranking gender integration and attention paid to girl soldiers as mothers and their children. Moreover, it allows for viewing how gender is broadly applied.

The second step to the content analysis was to define the "recording or coding units" for measurement (Buttolph Johson et al., 2016, p.271). I created measurement categories that are

exhaustive and mutually exclusive. The categories were created based off the systematic literature review and guided by feminist postcolonialism. An inductive approach to coding was taken, which allowed for coding of new themes as they emerged[5]. These categories were then used to analyze the collected documents and the frequency that each category appeared in each document was recorded.

Critical Discourse Analysis

The same programs as in the content analysis were again analyzed through a critical discourse analysis in order for consistency and to have a robust analysis. Critical discourse analysis allows for a theoretical and methodological basis for analyzing knowledge, subjectivity, and language (Gavey, 2011). It allows for political, social, or cultural issues and practices to be tied to language (Fairclough, 2012). Critical discourse analysis aims to uncover and expose the "political nature" of the language of the texts being examined (Bryman & Bell, 2019, p.298). In uncovering the "power hierarchies, structural inequalities, and historical political struggles" implicit within the texts, then one is able to see how those texts produce, reproduce, or transform those discourses (Bryman & Bell, 2019, p.298).

Thus, as a research method, critical discourse analysis allows for the hidden meanings and underlying connections in language to class, race, gender, power, and knowledge to be seen (Fairclough, 2012). The relationship of language to power and ideology in a specific context then can be seen (Fairclough, 2012; Lazar, 2007). Critical discourse analysis recognizes that "social realities [are human] produced constraints" thus historical grounding is needed (Fairclough, 2012, p.10). Further, it highlights how power and ideology is "reproduced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged" within different discourses and contexts (Lazar, 2007, p.142).

[5] To see a full list of codes used, refer to Appendix B and C.

Language is important and how it is used within DDR programs will reveal power and ideology structures. Ideologies are simply constructions of meanings that impact how society is hierarchically organized (Fairclough, 2012). Discourse has the power to maintain or transform ideology, thus, an analysis of how discourse is framed to maintain or transform structures within a specific context is useful. As a research tool for this project critical discourse analysis will reveal if and how DDR programs produce, reproduce, or transform discourses regarding girl child soldiers who become mothers while they are soldiers and their children. In other words, it will illuminate the power structures and ideologies present within DDR programs that allow for addressing or ignoring specific needs.

Positionality

Grant (1993) states "to know a 'woman' means to know from the perspective of the structure of gender, whereas a feminist perspective means that one has a critical distance on gender and on oneself" (as cited in Lazar, 2007, p.145). I myself am a feminist and am approaching this research with a critical distance on "gender and on oneself" (Grant, 1993 as cited in Lazar, 2007, p.145). As such, I need to state my position as a white, educated, Western woman conducting this research. Despite Smith's (2013) claim that confessing self-reflexivity is a way for white settlers to reaffirm their power, it is still an important practice. I do engage in self-reflexivity to reaffirm my own power but in the hopes of undoing power and acknowledging what I do not know (Smith, 2013). I do not presume nor claim to know the lived experiences of girl child soldiers and their children. As such, it is important to raise Spivak's (1988) critique on the role academics assume within research of 'The Other.' Through this research, I am mindful to not produce a narrative of girl child soldiers and their children, and child soldiers more broadly, as a monolithic collective. Where I can make an important contribution is in listening to

'subaltern voices' and engaging in a critical analysis of donor programs with the voices, needs and priorities of marginalized people in mind. Through critical engagement and reflection on these programs, we can begin to develop new conversations that lead to more appropriate and effective policies and programs. Moreover, by listening to these 'subaltern voices' and using postcolonial feminism, I am indirectly working in allyship and promoting 'subaltern voices'. This points to the important role that academia and scholarly work has in promoting allyship, postcolonial feminism, and listening to the Global South. Academia can pave the way for programming and policy to also listen to the 'subaltern voices' and engage meaningfully with the populations directly impacted by policy and programs, such as child soldiers and their children.

Ethical Considerations

The research for this thesis did not involve 'human subjects' and therefore I did not interact with girl child soldiers and their children. Data collection with child soldiers poses many challenges from an ethical perspective. For example, it is unethical to expect girl child soldiers and their children to outline their stigmatization and trauma for the benefit of data collection and extraction of knowledge for a Global North thesis. Doing research with child soldiers requires a high degree of sensitivity and support from a trained psychologist may be warranted. Other factors to be considered in research with child soldiers is the importance of building a trusting relationship over a long timeframe, factors that were not possible given my own life circumstances and time constraints as a graduate student working full-time in Canada. To ensure the research was done in the most ethical way possible, the study includes careful review of scholarship and literature (including autobiographies of the stories that child soldiers have chosen to tell the world), as well as document review of organizational program materials that were available online. This research therefore did not require approval from the University of

Ottawa Research Ethics Board (REB). Nonetheless, there are important ethical considerations that guided my work, namely, a commitment to represent the voices of scholars and authors in the context in which their ideas are presented, and with due credit to the authors.

Chapter Five: Findings

The findings section provides a content analysis and critical discourse analysis which act as tools to better understand whether and how gender roles and identity are presented, produced, and re-produced throughout the twenty-nine documents analyzed. The findings are presented in four sub-sections: Gender Considerations in Integration; Social Integration; Physical, Reproductive, and Mental Health; and Long-Term Integration.

Intersectionality in DDR

Documents analyzed were measured against two gender spectrums .

Gender Blind	Gender Neutral	Gender Aware	Gender Sensitive	Gender Responsive
Do not see girls as child soldiers Programs exclusively targeted at boys	Do not acknowledge any difference between boy or girl and relies on the use of child Unclear if girls are accounted for	Aware that girls can be soldiers, but do not acknowledge the multiple identities possible Programs emphasis girls' sexual abuse and promote traditional gender roles	Aware of the multiple identities' girls take on Programming does not provide specific guidelines to addressing the gendered challenges	Aware of the multiple identities' girls and boys take on Programs acknowledges the specific gendered challenges and provides specific guidelines for these challenges

Table 3: Gender Considerations in DDR

Not Integrated	Barely Integrated	Integrated	Targeted	Fully Targeted
Does not acknowledge that girl soldiers become mothers	Acknowledges that girl soldiers may give birth but no further mention	Acknowledges that girl soldiers may give birth and highlights how motherhood may complicate DDR. Does not acknowledge the child beyond their mother.	Acknowledges children of child soldiers face challenges in their own right. Does not provide programming guidance.	Provides programming guidance specific for children of child soldiers

Table 4: Considerations of Girls as Mothers and Their Children

Under the first spectrum, no documents are found to be 'gender blind'. The most frequent classifications are 'gender aware' and 'gender responsive' at twelve (41%) documents each. Three (10%) are 'gender-neutral' and two (7%) are 'gender-sensitive'.

