MISSING LINK: THE REHABILITATION OF

CHILD SOLDIERS

A Thesis
Presented
to the Faculty of
California State University, Chico

In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Arts
in
Political Science

by

© Kristin E. Henderson

Spring 2015
MISSING LINK: THE REHABILITATION OF

CHILD SOLDIERS

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Spring 2015

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ABSTRACT

MISSING LINK: THE REHABILITATION OF CHILD SOLDIERS

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Child soldiers have been used in various conflicts around the world, typically in developing countries. The children are abducted by rebel groups and forced to commit unspeakable atrocities. Yet, after the conflict has ended the children are expected to reintegrate into civilian society. There are rehabilitation programs aimed at facilitating this process, but how successful are they? What is life like for a child after he/she has been exposed such brutal violence and savagery? The focus of this thesis is to evaluate whether the existing rehabilitation programs for child soldiers are adequate in addressing the needs of former child soldiers.

The case studies examined will determine the level of success achieved by existing rehabilitation programs. The level of success can be measured by the how well the programs address the significant factors which affect the likelihood of rehabilitation, as identified in the previous literature. All three case studies have applied the same basic
recovery programs, yet their success is fleeting. After examining the causal variables, I will present a more holistic and comprehensive theoretical solution. This solution will have the potential to yield a higher success rate of rehabilitating former child soldiers at the individual and community levels. Yet, there will still be a need for further research in determining the national level strategy to ensure the sustainability of child soldier rehabilitation.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The global trend of modernity has decreased overall global violence; however, there are still pockets of violence erupting in the 21st Century. These pockets of violence appear mostly in developing countries that lack the infrastructure to ensure the international norms of human rights are adhered to. Because of this lack of accountability, warlords are able to successfully and continuously recruit child soldiers. Children are recruited because they are small, malleable and susceptible to manipulation. Additionally, many of these developing countries are poverty-stricken and lack alternative employment or educational opportunities for youth other than enlistment in rebel forces. Occasionally the children will volunteer to serve in rebel forces and more often than not embrace their time in combat because it supplies them with food, shelter and elevated social status among their peers, which is otherwise unachievable in their circumstances. Warlords also invoke mysticism or religion which serves to further motivate civilians, especially children, to join their cause. Because of the perpetual nature of the conflict, destitution within these countries and self-proclaimed divinity of combat...

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1 In his book The Better Angels of Our Nature, evolutionary psychologist Steven Pinker argues that global violence has decreased over time. He identified six historical decreases in violence, which he attributes not to a change in human behavior but rather an increase in triggers that cause peaceful attitudes among mankind. (Steven Pinker. The Better Angels of Our Nature (USA: Penguin Books, 2012)).
leaders, the issue of resolving the phenomena of child soldiers is both convoluted and difficult.

The issue of child soldiers has been addressed by many international organizations including the United Nations, the International Criminal Court and the International Labor Organization. The most recent regulation was enacted by the ICC on 1 July 2002, which defined the recruitment of children under the age of 15 as a war crime. Despite international regulation, the enlistment of child soldiers into armed conflict continues. In 2008 it was documented that an estimated 300,000 children under 18 years of age are involved in armed forces or armed groups. Moreover, 40% of armed forces in the world used child soldiers. A child soldier is defined as “any person below 18 years of age who is, or who has been, recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities.”

Much research has been dedicated to addressing the children in the aftermath of the conflict, which identified the psychological trauma as the most pressing factor facing former child soldiers and because of this it cannot be ignored. However, to fully conceptualize and analyze the problem, research should be focused on determining what causes the behavior of child soldiers as well as the external factors allowing child soldiering to continue.

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2 Siddhartha Chatterjee “For Child Soldiers, Every Day is a Living Nightmare” http://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2012/12/09/for-child-soldiers-every-day-is-a-living-nightmare/ (December 9, 2012)

Throughout this thesis I will identify the most relevant causal variables impacting the likelihood of rehabilitation for former child soldiers. For sake of clarity, I have divided the variables into three levels of analysis: individual, community and national. In my next section I will apply my variables to the selected case studies. I have chosen to analyze Sierra Leone (1991-2002), Uganda (1987-2005) and Liberia (1989-2003). I have selected these cases because of the geographical proximity and all have implemented similar recovery programs. The cases allow me to assess the success of the most commonly implemented rehabilitation program for child soldiers—DDR(R). In the following chapter I will present my suggested rehabilitation program based on the variables identified and the weaknesses of the existing programs. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a theoretical alternative to the existing rehabilitation programs, which according to my research have a low success rate.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to answer the following questions:

1. What individual, community and national variables affect the likelihood of child soldier rehabilitation?
2. Do the current rehabilitation programs fully address these variables?
3. If not, what is an alternative solution that will address all the causal variables?

Former child soldiers struggle to reintegrate into their communities post-conflict, for a variety of individual and community level factors (Betancourt et al. 2010). Psychological outcomes, a lack of community acceptance and education are among the variables decreasing the likelihood of rehabilitation and reintegration. This study’s main
goal is to investigate the most common challenges facing former child soldiers, whether the existing rehabilitation programs addressing these variables and if not, what is an alternative holistic rehabilitation program. Another purpose is to raise awareness in Western societies of the seriousness of this issue in hopes of inspiring future research into preventing the use of child soldiers.

Definition of Terms

Rehabilitation

Restoration of a person to health or normal activity after injury, illness, displacement, or addition by means of medical or surgical treatment, psychical and occupational therapy, psychological counselling, etc. (Oxford English Dictionary, 2015 ed., s.v. “rehabilitation”). In regards to former child soldiers, rehabilitation refers to overcoming the psychological trauma associated with their time spent with rebel groups.

Reintegration

Restoration of a person to a previous status, condition, etc. (Oxford English Dictionary, 2015 ed., s.v. “reintegration”). In regards to former child soldiers, reintegration refers to integrating back into their former communities and establishing a viable economic livelihood.

Limitations of the Study

As with any research, there are limitations to this study. In order to get an in-depth view of the problem, a qualitative method case study design was used for this research. I chose my case studies, in part, because of their geographical proximity. Additionally, I chose a small N study to gather a more in depth look at the factors pre and
post-conflict. Yet, because this study focused on only sub-Saharan Africa, it cannot be
generalizable to conflicts involving child soldiers in other regions of the world.

My individual level recommendations originated in western societies and thus
can be considered an ethnocentric approach. In order to alleviate this bias I advocate the
program be implemented from the ground up, with a large focus on involving local
community members. The program is flexible enough to incorporate culture values
inherent to a community. That being said, NGO administrators should be mindful of
respecting and understanding the particulars of the community they are attempting to
implement this program in. Moreover, my community level approach is distinctly non-
western and originated in African societies.
CHAPTER II

THEORY

Introduction

A child soldier is defined as “any person below 18 years of age who is, or who has been, recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities.”

Rehabilitation programs targeted at former child soldiers have been developed and implemented in many countries post-conflict. However, they have failed to successfully address the root of the problem and thus have not been able to provide sustainable rehabilitation of child soldiers. To fully conceptualize and analyze the problem, research should be focused on determining what causes the behavior of child soldiers as well as the external factors allowing child soldiering to continue. The contribution of this thesis is the development of a more holistic approach to the rehabilitation of child soldiers. In order to adequately address the rehabilitation of child soldiers, we need to approach the issue from multiple levels, including the individual, the community and the nation state.

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4 “Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups,” Child Soldiers International
Variables

To understand the most effective method of rehabilitating child soldiers, we must first identify the variables. After completing the research I have identified violence, religiosity, community acceptance, psychological outcomes, relevant national policies (specific to each country) employment and corruption as the having the most impact on the rehabilitation of child soldiers. The variables can be further classified as causal factors to the outbreak of conflict yet still impacting the rehabilitation efforts (relevant national policies, employment and corruption) and not impacting the conflict but impacting the likelihood of rehabilitation post-conflict. The variables are interconnected in how they affect one another (see fig. 1).

Figure 1 Relationship of the Variables

The three levels of analysis can be derived from the diagram. In crafting a solution to this problem the individual, community and national levels must be taken into account. Each level incorporates different variables. The individual level includes violence, religiosity and psychological outcomes. The community level includes community acceptance. Lastly, the national level includes relevant national policies, corruption and
employment. By analyzing the variables within each level of the conflict, a better solution can be derived that will address the multitude of factors.

**Individual Level**

Considering the goal of this thesis is to develop a program to ensure the rehabilitation and reintegration of the child, it is important to first understand how the variables affect the individual. The variables affecting the individual are religiosity, violence and psychological outcomes.

**Religiosity**

Children are easy prey for rebel leaders because they are easier to manipulate to commit violent acts and indoctrinate into the cause (Beber & Blattman 2013). Religion and violent conflict are often interconnected (Finke & Harris 2012). As Rami Mani discusses in her article, “No major religion has been exempt in complicity in violent conflict. All major and most minor religions have cavorted in violence: in dogma and deed; in rhetoric and practice” (Mani 2012). Moreover, Magnus Ranstorp has noted that currently a quarter of terrorists and rebel groups claim to be motivated by some religious doctrine, which is an increase from 1968, when none existed (Ranstorp 1996). More recently, religion have been used as a recruiting tactic for the radical Muslim fundamentalism group Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS. Correspondent Haq argues that ISIS’s appeal to religion and belonging is the main reason for its ability to successfully recruit.² Moreover, after extensive research, Finke and Harris conclude that

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² Former CIA officer Aki Peritz comments on the estimated 2,000 Westerns who have joined ISIS, “They’re often times searching for an identity, because what the jihadis are actually pushing is a specific narrative, which is: Your people (Muslims) are being oppressed in this place called Syria; your government is doing nothing; we’re the only ones who are actually going to help you out” (Husana Haq, “ISIS excel at recruiting Americans: Here are four reasons why” [http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/USA-](http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/USA-).
when religious groups form the basis of a social and political movement there is a higher capacity for violence (Finke & Harris 2012). Research suggests a high incidence of religion impacting social conflict (e.g. Paden 2005), thus is should be considered when analyzing the social conflict involving child soldiers.

Outside of intra-state conflict, religion has been to justify violence. Religion has often been used to justify psychically abusive child-rearing tactics (Bottoms, et al, 2003). Bottoms et al. (1995) conducted a study of religious-related child abuse which determined 66% of cases relating to child abuse were perpetrated by parents who perceived their children to be inflicted with evil spirits. In these cases the abuse included physical and sexual abuse and neglect (Bottoms et al 2003). Additionally on a national level, religion has also been utilized in the justification of violence. As of late the Egyptian military has been suspected of employing Muslim scholars to fabricate a religious campaign promulgating the religious duty of violence against recently ousted president Mohamad Morsi (Kirkpatrick & Sheikh 2013). Despite its benign nature, religion can be manipulated into a mechanism to perpetrate violent aggression.

Especially relevant in the case of child soldiers is propensity of religious motivation. The overzealous attitudes of the rebel groups can validate authority figures and their ritualistic and sometimes mystic behaviors. Within Uganda, Joseph Kony...
commanded the Lord’s Resistance Army and claimed the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Despite the religious fervor, the LRA lacks the support of the people and therefore had to rely on abduction as its main recruitment tactic. It has been estimated to have abducted 90% of its child members from local communities (Lomo & Havil 2004). Kony would often invoke the power of the Holy Spirit and his soldiers would be required to make the sign of the cross and rub oil on their bodies for protection. Additionally many of his child soldiers claimed Kony had supernatural powers derived from Acholi spirits. Kony legitimized his cause and therefore established loyalty among his child soldiers through spiritual invocations. In other cases, spirituality has the power to manipulate children into committing deplorable acts; such was the case in the Sierra Leone conflict. Child soldiers were forced to commit acts of cannibalism. After killing an enemy the children were required to cook and eat the deceased, in order to ward off supernatural evils (Medeiros 2007). Spiritual or religious sentiment has the ability to motivate innocent people, such as children, to commit the most horrifying acts.

Associating dogmatic beliefs to a social or political movement and isolating members of the movement from society can increase the movement’s potential for violence (Finke & Harris 2012). The Ugandan case study involved the LRA, which formed on the platform to oust current president Museveni. After capturing child soldiers, the LRA quickly moved them to remote locations. The LRA attempted to purify the

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8 “When you go to fight you make the sign of the cross first. If you fail to do this, you will be killed,” one young fighter who escaped from the LRA told US-based Human Rights Watch. Kony frequently used biblical references to establish his superiority and manipulate his young combatants into committing heinous acts such as cutting the lips and noses off of those they deem “impure”. BBC News, “Joseph Kony: Profile of the LRA leader.”
Acholi people and establish governmental rule based upon the Ten Commandments (Wilson & Whitlock, 2011), all while committing heinous acts of violence. Kony took abductees as far as possible from their homes, many were quickly transported to Sudan (Beber & Blattman 2013). The likelihood for violence can be increased by the indoctrination of members, which can be exacerbated by their physical remoteness from the rest of society.

Violence

Child soldiers are typically exposed to high, inordinate levels of violence while participating in the conflict. Betancourt et al. have documented the two most common instances of violence among child soldiers as wounding/killing others and rape. Research showed that overall 90% of children were beaten by their comrades, 87% witnessed murder, 86% threatened with death and 25% were raped (Klasen et al., 2010). The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and other rebel groups in Sierra Leone have been documented as some of the most vicious rebel groups. The RUF among other rebel groups perpetrated heinous crimes among civilians including up to 5000 upper limb amputations during the 1991-2002 conflict. Because of its ubiquitous nature the upper limb amputation became the symbol of the Sierra Leone conflict. (Betancourt et al., 2010). The high levels of exposure to violence for child soldiers has the likelihood of affecting other factors in the rehabilitation process.

The violence children are exposed to can have a detrimental effect on their psychological state in the aftermath of the conflict. In a study conducted on Sierra Leone measures terror in severed limbs,” http://search.proquest.com/docview/109983672?accountid=10346, (August 22, 1999).
Leonean youth it was reported that “Children who perpetrated injury or killing reported greater levels of depression, anxiety, and hostility (Betancourt et al, 2011). Another study conducted of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone surmised, “injuring/killing others was associated with increasing externalizing problems and decreasing levels of adaptive/prosocial behaviors” (Betancourt, Brennan et al., 2010). Prior research indicated the direct correlation between exposure to war violence and poor mental health outcomes (Bayer et al., 2007). Based on this research it is clear the violence the children are subjected to—either as perpetrator or victim—causes significant lasting mental strain that can inhibit the child’s ability to rehabilitate and reinte grated into society (Betancourt et al, 2011).

**Psychological Outcomes**

The trauma of child soldiering can be reflected in the psychological outcomes of a former child soldiers after the conflict. Reintegration requires a sudden transition of relationships, behavioral patterns and adjustment from a militarized to civilian state of mind. Children must become reaccustomed to peaceful social norms and institutions. Prior studies have concluded common post-conflict disorders, such as post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), anxiety disorders and depression, are more likely among former child soldiers (Betancourt et al., 2010). Although other disorders are prevalent among former child soldiers, the most disruptive would be PTSD. Between 27-97% of former child soldiers develop PTSD\(^\text{10}\) (Klasen et al. 2010). A study conducted by Pham, Vinck and Stover on adults residing in Northern Uganda concluded that 67% of self-identified

\(^{10}\) The wide range can be attributed to different sampling techniques and measurements. Fionna Klasen et al., "Multiple trauma and mental health in former Ugandan child soldiers." *Journal Of Traumatic Stress* 23, no. 5: 573-581.
abductees met the criteria for symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and 40% of self-identified abductees met the criteria for depression (Pham, Vinck & Stover 2009). The presence of PTSD symptoms can lead to behavioral problems which hinder a child’s ability to function in social and educational settings. Previous studies have documented that children with identifiable PTSD symptoms had poor expectations about their future. These children reported feeling less competent and had a stronger external locus of control\textsuperscript{11}, which was hypothesized as leading to an increase in school problems and drop-out rates (Betancourt et al. 2008). PTSD and other psychological disorders stymie a child’s ability to function in academic and employment settings as well as behave appropriately in social settings of civilian life.

**Community Level**

In addition to investigating the individual level variables, it is also important to examine the community level variables. The level of community acceptance of former child soldiers post-conflict can impact the individual level psychological outcomes, as well as the overall likelihood of rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers.

**Community Acceptance**

Evidence suggests that community acceptance is an important factor to consider in the rehabilitation of child soldiers, however it is also an important factor impacting noncombatant children. West African communities are often reluctant to welcome returning children for a variety of reasons including disease, such as Ebola, “The scourge of Ebola is creating thousands of orphans Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone” (McGroarty

\textsuperscript{11} An external locus of control refers to the belief that external forces affect your ability to succeed. Theresa S. Betancourt, et al., "Sierra Leone's Child Soldiers: War Exposures and Mental Health Problems by Gender." *Journal Of Adolescent Health* 49, no. 1: 21-28
In his article in *The Wall Street Journal*, Patrick McGroaty interviews a woman in charge of a local orphanage outside of Monrovia who is struggling to find adoptive homes for children orphaned by Ebola. The woman laments “Ebola is making us afraid of our own children” (McGroarty 2014). UNICEF estimated that about 3,700 children have lost family members to Ebola, thus rendering them orphans who are ostracized out of fear they may be carriers of the incredibly infectious disease. Moreover, many children are exhibiting signs of PTSD, as well as symptoms of depression and anxiety due to the loss of family members and subsequent ostracization (Muller 2014). The development of PTSD or other adverse psychological outcomes as a result of community ostracization can occur regardless of whether the child has been exposed to conflict.