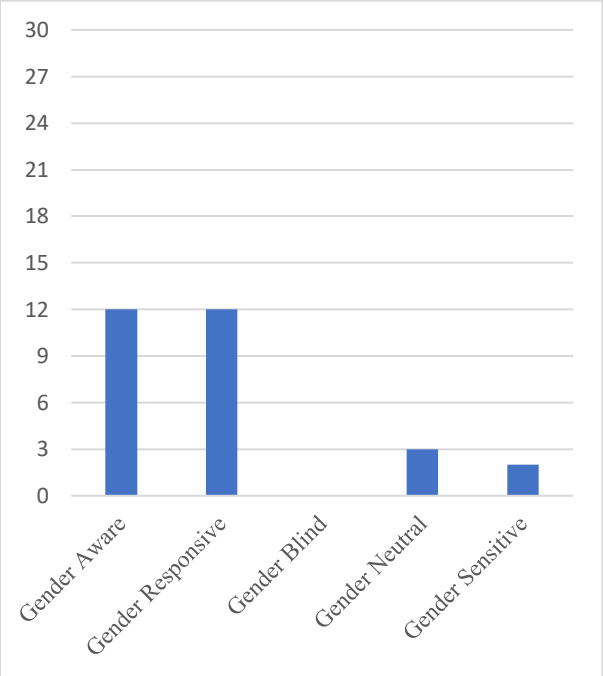

Figure 1: Results of Documents Analyzed Against Gender Spectrum

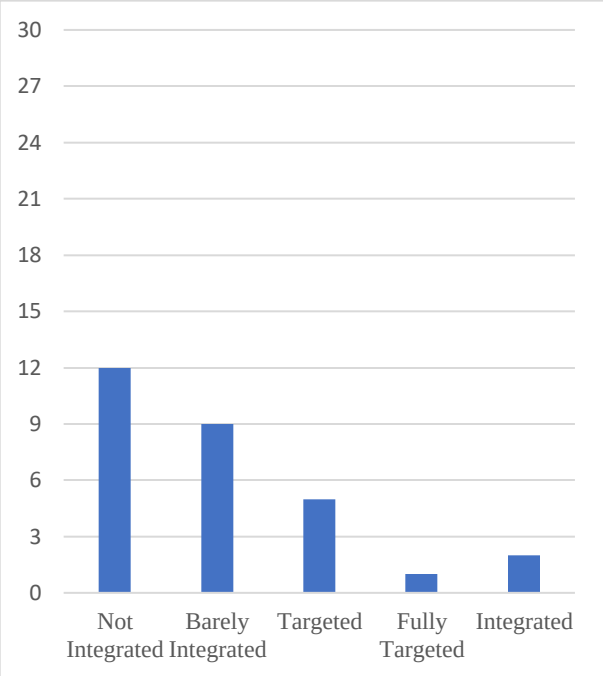

Figure 2: Results of Documents Analyzed Against Children of Child Soldiers Spectrum

For the second spectrum, findings trend lower in terms of integration. Only one document was found to be 'targeted', that is, viewing the children of child soldiers beyond their mother's

identity and identifying their specific challenges. The most common categorization was ‘not integrated’, that is, no mention whatsoever was given to girls as mothers or their children. It is highly striking that twelve documents were ‘not integrated’. At 41% this is a very high portion. ‘Barely integrated’ and ‘targeted’ are the next highest with nine documents (31%) and five documents (17%) respectively. The second lowest classification is ‘integrated’ with two documents (7%).

DDR Elements Present

DDR programs are made up of many different components to support reintegration efforts as discussed in the literature review. In documents analyzed, twenty-six different elements were found. These elements were summarized and grouped into four categories that offer useful information about the gender-specific needs, priorities, or gaps in programming:

- Gender Considerations in Integration: specific needs of boys; specific needs of girls; specific needs of girl soldiers as mothers; specific needs of children of child soldiers; SGBV against girls; SGBV against boys; pregnancy/children; child, early and forced marriage.
- Social Integration: family tracing and reunification; alternatives to family reunification; local ownership; all child soldiers have access to DDR; whole of community approach; community sensitization; traditional ceremonies/rites.
- Physical, Reproductive, and Mental Health: medical / health services; psychological/psychosocial services; reproductive health; recreational activities; artistic activities.
- Long-Term Integration: life skills and vocational training; education; child participation; child-centered; prevention from re-recruitment; monitoring and follow-up.

Four categories were created to keep the findings and analysis succinct. The naming of the categories refers to the overarching theme of the DDR elements found in each category. The first category, gender considerations in integration refers to the specific gendered considerations that arise during the DDR process. Social integration refers to the DDR elements that are socioeconomic in nature. Physical, reproductive, and mental health then refers to these elements.

Lastly, long-term integration refers to the elements present in DDR that are needed beyond the short term and are more holistic.

Gender Considerations in Integration

Of the twenty-nine documents analyzed, five documents are focused specifically on girls (UNICEF 2018; UNICEF, 2019; Child Soldiers International, 2017; Child Soldiers International, 2016; Child Soldiers International, 2017). Of these five, only one document (UNICEF, 2018) discusses the specific needs of former girl soldiers as mothers. Within the remaining four documents, one recognizes that girl soldiers may become mothers (Child Soldiers International, 2016), while three do not (UNICEF, 2019; Child Soldiers International, 2017; Child Soldiers International, 2017). It is interesting that the 2016 document produced by Child Soldiers International acknowledges that girl child soldiers may become mothers while the two documents produced in 2017, a year later, do not. As well, the 2016 document is specific to the Democratic Republic of Congo as is one of the 2017 documents.

Notably, nearly all the documents reviewed (97%) acknowledged that both boys and girls can be child soldiers. The fact that 97% of the documents are at least aware of girl soldiers is positive. It shows the impact of advocacy on awareness of girl soldiers. One document (Exile International, 2020) does not use the terms ‘boy’ or ‘girl’ and simply refers to child soldiers as ‘children’. Despite the high acknowledgement of girls and boys as child soldiers, more specific gender considerations do not appear in as high of numbers. Seventeen (59%) documents

acknowledge the various roles that child soldiers may play during conflict.

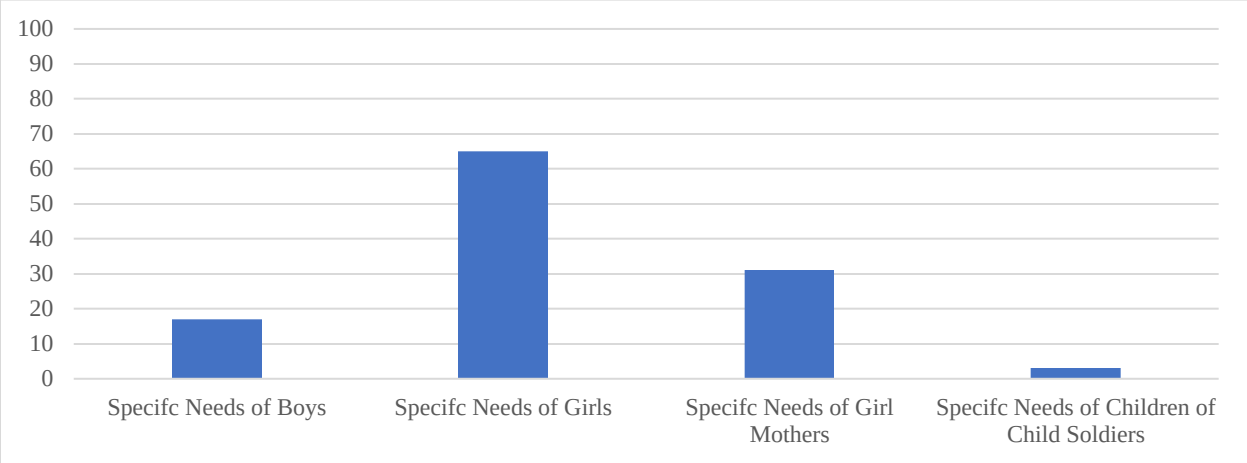

Figure 3: Percentage of Different Groups' Specific Need's Considered in Documents Analyzed

Nineteen documents (65%) state that girl child soldiers have specific needs and challenges independent of boys during reintegration. Interestingly, only five (17%) documents noted boys DDR needs independent of girl's needs. This trend continues in discussions around SGBV. Seventeen (59%) documents made specific reference to sexual violence experienced girls whereas only three (10%) documents stated boys may experience sexual violence. Fourteen (48%) documents do refer to SGBV without a specific mention of gender. Fifteen (51%) documents reference the fact that girl child soldiers are forced into marriage or become 'bush wives'. Broad reference to marriage through the terms 'marriage', 'husband', and 'marry' were found in these fifteen documents. The term 'bush wives' was found in two documents (Eastern Congo Initiative and Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, 2013; United Nations, 2019) and 'wives' was present in twelve documents. Some documents used both 'marriage' and 'wives' and others used only 'wives'.