Community acceptance has been linked specifically to child soldiers’ psychological well-being (Betancourt et al. 2010), thus affecting their overall rehabilitation. Prior literature concludes “the influence of community acceptance has a positive effect on depression and an enhancing effect on confidence and prosocial attitudes of former child soldiers” (Betancourt et al. 2010). Because children are often the perpetrators of violence, communities, and more specifically families, are reluctant to accept them back (Denvo 2010). The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone acknowledged the importance community ties and sought to destroy them by forcing child soldiers to murder civilians and their loved ones (Betancourt, Agnew-Blais et al. 2010). After the Sierra Leonean conflict, some children returned to their families only to face exclusion because of their association with RUF (Denvo 2010). The level of community acceptance is inversely related to the level of violence in the conflict.
(Humphreys & Weinstein 2007). The scholarly literature concludes that community acceptance is crucial for a child’s psychological rehabilitation.

The level of community acceptance can be related to the perceived stigma the child soldier faces when returning from the conflict, which can vary with gender. A study conducted by Betancourt et al. concludes 71 percent of former child soldiers in the sample experienced some sort of stigma upon returning to the community and 73 percent confirmed it was due to being a child soldier (Betancourt et al. 2010). Within the rebel groups boys and girls are assigned different roles. Male soldiers are typically responsible for fighting, while females are required to cook or act like wives. Upon removal from the rebel groups, female children reported feelings of loneliness and depression stemming from the lack of trust from civilians (Spellings 2008). When returning to their communities, former female child soldiers may also face a stigma of being impure or defiled, which can have notable implications for marriages and future opportunities (Betancourt et al. 2010). The Ugandan case showed evidence of this stigma. Returning females from the bush were viewed as less qualified marriage candidates, especially if they conceived children while being in control of the LRA (Veale & Stavrou 2007). As evidenced by the experience of former female child soldiers, the existence of the stigma can influence the economic livelihood of former child soldiers post-conflict, thus should be considered in developing a rehabilitation program.

National Level

National level variables also play a key role in sustaining the rehabilitation of child soldiers. National level variables affect the outbreak of conflict, rather than directly impacting child soldier rehabilitation. It is unlikely child soldiers will remain demobilized
if the conflict were to reignite itself. National level variables include employment, relevant national policies and corruption all of which can impact the likelihood of sustainable child soldier rehabilitation.

Employment

As discussed previously, the case studies I have chosen are Sierra Leone, Uganda and Liberia, all of which have been classified by the World Bank as developing countries in 2014 (http://data.worldbank.org/). The rebel groups within these countries are similar to gangs that are found in low income areas of industrialized countries in that they provide material benefits, such as food or shelter (Sassman 2007). Children from poor communities that have been impoverished by continuous conflict may seek out rebel groups for food and shelter. Children can be motivated to join rebel movements when no other viable economic opportunities are presented. The economic and political conditions of a country are significant in the development of child soldiers. National level policy decisions influence the national economy. Pervasive poverty at the national level can increase the likelihood of children remobilizing in spite of the treatment received.

The lack of economic opportunities for youth can influence the likelihood of mobilization for a civil war. The International Peace Academy concluded that a higher risk of conflict is associated with a lack of legitimate job opportunities for young men (Humphreys & Weinstein 2007). Scholars have cited widespread unemployment and

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12 The World Bank defines developing countries as having low to middle level GNP. The World Bank also supplies data for individual countries. In 2013 Sierra Leone had a GNI $680 per capita and 56.6% of population earning $1.25 or less per day. In 2013 Uganda had a GNI $510 per capita and 37.8% of population earning $1.25 and less per day. In 2013 Colombia had $7560 GNI per capita and 5.6% of population earning $1.25 or less per day. Myanmar had no data, however within the larger grouping of East Asia and Pacific, the World Bank reported $5,536 GNI per capita and 7.9% of population earning $1.25 or less. GNI is defined as “the sum of value added by all resident producers plus any product taxes (less subsidies) not included in the valuation of output plus net receipts of primary income (compensation of employees and property income) from abroad.” http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/country
inflation due to corrupt government practices as a causal factor in the outbreak of the Sierra Leonean conflict (e.g. Zack-Williams 1999). The failure of government to provide economic opportunities at the community level enabled rebel groups to easily recruit among youth. Rebel groups could provide shelter, food and security when those necessities are otherwise unavailable because children could not afford them. Lack of legitimate economic opportunities at the community level, as a result of government mismanagement, can increase the likelihood of child soldier mobilization.

**Corruption**

The recruitment and continued use of child has been linked to chronic political instability. In the majority of cases, child soldiers have been enlisted in warring factions fighting the oppression of the current government. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) originally came to power on the platform of free education and a redistribution of diamond mine wealth against the Freetown elite. The RUF’s goal was to change the corrupt government of Sierra Leone, eventually going onto become a political party until its demise in 2007. The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) movement in Uganda was fueled by Acholi suffering at the hand of Museveni’s regime. Their populist platform was at one time feasible considering the Acholi briefly held power in 1984 through 1986, before being ousted by current President Museveni. In Liberia, despite President Doe’s platform to end corruption, his 1985 election was widely considered fraudulent. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) gained much of its initial civilian support by exploiting existing hostility over the manufactured 1985 elections. Corrupt government enabled rebel movements to gain popular support, although they quickly manifested into violent
armed groups. International efforts should be focused on establishing sustainable regimes that are committed to satisfying basic human rights.

Relevant National Policies

Each of the case studies involves difference policies that can be linked to the outbreak of war. In Sierra Leone in 1986 President Momah declared education was a right not a privilege amid a state of national bankruptcy (Hanlon 2005). Because many Sierra Leonean families were unable to afford education the youth were left with few economic opportunities. Momah’s education policy fueled animosity among the youth and led to their socially marginalization and thus the outbreak of war. Under President Museveni, the Ugandan government socially and economically disenfranchised the Acholi people. Scholars have accused Museveni’s regime of committing genocide against the Acholi people as a direct violation of the Geneva Convention (Otunnu 2006).

Moreover, throughout history the Ugandan government has repeatedly committed acts of violence against Acholi civilians. The LRA was able to capitalize on the deeply rooted feelings of betrayal among the Acholi to gain support for its movement. President Doe of Liberia politicized ethnicity by favoring specific ethnicities, which caused high levels of ethnic violence and also established support for the NPFL. The relevant policies vary throughout the cases and will be discussed more thoroughly in the subsequent chapters.

Policy Recommendations

My recommended policies are based on the above research which identified the most salient factors impacting the likelihood of child soldier rehabilitation. These recommendations are based on a theoretical analysis of the literature and represent a comprehensive rehabilitation strategy.
Individual Level

*Boys and Girls Club of America (BGCA) Gang Intervention Program through Targeted Outreach (GITTO)*

Boys and Girls Club of America (BGCA) was able to implement an early gang prevention and intervention program with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquent Prevention (OJJDP). The program consisted of two initiatives: Gang Prevention through Targeted Outreach (GPTTO) and Gang Intervention through Targeted Resolution (GITTP). Most applicable to the case of child soldiers would be the GITTP program, which is designed to disengage youth (10-18 years old) from gang behavior and values.\(^\text{13}\) Most notably, 56% of youth involved reported developing a sense of belonging to the BGCA club and on a scale of 1-10, with ten being the safest, 80% of youth rated the club as an 8 or higher (Arbreton and McClanahan 2002). The BGCA’s gang intervention program has proved successful within in America at disengaging youth from gang related behavior that typically occurs in low income communities. Due to the similarity of symptoms between the targeted groups (children associated with gangs and former child soldiers), this model could be applied to former child soldiers.

There is notable similarities between rebel groups’ behavior and that of street gangs in industrial nations. The LRA is known to commit other atrocious acts of violence including other mutilations and public executions, which the children are responsible for.

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\(^{13}\) The GITTP program consists of four components: community mobilization, recruitment, interest based programming and case management. An outside study conducted on the program reported 68% of youth remained involved for at least a year, with 21% coming several times a week. In 2004 BGCA released a report titled “Proven Results: A Compendium of Program Evaluations,” in which it provided statistical data regarding the effectiveness of its programs. The statistical data was similar to data collected by outside researchers. The report concludes that participation in the GITTP program is associated with disengagement from gang behavior and peers, less contact with the juvenile justice system and increase in academic success in school. (Boys and Girls Club of America, “Proven Results: A Compendium of Program Evaluations,” oms.bgca.net/Content/ProvenResultsEvaluationCompendium.pdf (2004))
carrying out. Child soldiers and youth gang members engage in questionable immoral and violent tactics because of their allegiance.\textsuperscript{14} In addition to inflicting violence upon civilians, the LRA treats its own members with extreme violence. Once abducted, the children are constantly beaten, deprived of food and sleep and forced to torture civilians. The LRA also keeps records of the children’s families (if they have not already been murdered) in case the child escapes (Manca 2008), thus the children are afraid of even attempting to escape. However, it should be noted that gang members typically volunteer to join rather than being actively pursued or abducted (Goldman et al. 2014). Similar to child soldiers, gang membership has been linked to poverty and unemployment (Ibid).

The BGCA gang intervention plan focuses on reestablishing and maintaining community bonds to prevent reenlistment in the gangs and has proven successful in industrialized countries. Adjustments would be made, however, to fit the needs of developing communities but the program would be able to address an important factors motivating children to partake in rebel group activities.

*Group Action Play Therapy (GAPT)/Child Centered Play Therapy (CCPT)*

The most common and detrimental psychological impairment of former child soldiers is the development of PTSD. PTSD can occur in children as a result of sexual abuse, extreme violence or other traumatic experiences. Within industrialized countries a common and effective treatment for children with PTSD is child centered play therapy (CCPT). CCPT allows children to convey and therefore come to terms with their

\textsuperscript{14} Moreover, youth gang literature identified sense of belonging or desire for status or economic opportunity as motivation for joining a gang, similar to child soldiers’ motivation for joining a rebel group. (Kate O’Brien, Michael Daffern, Chi Meng Chu, and Stuart D.M. Thomas, “Youth gang affiliation, violence, and criminal activities: A review of motivational, risk, and protective factors,” *Aggression & Violent Behavior* 18, no. 4: 417-425).
emotions by playing with familiar objects, such as culturally specific dolls and toys or soccer balls. Play therapy allows children to communicate their experiences, which they would otherwise not communicate, by playing. As researcher Yumiko Ogawa states “For children, play is their language and toys are their world” (Ogawa 2004). Play therapy has proved successful in situations where children experience similar symptoms of distress as child soldiers. In researcher Frick-Helms’ study children were selected from a shelter that housed battered women. Children from these situations exhibit similar maladaptive behaviors as child soldiers that were reflected in their inability to function in school. Frick-Helms concludes that play therapy is beneficial specifically for children of abused mothers because it enables the children to recreate traumatic events and provide meaning to release tension and therefore gain control over the situation.

CCPT is most effective ages 3 to 11 years old. However, a similar model can be applied to preadolescents. Group activity/play therapy (GAPT) has a similar philosophy as CCPT yet it is geared towards older participants. Instead of toys the objects are more sophisticated and appropriate for preadolescents. CCPT and GAPT would be appropriate and effective treatment methods for former child soldiers to cope with the trauma of PTSD and alleviate many of the internalized feelings that produce hostility and anxiety.

\[15\] In addition to witnessing violence, it is documented the one in three abused women abuse their own children. Moreover 12% of children coming from houses of parental abuse are sexually abused (Frick-Helms, 1997). The children of the study felt helpless and defenseless, required assistance from outside sources to reestablish stability and were more withdrawn and silent about their traumatic experiences. (Sandra B. Frick-Helms, "Boys cry better than girls": Play therapy behaviors of children residing in a shelter for battered women. "International Journal Of Play Therapy 6, no. 1: 73-91").
Community Level

_Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)_

In addition to addressing the individual child, to effectively reintegrate former child soldiers a community level approach must also be taken. Oftentimes, communities are reluctant to accept the former child soldiers because of the atrocities they have committed against the communities. The previous literature suggests truth and reconciliation commissions (TRC) have proved successful in addressing gross violations of human rights and facilitating transitional democracy in formally failed states (Roper & Barria 2009). The most notable example is the success of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission in democratizing the former apartheid states of South Africa and preventing wholesale racial violence. The South African TRC is regarded as a way “to combine the investigation and documentation of systematic human rights abuses, the holding of perpetrators to account in public hearings if not in courts of law, and the creation of forums for survivors to contribute to a process of national resolution”\(^{16}\). TRCs grant the opportunity of victims and perpetrators to confront one another and resolve the issues between them through open testimony. The perpetrators come forward on the premise they are granted amnesty and are only required to address their victims without retribution.\(^{17}\) Considering the success of TRCs in restoring the dignity of the country and

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\(^{17}\) “The general finding is that TRCs are a more likely outcome ‘when the relative strength of the demands [between the outgoing and current regime] is relatively equal.’ Granting amnesty to the perpetrators motivates them to participate and move forward with the transitional government rather than resist out of fear of imprisonment or death due to political crimes. This is especially important in the case of child
promoting transitional government, it is a likely solution to apply in the countries that face the problem of child soldiers.

**National Level**

The previous literature has identified the stability of government and the necessity of employment opportunities to decrease the likelihood of remobilization of children. Government stability is essential to ensure a civil war does not break out. Moreover, democratic institutions are likely to decrease civil war. In all of my case studies, war broke out as a minority group’s response to corrupt government practices (Bah 2013, Branch 2013). Had legitimate institutions been more accessible for the civilians to express their grievances and had the government properly responded to these grievances, the likelihood of civil war would have decreased. Contrary to popular belief, continuous civil conflict in developing countries is not due to societal and ethnic strife, rather it is due to persistent poverty and failure of government institutions (Elbadawi & Sambanis 2000). Moreover, in 2002 researcher Francis Stewart noted that eight out of ten of the world’s poorest countries were suffering from large scale violent conflict, presumably causes from a failing economic system (Stewart 2002). Stewart argued that young uneducated men are motivated to fight because it provides opportunities to loot, carry out illicit trade including arms, diamonds or minerals and benefit from international aid (Ibid). The lack of employment opportunities drives many children to seek alternative methods to earn a living. The rebel groups capitalize on this and proceed to offer ways of

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soldiers, who are under the age of 18 and cannot understand the full consequences of committing said crimes.  
making money and providing food and shelter for the children. The failing economies can be traced to mismanagement of the government. In many cases the governments have failed to set up the infrastructure of education and job creation. Thus the civilians are left to live in poverty with no social mobility.

The stability of national government can decrease the likelihood of human rights violations within the country. Browne Onuoha describes Sierra Leone, Uganda and Liberia as failed states. All of which exhibit similar political and socioeconomic symptoms of failed statehood such as poverty, child soldiers, displacement and most notably the worst incidences of human rights violations ever seen (e.g Onuoha 2011). According to Onuoha, most African leaders have become incapable of governing and protecting their civilians against human rights violations (Ibid). Additionally, the research suggests there is an inexplicable link between government corruption and human rights violations. Senior fellow of UN Conference Board Robert Berenbein presented a speech at to the Global Compact Working Group in 2010 which illustrated the direct link between human rights violations and corrupt. Berenbein argues corruption can no longer be viewed as a step in the journey to political development, rather when dictators rise to power as a way to gain and consolidate wealth and in doing so undermine the institutional safeguards to protect civilians’ human rights (Berenbein 2010). The ineptness of the national government can lead to an increase in human rights violations against civilians and therefore it is an important root factor to consider in the rehabilitation efforts of child soldiers.
CHAPTER III

SIERRA LEONE

Introduction

As previously discussed in my theory chapter the most important causal variables to the successful rehabilitation of child soldiers on an individual level are religiosity, violence and psychological state of the child. In regards to the community level, the most important factors is community acceptance. On a national level, the most important variables relevant national policies, employment and corruption. In the case of Sierra Leone the most notable variables are the levels of violence, the psychological state of the children as a result of exposure to violence, the economic opportunities and the level of community acceptance. The case of Sierra Leone exhibited high levels of violence during the conflict, which impacted the level of community acceptance post-conflict. This case will thus raise important considerations in how these variables have affected the conflict and help to shape a holistic rehabilitation plan. In this chapter I will begin a brief history of the conflict, discuss the variables present and analyze the rehabilitation efforts that were put in place post conflict in order to better understand whether all the pertinent variables were addressed.