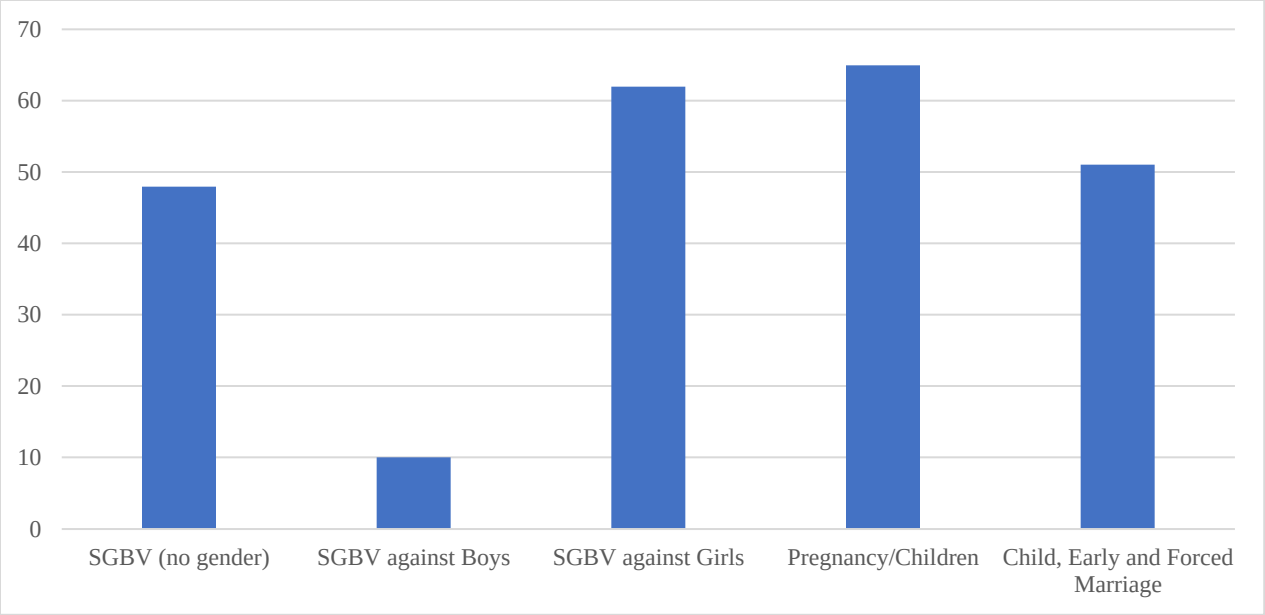

Figure 4: Percentage of Gendered Considerations Present in Documents Analyzed

Needs of Girl Soldiers as Mothers and Their Children

Interestingly, of the twenty-nine documents reviewed, nineteen (66%) stated that girl child soldiers often become pregnant and/or have children. Yet, of these nineteen documents, only one document referred to the specific needs of the children born to child soldiers independent of their mothers needs or things that eased parenting such as childcare or providing clothing and food. For example, "[it is important to provide] nutrition and health care for infants and young children where necessary and support to girl soldiers as mothers to care for their children" (Ward & Stone, 2018, p.16)

The specific needs of children of child soldiers in the one document that did recognize children of girl soldiers were not expanded upon beyond "[these children face a] number of unique physical, economic and psychosocial challenges, above and beyond those experienced by other child soldiers" and "'stigma, discrimination, abandonment and even infanticide...' [these children] are at much higher risk of becoming street children once the conflict has ended – and as adults, they may be legally stateless, on account of not having received any formal identification

or documentation at birth" (The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, 2012, p.41). While, the document did not outline how to address these needs, the fact that they were included alone is positive.

An additional document produced by UNICEF (2019) recognizes that children born to child soldiers may face stigmatization for being born of rape. However, this is framed in relation to their mother as the wording used is "stigmatized girls and their children" (UNICEF, 2019, p.91). This is the most common acknowledgement of children of child soldiers – in relation to their mothers as their children or dependants.

Of the nineteen documents that recognize girl soldiers as mothers, seven documents (37% of the nineteen, or 24% overall) acknowledge that girl soldiers as mothers have specific needs due to their motherhood. Though, four of these documents are IDDRS modules (Children and DDR 2006 and 2019; Youth and DDR 2006 and 2019). Thus, only three documents (UNICEF GBVIE Help Desk, 2018; The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldier Initiative, 2012; and Eastern Congo Initiative and Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, 2013) recognize the specific challenges of girl soldiers as mothers outside of IDDRS. It is interesting to note that all these documents are not program specific, but are guidance or research-focused documents.

The extent to which the needs of girl soldiers as mothers are acknowledged varies considerably from one document to the next. The Eastern Congo Initiative and Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (2013) focuses solely on economic needs: "Female participants described the additional challenge of having to support their children, some of whom were also old enough to go to school. Mothers thus had to choose between paying school fees for themselves or for their children" (p.96).

The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldier Initiative (2012)[6] focuses on the act of mothering itself: "she may have given birth within the armed group and does not see how the DDR process will benefit her as a mother" (p.41) and "the caring of children born to girl soldiers whilst in the bush (p.41).

Ward & Stone (UNICEF GBVIE Help Desk, 2018) outline multiple needs of girl soldiers as mothers. First, stigma: "Pregnancy may complicate girls' willingness or ability to leave armed forces or armed groups and heighten the stigma they and their child(ren) face upon return" (p.7). Second, health issues, including reproductive health: "increase[d] the risk of ill-health for mothers and their children--especially young mothers whose reproductive health systems are not sufficiently mature". Third, material goods to ease parenting: "provision … diapers, baby formula, baby clothes, etc." (Ward & Stone, 2018, p.16). Fourth, access to traditional schooling (p.17) but also parenting and child health education (p.18). Fifth, "ensur[ing] that girl soldiers as mothers who are combatants or otherwise associated with armed forces and groups will not be separated from their children during demobilization" (Ward & Stone, 2018, p.17). Lastly, Ward & Stone (2018) recognize that both girl soldiers as mothers and their children are prone to "experiencing the highest levels of rejection and abuse upon return" (p.23). As well, the document includes a specific bullet point on girl soldiers as mother's needs, though it is included in the Appendix A as a summation of key points from IDDRS. While included in the annex, the bullet point is an important inclusion:

> Girl soldiers as mothers need a particularly tailored support package that also includes careful analysis of the welfare of the child and the increased livelihood burden of a girl

[6] In 2020, The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldier Initiative changed its name to the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace, and Security. As the document being discussed was produced prior to the name change, the thesis uses the original author's name.

> [soldier as a] mother in order to support both herself and the child. In situations of forced marriage, girls and young women should remain secure and separated from their partner, to give them time both to be reunited with family members and to think about whether or not to re-join their partner. In addition to prevent cycles of violence, girl soldiers as mothers should be enabled to learn positive parenting skills so their children grow up in a nurturing household that is free of violence and abuse (Ward & Stone, 2018, p.29).

Similar to the UNCIEF GBVIE Help Desk document produced by Ward and Stone, the IDDRS modules on children list multiple needs. The modules on youth do recognize the needs of girl soldiers as mothers though not to the same extent. The 2006 Youth and DDR module outlines that girl soldiers as mothers should be "adequately included in programmes and their health and livelihoods should be supported" (p.20) and that child-care should be provided so that girl soldiers as mothers can access education (p.12). The 2014 Youth and DDR module includes the same recommendation that child-care be provided to allow girl soldiers as mothers to access education.

The 2006 IDDRS module on Children and DDR both recognizes the existence of girl soldiers as mothers and their challenges. Firstly, in terms of material goods: "sites should also be designed to provide proper food and health care for infants and young children, with child-care assistance provided for mothers unable to care for their children" (p.11). While it includes this recommendation of child-care, it also recommends girl soldiers as mothers "should not be separated from their children" (p.16). Second, the increased stigmatization is recognized which may result in "experiencing the highest levels of rejection and abuse upon return" (p.11). Third, the document recognizes the struggles of mothering and the need for community sensitization:

> girls may be reluctant to accept their own children, who may have been born of rape, or else they may reject them because their fathers are unknown or from the opposing forces. … Families and communities should be sensitized about the vulnerabilities of girl soldiers as mothers and their children and encouraged and assisted to protect and support them. Particular support should be offered to families to protect girls and their children from being re-abducted into marriages that have not been recognized through customary and national law (p.13).

Fourth, the importance of accessing education (p.14) and parenting skills (p.14) is noted. Fifth, access to community health services and psychosocial support is outlined as a reintegration need for girl soldiers as mothers (p.14).