Background

It is necessary to provide a brief history of the conflict to formulate the most comprehensive rehabilitation program. Understanding the causal mechanisms of the conflict will shape the rehabilitation strategy for former child soldiers. The Sierra
Leonean civil war was the result of twenty four years of government corruption under the All People’s Congress, which effectively crippled the economy. President Joseph Momah arose to power in 1985 and set the conditions for war by defaulting on the terms of an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan agreement and subsequently being unable to provide basic government services. In 1986 President Momah also alienated the youth population by declaring education was a privilege not a right (Hanlon 2005). After years of corruption the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), led by Foday Sankoh, launched attacked in the eastern province of Kailahun in 1991. Sankoh had foreshadowed the attack weeks earlier in a statement to BBC, he proclaimed that unless Momah stepped down violence would ensue (Hoffman 2011). The RUF received support from leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), Charles Taylor. The RUF also gained support from disenfranchised local groups on the eastern border and continued to strengthen its armies by capturing and training people from the defunct rural primary schools in eastern and southern regions of Sierra Leone.

The key players in the conflict are the RUF, successive governments during the eleven year conflict and the United Nations. The conflict affected the majority of people in Sierra Leone. In 1999 when the Lomé Peace Agreement was first discussed, the RUF controlled the northern part of the country, while the government controlled a smaller portion of the southern part of Sierra Leone. In reference to Figure 1.2, the RUF controlled land north of Kamguma. Most notably the RUF controlled both the capital Freetown and the diamond district of Kenema. The conflict waged for many years involving intervention from Nigeria, Britain, Guinea and finally the United Nations, eventually resulting in the Abuja Accord—a permanent cease fire agreement between the

Children began involved in the conflict due volunteering because of their grievances regarding their marginalization by society and through abduction. Moreover, child soldiers were used on both sides of the conflict. Many young RUF members cited their motivation for joining was because of unethical and sometimes illegal and arbitrary punishment from elders, including fines and beatings. It has been estimated that between 15,000 and 22,000 children were taken to by both government and rebel groups to participate in the conflict (Betancourt et al. 2008). The children were required to perform domestic chores as well as committing acts of violence. Additionally there is evidence the abducted children were victims of sexual abuse and forced to use of alcohol and drugs (Ibid). After the conflict, a short term Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program sponsored by the United Nations was implemented but many scholars have criticized the program for failing to address the needs of former child soldiers (e.g. Humphreys & Weinstein 2007; Medeiros 2007). Although the Lomé Agreement was ultimately rejected in favor of the Abuja Accord, the mandated Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SLTRC) of the Lomé Agreement was implemented in late 2002. Similar to the DDR program, scholars have criticized the program for being ineffective at achieving its ultimate goals of rehabilitation in the Sierra Leone community.

18 I have provided a timeline, as figure 1.3, courtesy of BBC News, so that the reader can better conceptualize the conflict.

19 Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity. ed 2., s.v. “Sierra Leone”
1991 - Start of civil war. Revolutionary United Front (RUF) begin campaign against President Momoh (invaded from Liberia b/c Charles Taylor mad that APC supports ECOMOG in Liberia), capturing towns on border with Liberia.

1992 - President Joseph Momoh ousted in military coup led by Captain Valentine Strasser, (NPRC) who replaces Momah

1993 – Nigerian backed ECOMOG transferred to Freetown to protect Strasser government

1993-1995 – RUF on retreat from Strasser’s 12,000 men army

1996 January - Strasser ousted in coup by his own party, NPRC.

1996 February - Ahmad Tejan Kabbah elected president

1997 May- Kabbah overthrown by AFRC and constitution is suspended

1997 October - The UN Security Council imposes sanctions on Sierra Leone, barring the supply of arms and petroleum products. A British company supplies "logistical support", including rifles, to Kabbah allies.


1998 March - Kabbah reinstated as president

1999 January- May - RUF seizes Freetown from ECOMOG, but eventually driven out. 70% of Sierra Leone under rebel control including mining areas and key highway linking the country. Until May travel to capital was by helicopter.

1999 May - A ceasefire is called, RUF considered legitimate player in game that could continue to possess captured lands until peace settlement or talks broke down.

1999 July – Lomé Peace Agreement signed, under which the rebels receive posts in government and assurances they will not be prosecuted for war crimes “absolute and free” pardon and share of power until next elections in in 2/01.

2000 April/May - UN forces come under attack in the east of the country, several hundred abducted


2001 March - UN troops for the first time begin to deploy peacefully in rebel-held territory.

2001 May - Disarmament of rebels begins, and British-trained Sierra Leone army starts deploying in rebel-held areas.

2002 January - War declared over. UN mission says disarmament of 45,000 fighters is complete. Government, UN agree to set up war crimes court.

2002 July - Sierra Leone TRC begins work

Throughout the chapter I will discuss the theoretical variables relevant in the Sierra Leone case and discuss in more detail the post-conflict resolution efforts. I will assess and critique whether the rehabilitation efforts were effective in achieving the ultimate goal of the rehabilitation of child soldiers. This chapter will serve to illustrate the important variables of the Sierra Leonean case and highlight the ineffectiveness of the individual, community and national level rehabilitation efforts. In my policy prescriptions chapter I will use this case study to make post conflict policy prescriptions in future cases.

Variables

Throughout this next section I will discuss the variables affecting each level of analysis. The interconnected relationships of the variables is important in understanding how they relate to the rehabilitation process. From my theory chapter I have included the diagram, as figure 1.1, which details the conceptualization of the relationship between the variables. I chose to analyze the case of Sierra Leone because of the high levels of

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violence and the causal impacts of relevant policies on the outbreak of war. Although not all the variables are present in this case study, it will still be useful to understand how the salient variables interact with one another to formulate an appropriate solution.

Figure 1.1 Relationship of the Variables

Individual Level

Violence

The high levels of violence in the Sierra Leonean conflict were mainly attributed the actions of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The particularly violent nature of the conflict can affect the psychological state of the child. The RUF was responsible for “wanton destruction of life, the hacking of limbs and the slitting of pregnant women” (Abdullah 2004, 222). There are numerous anecdotes by survivors documenting the atrocities of the RUF. The RUF committed up to 5000 upper limb amputations

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22 Alex Tamba Teh was spared because he was a clergyman and instead held hostage by the RUF. He later recounted the atrocities of the RUF as testimony during Charles Taylor’s trial, “some of the child soldiers killed a boy by chopping off his limbs…They put his right arm on a log and amputated it at the wrist…After cutting off his other hand and both feet, the child soldiers took the boy who was still screaming and threw him in a toilet pit” (Associated Press, “Pastor tells Taylor trial of massacre,
(Betancourt et al. 2010) and of those amputees only about 1000 survived (Dougherty 2004). Another survivor described the killing targeted at children “The RUF fighters killed all the children [of the village] in 1999 claiming that they were not supporting the movement. I saw them butchered like sheep” (Associated Press 2007). The violence of the conflict was relatively steady and widespread. A lull in the fighting occurred between 1991 and 1993, until the RUF began carrying out sporadic attacks against villages throughout the country. The RUF opted for lighter weapons and organized in bush camps, mainly in the Gola forest along eastern border of Sierra Leone, which proved elusive for government forces. A major spike in violence occurred before the 1996 elections, when the RUF cut off the hands and fingers of many civilians to prevent them from voting in the first multi-party elections in twenty five years.\(^{23}\) Considering the child soldiers of the RUF were often the perpetrators of violence against their own communities, it is important to note how the level of violence can affect other factors of the conflict, including psychological outcomes of the children and the level of community acceptance.

**Psychological Outcomes**

The research suggested that, in regards to child soldiers, increased levels of exposure to violence was directly related to mental health problems (e.g. Betancourt et al.)

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\(^{23}\) The RUF wanted the elections delayed or cancelled, believing that they had been excluded from the participation as a legitimate contender. In response, they carried out a new stage of hit-and-run attacks in Northern and Eastern Provinces. William Shawcross, who was reporting on the event for the International Crisis Report recounts, “Hundreds of Sierra Leonean had their fingers, hands, arms, noses or lips chopped off with machetes in the cause of democracy. They were punished either for voting in, or for the mere fact of, the first round of the country’s multi-party elections…Someone had carved with a knife the word TERROR on his chest and on his back AGAINST THE ELECTION FEBRUARY 26.” Pham, Peter J. 2005. *Child Soldiers, Adult Interests.* New York: Nova Publishers Inc.
2011; Betancourt & Brennan et al. 2010; Bayer et al. 2010) and the Sierra Leonean child soldiers are no exception. In a study conducted on Sierra Leonean youth it was reported that “[c]hildren who perpetrated injury or killing reported greater levels of depression, anxiety, and hostility. (Betancourt et al. 2011). Another study conducted of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone surmised, “injuring/killing others was associated with increasing externalizing problems [outward hostility] and decreasing levels of adaptive/prosocial behaviors [behavior intended to benefit others]” (Betancourt & Brennan et al. 2010).

Prior research indicated the direct correlation between exposure to war violence and poor mental health outcomes (Bayer et al. 2007). Research suggested that the mental health problems former child soldiers faced can include both internalizing and externalizing problems. Internalizing refers to anxiety and depression and externalizing is outward hostility (Song et al. 2013). The violence the children are subjected to—either as perpetrator or victim—caused lasting mental strain and can impact other variables in the conflict that decrease the likelihood of a child’s ability to rehabilitate and reintegrate into society.

Community Level

Community Acceptance

Because children were the perpetrators of much of the violence against communities, villagers were reluctant to accept them back into the community. In Sierra Leone former child soldiers were immediately regarded with fear and distrust, while females were viewed as sexually promiscuous or defiled ultimately resulting in the community treating child soldiers—male and female—with trepidation and uneasiness (Betancourt et al. 2010). This hesitancy and distrust of the community can impact a
child’s psychological state post-conflict thus is it is an important variable to consider in understanding child soldier rehabilitation.

There has been significant research arguing the existence of community stigma within a former child soldier’s community (Betancourt et al. 2010). For example, in Sierra Leone many of the child soldiers rescued were able to reunite with their families and even there they suffered rejection and a stigma because of their association with RUF (Denov 2010). The stigma can develop because of the high levels of violence perpetrated against a community by the former child soldiers (Humphreys & Weinstein 2004), such as the RUF’s policy of forcing child soldiers to murder their own family members and loved ones (Betancourt & Agnew-Blais et al. 2010). Researcher Theresa Betancourt characterized this phenomenon as a stigma, which she defined as being “labeled, negatively stereotyped, categorized as separate, and experiences discrimination by someone who is in a position of relative power” (Betancourt et al. 2010, 18). Furthermore the existence of a stigma has been linked to increased mental health problems, fewer positive outcomes and less access to community and family support (Ibid). Addressing the lack of community acceptance as a result of high rates of violence against communities is important in both for both the individual rehabilitation and reintegration into the community.

National Level

Employment

The lack of economic opportunity at the community level in Sierra Leone created ideal circumstances for the RUF to legitimize itself and wage a war. The International Peace Academy concluded that a higher risk of conflict is associated with a lack of
legitimate job opportunities for young men (Humphreys & Weinstein 2007). Scholars have cited widespread unemployment and inflation due to corrupt government practices as a causal factor in the outbreak of the Sierra Leonean conflict (e.g. Zack-Williams 1999); moreover, “the civil war is a consequence of...social exclusion of young people and the crisis affecting the Sierra Leonean youth” (Zack-Williams 2001, 74). At the outbreak of war, in 1991, the unemployment rates from males and females aged 15-24 was 60.3% and 41.5%, respectively (United Nations Statistics Division 2008). The lack of economic opportunity for youth has been considered a causal factor to the outbreak of civil war and recruitment of child soldiers. Civil unrest began to culminate because of the obvious economic disparities of the region and the government’s failure to act on behalf of its citizens. A civil war ultimately erupted and the idle youth became the perpetrators of the conflict. All efforts at successfully rehabilitating former child soldiers will be in vain, if the political instability of Sierra Leone continues.

Corruption

The Sierra Leonean conflict has been theorized to have been driven by economic disparities throughout the region (Keen 2005); yet, government practices are largely responsible for causing the economic imbalance. Barry Riddell argued the policies of the post-colonial government of Sierra Leone created an outlandish economic gap between peasants and elite (Riddell 2007). Moreover, Riddell posited that the under the rule of the All People’s Congress (APC) led by Sikah Stevens, Sierra Leone transitioned into a shadow state24 and the clients of the shadow state—Stevens and fellow elites—

24 William Reno defines shadow state as “a form of personal rule, where decisions and action are taken by an individual ruler and do not conform to a set of written laws and procedures, although these might be present. Shadow state ruler manipulate external actors’ access to both formal and clandestine markets, by
effectively began richer through patrimonialism. J. Peter Pham concluded the corruption became “quasi-institutionalized” affecting every aspect of Sierra Leonean life, including “manipulating other people’s access to economic opportunities in ways to enhance their power” (Pham 2005, 57). Corrupt governmental rule and mismanagement led to bankruptcy of state. Inept government policies can be considered a causal variable for the recruitment and use of child soldiers. The earliest available statistics regarding corruption in Sierra Leone are from 2003, which was the end of the conflict. Transparency International recorded Sierra Leone as ranking 113 out of 133 countries, 133 being most corrupt (Transparency International). In the case of Sierra Leone the government failed to provide viable opportunities for its civilians and subsequently impoverished them.

Because of the high levels of corruption and lack of economic opportunity it was not hard for the RUF to gain appeal. The RUF advocated a populist agenda aimed to revolutionize the state and oust the corrupt government officials. The RUF focused on recruiting the déclassé elements of society, without invoking any religious or ethnic sentiment, promising free education and healthcare. In the case of Sierra Leone, religiosiy had no impact on a child’s behavior during conflict. The disintegration of family relations prior to the conflict allowed the RUF to recruit or conscribe child soldiers. The poor living conditions led many Sierra Leonean families to foster their children to a more affluent family. The fostered child would act as a servant serving to relying on the global recognition of sovereignty, and are thereby able to undermine formal government institutions. This is often to their benefit especially as such institutions may acquire interest and powers at odds with the rulers’ efforts to retain power. Another way in which rulers undermine formal institutions is by way of weakening bureaucratic structures and manipulating markets in order to ‘enrich themselves and control others’
better his/her future prospects; however, in reality this practice was very exploitative. The wards (fostered children) were regularly beat and malnourished (Zack-Williams 1999, 78). Furthermore, prior to the outbreak of war Sierra Leone had a significant amount of street children living in especially dangerous conditions without any family ties. Widespread poverty resulting in the breakdown of families and corrupt government practices provided the RUF with ammunition to mobilize the population.

Relevant National Policies – Education

The lack of economic opportunities has been cited as a causal factor of the Sierra Leonean war, and can be traced to government policies instituted by President Momah. Researcher Joseph Hanlon explained the lack of governmental infrastructure which correlated to the destruction of the education system was a cause of why so many young people were able to be recruited by the RUF (Hanlon 2005). Moreover, by 1986, six years before the outbreak of war, President Momah declared education was a privilege not a right and the government was spending one-sixth on education as it had been five years before (Hanlon 2005, 460). Due to the patrimonialism of the government, there was little money left over to pay teachers. Therefore, teachers began asking parents to pay for their service and since many children came from poverty they were unable to afford basic education (Pham 2005). J Peter Pham notes that between 1980 and 1987, in addition to triple digit inflation, government spending on health and education decreased by over sixty percent and left many civilians without adequate social services (Pham 2005, 61). Coupled with the lack of educational opportunity, there were very few jobs accessible to the youth war before and after the war. The ostracization led many to label the Sierra Leonean conflict as a “crisis of youth,” in which youth were excluded from education,
employment and positions of advancement (Boersch 2012). This marginalization fueled anger toward the corrupt governing elite. The lack of youth advancement opportunity due to the patrimonial system in place was a distinctive factor in the onset of war and thus should be analyzed within the context of rehabilitation efforts to ensure they youth will not be remobilized.

Recovery Efforts

The international and national community has taken a two pronged approach in order to rehabilitate former child soldiers and heal the community. The United Nations implemented a Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program to remove weapons from rebel groups and reintegrate the fighters, specifically focused on the children involved in combat. The Lomé Peace Agreement established the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SLTRC) to foster acknowledgment and healing for the communities of Sierra Leone. On the national level the international community advocated for speedily elections so that government stability could be achieved. By analyzing the programs their corresponding levels of analysis, I will be able to determine whether all of the variables previously discussed have been addressed. My hypothesis is that the success of each programs was curtailed by which variables were taken into account. The more causal variables taken into account the greater the likelihood the success of the program and vice versa. Through my analysis I can ascertain the weaknesses of each program to develop a more effective rehabilitation program.

Individual Level

After the cease fire in 2001 efforts were made to address the former child soldiers of the conflict. A Disarmament, Demobilization and Rehabilitation Program (DDR) was
implemented to facilitate the reintegration of child soldiers into the community. Originally the program was intended for ninety days, but was soon streamlined to six to eight weeks and eventually was cut to three weeks in 2000 (Keen 2005, 258). The DDR program focused on disarming the individual and transferring the children to a demobilization center where they would be provided counseling, literacy lessons, employment training and basic necessities until they are moved to permanent residence in local community. After moving to a community the children are then provided with training programs specializing in vocational skills such as auto repair and furniture-making (Humphreys & Weinstein 2007, 539). Of the estimated 10,000 children conscripted to the RUF, only 1,700 went through the DDR and over half returned to the RUF before May 2000 (Keen 2005). Many scholars have criticized the DDR program for failing to address the psychological and community acceptance variables crucial to child soldiers’ rehabilitation. Additionally the program did not provide long term economic opportunities or include all victims of the conflict, such as women and amputees.

As mentioned above the psychological trauma of former child soldiers is an important variable to consider. Unfortunately, Sierra Leone was ill-equipped to deal with the psychological traumas correlated with the war. There were few if any psychiatrists on hand after the conflict, “there were no psychologists or psychiatric nurses in either country [Liberia or Sierra Leone]. No local health and social workers had been formally trained to accomplish the enormous task of rehabilitation” (Medeiros 2007, 501). Moreover, Medeiros criticized the DDR program of Sierra Leone for avoiding the mental health traumas the children may have faced. The research revealed that post-conflict
Sierra Leone lacked the capacity to effectively treat the mental health issues of former child soldiers.

The Sierra Leonean civil war was one of the bloodiest conflicts, and most of the atrocities were committed by child soldiers. A report conducted by Betancourt et al. in 2013 identified that of the 243 Sierra Leonean former child soldiers, 32 percent self-reported symptoms of PTSD. Although much literature suggests the psychological hardship of former child soldiers, there were few resources to help in Sierra Leone (Song, van den Brink & de Jong 2013, 615). Likewise the World Health Organization (WHO) Atlas project characterizes low-resourced countries as having the chronic, systematic and widespread disregard of mental health resources (WHO 2005). Logically the child soldiers may possibly suffer from psychological trauma associated with the violence, thus it is unreasonable not to include a psychological treatment in the rehabilitation program. Suzan Song indicated the various barriers to developing psychological care facilities as little understanding of mental health, system issues (lacking infrastructure and skilled workers, decentralized care) and failure to provide any evidence necessary to develop any policy or lasting practice (Song et al. 2013). Because of the inability of Sierra Leonean government to institutionalize any sort of mental health reform, religious groups, natural healers and NGOs are largely responsible for handling this problem (Ibid). Centralizing psychiatric care will ensure that all former child soldiers are receiving standardized care that is applicable to their conditions, consequently it is of the utmost importance that the government begin to dedicate resources to developing programs.

After extensive research regarding the effectiveness of the DDR program authors Humphreys and Weinstein concluded, “there is little evidence of the relationship between
participation in the DDR program and the degree to which ex-combatants have reintegrated in Sierra Leone” (Humphreys & Weinstein 2007, 554). The DDR program gave little attention to the reintegration aspect of the program. There was no sensitization of the combatants or the local community to understanding human rights issues of the conflict. The mechanistic program to bridge the gap between combatants and their formal communities was missing entirely from the DDR program. David Keen noted that many combatants feared retaliation from both existing rebel group yet to disarm and their very communities. Unfortunately there is no evidence supporting the notion that the DDR program actually increased the level of acceptance ex-combatants received from families or communities.

The DDR program also proved inadequate to foster skills necessary to pursue a career outside of rebel groups and, in some aspects, reinforced the allure of rebel groups. Keen criticized the program as lacking a daily schedule thus combatants would exhibit boredom and have little other alternative than to smoke marijuana (Keen 2005, 258). Moreover, the DDR program has decreased government efficacy in former combatants and reduced the likelihood of the children being employed post-conflict. Professor Zack-Williams identified the lack of social citizenship being a contributing factor to children’s support of the RUF, which the DDR program managed to enforce. The conditions of the camps, particularly difficult due to lack of funding, reinforced many of the combatants preconceived notions that rebel groups were the only secure way to access food and achieve dignity and respect (Keen 2005). The DDR reinforced much of the behavior it

25 A UN worker revealed “they hadn’t thought of the ‘R’—the reintegration—at all…There was no personnel equipped to do this reintegration.”

David Keen Conflict and Collision in Sierra Leone (New York: Palgrave: 2005)
was designed to eliminate and posed as another potential traumatic experience of separation for the protection of the rebel groups and has shown little evidence of disintegrating that bond.

Additionally, the DDR program worked to ostracize victims of the conflict. Roughly 5000 civilians, including children, suffered from upper limb amputations and only 1000 survived the conflict. (Dougherty 2004, 47). The surviving amputees felt neglected and excluded that all rehabilitation efforts were directed at former child soldiers. Women also were largely excluded from participation in the program with only 8% going through the program, although they accounted for a third of child soldiers in Sierra Leone (Keen 2005, 286). There was little opportunities provided for abducted females to free themselves from their male “partners” within the rebel groups. The DDR program included a cash-for-weapons incentive for combatants, but it was of little help to females who are routinely kept as sex slaves of porters. Overall the DDR program showed little to no evidence of positively affecting the rehabilitation of Sierra Leonean child soldiers.

Community Level

The concept of a truth and reconciliation commission (TRC) was developed to address special cases in which there were mass violations of human rights. The Lomé Peace Agreement in July 1999 assured the implementation of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SLTRC). Heavily supported by the RUF, the agreement also established amnesty for all perpetrators. From the outset the SLTRC faced many logistical and funding problems hindering its ability to successfully restore peace to Sierra Leone. Likewise the SLTRC had to compete with the Special Court of Sierra
Leone (SCSL), which was established to prosecute perpetrators of war despite the Lomé amnesty. A key component of TRCs is to create a clear narrative to account for blame so that the civilians are able to move past the tragedy. Unfortunately in the case of Sierra Leone, there were two differing narratives established. The SCSL and the SLTRC both worked to provide justice but came to different conclusions of who was responsible. All of these factors combined negated any possibility for truth and reconciliation to actually occur.

The failure of the SLTRC can be a lesson to improve on future implementations. The SLTRC suffered from serious mismanagement, lack of funding and continuous delays. The original estimation of the SLTRC was $10 million for 12 operational months. However, funding was so inadequate that the final budget was reported as just half at $5 million (Dougherty 2004, 53). The lack of donors was the result of its flawed hiring process. There were numerous complaints that the hiring process was politically driven and employees were “unqualified and redundant” (Dougherty 2004, 42). This perception of the SLTRC as dysfunctional led many donors to hold off on their contributions. The SLTRC was also delayed for 2 years after the collapse of the Lomé Agreement and also missed its original report deadline in October 2003. Circumstantial problems arose as well. Sierra Leone does not have a single dominant language thus all documents had to be translated into various local languages. Also travelling outside of Freetown was difficult due to poor roads and the rainy season. The beginning hurdles of the SLTRC destroyed its credibility and many civilians lost faith in its mission before it even started.
The lack of economic opportunity for Sierra Leonean youth was also a causal factor in the outbreak of the conflict. Due to the breakdown of the educational system, youth were left with no skills and little economic opportunity. Since the end of war, the Sierra Leonean government has identified its commitment to increasing economic opportunities for youth in the Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (SLPRSP). Yet, as of 2009, roughly 45% and 68% of men and women under 24, respectively, were unemployed (Peeters et al. 2009). However, it should be noted that almost half (47%) of women had at least one child by 19, thus removing them from the workforce (Ibid). Peeters et al. have acknowledged that although participation of youth in local and national politics has increased in post-conflict Sierra Leone, the generational tensions that led to the outbreak of civil war still exist. The institutional values of the pre-conflict system are still apparent and many high status elders favor reinstatement of chiefdoms, in which youth labor was controlled (Peeters et al. 2009). The youth also face specific obstacles entering workforce such as not receiving payment for their labor, fewer opportunities, inaccessibility to public sector due to age constraints and less access to resources, such as land and electricity (Ibid). Ensuring the youth have the necessary skills and opportunities in post-conflict Sierra Leone is important in securing the peace of nation as well as preventing remobilization into rebel groups.

Post-conflict Sierra Leone also suffers from endemic corruption throughout society. The International Crisis Group characterized the post-conflict Sierra Leonean judicial system of being “unable and unwilling to go after corrupt individuals,” and
charged donors and diplomats of intentionally ignoring local corruption that led to establishment of old ways which were meant to disenfranchise those most interested in reform (Hanlon 2005). As with most seemingly corrupt societies, there are accounts of suppression of the press as well. Joseph Hanlon reports that in October 2004 and May 2005 three journalists were sentenced and jailed for “seditious libel” after having wrote about apparent corruption of government officials (Hanlon 2005). Convincingly, Sanjukta Roy has argued the existence of a free, independent press as crucial to the political development of Sub-Saharan Africa (Roy 2014). In areas where corruption is highly plausible it is of the utmost importance that media be able to hold officials accountable and the civilians have access to this outlet. Despite international participation, the post-conflict society of Sierra Leone is still deeply corrupt, consequently cultivating the same conditions that led to the outbreak of war in 1991. In order for the rehabilitation process of child soldiers to be ultimately effective the national level issues must be addressed to decrease the likelihood of another civil war.

President Momah’s educational policies impacted the availability of children to be conscripted into conflict. On the verge of bankruptcy, there was no money to fund education and President Momah soon declared public school a right and not a privilege. For many rural families in poverty, education was out of reach and children were left with very little economic opportunity or basic necessities. In the aftermath of the conflict the Sierra Leonean government made education a main priority. The Ministry of Education implemented new policies, including, but not limited to, free core textbooks and learning materials, a school feeding program for students and elimination of primary
school fees. Many older children were forced out of school because of the conflict and in response the Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools (CREPS) program was developed so that young people can complete primary school in three years rather than required six (Maclure & Denov 2009). The Sierra Leonean government also increased educational spending to account for 19% of national budget between 2001 and 2004 (Ibid). Based on the reforms implemented it would seem that the education system in Sierra Leone was improving, however that is not the case.

Despite the attention and policy formation dedicated to improving the school system, scholars argued it is still not up to par. Researchers Maclure and Denov suggested the Ministry of Education is institutionally challenged and therefore the education system is suffering. Many classrooms are overpopulated and lacking adequate material, such as chairs. Teachers are underqualified, understaffed and often absent due to payroll discrepancies. Moreover, the promise of “free” education does not apply to many Sierra Leonean households, as data indicates the 44% of educational costs are supplied by families (Maclure & Denov 2009). Scholars conclude that, overall, the rapid education reconstruction of Sierra Leone did not provide enough resources for overpopulated classrooms and the situation will only continue to worsen with increasing enrollment. It is important to address the educational policy issues of Sierra Leone, because increased education can impact the youth economic opportunities.

Conclusion

The Sierra Leone case highlighted the impact of violence on other causal factors in the likelihood of child soldier rehabilitation, such as psychological outcomes.
and community acceptance. The Sierra Leonean case also provided an example of the inefficiencies of the individual and community level recovery efforts. Notably, Sierra Leone revealed the importance of national level policy decisions on the outbreak of conflict as well as the post-conflict rehabilitation process. Education is a crucial factor in enabling former child soldiers to reintegrate into civilian society. I will discuss in detail the lessons to be learned from Sierra Leone in a later chapter and apply my solution to this case study. The following section discusses another case study of Uganda.
CHAPTER IV

UGANDA

Introduction

As discussed in my theory chapter the most important causal variables to the successful rehabilitation of child soldiers on an individual level are religiosity, violence, psychological state of the child and the level of community acceptance. On the community level the variable is community acceptance. In regards to the national level the most important variables are employment, national relevant policies and corruption. The variables especially relevant to the Ugandan case are religiosity, violence, psychology, community acceptance and national relevant policies. The Ugandan case provides insight into how religiosity can affect the violence of the conflict and the subsequent psychological state of the child, therefore affecting the overall likelihood of rehabilitation. Understanding how these variables led to the outbreak of conflict will further our knowledge in developing a successful rehabilitation program. I chose the Ugandan conflict because of the elements of religiosity and political stability are not unique to child soldiering conflicts and therefore the knowledge obtained from this case can be generalized to other child soldiering conflicts.

Background

It is necessary to provide a brief history of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) conflict in order to formulate the best possible rehabilitation programs. Understanding the
context of the conflict will provide insight to causal mechanisms of child soldiering. This is by no means an extensive history for it is only meant to provide the most relevant information for purpose of this thesis. The geo-ethnic divisions of Uganda can be traced back to the colonial period of Uganda. During the British colonial era the northern and southern areas of Uganda were divided based upon occupation. The northern area was recruited for military purposes, while the south began employment in civil service. Northern Ugandans began to distinguish themselves as “military ethnocracy” (Adam et al., 2006). By nature of their trades, the south began more economically developed while the north remained a rural labor source. The north-south divide has continuously reinforced throughout centuries of competitive retaliation by use of the state military.

The LRA insurgency is rooted in government misuse of military for selfish purposes. Throughout history Ugandan governments have repeatedly purged ethnic groups by use of the military. Governments will back a specific ethnic group and, with the use of state military, target another ethnic group reinforcing ethnic cleavages in the land. Because of these patterns, there is severe government mistrust and strong ethnic divisions in the land. The Acholi people of the north suffered horrific grievances at the hands of the government for forty years. In 1972, President Amin ordered the massacre of Acholi state military members. In 1988, after a peace treaty was established between government forces and Acholi rebels, the Acholi civilians were massacred. President Museveni usurped power in 1986 from an Acholi dominated government on a platform of inclusivity. However, after twenty five years of continuous ethnic retaliation, there was little optimism among the Acholi people that Museveni’s regime would bring peace.
The Acholi civilians have suffered decades of atrocities, yet the most recent uprising can be attributed to the frequent rotation of ex-soldiers throughout their villages. The continuous change in military composition by different governments led to the militariat entering in and out of civilian society. The ex-combatants were reluctant to assimilate to the villagers’ lifestyles, thus creating an ideal breeding group for insurgency movements such as the Holy Spirit Movement Force (HSMF) and LRA. Joseph Kony became the self-proclaimed leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), which worked on behalf of the marginalized Acholi people of northern Ugandan. The LRA fought to establish a state which was run in accordance with the Ten Commandments (Flock 2011). However in the early nineties, the LRA began committing massacres, maimings and forced recruitment of the Acholi people in attempts to purify them. (Branch 2007).

According to the United Nations, the LRA has killed more than 100,000 people and kidnapped more than 60,000 children in an almost three-decade reign of terror in central Africa. (Aljazeera 2015). The myriad human rights violations have been well documented; researcher Joanna Quinn asserted that in a single Acholi community “79% of people reported having witnessed torture, 40% had witnessed killing, and 5% had been forced to harm another physically (Quinn 2008). The Acholi people also suffered human rights abuses at the hand of government forces throughout the conflict.

The ongoing Uganda conflict first began in 1987 with the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency against the Ugandan government. The LRA regularly

26 The HSMF was led by Alice Lakwene and is considered the precursor to the LRA movement (Frank Van Acker, “Uganda and the Lord’s Resistance Army: the new order no one ordered” African Affairs no 103: 412, 335-357).

27 The returning soldiers were reluctant to return to civilian life or take place in the necessary purification ritual, “kiroga” to expel the dangerous “cen” spirit leading many villagers to shun or fear them. (Frank Van Acker “Uganda and the Lord’s Resistance Army: the new order no one ordered” African Affairs)
participated in the abduction children, dismemberment and murder of civilians. In 2011, it was estimated that the LRA has abducted between 25,000 and 38,000 children (Vindevogel et al. 2011), however recent data estimated the abductions at 60,000 (Aljazeera 2015). However, the LRA is not solely responsible for all atrocities of the war, President Museveni’s regime has also be identified as contributing to the humanitarian crisis. Due to Museveni’s government policies, it was estimated in 2008 that 1.8 million people were internally displaced in northern Uganda, which accounted for 80 percent of the population (Quinn 2008), through the creation of “protected villages.” Researchers and scholars have described the government’s mass internment and the displacement of the Acholi as humanitarian crisis and war crime (Allen 2005; Otunnu 2006). Many Acholi people concluded that President Museveni has targeted them through government policy meant to destroy their methods of productivity (van Acker 2007). Both the LRA and Museveni’s government have targeted the Acholi people residing in northern Ugandan districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Padar, where the majority of fighting has taken place. I have included both a map (figure 2.1) and a timeline (figure 2.2) to help the reader conceptualize the chain of events in the conflict. A large portion of the violence took place in the between 1991 and 2003, in the northern regions on Uganda. It should be noted that, as of now, no official peace agreement has been established, nor has Joseph Kony been apprehended.

The LRA civil war began in 1986 and the fighting has decreased significantly but the conflict has not been officially declared over. By 2006 the LRA called for a ceasefire, which as later signed by the LRA and Ugandan government in February 2008 in Juba, Sudan. However, Kony failed to attend the signing of the peace agreement in November
2008. Since then Kony has been hiding in the bush or in Sudan and the LRA still commits sporadic attacks on Acholi peasantry. On the national level, Dr. Maina noted that as of 2011, more than 85 percent of inhabitants of the government sponsored camps had returned to their villages and a majority of the camps had shut down (Maina, 2011). Despite the resumption of everyday life for the Acholi people, many still live in fear of Kony’s return. Only when Joseph Kony has been apprehended will Acholi people and former child soldiers of the LRA be able to retain any semblance of normalcy.