The identified needs of girl soldiers as mothers in the 2019 Children and DDR IDDRS module are similar to that of the 2006 module. It similarly recognizes that of material goods: "proper food and health care for infants and young children, with childcare assistance provided for mothers unable to care for their children" (p.27). It also recommends girl soldiers as mothers "should not be separated from their children" (p.27). Second, the need to access education (p.37) and parenting courses (p.30) are noted. The 2019 module goes further and states: "provision of childcare and, if necessary, flexible training schedules for girl soldiers as mothers" should be given so girls can access education (p.37). Third, the need for community health services and psychosocial support is noted (p.30). The 2019 module goes further and recognizes the need for economic support as it states that girl soldiers as mothers may "have current responsibilities [that is children] that require training support for immediate employment" (p.26).

	UNICEF GBVIE Help Desk (Ward & Stone)	The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative	Eastern Congo Initiative & Harvard Humanitarian Initiative	2006 Children and DDR	2019 IDDRS Children and DDR	2006 IDDRS Youth and DDR	2019 IDDRS Youth and DDR	**Total**
Economic Need	X		X	X		X		**4**
Mothering		X			X			**2**
Stigma	X							**1**
Health (physical)	X			X	X	X		**4**
Reproductive Health	X							**1**
Psychosocial Support	X			X	X			**3**
Material Goods	X			X	X			**2**
Education	X			X	X	X	X	**5**
Maintaining family unit	X			X	X			**3**
Parenting skills	X			X	X			**3**
Child Protection					X			**1**
Community Sensitization					X			**1**
Child-care					X	X	X	**3**

Table 5: Identified DDR Needs of Girl Soldiers as Mothers Within the Documents Analyzed

The most frequent identified DDR need for girl soldiers as mothers within the documents analyzed is education, with five of the seven documents acknowledging the importance of education. Interestingly, the two identified needs that focused on long-term societal changes – addressing stigma and community sensitization – are both only mentioned once in separate documents. The other identified needs such as providing material goods and providing parenting classes are more short-term solutions that do not work to effect social change and increase the sustainability of reintegration measures.

Notably, of the documents that acknowledge the specific needs of girl soldiers as mothers, they also acknowledge the stigmatization for the girls that experience sexual violence. However, this is not framed as a specific need of girl soldiers as mothers, so it is not included in the analysis above. It is important to note however that increased stigmatization due to rape and being a 'wife' as a reintegration need are noted. For example, the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldier Initiative (2012) outlines "the communal stigmatization of those girls who have been raped or

who were enslaved as 'bush wives'" can impact reintegration. While this is not specifically in reference to girl soldiers as mothers, the majority of girl soldiers as mothers are those who were raped and/or 'bush wives'.

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (2006) recommends "particular attention should be given to girl-mothers" (p.19). However, it does not expand upon why they should be given particular attention or how. This trend is common across documents as is mentioning pregnancy without mentioning the children. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (2018) states that "girls have vulnerabilities unique to their gender and status in society and suffer specific consequences to rape and sexual violence such as pregnancy and pregnancy related complications" (p.9). This recognizes pregnancy and 'pregnancy related complications' but does not explain what these complications are nor actually mention the children born from these pregnancies.

Social Integration

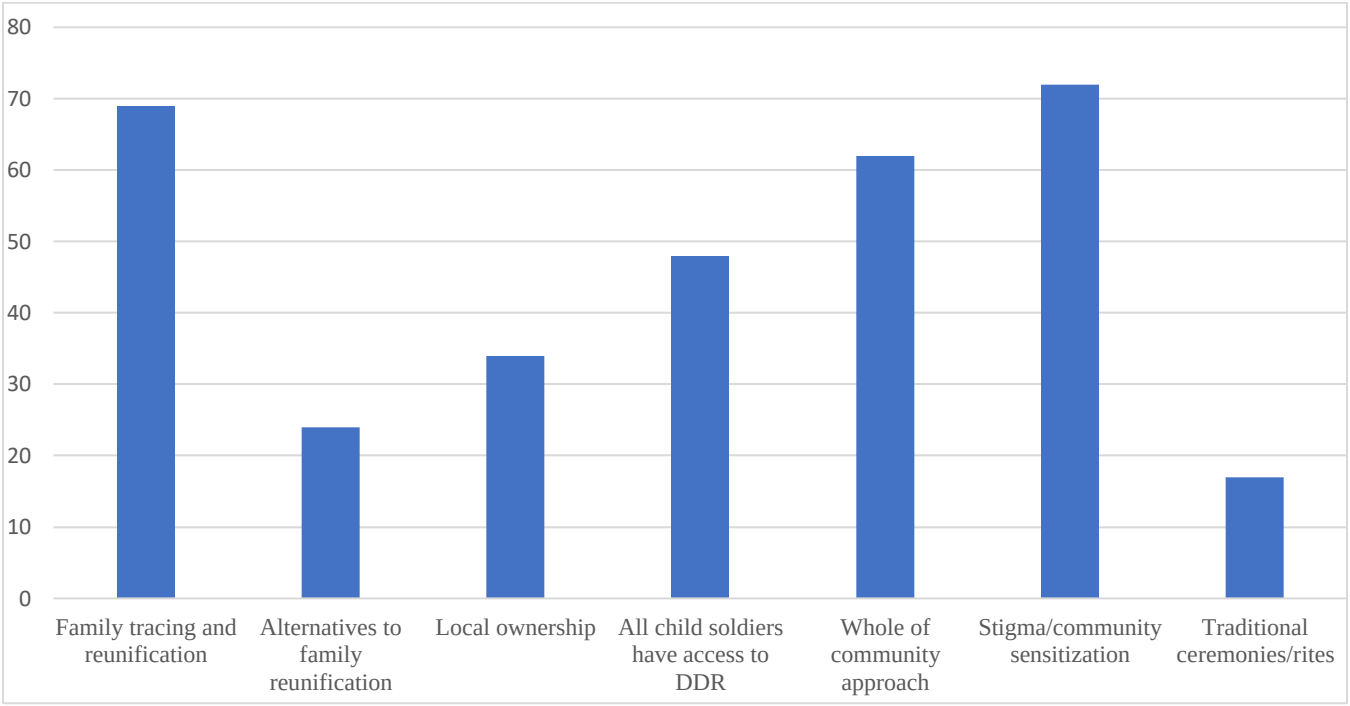

Figure 5: Percentage of Social Integration Elements Present in Documents Analyzed

The frequency of which DDR elements related to social integration varied. All elements were recorded at below 75% frequency. The highest frequency recorded for this category is the need to address stigmatization and provide community sensitization at a frequency of 72% (twenty-one documents). This is notable as stigmatization is cited as a main barrier to girl's reintegration within the literature. Two elements were recorded between the 50%-70% range, including family tracing and reunification (69%) and whole of community approach (62%). Two elements were recorded at a frequency between 25%-50%, including local ownership (34%) and all child soldiers should have access to DDR (48%). Lastly, two elements were recorded at a frequency below 25%. These are alternatives to local ownership (24%) and traditional ceremonies and rites (17%).