Figure 2.1 Map of Uganda

Figure 2.2 Timeline

**1986 January**- President Museveni National Resistance Army overthrow Acholi government.

**1986 August**- Rumors of insurgency in northern Uganda, where villagers are concerned of Museveni’s retaliation against Acholi people

**1987 January**- Joseph Kony forms the LRA to overthrow Museveni

**1987-1991**- LRA raids villages in northern Uganda, begins abducting civilians into military service

**1991 March**- Ugandan government launches Operation North against LRA. In retaliation Kony massacres hundreds government supporters among Acholi

**1991-1994**- LRA insurgency increasing in violence, Acholi flee

**1994 February**- Peace talks between government and LRA fail; Kony establishes LRA bases in South Sudan

28 [http://tcon-uganda.org/blog/]
1994-1996- LRA attacks increase as do abductions of young people and children
1995 April- Ugandan government ceases diplomatic relations with Sudan, accusing them of helping LRA
1996 October- LRA abducts 139 girls from college in northern Uganda drawing international attention to issue
1996 Late- Ugandan government begins moving Acholi people into “protected villages”
1996-2002- Thousands of families entering displacement camps as war rages
2002 March- Government launches Operation Iron Fist in northern Uganda and South Sudan,
LRA responds with bloody counteroffensive incorporating new areas into fighting.
2003 December- President Kony recommends ICC investigate Kony and LRA leaders for war crimes
2005 October – ICC issues arrest warrants for Kony and top lieutenants
2006 July- Peace talks begin in Juba, South Sudan
2006 September- Temporary ceasefire
April 2008- Kony fails to show up to sign peace agreement

Throughout the chapter I will discuss the variables relevant in the Ugandan case and discuss in more detail the post-conflict resolution efforts. I will assess and critique how effective the efforts were in rehabilitating child soldiers. This chapter is meant to illustrate the relevant variables in this case and showcase the failure of the individual, community and national level solutions to successfully rehabilitate the child soldiers. In my policy prescriptions chapter, I will use this case study to hypothesize on solutions for future cases.

Variables

The next section of my chapter will discuss the variables in each level of analysis. The variables are interconnected throughout the levels and it is important to understand how these relationship materialize in the conflict. From my theory chapter, I have included diagram 2.3 to help the reader conceptualize the relationship of the variable. I have chosen the case of Uganda for the high levels of religiosity and political instability.

Not all the causal variables identified in the theory chapter are present, but that does not discount the potential insight that could be gained from analyzing this case.

Figure 2.3 Relationship of the Variables

**Individual Level**

*Religiosity*

Religion has long been considered a variable in social conflict (e.g. Huntington 1993), but more specific analysis, such as Finke and Harris’, has determined the relationship of between religion and violence. Finke and Harris postulated that when a religious group forms as a basis of a social or political movements, it has a greater capacity for violence (Finke & Harris 2009). The LRA was formulated on the basis of overthrowing the Museveni regime to establish a Christian orientated government, thus increasing its capacity for violence. Joseph Kony’s movement was spawned by the earlier Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) led by his relative, Alice Lakwena in response to the brutal Obote regime. Similar to Kony, Lakwena believed herself to be a messenger of a Christian spirit. Scott Wilson and Craig Whitlock of *The Washington Post* have identified
Kony as attempting to establish a Ugandan Christian government based on the Ten Commandments (Wilson & Whitlock 2011), similar to many religious armed groups. Kony worked to reshape society in accordance with his dogmatic beliefs. Kony and his followers believed themselves to be teachers enlightening the Acholi people, who had forsaken God. The killing of the Acholi people was in accordance with carrying out God’s mission to cleanse the Acholi people. The LRA and the children they abducted represent the “pure” Acholi people, initiated and cleansed through religious rituals, mainly of which contained violence (Ochen 2006). Finke and Harris also argued that increased isolation of a group increases the probability of religiously motivated violence (Finke & Harris 2009). Kony took abductees as far as possible from their homes, many were quickly transported to Sudan (Beber & Blattman 2013). The isolation of the LRA from civilization served to increase the likelihood of religiously motivated violence against civilians. Kony’s ability to attach his dogmatic beliefs to a political movement and keep his combatants in relative isolation increased the probability of the LRA’s religiously motivated violence.

Kony’s religious doctrine also brainwashed or frightened many of his child soldiers into submission. Kony, acting as the people’s savior and the “mouthpiece” of God has enacted various rules dictating what to eat, drink and whether or not to have sex (Adam et al. 2006), which established complete control. There are many accounts of LRA abductees who forfeit their first opportunity to escape out of fear of spiritual retribution (Adam et al. 2006). The spiritual doctrine of the LRA maintained that the outsiders are nonbelievers and thus should be killed by the insiders affiliated with the LRA. The LRA will save the Acholi people spiritually, but demanded they kill in their
time left on earth. The LRA’s belief system disciplined the child soldiers and ensured they will not escape or act out. Moreover, the constantly changing rule system keeps the child soldiers living in fear and unbreakable allegiance to their leader Kony. The children begin to actually believe in the rituals they are performing and relying upon them for survival in the bush. The LRA’s use of Christianity and Acholi religious practices fostered an environment in which abducted children become indoctrinated into their role of child soldier. Taking note of how and why child soldiers behave in conflict is important in developing a sustainable program for rehabilitation and decrease the likelihood of remobilization.

Violence

The violence of the LRA has been well-documented. The LRA forcibly recruits children into its army; it has been documented that up to 90 percent of its ranks are child soldiers (Bevan 2007). Around 1991 the LRA became especially violent and “began a campaign of massacring…civilian population, abducting recruits and torturing people, cutting off limbs, ears and lips and gouging out eyes” (Bevan 2007). The LRA is infamous for deforming Acholi civilians by either cutting off their limbs, ears, noses or lips. In 2002, a former abductee of the LRA recounted the attack on his village, in which 50 people were axed to death and 35 abducted, to the BBC. John Ochola had his hands, right ear and nose cut, which began to rot before being rescued and treated. Ochola also mentions two females he encountered who were repeatedly raped until they could no longer walk and one had her breast cut off (Ochen 2006). The violent nature of the LRA has also caught international attention. In a 2011 letter to Congress authorizing the deployment of 100 US combat forces to aid in the fight against the LRA, Obama wrote
the LRA has “murdered, raped and kidnapped tens of thousands of men, women and children in central Africa” and “continues to commit atrocities across the Central African Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan that have a disproportionate impact on regional security” (Flock 2011). The LRA repeatedly attacked and abducted members of the civilian population. Considering the majority of the LRA is comprised of child soldiers (Bevan 2007), the level of violence in a considerable factor in the rehabilitation efforts.

**Psychological Outcomes**

As with the majority of cases, former Ugandan child soldiers exhibited a high rate of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Weierstall et al. reported that when comparing non-abducted verse abducted Ugandan child soldiers, members of the abducted group had substantially higher rates of “appetitive aggression” (Weierstall et al. 2012), which refers to the experiencing pleasure when perpetrating violence. This is particularly concerning considering 90 percent of LRA child soldiers were abducted (Lomo & Havil 2004). A study conducted by Pham, Vinck and Stover on adults residing in Northern Uganda concluded that 67% of self-identified abductees met the criteria for symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and 40% of self-identified abductees met the criteria for depression (Pham, Vinck & Stover 2009). PTSD and other common mental illnesses were prevalent among former Ugandan child soldier, yet other lesser known illnesses existed as well.

In addition to PTSD and depression researchers have also documented the prevalence of a dissociative psychological disorder known as spirit phenomenon, in which the victim describes a spirit taking over their identity. Neuner et al. conducted a study which identified the existence of spirit phenomenon in 14.3 percent of abducted
children in Northern Ugandan (Neuner et al. 2012). The researchers concluded that the development of spirit phenomenon resulted from prolonged exposure to a highly spiritualized, traumatic war environment. Spirit phenomenon has been linked to maladaptive behavior and dysfunction and can therefore be classified as psychopathology (Neuner et al. 2012). Evidence shows that former Ugandan child soldiers exhibited high levels of psychological and dissociative behaviors which are elemental in the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child soldiers.

Community Level

Community Acceptance

As discussed in the theory chapter, the level of community acceptance can impact the ability of a child to reintegrate into community as well as their individual psychological state. Vindevogel and her colleagues noted that former child soldiers reported high levels of community acceptance upon returning, yet community level stigmatization was especially difficult for the female children to overcome (Vindevogel et al. 2013). Overall the families were happy to see the return of their children because in most cases they assumed them to be dead. Rodriquez and his colleagues’ findings suggested the more time an abductee spent in the bush, the higher likelihood of experiences problems reintegrating. In some cases, the families reported feeling nervous
about a child’s state of mind and behavior (Veale & Starvou 2007). Male former child soldiers reported little to no challenge in reintegrating into communities; conversely, females struggled to be accepted back into communities.

Despite the high levels of acceptance, there was disparity of acceptance between genders. Females faced higher levels of community stigmatization upon returning, which is reflected in their psychological outcomes (Annan et al. 2013). Annan and her colleagues cited qualitative research suggesting that females experience domestic violence and discrimination upon returning (Ibid). Because of a female association with the LRA decreased her chances of marriage, many females are left alone to raise their child. The inability to marry post-conflict signified a lack of opportunity for female former child soldiers (Annan et al. 2013). Female former child soldiers suffered from social exclusion and food and housing insecurity, all of which have been linked to an increased risk of mental illness (Lund et al. 2011). In the case of Uganda, female former child soldiers experienced high levels of community stigma, which decreased their level of economic opportunity, which in turn increased the likelihood of psychological issues. Evidence suggested the level of community acceptance impacts multiple variables that are crucial to the rehabilitation of child soldiers, thus indicating its importance in developing a rehabilitation strategy.

National Level

Employment

Unlike the Sierra Leonean conflict, the lack of economic opportunities for youth was not a causal factor in the outbreak of war. It was, however, a significant challenge for the rehabilitation of former child soldiers. Researcher Grace Maina discussed the
economic livelihood of returning child soldiers, with specific attention to females. Contrary to returning males, who can eventually find labor work, returning females often lack educational and trade skills thus increasing the burden on their families, who have already suffered through the severe conditions of the internally displacement people (IDP) camps. Annan and her colleagues also noted that regardless of abduction, females exhibited low education levels and less participation in skilled labor, signifying a lack of opportunities for Ugandan females in general (Annan et al. 2013). Moreover, less than 10% of female former child soldiers continued their education upon returning (Ibid). The lack of economic opportunities for former female child soldiers has proved especially challenging for the reintegration process. As discussed above a lack of economic opportunity post-conflict can impact psychological outcome (Lund et al. 2013), therefore it is important to consider economic opportunities, especially for females, when developing a rehabilitation program.

**Corruption**

President Museveni came to power in 1986 and has continued to remain in office for 29 years. However, Museveni only began competing in elections in 1996, ten years after he seized power, and since then has served five consecutive five year terms. Museveni has managed to continuously win elections due to vote rigging, electoral malpractice, intimidation, violence and other forms of corruption (Tangri & Mwenda 2010). Many of the institutions responsible for curtailing presidential power such as parliament, the judiciary and the Electoral Commission have had their powers revoked by Museveni (Ibid). Museveni remains in full, unilateral control of the only Ugandan political party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), eliminating the opportunity of
other candidates to compete for office. The NRM mandated that political parties be abolished in 1993 and solidified this in the 1995 constitution (van Acker 2004). In order to remain in power for twenty nine consecutive years, Museveni has illegally manipulated and corrupted the election process. Museveni’s regime, albeit authoritative, has proved durable. However, the LRA insurgency indicated that Museveni does not have a monopolization of the means of violence within Uganda. The high levels of corruption and subsequent favoritism have rendered the government incapable of providing basic goods and services to its people, especially those of northern Uganda.

*Relevant National Policies – Displacement*

The policies of Museveni’s regime in regards to northern Uganda have had devastating effects. The area of northern Uganda in which the LRA terrorized is about 30,000 square kilometers and contains about 700,000 inhabitants mainly of Acholi origin. Per government orders the Acholi population was moved to “protected camps” to shield them from LRA attacks, of which Adam Branch has likened to internment or concentration camps (Branch 2007). The Uganda People’s Defense Force (UPDF) have displaced the Acholi people by burning and bombing entire villages. The UPDF killed any civilians found outside of the camp, yet not protect them so they are easy for targets for LRA attacks. In January 2006, northern Uganda was reported as having one of the worst mortality rates in the world at 1000 children per week, by World Vision Uganda (Otunnu 2006). Furthermore, northern Uganda experienced an unprecedented increase in HIV/AIDS infections to 50 percent, while the nationwide rate is 6.4 percent. Olara Otunnu attributed this increase to the government decision to send HIV-positive soldiers to wreak havoc on the Acholi population. The lack of proper amenities, such as food,
housing and medicine, is in direct violation of the Geneva Convention. Furthermore, Otunnu reported a death rate in Acholi concentration camps three times that of Darfur (Otunnu 2006), which has led the Acholi people and many international aid organizations to classify the situation as genocide.

The displacement of the Acholi population has left roughly 80% of arable land open to encroachment by other ethnic groups (van Acker 2004). Additionally, there has been a disastrous loss of cattle for the Acholi people, dropping by over 150,000 between 1986 and 1998. The loss of cattle have been attributed to plundering by local tribes, but as van Acker pointed out there is also suspicion that NRA soldiers have disguised themselves as such to steal cattle (van Acker 2004). Because of the placement in the camps the Acholi men have lost their ability to farm and adequately protect their cattle leaving the role of bread winner to the women while the men resort to drinking (Ibid). Museveni’s policies have led many Acholi to conclude that the government is specifically targeting their methods of production and destroying the social fabric of their communities.

In addition to economically marginalizing the Acholi, historically the Ugandan government has repeatedly committed violence against the community fostering a deep sense of betrayal among the Acholi. In 1972, the Acholi members of the state military were reported back to barracks and murdered for purposes of ethnic cleansing under then President Amin. The Acholi people led an overthrow of the Obote regime in 1985 and six months later in January 1986, the Acholi regime was ousted by the current President Museveni. President Museveni has committed many human rights abuses against the Acholi people, culminating in the Operation North of 1991, in which the National
Resistance Army (NRA) massacred the population. The marginalization and human rights violations by the Ugandan government are especially important when theorizing the rehabilitation and reintegration programs for former child soldiers. If these factors are left unaddressed there is a high likelihood another civil war could erupt.

Recovery Efforts

The recovery efforts that took place in northern Uganda were minimal. There was no comprehensive DDR program, rather the process was organized by NGOs and local community members. On the community level there was no TRC to address the LRA insurgency, however a TRC was conducted in 1986 to foster healing from previous conflicts. Although this TRC is not relevant to the LRA conflict, I have chosen to still analyze it because of the potential lessons to be learned for future application. On the national level, few reforms have taken place besides the decommissioning the IDP camps. President Museveni still remains in power and as I will demonstrate below, there is still high levels of corruption. By analyzing the recovery efforts at each level of analysis, I will be able to determine whether the previously discussed variables were adequately addressed. My hypothesis is that the programs were largely unsuccessful because there was no comprehensive, holistic program in place to rehabilitate the former child soldiers. The more causal variables taken into account, the higher likelihood the success of the programs. Through my analysis I can surmise the weaknesses of the recovery programs and use this knowledge to develop a sustainable rehabilitation program which I will present in a later chapter.
Individual Level

Despite the two decade long conflict that has plagued Ugandan since 1986 and the reported 25,000 to 30,000 children abducted by the LRA (Corbin, 2008), a national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program has yet to materialize (Blattman & Annan, 2008). There have been, however, NGO and locally sponsored DDR programs. The NGO sponsored DDR programs consisted of a reception center acting as an intermediate housing facility between combat and civilian life. At the center the child was provided with medical care, counseling services and help in locating the families. The counseling provided was by no means extensive or adequate, merely consisting of group discussions and advice from social workers. The reception center also provided clothing, a mattress and a few other household items (Blattman & Annan 2008). The first reception center was opened in 1994 due to the efforts of local community members and soon secured funding from international NGOs such as Save the Children (Verma 2012). As of 2013, 26,288 of the 50,000 estimated combatants had been demobilized and 5,335 reintegrated, the majority of which had escaped from the LRA (Zena 2013, 4; Blattman & Annan 2008). Joanne Corbin reported that 84 percent of abducted boys attended reception centers, while only 15 percent of abducted girls attended (Corbin 2008). The existence of such reception centers was helpful for the reintegration of child soldiers, but the process was in no way comprehensive to all the needs of former child soldiers.

One of the most significant challenges of reintegration efforts is the consideration of what the child is reintegrating to. More than 1.8 million people—90% of the affected population—were moved to internally displaced people (IDP) camps (Patel et al. 2014, 1), meaning that many of former child soldiers were not returning to their homes. After
completing the DDR process former child soldiers were returned to impoverished IDP camps with few economic opportunities and especially high rates of HIV (Patel et al. 2013). Blattman and Annan reported that only 23% of returning males had found work, which only consisted of an average of 14 days of work in a month earning less than 2 dollars a day (Blattman & Annan 2008). The DDR programs have been criticized for increasing crime rates rather than fostering employment. Zena maintained that former child soldiers were unable to apply newly developed skills because of an overall lack of economic opportunities in the community and thus resorted to crime, evidenced by the incarceration rate of 42% among former child soldiers (Zena 2013, 6). Moreover, Joanne Corbin asserted that the reception centers focused primarily on cultural and societal healing, while neglected to provide “little if any psychological support” (Corbin 2008, 318). Throughout the literature there were accounts of returned child soldiers and family members fearing the possibility of re-abduction (e.g. Veale & Starvou 2007). The programs in Ugandan failed to establish a succinct, inclusive rehabilitation program for child soldiers. More attention should have been devoted to ensuring stable psychological outcomes and fostering genuine economic opportunity. It is important that a rehabilitation program include all the causal variables of child soldiering so that its impact will be notable and sustainable.

**Community Level**

The Ugandan situation is unique in that a TRC was implemented in 1986 prior to the LRA’s emergence as the dominant rebel group. President Museveni came to power in 1986 and soon after mandated The Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights (CIVHR) to investigate the human rights violation of the past 15 years under the
regimes of Idi Amin and Milton Obote. President Museveni also dictated that the CIVHR not consider any human rights issues past 1986. Researcher Joanne Quinn argued that the commission did not present an actual opportunity for Ugandan citizens to acknowledge and address human rights violations. President Museveni provided a particularly vague and broad mandate for the commission to scrutinize all types of human rights violations from 1962 to the beginning of his reign in 1986. The fact that each human rights violation has its own circumstances was especially overwhelming for the commissioners.

Moreover, the CIVHR was fraught with institutional problems from the beginning and the citizens as well as government officials lacked the political will to achieve the goals set forth by the CIVHR. Similar with the Sierra Leonean case, the CIVHR had to compete with other commissions which had a detrimental effects on its legitimacy. Perhaps most damaging to the work of the CIVHR was the apathy of the international community. Overall, the CIVHR ultimately failed evidenced by the continued violence of Uganda.

The most relevant institutional problems of the CIVHR pertained to capacity, citizens’ lack of human rights knowledge, mishandling of evidence collected by the commission and severe lack of funding and resources. The CIVHR was responsible for looking into over 25 years’ worth of human rights violations. Researcher Quinn noted that the commissioners particularly struggled to maintain fluidity when violations had been committed by various different power seeking perpetrators throughout various government power exchanges. Additionally, many Ugandans were unfamiliar with the concept of their rights. Only the 1995 Constitution established the Ugandan Human Rights Commission, thus many Ugandans lacked knowledge of their rights prior to late
1980s. Another bizarre flaw of the CIVHR was the evidence that went missing during the commission; this loss of evidence made it even more difficult to establish a signal narrative and to carry out justice to the perpetrators. As with the case of Sierra Leone the CIVHR lacked funding and as a result was suspended for long periods of time, thus hindering its effectiveness. The CIVHR was predicted to take only three years, but in reality the final report was not submitted until 1994; five years off schedule. Although the institutional factors logistically hindered the CIVHR’s mission, there are more insidious factors.

The most concerning factor to the failure of the CIVHR was the lack of political will and apathy of the international community. Quinn revealed that the majority of participants were from the lower to middle class, while the wealthier citizens were hesitant. It is documented that many came forward only under the assumption they would be compensated for their testimony, however commissioners noted that they believed strongly in the system and the work of the Commission. Participation in the Northern communities was especially lacking due to inaccessibility of certain geographical areas under the control of the LRA and the northern citizens’ persistent mistrust of government. The CIHRV required citizen participation, especially from those most affected by human rights abuses, to achieve its purpose. Unfortunately, for Uganda, that was not possible.

The inability of the Commission to address the human rights issues of President Museveni’s regime gravely affected any gains that could have been accomplished. Additionally Museveni failed to establish proper funding and facilities for the Commission and many of its commissioners were affiliated with him personally. The establishment of competing committees, such as the Amnesty Committee, dissuaded
participation in the CIVHR by offering amnesty instead. Despite his outward commitment to the cause, Museveni was more interested in rebuilding the economic and physical infrastructure. Any democratic reforms promised by Museveni was quickly dissolved by his suspension of term limits leading to a two decade reign of power that continues today. In her research Joanna Quinn mentions her struggle to gain a copy of the CIVHR, because of which she concluded that its final report, including conclusions and recommendations, were buried and largely ignored the international community. Despite its failures, the CIVHR provided important lessons to implement a more effective program to address the current warfare of the LRA.

More recent efforts have been made to handle the conflict with the LRA. In 2003 the Ugandan government issued a “Referral of the Situation concerning the LRA” to International Criminal Court (ICC). Professor Adam Branch argued that the intervention of the ICC failed for two reasons. Branch maintained the problems rest upon the assumptions that the intervention of the ICC will cause a speedy end to the war and Museveni’s referral symbolized his commitment to end the conflict. Branch asserted both of these are false. Supposedly, ICC intervention would increase pressure on Sudan and eliminate top LRA officials thus leading younger warriors to defect. However, at the time of referral, Sudan maintained that it no longer supports the LRA. Likewise, the fear that Kony has instilled in his soldiers is likely to keep them in line, especially since he is still at large. Additionally the arrest warrants issued by the ICC negated the possibility of peace talks. Notably, Branch stated that general amnesty is the popular demand of the civilians. Museveni’s referral enabled a military solution to enforce international law, which has shown in the previous two decades to be ineffective. Under Museveni’s
control, the government military Uganda People’s Defense Force (UPDF) now had the opportunity to hunt down and seize LRA combatants. Correspondingly, the arrest warrants disregarded the Amnesty Act of 2000, which was strongly supported by the Acholi people to grant general Amnesty to the LRA combatants (Branch 2007). Despite its intent the ICC intervention served only to prolong the war and Museveni’s reign of power.

National Level

Economic reconstruction efforts are especially challenging in areas where the infrastructure was damaged and the population lacked both education and skills, such as northern Uganda (Annan et al. 2013). I could find no evidence of a comprehensive educational or economic recovery program specific to northern Ugandan. As on May 2007 there were few educational programs in place to help former child soldiers make up for lost time due to combat and evidence suggested that existing training programs do not yield increased income (Robinson & Alpar 2009). A possible explanation for failure of aid programs, such as school scholarship and vocational training programs, is the unclear eligibility criteria which dissuaded youth enrollment (Annan, Brier et al. 2009). Moreover, there were few programs assisting in the transition from training to paid work. Youth had little alternative other than joining the UPDF for males and sex work for females (Robinson & Alpar 2009). It seems as if the national government largely ignored the economic disaster of northern Ugandan.

President Museveni has managed to remain in power despite numerous accusations of corruption among high ranking officials. Most notable of the accusation is the diversion of $4.5 million from the Global Fund to fights AIDS, Tuberculosis and
Malaria in 2005, $800,000 stolen from the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations in 2006 and the $12.7 million stolen from the Office of the Prime Minister in late 2012 (Human Rights Watch 2013). Human Rights Watch and Yale Law School’s Lowenstein Human Rights Clinic issued a report in 2013 implicating the Ugandan government’s failure to hold its highest members of government accountable for corruption, despite damning evidence. The reports concluded there was a lack of political will in Ugandan anti-corruption institutions (Human Rights Watch 2013).

Moreover, in 2013 at least 28 anti-corruption activists were arrested while distributing information to the public (Ibid). Despite pledges to curtail corruption and promote democracy, the recent events prove that Ugandan is mired in corruption.

The Ugandan government decommissioned the 150 IDP camps in northern Uganda in 2005, yet many civilians remain. Whyte and her colleagues concluded the reason people remain in the camps is because of loss of previously held land due to squatters or lost privilege to the land they held due to a family member’s death or new martial bonds (Whyte et al. 2012). On the national level, the Uganda government has done little to aid displaced persons in returning to their land. However, new local governments and local investors are working to rebuild the infrastructure of northern Uganda including development of roads, water systems, buildings and schools (Ibid). Unfortunately, for the inhabitants of northern Uganda, physical infrastructure was not the only thing destroyed by the displacement.

One of the more tragic effects of the Acholi displacement is the destruction of societal inclusiveness. Many internally displaced persons (IDP)s lost a family member that was a key link to their social structure, rendering then isolated in the aftermath of
conflict. A first link family member, such as a husband, may have been killed and the remaining family members of the widow refuse to accept the obligation of inclusion of her (Ibid). Furthermore, many IDPs were never even located in the camps, Refstie and Brun acknowledge the existence of 300,000 to 600,000 “rural IDPs” who fled to the town or urban areas (Refstie & Brun 2011). “Rural IDPs” are no recognized by NGOs, therefore they are not entitled to the benefits encamped IDPs receive. The Acholi civilians forcibly displaced by the LRA conflict faced economic and societal hardship, which the national government has done little to alleviate.

Conclusion

The Ugandan case is unique in its relationship with religiosity. None of the other case studies incorporate this variable, but as indicated by the literature review religiosity is a common variable to the incidence of child soldiers. Because of this, it is important to understand its relationship to other variables as well as how it impacts the individual level child. Also of note is the limited role of the national government in the Ugandan case. They provided no individual, community or national level recovery program suitable to the needs of former child soldiers. Analyzing a case in which no recovery program took place, reaffirms the necessity to a multilevel comprehensive rehabilitation program. I will go into further detail about the specific inefficiencies of what recovery efforts did exist and provide my policy recommendations in a later chapter. The next section discusses another case study of Liberia.
CHAPTER V

LIBERIA

Introduction

As previously discussed in my theory chapter the most important causal variables to the successful rehabilitation of child soldiers on an individual level are religiosity, violence and the psychological state of the child. On the community level the most important factor is community acceptance. In regards to the national level the most important variables are corruption, employment and relevant national policies. In all cases, including Liberia, the especially high levels of violence in the conflict can in turn affect the psychological state of the child. Moreover, the relevant national policies can impact the levels of the community acceptance for former child soldiers. Understanding the relationships between these variables is useful in developing a comprehensive rehabilitation program. The Liberian case reiterates many of the conclusions found in the previous two case studies as well as having strong linkages to the Sierra Leonean conflict. I chose this case mainly because it is one of the most notorious incidences of child soldiers and its relations to the previously discussed cases. I will begin this chapter by providing a brief history of the conflict (see figure 2.2 for more detailed account) so that the reader can fully understand the impact of the causal variables.
Background

Liberia was engulfed in 14 years of civil war from 1989 until 2003, during which 250,000 people were and another 1.3 million displaced (Medeiros 2007). Children as young as ten years old were conscripted into fighting for both the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and the United Liberian Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO)—an offshoot of Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). It has been estimated between 40,000 and 60,000 children were recruited by rebel groups. UNICEF estimated 10% (6,000) of recruits were under the age 15 and 20% (12,000) were between ages 15-17 (Fleischman & Whitman 1994), yet the youngest demobilized child was documented as seven years old (Cohn 1998). The conflict spread throughout Liberia and into neighboring Sierra Leone at some points of fighting and ultimately ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2003.

The root causes of the Liberian civil war, lasting from 1989 to 2003, lie in the routine violence and excessive corruption of President Samuel Doe’s regime (1980-1990). In 1980 a military junta headed by Doe tortured and assassinated the previous president, William Tolbert, and took control. With the use of voter rigging, Samuel Doe won the 1985 elections with 50.9% of the popular vote in a contest that was actually won by Jackson Doe, no relation to Samuel Doe (Kandeh 1996). Despite the violent nature of the succession, many Liberians supported Samuel Doe because of his revolutionary
populist platform.\textsuperscript{31} However, evidenced by his brutal suppression of a coup led by Qwiwonkpa, an ethnic Gio, and targeted violence toward Gio and Mano civilians\textsuperscript{32}, it became clear Doe was specifically catering to the Krahn ethnic group and using violence as a political instrument. At the time of Charles Taylor’s 1989 insurgency, all other ethnic groups had been forcefully removed or resigned from government position, and only members of the Krahn ethnic group remained in power (Dunn 2005). Doe was repeatedly accused of corruption and brutality amid a declining economic conditions. The exclusively Krahn dominated government began responding to opposition with increased levels of violence, so much so that executions, rapes and dismemberment became commonplace in Liberia to achieve politically corrupt motives.\textsuperscript{33}

Doe’s reign of violence and corruption ended with the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) insurgency in Nimba County led by Charles Taylor. Taylor exploited the already existent hostility over the fraudulent 1985 elections to gain support for his campaign. In response to Taylor’s incursion, Doe unleashed his military to murder

\textsuperscript{31}\textnormal{According to Sgt. Samuel Doe “the People’s Redemption Council (PRC) came to power not to continue the suppression of our people but to release them from the chains of oppression and provide them with a full and meaningful life.” Jimmy Kandeh, “What does the ‘militariat’ do when it rules? military regimes: the Gambia, Sierra Leone and Liberia.” \textit{Review of African Political Economy} 23, no. 69: 387-404.}

\textsuperscript{32}\textnormal{Kandeh remarks that after Taylor’s 1989 incursion in Nimba County, Doe began an ethnic purge of Gios and Manos in the region. Doe relied on his military to massacre and displace thousands for supporting opposition leader Quiwonkpa and Charles Taylor. (Jimmy Kandeh, “’What does the ‘militariat’ do when it rules? military regimes: the Gambia, Sierra Leone and Liberia,’ \textit{Review of African Political Economy}.”}

\textsuperscript{33}\textnormal{A leader of a Liberian radical group instrumental in the overthrow of previous regime Amos Sawyer has commented on the first six years of Doe’s regimes as “years of rape and plunder by armed marauders whose ideology is to search for cash and whose ambition is to retain power and to accumulate and protect wealth.” Additionally Max Sesay has described the regime as “characterized by sustained levels of brutality, dramatic economic decline, political immobilization and purges of real and imagined enemies. The regime’s brutality was markedly represented by the haste with which those allegedly implicated in plots to overthrow the government were summarily executed” (Jimmy Kandeh, “What does the ‘militariat’ do when it rules? military regimes: the Gambia, Sierra Leone and Liberia,” \textit{Review of African Political Economy}).}
anyone suspected of sympathizing with the cause and they destroyed entire villages in the process. The violence of Doe’s counterinsurgency caused many civilians to join the ranks of the NPFL and the movement gained momentum. As rebel groups marched toward Monrovia, Doe’s Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) continued to commit senseless violence against civilians, culminating in an attack on an International Red Cross station which massacred 600 Gio and Mano civilians in 1990. The NFPL also targeted Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups for supporting Doe. Doe’s regime was fighting not only the NPFL, but also other ethnic militias such as the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPF) led by Prince Johnson. In September 1990, on an incursion into INPF controlled territory, Doe was captured, tortured and killed by the INPF, leaving a vacuum of leadership for Liberia.

Upon Doe’s death, the struggle for control of Liberia intensified. In October of 1992 Taylor staged an unsuccessful coup resulting in the violent military confrontation between Taylor’s army of child soldiers and the professional soldiers of the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). In 1996 another surge of fighting occurred in Monrovia, leading international and regional peace facilitators to call for new elections, which Taylor won with 75% of the vote. Soon after, in 1999, a rebel group called Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) developed. LURD aimed at removing Taylor from power and holding him accountable for human rights abuses.34 Throughout his tenure as president Taylor was accused of using state forces to harass and intimidate opponents, mismanaging state finances to deprive civilians of basic

necessities and destabilizing neighboring countries by supporting rebels. Relative
stability was established in 2000 when United Nations condemned Taylor’s regime as
supporting the RUF in Sierra Leone. The United Nations then placed crippling economic
sanctions on Liberia (Bøås 2001). Taylor was also engaged in an ongoing conflict with
LURD rebels, who at the height of their power controlled one-third to one-half of Liberia.
Taylor employed ex-RUF fighters from Sierra Leone as well as his own Anti-Terrorist
Unit forces to defeat LURD, but to no avail. Amid intense international pressure, Taylor
was eventually exiled to Nigeria in 2003 after multiple offensives by newly developed
rebel groups committed to establishing democracy in Liberia.  

Figure 3.1 Map of Liberia

![Map of Liberia](image)

Figure 3.2 Timeline

1980 - Samuel Doe carries out military coup. President Tolbert and 13 of his aides are
publicly executed. Doe suspends constitution and assumes full powers.
1985 - Doe wins presidential election.

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1989 - National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor begins an uprising against the government.

1990 - Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sends peacekeeping force. Doe is executed by a splinter group of the NPFL.

1997 - After several years of chaotic, stop-go fighting, Taylor wins a presidential election.


2000 July - Stability remains elusive. Government reports first attacks by rebels who identify themselves as Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).

2001 May - UN Security Council reimposes arms embargo to punish Taylor for trading weapons for diamonds from rebels in Sierra Leone.

2002 January - More than 50,000 Liberians and Sierra Leonean refugees flee fighting. Taylor declares a state of emergency.

2003 March - Rebels advance to within 10km of Monrovia.

2003 June - Talks in Ghana aimed at ending rebellion overshadowed by indictment accusing 2003 July - Fighting intensifies; rebels battle for control of Monrovia. Several hundred people are killed. West African regional group ECOWAS agrees to provide peacekeepers.


2003 September-October - US forces pull out. UN launches major peacekeeping mission, deploying thousands of troops.

2005 23 November - Ellen Johnson Sirleaf becomes the first woman to be elected as an African head of state.