Physical, Reproductive, and Mental Health

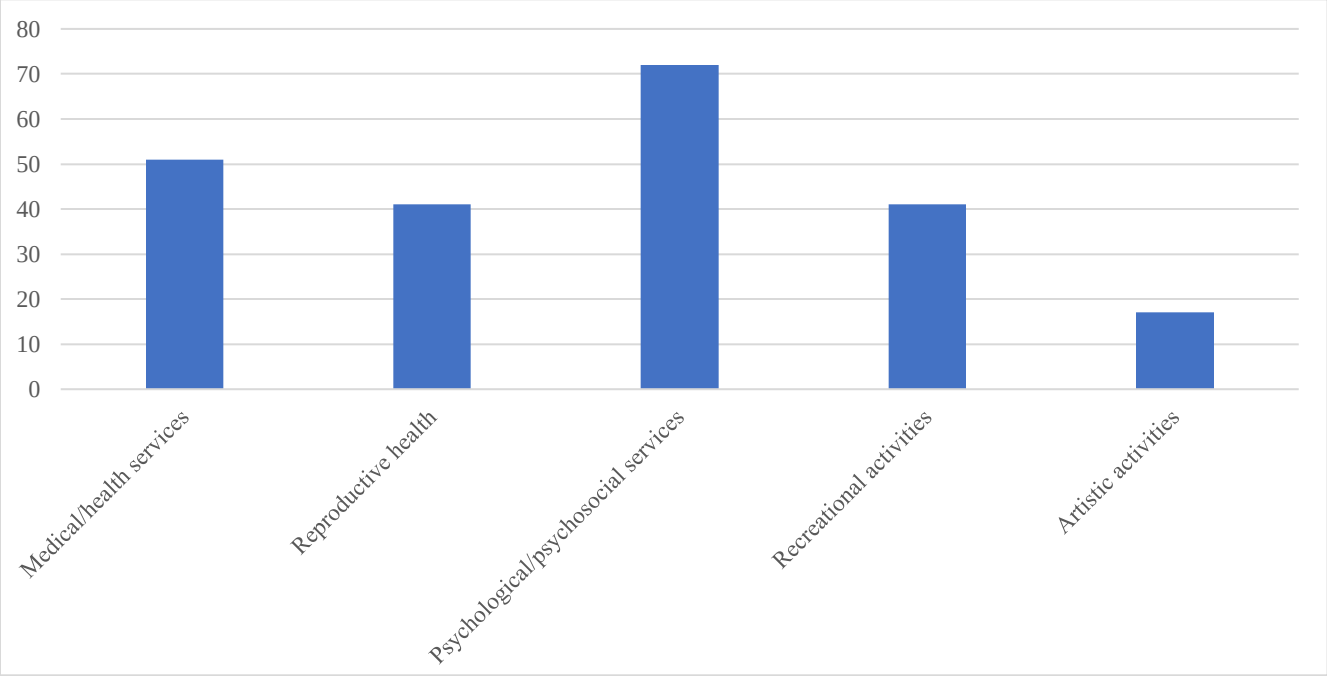

Figure 6: Percentage of Physical, Reproductive, and Mental Health Elements Present in Documents Analyzed

Once again, no elements in the physical, reproductive, and mental health classification were found at a frequency above 75%. Two elements were recorded between a 50% and 75%

frequency, including psychological and psychosocial services (72%) and medical and health services (51%). Two elements were recorded between 25% and 50%, including reproductive health services (41%) and recreational activities[7] (41%). Artistic activities[8] was recorded at a frequency below 25% at a rate of 17%. Recreational and artistic activities are included within the physical, reproductive, and mental health classification as these are activities that facilitate healing, though predominately mental health. They are included separately from mental health as they are not described as mental health tools within the documents, rather as separate activities.

Long-Term Integration

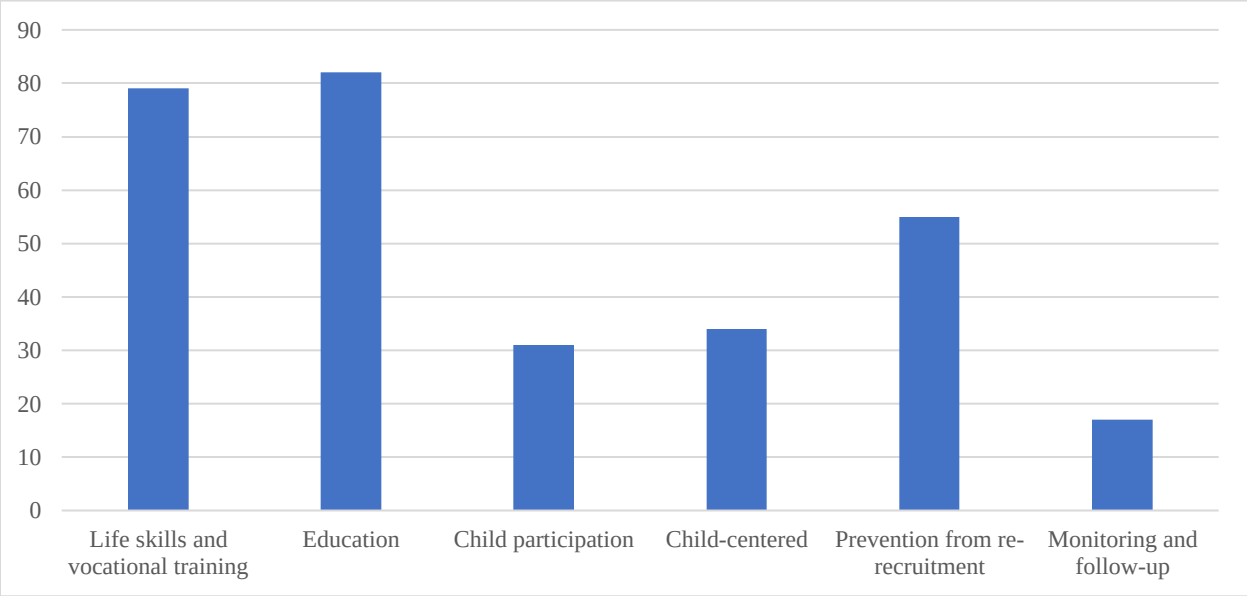

Figure 7: Percentage of Long-Term Integration Elements Present in Documents Analyzed

In general, frequencies of elements recorded for long-term integration are higher than the other categorizations. Notably, this is the only categorify in which an element is recorded at a frequency above 75%. In fact, two elements are recorded at higher than 75%, which are education (82%) and life skills and vocational training (79%). However, only one element is

[7] Recreational activities to any activities described as recreational or sports in the documents.
[8] Artistic activities refers to a broad range of activities such as art, art therapy, dance, and theatre.

recorded between 50-74%, which is prevention from re-recruitment (55%). This is the only category where only one element is recorded within this percentage range. Two elements were recorded at a frequency between 25-50%, including child participation (31%) and child-centered (34%). Lastly, one element, that is monitoring and follow-up, was recorded at a frequency below 25% at 17%.

Framing of Child Soldiers

The language framing girl child soldiers in general still tends to focus on their status as a 'victim' and their 'vulnerability'. It is interesting to note that 'victim' and 'vulnerable' are both used throughout twenty-four of the documents analyzed.

'Victim'	'Vulnerable'
24	24

Table 6: Usage of 'Vulnerable' and 'Victim'

It is pertinent to note that 'vulnerable' is often preceded by 'most', 'particularly' or 'especially', emphasising how at-risk child soldiers are deemed. The label victim is applied to child soldiers, in particular girls, most often in relation to sexual violence, but also in relation to child soldiering as a whole. The emphasis on victimhood and vulnerability serves a particular role in describing their precarious situations but also denies the agency of child-soldiers and their capacity to make decisions as both children and soldiers. These agency-denying words characterize any person under the age of eighteen, while a child's evolving maturity or intentions behind being part of armed groups is, for the most part, unacknowledged. Moreover, one document (Eastern Congo Initiative and Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, 2013) goes further and denies the agency of child soldiers all together and states the experience stripped them of their

agency as “every aspect of their lives was dictated by higher ranking soldiers, from what they ate to when they bathed to what happened to their bodies” (p.79).

Only three documents state that life as a child soldier may have been empowering for girls and offer opportunities beyond what is possible in lay society as a girl (United Nations 2006; United Nations 2006; and UNICEF GBVIE Help Desk, 2018). As such, the constant framing as ‘victims’ and ‘vulnerable’ denies this reality.

As War Child UK (2019) states, “focusing only on children’s victim status risks seeing children only as recipients of services, rather than as members and participants in their community” (p.11). Two documents do acknowledge the agency that child soldiers possess, going beyond the narrative of solely victims (War Child UK, 2019; 2019; MONUSCO, 2019). MONUSCO (2019) reaffirms “children’s agency in the decisions that led them to armed groups cannot be overlooked” (p.10). War Child UK (2019) explores this notion further and how child soldiers can express their agency. It is also notable that War Child UK (2019) is the only document analyzed that explicitly states girl child soldiers have agency and are “making choices and decisions that shape their lives, even if those choices are made within constrained and limited environments” (p.10). War Child UK (2019) goes further and states “children are experts of their own lives and are as well-placed as adults to advise on both their own and their community’s needs” (p.32). This idea is key in child participation and local ownership, both of which are key feminist postcolonial ideals that increase social integration and long-term sustainability of DDR.