2006 April - Former president Charles Taylor appears before UN-backed court in Sierra Leone on charges of crimes against humanity. In June the Netherlands-based International Criminal Court agrees to host his trial.

2006 June - UN Security Council eases a ban on weapons sales so Liberia can arm newly trained security forces. An embargo on Liberian timber exports is lifted shortly afterwards.

2006 July - President Johnson Sirleaf switches on generator-powered street lights in the capital, which has been without electricity for 15 years.

2007 June - Start of Charles Taylor's war crimes trial in The Hague, where he stands accused of instigating atrocities in Sierra Leone.

2009 February - President Johnson Sirleaf admits to Truth and Reconciliation Commission that she mistakenly backed ex-President Charles Taylor when he launched the 14-year civil war in 1989.

2009 July - Truth Commission submits report to parliament, recommends prosecuting 200 people and listing others who should be barred from public office, including President Johnson Sirleaf.
Throughout the chapter I will discuss the variables relevant to case of Liberia and discuss in more detail the recovery efforts that took place. I will assess and critique whether the rehabilitation efforts were effective in ultimately rehabilitating the child soldiers. However, contrary to the previous two case studies, there is limited data on Liberian child soldiers. I could find few if any quantitative studies that documented the post-conflict conditions of child soldiers in Liberia. I have summarized my finding below and, albeit scarce, they can still provide worthy insight into the challenges that former Liberian child soldiers face. This chapter will serve to illustrate the important variables of the Liberia case and highlight the ineffectiveness of the individual, community and national level recovery efforts. In my policy recommendations chapter, I will use this case study to make policy prescriptions about future case studies.

Variables

Throughout this next section I will discuss the variables affecting each level of analysis. The interconnected relationships of the variables is important to understanding how they relate to the rehabilitation process. From my theory chapter I have included the diagram, figure 3.3, which conceptualizes the relationship between the variables. I chose to analyze the case of Liberia because of its similarity to the previous case studies and

unique relationship with Sierra Leone. The Liberian case showcases high levels of violence and an actual criminal indictment for the use of child soldiers of its leader, Charles Taylor. Pertaining to the statistical research of the conditions of Liberian child soldiers, there is a gap in the research. I have summarized all the research available below, which will provide insight into the variables which affected the former child soldiers of Liberia. Additionally, there were few recovery efforts implemented at the national level to address the individual level variables. Although the research is sparse, the Liberian case will provide knowledge that will be useful in developing a rehabilitation strategy for future cases.

Figure 3.3 Relationship of the Variables

**Individual Level**

**Violence**

The Liberian conflict was especially violent in that it was waged in the absence of stable government among various ethnic factions (Cohn 1998). Researcher Ilene Cohn pointed out that almost all children in the country, including combatants and civilians, suffered from one or more traumatic war-related experiences (Ibid). Sesay and his
colleagues noted that child soldiers often watched family members being maimed or
dying slowly and in some cases committed atrocities themselves (Sesay et al. 2003).
Many of the child soldiers became involved in the conflict at a young age and were
therefore exposed to high levels of violence in their preadolescent years (Ibid). Human
Rights Watch reported the routine punishment of child soldiers within the ranks as
including beatings and abuse from superiors (Human Rights Watch 2004) as well as
undergoing cruel initiation processes in which children were required to murder or
commit some other atrocity to demonstrate loyalty (Fleischman & Whitman 1994).
Former child soldiers also sustained scars on their chest as a supposed protection
mechanism against warring factions. More often than not the violence of the conflict has
left both emotional and physical scars on the children.

The child soldiers of the NPFL had similar duties as the children in the RUF and
LRA; however, there were also notable differences with respect to the youngest child
combatants. Responsibilities of the Liberian child soldiers included carrying ammunition,
cooking and serving food or some were required to partake in the atrocities as spies,
executioners, or checkpoint staff where they routinely killed, harassed and raped civilians
(Ibid). The younger children were typically the first sent into battle as a buffer for the
stronger, more skilled fighters. Many of the children interviewed by Human Rights
Watch expressed remorse for killing and raping civilians, while others were proud of
their accomplishments (Human Rights Watch 2004). One of the more notorious factions
of the NPFL was the small bodyguard unit (SBU) of Charles Taylor, comprised of the
youngest of children. An NPFL representative described the SBU as witnessing the worst
of atrocities committed by the AFL against their own families (Fleischman & Whitman 1994). Although the research lacks quantitative evidence documenting the violence, the anecdotal evidence is strong enough to conclude that violence is significant factor in the Liberian conflict. It is important to understand the dimensions of this variable because as discussed in my theory chapter it can have important implications for the psychological outcomes for the child thus affected overall level of rehabilitation.

*Psychological Outcomes*

The psychological outcomes of former child soldiers can impact their likelihood of rehabilitation post-conflict. Moreover, the levels of violence a child is exposed to can affect their psychological outcomes (Betancourt et al. 2010). Unfortunately in the case of Liberian, there are few statistical studies completed that document the existence of mental illness among former child soldiers. The statistical evidence available determined over half of the 141 participants surveyed expressed symptoms of both depression (52.3%) and PTSD (55.3%). Moreover, 62.4% were classified as psychologically functionally impaired (Dousuah 2012). Fleischman and Whitman concluded that former Liberian child soldiers suffered from PTSD, sleeplessness, nightmares, flashbacks, bedwetting, anxiety and depression (Fleischman & Whitman 1994). Based on the discussion in my theory chapter, it is clear that the intensity of violence has direct impacts on psychological outcomes. The limited evidence of Liberia\(^{38}\) suggests this is also true of this case.

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\(^{38}\) Clair Macdougall notes the extreme brutality of the conflict. She described the “intentional hacking off of limbs, carving the initials of rebel factions into victims’ skin, slaughtering pregnant women to bet on the
Community Level

Community Acceptance

The level of community acceptance in Liberia is hard to gauge, because over a million people were displaced. Liberia has been classified as having the second highest rate of forced migration in the world (Woodward & Galvin 2009). Awodola reported that of her sample of 250 former child soldiers in Monrovia, over half reported being “on their own” or living in the “street,” and only 8% reported returning to their immediate family, signifying that the majority of Liberian former child soldiers were not successfully resettled into their communities (Awodola 2012). Munive noted that many of the families refused to take their children back because of the atrocities committed (Munive 2011). Awodola also reported that many children were unable to locate their families, they had died in conflict or were unwilling to return to families, considering themselves adults (Awodola 2012). The research suggested that many children were unable to achieve community acceptance in Liberia, because there were no communities to resettle into. As a result of their homeland destruction, many former child soldiers have migrated elsewhere.

After the conflict ended in 2003, many former child soldiers were moved to refugee camps in neighboring countries. By 2004, 770,000 Liberians had fled the gender of the unborn child and the use of young girls as human sacrifices. Numerous people have reported that they were forced to cut, cook, eat and serve human flesh and internal organ, including those of their own parents and infants. Countless numbers of children and teenagers were forced to watch torture, rape and brutal murders of their family member...forbidden to show any emotion, or, in many cases commanded to laugh.” Moreover she argued that violence of this nature has a direct impact on the psychological outcomes of the child soldiers.

country, mainly taking refuge in Guinea (70,000), Ghana (41,000) and Sierra Leone (65,000) (Woodward & Galvin 2009). Woodward and Galvin conducted a study in a refugee camp in Ghana where 30,000 former Liberian child soldiers had resettled. They concluded that the former child soldiers are without employment, lacked food and shelter, medical care and social services. In addition to resettling in a foreign land, the former child soldiers also had to acclimate themselves to the new surroundings, which were far from welcoming.

The conditions of the resettlement camps negatively impacted the rehabilitation process of the former child soldiers. For example, the refugee camp of Ghana fostered feelings of social exclusion among former child soldiers as well as hindering their ability to acquire skills necessary for reintegration. The portion of the camp that the children resided in resembled a socially excluded ghetto, which was often solicited by mercenaries from Cote d’Ivoire. The children were considered “subcitizens” by surrounding community members. The children were also unable to access training for new skills vital to the reintegration process. Woodward and Galvin conclude that the condition of the children in refugee camps was substantially detrimental to their overall process of rehabilitation (Woodward & Galvin 2009). The research suggested that regardless of where the children settled, there was a definite lack of community acceptance which hindered their rehabilitation process.
National Level

Employment

Similar to the Sierra Leonean child soldiers, a lack of employment opportunities impacted their likelihood of joining a rebel group. Anthropologist Paul Richards further developed this argument by asserting that the economic and political exclusion of Liberian youth coupled with lack of opportunities and labor exploitation created the conditions necessary for recruitment into rebel groups (Munive 2011). Anecdotal evidence suggested that although all factions involved have forcibly recruited, most children join voluntarily because there is no other option. Oftentimes they joined to avenge the killing of parents or get food for themselves or their family (Fleishman & Whitman 1994). Dousuah echoed this sentiment when noting that many child recruits were orphaned, abandoned, homeless, hungry and in need of food, companionship and protection prior to joining a rebel group (Dousuah 2012). Moreover, UNICEF reported that prior to the outbreak of war 34% of Liberian children had completed first grade. A post-conflict survey of former child soldiers showed that education levels were somewhere between nonexistent and fifth grade, while most had only completed first grade (Fleischman & Whitman 1994). The earliest available data on Liberia from 1991 revealed that males and females aged 15-24 had unemployment rates of 76.8% and 70.5%, respectively (UN Statistics Division 1991). The lack of education and subsequent lack of viable employment for youth has been linked to an increase likelihood of conflict (Murphy 2003). The research suggested high unemployment rates for youth as well as a
lack of basic education, which signified a failure of the government to maintain accessibility to basic services.

Corruption

President Doe’s regime began in 1980 with a military takeover of the previous government. Despite the initial support, Doe’s military was never able to gain legitimacy among the people (Sawyer 1992). Throughout Doe’s tenure it became clear that anyone who opposed his policies would be subject to murder, torture or imprisonment (Ibid). President Doe and his ruling party—People’s Redemption Council (PRC)—entered office with a commitment to end corruption. In order to fight corruption the PRC executed anyone associated with the former ruling party, True Whigs Party (TWP), in the first few days of office. Despite their claims, members of the PRC refused to declare their own assets to be scrutinized in the anti-corruption fervor. Moreover, many of the PRC officials lived in the houses that had been occupied by condemned TWP officials.

William Murphy argued that the many of the youth in Liberia were driven to dependency upon rebel groups for survival because of the marginalization and economic hardship brought on by corrupt government practices (Murphy 2003). Throughout the degradation of economic structures through the corruption of patrimonialism, Liberia transformed into a warlord economy (Ibid). Children were left with little other opportunity than resorting to rebel groups for patronage because the institutional structure of the state was

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39 Samuel Doe promised Liberians that “we will enjoy like the corrupt Tolbert government enjoyed” (Jimmy Kandel "What does the ‘militariat’ do when it rules? military regimes: the Gambia, Sierra Leone and Liberia." Review of African Political Economy)

40 On the topic of PRC lifestyles, first minister of education for the PRC lamented, “How can you ride in the same cars, sleep in the same houses and adopt the same values as those of your predecessors if the revolution is to succeed?” (Jimmy Kandeh, "What does the ‘militariat’ do when it rules? military regimes: the Gambia, Sierra Leone and Liberia." Review of African Political Economy)
effectively broken due to years of pervasive corruption. The government responded to public contestation through military suppression, which only served to escalate the violence of the conflict.

**Relevant National Policies – Politicized Ethnic Divisions**

In addition to depriving civilians, especially youth, of basic social service, Doe’s regime was characterized by unprecedented levels of violence against civilians of specific ethnicities (Sawyer 2002). James Fearon argued that ethnic violence is rooted in the politicization of ethnicities through economic modernization (Fearon 2005). Regimes will implement distributive policies favoring an ethnic group and excluding another in order to maximize the value of distributed goods (Fearon 2005). Ethnic conflict develops when commonly shared goods are distributed more heavily toward one ethnic coalition. When public goods are distributed along ethnic lines, it is impossible for citizens to switch over to the winning coalition, thus securing a set amount of public good per individual in the favored ethnic group. In other words, regimes may use ethnicity as the basis for formulating their coalitions because it can increase one’s share of a limited number of resources. This argument is further developed by Boix and Stokes’ assertion that ethnicity is commonly utilized in multiethnic societies to enhance political or economic power. The theories presented provide possible explanations as to why and how ethnicity drove violence in Liberia.

Doe’s regime attempted to justify its use state sanctioned violence through policy implementations. Mark Huband noted that unable to establish legitimacy, the AFL effectively became another fighting faction. Huband also cited the 1990 massacre of
civilians at a Red Cross International Station in Monrovia as evidence of the AFL’s wanton destruction. The majority of the government-sponsored violence against civilians took place in eastern Liberia, in Nimba County. Human Rights Watch released a report in 1990 documenting the indiscriminate killing of residents of Nimba County by government military. Based on the testimony of civilians, the report concluded that the government had been consistently harassing Gio and Mano ethnic groups since the beginning of Doe’s presidency (Africa Watch 1990). Mark Huband argued that the AFL actions against the Gio and Mano tribes could be classified as genocide as defined by the 1948 Convention for the Prevention and Punishment for the Crime of Genocide. Yet Doe’s regime was still able to justify its actions through policy.

The government was able to establish legality in state-sanctioned violence through the enactment of Decree 88A, which allowed the government to detain anyone believed to be spreading “rumors, lies and disinformation” regarding the PRC. With the decree Liberians were arrested and detained without trial for arbitrary reasons, causing many dissidents to go underground only to emerge in the 1989 insurgency (Kandeh 1996). The overwhelming violence of the Doe regime against the civilian population, specifically Gios and Manos, which killed 250,000 people and displaced another 1.3 million (Medeiros 2007), substantially affected the societal ties of the Liberian community and thus should be taken into account when developing a post-conflict.

When Doe’s regime was toppled in 1990, Charles Taylor was elected president and reigned for 14 years until his exile in 2003 (Toral 2012). During Taylor’s brutal tenure as president, one of the most devastating consequences was the ubiquitousness of
rape among Liberian women, children and babies. Almudena Torel reported that between 60% and 90% of all women were raped during the conflict (Toral 2012). Violence against women in Liberia is rooted in the religious dogma. The indigenous religion Poro advocated raping virgins and babies in order to achieve good luck or future employment (Ibid). During the conflict rape was justified as an initiation tactic to break a new soldier’s spirits or as a weapon to instill fear in communities. Many of the perpetrators were unknown to the victims. The systematic rape of women in Liberia has created a disturbing pattern of violence that will be a significant challenge to overcome in restoring peace to Liberia. Regardless of whether the victims or perpetrators were child soldiers, it is important to establish a sense of security and thus government legitimacy among civilians of Liberia in order to achieve a sustainable peace.

Recovery Efforts

To combat the devastation caused by the fourteen year conflict, the national government and international community have implemented recovery programs on both the individual and community level. Upon Taylor’s exile in 2003, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected in 2005 on the platform of restoring peace to Liberia. The regime change allowed the Liberian government to address the national level variables more adequately than the other case studies.

Both the Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Rehabilitation (DDRR) and the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) were eventually implemented in 2005 as mandated by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in 2003. Prior to the DDRR’s inception, NGOs and local organization were tasked with the
rehabilitation of the child soldiers yet struggled because there was no formal demobilization effort. As I will illustrate below on an individual level the DDRR program failed to address the psychological variables of the conflict. The TRC was unable to provide sufficient transitional justice in the eyes of the Liberian people, thus its entire mission was undermined. Nationally, the Sirleaf regime is still plagued by corruption hindering the country’s abilities to alleviate poverty and eradicate community level violence against women. By analyzing the programs and developments in their respective levels of analysis, I will be able to determine whether all the variables have been addressed. My hypothesis is that the success of each program was curtailed by its failure to take all the variables into account. The more causal variables taken into account the greater the likelihood of success and vice versa. Through my analysis I can ascertain the weaknesses of each program or development to present a more comprehensive rehabilitation program to present in my analysis chapter.

**Individual Level**

Prior to 2003 during the peaceful periods between fighting, Charles Taylor’s government did little to facilitate the rehabilitation of former child soldiers. In fact, the government claimed that child soldiers did not play a significant role in the conflict,\(^{41}\) and thus did not require the government’s assistance. Because of the government’s indifference, NGOs began the primary provider of post-conflict rehabilitation efforts. Two of the most active agencies Don Boscos Homes and the Children Assistance

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\(^{41}\) A cabinet member of the Ministry of Planning stated, "the actual period of fighting in the Liberian civil war was very short; and child soldiers were only occasionally used in conflict, and more often as spies," thus justifying the government’s aloofness to the plight of former child soldiers (Sesay et al. 2000).
Program (CAP) were responsible for the bulk of rehabilitation efforts. Don Boscos Homes catered to all children who were considered unwanted in society and began their work in 1993 by providing shelters, rehabilitation centers, education, parental care, clothing and security (Sesay 2000). Don Boscos also provided vocational training and job placement for the children, however struggled in managing former child soldiers. The children would bring guns into the compound, thus threatening the security of the noncombatants. Overall, however, Don Boscos Homes had a positive effect on its beneficiaries and at its peak hosted 2000 children (Ibid). Unfortunately, though the program struggled with a limited capacity for the growing number of children in need assistance, mainly of which were able to find solace in other nonprofit organizations.