In total, twenty-seven documents mention SGBV whether it be broadly, against girls, or boys. This number may seem higher than the findings section which outlined the statistics, but this number does not sub-classify which population the SGBV is in reference too. As such,

nearly all the documents at 93% recognize that child soldiers do experience sexual violence. This framing is furthered as girls are referred to as ‘sex slaves’, ‘sexual slaves’, or ‘sexual servitude’ in fifteen documents. Many of the documents (when referencing girls’ roles as child soldiers) link girls disproportionately to the term ‘sex slaves’. This framing denies the reality of girl soldiers and the multiple roles that they may take on during conflict. While they are often subjected to rape and are treated as a ‘sex slaves’, reducing girl child soldiers to solely a ‘sex slave’ denies their lived experiences and perpetuates the gendered stereotypes around soldiering.

Needs of Children of Child Soldiers

The revised IDDRS states

> A dependent child of an ex-combatant shall not automatically be considered to be associated with an armed force or group. However, armed forces or groups may identify some children, particularly girls, as dependents, including as wives, when the child is an extended family member/relative, or when the child has been abducted, or otherwise recruited or used, including through forced marriage. A safe, child- and gender-sensitive individualized determination shall be undertaken to determine the child’s status and eligibility for participation in a DDR process. DDR practitioners and child protection actors shall be aware that, although not all dependent children may be eligible for DDR, they may be at heightened vulnerability and may have been exposed to conflict-related violence, especially if they were in close proximity to combatants or if their parents are ex-combatants. These children shall therefore be referred for support as part of wider child protection and humanitarian services in their communities. (United Nations, 2019, p.5).

This new addition while identifying children of girl soldiers as vulnerable, increases their vulnerability. First, the IDDRS does not discuss why these children are not automatically considered associated with an armed force or group. Second, it does not outline what the eligibility factors are. Nor are guidelines given on how to conduct the determination or how to provide referrals to larger support networks. As DDR in itself often fails child soldiers, including these extra steps within programming creates space for the program to lapse in attending to these children. Moreover, for programs with limited funding, human capacity, or time determining eligibility and then possibly referring is simply not feasible given the capacity of the program.

The Vancouver Principles state that a child soldier is any child used in "armed conflict by armed forces and armed groups, including as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies, or [for] sexual purposes" (2017, p.2). This definition is very similar to the Paris Principles, where children associated with armed forces or armed groups refers to "persons below 18 years of age who are or who have been recruited or used by an armed force or group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys or girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes" (2007, p.4). Given the broadness of these definitions, it could be argued that the children of girl soldiers should automatically qualify for DDR. Within the Paris Principles definition, it says any child recruited **or** used by force or group **in any capacity,** and in The Vancouver Principles **used by**. The bolded words are the qualifying words that could be expanded to include these children. As the LRA in Uganda were creating a new clan system and fostering a system of soldiers through these children, their birth itself could be seen as being used by the LRA.

The revised IDDRS does state dependents should be referred to "wider child protection and humanitarian services in their communities" (United Nations, 2019, p.5). Yet, these structures may not be sufficiently equipped to respond to the needs of children as child soldiers as they have effectively lived as child soldiers. As such, these protection and humanitarian services, cannot respond in the same way as DDR.

Girl Soldiers as Mothers

It is notable that in the UNICEF GBVIE Help Desk Document, Ward & Stone (2018) further outline how being mothers may impact whether a girl chooses to access DDR. The document claims:

> girls, especially those who may have children as a result of their association with an armed force or armed group, may be particularly reluctant to engage in standard DDR programmes that do not specifically anticipate and address their concerns, particularly in terms of the safety and well-being of their children and how they will be reintegrated (including in terms of having access to legal identity/nationalization papers for the children) (Ward & Stone, 2018, p.23).

What is particularly striking in this passage is the inclusion of the needs of the children. Yet, this inclusion is framed in reference to their mothers worrying and not as independent entities themselves. Access to legal identity and nationalization is not framed as a need for the children themselves but rather as a need for the mother to be more secure in accessing DDR.

The modules on children, youth, and women in both the 2006 and 2019 versions of the IDDRS recognize the existence of girl soldiers as mothers and their children. This is vital as the IDDRS are meant to guide all DDR programming. However, recognition alone is not sufficient to adequately respond to their needs. The modules do in fact state girl soldiers as mothers have

specific needs and require particular attention. On the other hand, children of girl soldiers are only discussed in relation to their mothers. Thus, their identity is inherently linked to their mothers and are not considered as separate with their own needs.

While both 2006 and 2019 versions of the IDDRS pertaining to children are comprehensive, it is interesting to note their differences as it pertains to girl soldiers as mothers and their children. Both versions do acknowledge their existence and outline specific provisions for mothers should be provided at care centers such as childcare, and infant supplies. Yet, the 2006 version includes a small paragraph on girl soldiers as mothers and their children. It is not an exhaustive paragraph nor is it comprehensive. Its inclusion though it is a step in the right direction as it posits girl soldiers as mothers and their children apart from the larger category of girls. The 2019 version does include a section on girl soldiers as mothers and their children but not within the DDR section, rather in the criminal responsibility section. While this is an important consideration, the removal of the 2006 paragraph in the 2019 version is worrisome as it removed the specific reference to girl soldiers as mothers and their children within the DDR programming section. The implication of this is that girl soldiers as mothers are acknowledged in relation to criminal responsibility and how the legal and justice systems should interact with them rather than how DDR programs and staff should interact with them. However, of particular importance in this paragraph, is the recommendation that "practitioners shall advocate with Governments for mothers under 18 years of age to have the right to confer their nationality onto their children, a right that protects their children from becoming stateless." (United Nations, 2019, p.46). The 2006 version does state "children of girls associated with armed forces and groups should be registered, where birth registration is available, to allow them to gain access to basic services" (p.13). However, it does not explicitly reference statelessness. This addition in

the 2019 version, is vital as it recognizes that children of child soldiers may face statelessness, which the 2006 version does not. The 2006 module focuses on access to basic services whereas the 2019 module names statelessness, which has much broader implications than access to basic services.

It is of particular interest to note that while nineteen (65%) documents made references to pregnancy or children of girl soldiers as mothers, while eighteen (62%) documents reference the sexual violence experienced by girl soldiers. As well, many of the documents that mention pregnancies and/or children do not overlap with the documents that mention sexual violence against girls (World Vision, 2020; Plan International, 2017; The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2020; UNDP, 2012; The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, 2012; 2018; UN, 2006). As many of the pregnancies and children born to girl soldiers as mothers are conceived due to rape, it seems an oversight to not mention the SGBV that many girl soldiers who become mothers experience. Moreover, it renders invisible that children of child soldiers are often the product of rape, which complicates their reintegration and increases their vulnerability to stigmatization. As well, it makes invisible the stigma that many girl soldiers as mothers may face due to experiencing SGBV and transgressing the gender and culture norms surrounding purity and sexuality.

UNICEF (2008) noted that girl soldiers in Nepal returning were in fact more vulnerable to child, early and forced marriage, "both to avoid any stigma associated with their time spent with the armed group and as a means of social control over girls who may have come back with different ideas about their own lives" (p.38). This was the only document that discussed the risk of child, early and forced marriage after conflict. Other documents that discussed marriage post conflict instead focused on the potential difficulties for girls finding husbands. For example,

Child Soldier International (2017) states “returning girls have no prospects of marriage” (p.30) and Eastern Congo Initiative and Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (2013) claims girls are “unable to find a [husband]” (p.100). The use of child, early and forced marriage in Nepal points to a coping strategy to ‘deal’ with girl soldiers and manage their reintegration. As such, it reiterates the importance of a contextual approach to DDR as there are different reintegration challenges across countries, and even communities.

Chapter Six: Analysis

The use of language in the documents analyzed illuminates the power structures and ideologies present within DDR programs that allow for addressing or ignoring specific needs of girl soldiers who become mothers and their children. As the findings above show, girl soldiers who become mothers and their children are not systemically mainstreamed into DDR. While they may be mentioned more frequently than in the past, their meaningful integration is still lacking. Furthermore, the language that is used to describe the experiences of girl soldiers is limited. For example, the emphasis on girls as 'sex slaves' reinforces victimhood and vulnerability, denying them of their agency and voice. In some cases, girls actively sought out roles as soldiers because it gave them power, prestige, and authority that they were not able to access in their daily life before becoming a soldier (Brett, 2004; Martuscelli & Bandarra, 2020; M. Wessells, 2006).

The literature review revealed the main themes of education and economic opportunities (including skills building and training); health care and societal changes to end discrimination and stigmatization, as things needed during the DDR process for girl soldiers who become mothers. The literature also revealed that while these are needs of children born to child soldiers, they have distinct needs such as ending stigmatization, inheritance, and statelessness. The research found these elements present throughout the documents analyzed; however, not all the elements were present in all documents, and in particular elements pertaining to children of child soldiers were missing.

One of the main findings that this thesis confirms is Denov and Lakor's (2018) claim that DDR largely relies on the trickle-down approach in addressing the needs of children of child soldiers. As only one out of the twenty-nine documents reviewed highlighted that children of

child soldiers do have their own distinct needs, this confirmed the argument from by Denov and Lakor (2018). This finding, while disheartening, points to the limitations of DDR. It also presents an area where DDR can and must improve in order to adequately respond to the needs of all children, including those who may not be seen as a child soldier legally.

It is positive that one document identified the specific needs of children born to child soldiers. Moreover, The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative (2012) document highlighted two specific needs identified in the literature review, that is, stigmatization and statelessness. The document also identified the challenge of integrating into a society that they are unfamiliar with (The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, 2012). However, as the document is a handbook for security actors, the document needs to go beyond recognizing issues and provide concrete programming or policy recommendations, which is does not do. This is a common thread throughout the documents analyzed. Many will identify DDR needs but not provide concrete actions or recommendations that DDR practitioners can use to bolster DDR.

The literature review identified that a main reintegration priority for girl soldiers who become mothers and their children is that of paternal identity (Baines & Gauvin, 2017; Denov & Lakor, 2018; Kostelny, 1999; Shanahan & Veale, 2016). Evelyn Amony (2015) also identified this as a pressing need in her autobiography. This need however was absent in the research conducted for this thesis. While documents did include family tracing and reunification, including alternatives to this, the focus of this is for girls, not for identifying the fathers and clans of their children. Thus, this remains a large gap within DDR that must be addressed. As Amony (2015) says, it is “very important to the future of these children” (p.170) not only for inheritance and identity, but also for reasons of statelessness, which has wide-reaching implications. The impacts of inheritance, paternal identity, and statelessness may not be felt when children first

integrate into society. However, as children age and mature, the impacts will be more noticeable. Coupled with the impacts of intergenerational trauma and stigmatization, the impacts may have devastating consequences on education, healthcare, voting, acquiring a passport, travel, immigration, and mental health. As such, this is an avenue that must be further explored in research and DDR.

The literature review identified three main overall themes that are needed for girl soldiers who become mothers during the DDR process. These are education and economic opportunities, health, and combatting stigmatization. A positive finding from the research is that these needs were all identified within the documents analyzed, as discussed in the previous findings section. However, an important finding from the research is that while these elements are present, they are not necessarily identified as important due to the identity of 'mother' rather due to the identity of 'girl'. As well, not all the identified needs are present within all documents. This pick and choose approach means that while some needs are being met, there are still needs remaining unfulfilled. It is not sufficient to address one need and ignore the others. All the reintegration needs must be met in order for girls and their children to have the best chance at civilian life. Thus, there are still gaps in programming as discussed by various authors in the literature review (Coulter, 2009; Denov, 2019; Haer, 2017; Kostelny, 1999; McKay & Mazurana, 2004; McKay 2004; Muldoon et al., 2014; Tóth, 2018; Vastapuu, 2019; Wessells, 2019; Worthen et al., 2010).

It is vital to realize that while the needs were identified through the literature review, not all former girl child soldiers, girl soldiers as mothers, and their children have the same needs during reintegration. The specific contexts will determine exactly what is needed during DDR. The needs identified in the literature review are common across contexts. However, the needs must be further tailored. For example, while providing health care is important and a universal

need, the type of health care needs to be tailored to the context to ensure the right kind of care is given. This applies to all elements that may be present in DDR. As such, a postcolonial feminist framework is vital as it goes beyond homogenization, and advocates for intersectionality and agency.

The larger systemic flaws with DDR which were identified in the literature review are: 1). Little attention paid to traditional rites; 2). Short term programming and funding; 3). Lack of localization; 4). and Conducting DDR during conflict. These flaws are a symptom of ignoring postcolonial feminism, and decolonial practices such as localization. These are common challenges across international development programming, more broadly, not just DDR. The findings of this thesis reaffirm that these are gaps within the framework of how DDR is planned and implemented. DDR is largely a bureaucratic process often funded by Western donors and implemented by outside organizations. Wessells (2019) argued that DDR does not integrate local methods of healing. Only five of the documents referenced the use of traditional rites, ceremonies, and local healing, thereby confirming the findings by Wessells (2019). Wessells (2019) alongside Vastapuu (2019) also argue that DDR, and peace processes at large, do not incorporate the voices of girls and allow them to participate in the design and implementation of programs. A total of nine documents speak to the need for child participation when designing programs, highlighting arguments made by Wessells (2019) and Vastapuu (2019). Moreover, ten documents in the research state the need for local ownership over programs. Interestingly, only four of the documents state both the need for child participation and local ownership. This shows that while there are more localized elements present in DDR, they are often picking and choosing certain elements rather than taking on a more holistic approach. While this may be easier for organizations and be less resource heavy, it does not allow for DDR to reach its full potential.

The element of decolonial programming and localization that was most commonly cited in the research was the need to take a whole of community approach. That is, the need to involve the entire community in programming. This was commonly cited in relation to reducing stigmatization and educating the community on former child soldiers. While the literature review did not explicitly state the need take a whole of community approach, it did find the need to address the stigmatization that former soldiers, including girl soldiers as mothers and their children face. Community sensitization is one avenue to do so, and a whole of community approach is another. While they are similar, they are also different as a whole of community approach may involve additional resourcing specifically for communities. This may then allow for communities to be sensitized during DDR as well, and not foster any additional resentment over additional or special resourcing going only to former child soldiers, who the communities may harbour resentment towards.

In terms of programming timeframe, five documents explicitly state the need to continue monitoring and follow-up with the children not only during DDR but also after. Monitoring and follow-up are timely and resource heavy. However, they also allow for organizations to track the longer-term success of their programming. It provides opportunities to learn and adjust future programming to improve DDR. More importantly, it provides opportunities for further aid to be allocated to children should they be struggling post DDR.

The research did, in part, acknowledge that programming during conflict is a challenge. Sixteen documents stated the need for additional child protection systems to be put in place to ensure children are not recruited or re-recruited into conflict. What the documents do not acknowledge is that DDR itself should be a system that prevents re-recruitment and provides former child soldiers the best chance at thriving in civilian society.

As postcolonialism feminism guided this thesis, a maximalist approach to the analysis, findings, and recommendations was inherently taken. While this approach is faithful to the spirit of feminist postcolonialism, it does have limitations and critiques – namely for practical implementation. The current constraints of DDR programming, such as funding and timeframes, make the maximalist approach of intersectionality and providing everything difficult. Yet, it is vital to push policy and programs, and present these alternate views in the hopes of meeting somewhere in the middle and doing better. So much of the work with children remains aspirational due to the difficulties of working with children in an ethical way that upholds their rights. Yet, as children are the future, we must keep pushing to do better and push to not leave anyone behind.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

> *It's us who lost our childhood, and the dignity of a woman, and it's us who lost our clear dreams, it's us who remain hating our skin and it's us with no thoughts of a child; or grown up thoughts, yet we are already mothers and fathers to the child given to us by men the same age as our fathers* (*Keitesi, 2004, p.xi-xii).*

The lives of girl child soldiers were irrevocably changed the moment they became soldiers. Their lives were further altered the moment they became a child wife, experienced sexual violence, fell pregnant, and gave birth. As the above quote by China Keitesi demonstrates, these girls were in a state between childhood and adulthood, forced to become mothers too soon and endure things no child should. What happened during their tenure as a child soldier has lingering impacts. For the girls who became mothers, their children remain a visible reminder of their time in the bush and of all the horrors they endured.

DDR is meant to bridge the gap between child soldiering and civilian life. The challenges in the delivery of effective DDR programs serve as barriers to adequate support for child soldiers. Increasingly, research has also considered the gender-specific challenges and barriers that former girl soldiers face and the limited (if any) support they receive through DDR. Scholars such as Kostelny (1999) began raising these issues of poor DDR support for girls nearly 25 years ago, and many of these issues are still not being addressed through DDR interventions, as the findings based on document review provided in this thesis illustrate. As a result, it is clear that DDR continues to offer inadequate services to meet the needs of girl child soldiers. Furthermore, as this study has demonstrated, DDR support for girl soldiers who have become mothers are even less likely to meet their complex needs. As such, girl soldiers as mothers and their children remain outside the dominant DDR discourse and subsequently do not get the attention, they need in DDR programming documents. While the discourse within DDR programs has progressed to

include sexual violence and some gender-specific needs, these additions are insufficient for meeting the diverse needs of girl child soldiers and their children. The result is girl soldiers who become mothers and their children remain unprepared for returning to their communities or society, and their communities continue to be unprepared to receive them.

In order to properly respond to the needs of all children, including girl child soldiers and their children, DDR must be intersectional. That is, it must consider all their lived identities and respond accordingly. What the research shows is that DDR is largely not intersectional. While certain programs or organizations may recognize the various identities and roles played by child soldiers, the content of DDR itself is ill equipped for the flexibility needed to respond to all the unique needs of children with diverse experiences. This is largely a flaw in the system and development programs overall.

DDR is a long process that must be addressed with long-term programming. Yet, programs often do not have the time needed to properly respond. As such, the short timeframes hinder what DDR can feasibly accomplish. A more holistic and sustainable approach to DDR would include longer time frames as well as an intersectional approach to ensure diverse needs are met. The findings from this study bring new insights to the research on child soldiers. In particular, this study offers a scholarly review of studies that have documented the particular gender and age-related needs of child soldiers. The reports analysed in this study offer important information about the content and language used in these documents to demonstrate, over time, if programming guidelines have offered improved support to child soldiers through a gender lens.

Based on the review of documents, it is clear that progress is being made as the documents from The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative (2012), War Child UK (2019), and UNICEF GBVIE Help Desk (2018) demonstrate. However, ongoing challenges remain,

particularly for documenting the specific needs of girl soldiers who become mothers. The specific challenges they face in reintegration into their communities need to be better addressed through improved and more widely adopted DDR programs for girl soldiers who become mothers. Several needs and priorities need to be addressed to fill this gap including better live skills training and education programs as well as broader public engagement and community development programming to reduce the stigma faced by former girl soldiers and the children, they bring home with them.

Postcolonial feminism serves as a valuable framework to consider the challenges and opportunities for improved support for former girl soldiers and their children because it facilitates a crucial analysis of the language widely used in DDR program documents and the implications of that language for meeting the needs of former child soldiers. Moreover, it allows for a discussion that goes beyond homogenizing girl child soldiers and into the specifics of their lives and needs. The DDR needs will differ based on multiple factors, and postcolonial feminism is needed in order to fully examine this.

As a Master's Thesis, there are inherent limitations to the research. While the findings presented in this study offer important information for improving DDR programming, there are a few limitations to this research that could be addressed in subsequent studies: 1). Relying on discourse analysis and content analysis of program documents offers a partial but incomplete picture of programming activities and project outcomes. Additional research could build on this study and involve community-based research to document the nature of the DDR programming delivery strategies. Other research activities that could build on this study include interviews with DDR program teams and beneficiaries of these programs to determine if the gaps in DDR supports are being addressed outside of the program documents. 2). Documenting post-DDR

development programs that are designed to build on the early stages of DDR programs and which may offer insights into ongoing programming and activities that help fill the gaps left behind by DDR programs. DDR programs are short-term initiatives that require longer and more sustainable efforts to address the challenges and barriers to reintegration and rehabilitation. While it is encouraged to have longer-term planning for DDR initiatives, it can also be an opportunity to explore the range of programs that are in place, if any, to address long-term needs of former child soldiers. 3). As many of the children of former child soldiers are entering adulthood and preparing to have or may already have children themselves, further research is needed on intergenerational trauma and changing family dynamics. The longer-term, cyclical impacts of conflict, and being born into conflict must be examined in order to have a broader picture into how being children of child soldiers impacts their lives post DDR. 4). Comparative analysis between DDR programs and countries. As the use of soldiers is a global phenomenon, multiple countries undergo DDR process ran by varying organizations. Comparing how countries and organizations program and scaled up.

As the issue of girl soldiers who become mothers and their children is still underdiscussed in academia, in addition to the suggestions above, there are many avenues for future research beyond DDR. Suggestions for such research include: 1). The relationship children born to child soldiers have with their mothers, and if known, their father. 2). How abortion is utilized within armed forces and groups to control pregnancy in girl soldiers 3). The impacts of intergenerational trauma. 4). Implications of statelessness for children of child soldiers. 5). The way that policy and program documents view gender as a binary. The binary lens obscures the experiences of non-binary and transgender children. Making space for children

who are LGBTQI+ in research is vital as their experiences are not discussed in the discourse of child soldiers.

Any future research on this subject should be prepared to explore trauma informed research, in particular research that aims to interact directly with girl soldiers who become mothers and their children. However, trauma informed research is still an important concept for desk research as this is a sensitive topic and may impact the researcher.

This thesis reaffirms the challenges and gaps that exist within DDR. It also offers insights into how DDR can be improved in order to address the needs of girl soldiers who become mothers and their children. DDR is a powerful tool with infinite possibility to transform the lives of children integrating into society and civilian life. As a thesis, this study cannot transform lives, but it offers a way forward for others to do so. The use of girls' voices, postcolonial feminism, and a commitment to localization are avenues for this. We must listen to former girl child soldiers and their children. We must learn from them. And above all, we must not forget their agency and resiliency.

> *[My daughter] Bakita suffered a lot as a young girl; her life was so difficult, but as much as she suffered, she walked* (*Amony, 2015, p.77).*

Appendix A: List of Documents Reviewed

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Appendix B: List of Codes Used – DDR Elements

Girl Specific
Specific Needs of Boys
Specific Needs of Girls
Specific Needs of Mothers
Specific Needs of Their Children
Sexual Violence (no gender)
Sexual Violence against Boys
Sexual Violence against Girls
Pregnancy/Children
Child, Early and Forced Marriage
Child Centered/Best Interests of the Child
Family Reunification and Family Tracing
Alternatives to Family Reunification
Whole of Community Approach
Local Ownership
All Children Are Able to Access DDR
Stigma/Community Sensitization
Health Services (Physical)
Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
Mental Health Services/Psychosocial
Traditional Rites
Life Skills and Vocational Training
Education
Child Participation
Protection for (re)recruitment
Monitoring and Follow-up
Recommendations
DDR Flaws
Need to Change DDR system/funding
Religious
Art
Recreation/Sport
Acknowledges Life as a Solider as Empowering

Appendix C: List of Codes Used – Emotive Language

Invisible
Survive
Resilient
Robbed
Helpless
Exploited
Deprived
Devastating
Victim
Mother
Pregnant
Birth
Abuse
Marriage
Bush Wives
Wives
Lack of Agency
General Agency
Need to Rebuid Agency
HIV
Vulnerable
Empower
Sex Slave
Rape
Sexual Violence
Girl Mother
Girl Soldier
Boy Mother

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