The CAP program partnered with USAID/UNICEF to implement the War Affected Youth Support (WAYS) project in 1996. The project allowed for three training centers hosting a maximum of 409 trainees each, which would enable children to develop vocational skills in one thirteen categories (Sesay et al. 2013). The CAP/WAYS program was available to all children, both combatants and noncombatants, and offered a living stipend of $100 and job placement upon completion of the training. Unlike the Dos Boscos Homes, there was no residential component to the rehabilitation efforts, meaning children arrived in morning and left by 5 P.M., which limited the effects of the rehabilitation efforts. Moreover, the staff witnessed and experienced behavioral problems with many of the child soldiers.\(^{42}\) Besides the interactions with child soldiers, the

\(^{42}\) A study conducted by Sesay revealed that in regards toward their peers, “child soldiers do initially engage in fights although not all the time” and with teachers the “child soldiers tend to be insulting, abusive and even attempt to fight the teachers” (Sesay et al 2012, 59).
program also suffered from logistical challenges and a lack of funding thus jeopardizing the long term existence of the program.

After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in 2003 a Demobilization, Disarmament, Rehabilitation and Reintegration program (DDRR) was implemented in 2005. In total the DDRR program demobilized 103,019 combatants. The program was organized and implemented by the national government, United Nations and NGOs. Due to pressure of donors, the DDRR program began without adequate preparation, such as sensitization, troop presence for security purposes and logistics. Additionally the DDRR program grossly underestimated the number of prospective combatants at 250, when in reality well over a thousand appeared on the first day. Frustrated at the lack of efficiency, ex-combatants began rioting which lasted for two days costing lives and property. However, despite initial missteps the DDRR program was mildly successful in educating and training ex-combatants (Daboh 2013). A UNMIL survey conducted in 2006 revealed 23% of ex-combatants worked in agriculture, 19% were unemployed and 17% were students. According to another 2006 survey conducted by Pugel reported similar findings, a quarter of ex-combatants reported finding work (Sanz 2009). The DDRR program was not able to provide adequate psychosocial assistance that is crucial to the proper rehabilitation of child soldiers. Furthermore, Sanz argued that the rapidness of the DDRR program actually increased crime rates (Sanz 2009). Overall, the individual recovery efforts neglected the psychological variable in the rehabilitation of child soldiers, thus impeding their rehabilitation efforts.
Community Level

The Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was enacted and implemented on May 12, 2005 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia) by the Liberian Parliament, to redress the atrocities of the past 16 years. The TRC issued its final report, albeit much delay, in 2010. The TRC faced many challenges most notably the lack of authority to enforce its recommendations and failure to access Taylor’s testimony as well as monetary and logistical issues. The challenges of the Liberian TRC curtailed its legitimacy among participants and hindered its overall impact of promoting transitional justice.43

The TRC of Liberia’s mandate required “investigating gross human rights violations and violations of humanitarian law… determine those responsible…[and] provide a forum against impunity” (United State Institute of Peace 2006). In terms of establishing transitional justice, the TRC largely failed. After Charles Taylor’s relinquishment of power in 2003, he was indicted by the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL) for his involvement with the Sierra Leonean war. Taylor was suspected of supporting RUF rebels. After Liberia transferred Taylor to the SLSP, he was arrested and soon relocated to the International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague in 2006. Because of his arrest and subsequent transfer the TRC of Liberia was unable to hold him

43 A study conducted in Liberia of post-conflict population attitudes in 2011 reported that 76% of population polled found truth to be important and 73% had heard about the work of the TRC. Only 45% of respondents believed the TRC recommendations would actually be implemented, 45% declaring they would likely not be implemented and 31% believing they would be partially implemented, although 62% believed they should. Moreover, only 39% thought the TRC actually helped peace, while only 38% believed it helped unity. (Carls De Yeaza, “A Search for Truth: A Critical Analysis of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission” Human Rights Review 14:189-212).
accountable for war crimes committed in Liberia, thus constraining the transitional justice mandate of the TRC (De Yeaza 2013).

The lack of the TRC’s will to hold Liberian government accountable to its recommendations also posed a problem in establishing transitional justice. Among the reported findings of the Liberian TRC was the naming of 150 individuals to be prosecuted and barred from office for their participation in war crimes and human rights abuses. The current President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was recommended to resign and be barred from office for thirty years for her previous support of Charles Taylor. The recommendations of the TRC were later found unconstitutional by the Liberian Supreme Court (De Yeaza 2013), despite 62% of Liberians believed the recommendations should be implemented (United States Institute of Peace 2006). The TRC also chose to not invoke blanket amnesty, rather it recommended amnesty for specific individuals. Amnesty International criticized the TRC for its inability to enforce its policies on prosecution of current government officials and not providing general amnesty for all of those who came forward with testimony, thus undermining the national reconciliation and healing process (Aning & Jaye 2011).

As with the other case studies, the TRC of Liberia suffered from a lack of adequate financial resources and rushed deadlines. The lack of funding was reflected in the TRC’s inability to muster legitimate evidence and provide legal expertise on how to prosecute perpetrators. There were substantial operational delays in the statement taking process and completion of the final report (De Yeaza 2013). The logistical challenges of
the TRC threatened its legitimacy among participants, which can hinder its overall impact in society.

National Level

A causal factor in the outbreak of the Liberian conflict was the politicization of ethnicities. Because of the perceived favoritism of one ethnic group over another, conflict broke out along ethnic lines. A 2011 survey conducted by University of Berkeley faculty suggested that ethnic division is no longer a point on contention in post-conflict Liberia. The researchers surveyed 4,501 Liberians about the state of affairs post-conflict. Despite sporadic incidences on violence between ethnicities, such as Mandingo and Loma tribes in February 2010 (Vinck et al. 2011), respondents reported low levels of inter-ethnic tension. A high percentage of respondents (89%) described their relations with other ethnic groups as good or very good, while 71% reported having daily activities with someone from another ethnic group. Only 8% of respondents mentioned having problems with other ethnic groups. The researchers were able specify which ethnic groups were mentioned most often is association with ethnic tension, all of which lie countries on the eastern border of Liberia (Grand Gedeh, Lofa and Nimba counties). During President Doe’s tenure, the Krahn ethnic group was in control and mainly committed violence against Gio and Mano ethnic groups. Among the Krahn only 12% reported problems and 1% of all respondents reported problems with the Krahn. Only 10% of the Gio reported ethnic problems and 1% of respondents reported problems with the Gio ethnicity. Less than 1% of Mano ethnicity reported problems and less than 1% of respondents identified problems with the Mano ethnicity (Vinck et al. 2011). Based on the results of the
population based survey, it would seem that inter-ethnic tension has drastically decreased since the end of conflict, however researchers identified that attention should be directed to the eastern countries as that is where the highest levels of ethnic tension remain (Ibid).

Despite pervasive poverty\(^{44}\) and allegations of corruption, President Sirleaf’s regime has imposed some of the toughest antirape measures in the region (Toral 2012). Yet, the problem remains. In 2011 a total of 1475 rape cases were reported, however this is most likely an underestimate as many rape cases go unreported (Ibid). Female victims are reluctant to report rapes because of the stigma associated with rape victims will decrease their chances of marrying and as men as often the breadwinners of the family, a life without a husband is synonymous with inexplicable poverty. Another deterrent for reporting rape is the postwar judicial system’s incompetence at handling or understanding rape cases\(^{45}\), thus allowing many men to believe their actions will have no consequences. Because of its prevalence in Liberia, a palpable rape culture\(^{46}\) has developed. Many women blame themselves and men openly joke about it and claim they did not know what they were doing was wrong. Although President Sirleaf has enacted legislation to combat the insidious nature of rape, Liberia is still plagued by high levels of violence.


\(^{45}\) Toral reported that the judicial system lacked adequate resources, was inept and had high levels of corruption. Furthermore as one UN official commented, most police officials do not even know how to collect evidence from a rape scene. Almudena Toral. “History of Violence: Struggling with the Legacy of Rape in Liberia”, http://world.time.com/2012/04/30/history-of-violence-struggling-with-the-legacy-of-rape-in-liberia/.

\(^{46}\) Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) articulates that rape culture in a term to characterize the way society blames victims and normalizes male sexual violence. (What is Rape Culture, http://www.wavaw.ca/what-is-rape-culture/ (2014)).
against women. In order to promote sustainable peace, lawlessness must be severely addressed or else there is the risk of civil unrest.

The lack of employment opportunities was a causal factor for youth joining rebel groups, and thus should be addressed to ensure national level security. However, the Liberia still has overwhelmingly high unemployment rates for youth a decade after the end of the conflict. Liberia implemented its first poverty reduction strategy (PRS) *Lift Liberia* in 2008 to ensure peace, promote economic growth, reform public sector agencies and reconstruct education and health services (International Monetary Fund 2012). Although the PRS achieved substantial increases in aggregate employment, youth unemployment rate remains consistently high as an estimated 85% in 2013 (Dunmore 2013). A report by the International Monetary Fund concluded that Liberian youth had the skills necessary to participate in the labor force but there is a lack of jobs in which the youth can apply those skills (International Monetary Fund 2012). The PRC also set out to improve the overall education of Liberian youth, however was unsuccessful. In reality the net enrollment rates of primary school declined in the period from 2007-2011. Education has the potential to act as an intervening variables of youth employment, thus should be considered a priority of the government. Youth unemployment rates threatens the national security of Liberia as it can negate the likelihood civil uprising or recruitment into a rebel group.

On October 11, 2005 Liberia held presidential elections in which Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf won with 59.4% of the votes (Cook 2005). Sirleaf became the first female African president signaling a new era for Liberia, however her regime has repeatedly been
accused of corruption. The World Bank, bilateral donors and the U.N. Secretary-General have all commented on the lack of transparency of the regime specifically relating to import-export transactions, government contracts and the transfers of public resources to private ownership (Ibid). Most notably, the government was condemned by locals and foreigners alike for the private use of expensive vehicles by legislators for minimal cost (Ibid). In November 2005 the US Embassy issued a statement chastising recent actions as “unscrupulous, irresponsible and contrary to public interest of the people of Liberia” (Cook 2005, 8). Despite the newly elected president, the Liberian government has drawn criticism for its corrupt practices, which render the government incapable of providing basic needs to civilians and increase the likelihood of civil unrest.

Conclusion

Although the data is limited in the Liberian case, it still provided understanding into the development a comprehensive rehabilitation program. The Liberian case reaffirmed many of the variable relationships introduced in the previous cases, such as the impact on level of violence and community acceptance. Moreover, similar to the previous cases the recovery efforts were fraught with logistical challenges which tarnished their legitimacy among civilians. Unique to the Liberian case was the incidence of regime change. Although it was not a panacea for the challenges facing post-conflict child soldiers, it did allow for redress for national policies that affected the outbreak of conflict. In the following section, I will present the common weaknesses of the recovery efforts of the case studies and my policy recommendations.
CHAPTER VI

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Throughout this chapter I will illustrate my recommendations of future child rehabilitation programs, based on the material presented in my case study chapters. The Sierra Leonean, Ugandan and Liberian recovery efforts had many of the same issues; however, because of the diversity within the cases there are specific variations in policy recommendations throughout the levels of analysis. The three cases involved the same recovery programs on the individual and community levels, however national level efforts varied. I will argue that the Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Reintegration (DDR(R)) programs failed to address the psychological needs of the former child soldiers, thus hindering their ability to reintegrate. The Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC)s suffered from serious mismanagement and lack of resources, which prevented the establishment of transitional justice and undermined their mission of facilitating community acceptance through forgiveness. Lastly, the national level recovery programs failed to eradicate corruption, which enabled pervasive poverty to remain, including high unemployment rates for youth, which has been identified as a casual factor to the outbreak of conflict (Humphreys & Weinstein 2007).

In addition to synthesizing the data from my case studies, I will present my post-conflict policy recommendations. These recommendations are based upon previous
findings indicating the most important causal variables to the likelihood of successful rehabilitation. My research determined common deficiencies that occurred throughout the case studies in the post-conflict recovery efforts. In the presentation of my policy recommendations below I have tailored them to address both of these issues. The case studies research also revealed specific challenges inherent to each location and I have adjusted my policy recommendations accordingly. These are generalizable, theoretical policy recommendations that can be amended to fit future challenges. Based on my research, the policy recommendations will address the most common causal factors to the likelihood of a successful child soldier rehabilitation.

Individual Level

In the following section I will present the common individual level variables that were absent from the recovery efforts in my case studies. After conducting my research, I came across unanticipated challenges in each of the case studies and because of this I have slightly altered my policy recommendations to include all the relevant factors. I will present each of the challenges to the recovery efforts of the case studies and immediately discuss my policy recommendations following each challenge. The individual level rehabilitation of the former child soldiers is important to consider when constructing a comprehensive rehabilitation strategy. Assuring a former child soldier has overcome the common challenges associated with rehabilitation is instrumental to developing a sustainable solution.

Psychological Outcomes

The psychological challenge that child soldiers face post-conflict could be alleviated with proper mental health care and facilities as well as a welcoming, open
environment. The primary challenge of addressing the psychological outcomes of former child soldiers can be subdivided into two categories: lack of health care professionals and social stigma. The communities the former child soldiers returned to lacked sufficient mental health care professionals to adequately address their needs and suggest treatment. Additionally, the cultural perspective toward mental health issues of the communities is not conducive to mental health recovery. Both of these issues proved to be significant challenges for the rehabilitation of former child soldiers.

*Lack of mental health professionals*

All three of the cases struggled in addressing the psychological outcomes of former child soldiers. There were few if any psychiatrists on hand after the conflict in Sierra Leone and Liberia, “there were no psychologists or psychiatric nurses in either country [Liberia or Sierra Leone]. No local health and social workers had been formally trained to accomplish the enormous task of rehabilitation” (Medeiros 2007, 501).

Medeiros criticized the DDR program of Sierra Leone for avoiding the mental health traumas the children may have faced. Moreover, Joanne Corbin asserted that the Ugandan DDR reception centers focused primarily on cultural and societal healing, while neglected to provide “little if any psychological support” (Corbin 2008, 318). In addition to PTSD, Ugandan former child soldiers suffered from spirit phenomenon, which was also not addressed by post-conflict recovery efforts. There was no available evidence on the psychological outcomes of former Liberian child soldiers, yet prior studies have concluded common post-conflict disorders, such as post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), anxiety disorders and depression, are more likely among former child soldiers who have been exposed to high levels of violence (Betancourt et al. 2010). From the
previous literature and the high levels of violence reported in the Liberian conflict, it is
safe to assume that former Liberian child soldiers also suffer from psychological issues.
The lack of psychological support is for former child soldiers can be especially
detrimental to their overall ability to rehabilitate into society.

*Social Stigma*

Another specific challenge to the treating the mental health outcomes of former
child soldiers is the community attitudes toward mental health. Throughout the cases, it
became apparent that there was a community level stigma associated with mental health
issues. Ugandans typically believe that mental health problems are the cause of evil
spirits, witchcraft or ancestral spirits (Quinn & Knifton 2014). People diagnosed with a
mental health issue often lack the right to vote, or inherit property because of structural
discrimination within the system (Quinn & Knifton 2014). The mental health stigma is
widespread throughout Uganda and is especially worrisome for the future of former child
soldiers because of their high likelihood for PTSD. Likewise, the Sierra Leonean
government failed to institutionalize any sort of mental health reform for civilians, let
alone former child soldiers, post-conflict. I found no evidence suggesting the existence of
mental health treatment in Liberia. The World Health Organization (WHO) Atlas project
characterized low-resourced countries as having the chronic, systematic and widespread
disregard of mental health resources (WHO 2005). Suzan Song indicated the various
barriers to developing psychological care facilities as lack of understanding of mental
health issues, system deficiencies (lacking infrastructure and skilled workers,
decentralized care) and failure to provide any evidence necessary to develop any policy
or lasting practice (Song et al. 2013). Logically the child soldiers may possibly suffer
from psychological trauma associated with violence, thus it is unreasonable not to include a psychological treatment in the rehabilitation program.

**Recommended Policy**

As discussed in my theory chapter I argue for the implementation of child-centered play therapy (CCPT) or group action play therapy (GAPT), depending on the child’s age. Play therapy is commonly used in developed countries to address symptoms of PTSD in youth children. Notably, PTSD is also one of the most common psychological illnesses of former child soldiers (Klasen et al. 2010), thus CCPT/GAPT could be utilized in former child soldiers. David Levy offered two types of play therapy: abreactive therapy and pre-set arrangements. Abreactive therapy involves unstructured play and is especially useful for youth, externally stressed children. Pre-set arrangements allow the therapist to recreate the situation, through certain toys, that the child fears. Without external direction, the child is able to play out his anxieties with the toy. Regardless of the play method, the therapist is responsible for helping the child detach himself from the repeated compulsions, such as dreams, physical reactions and various emotional responses, caused by the trauma (Terr 1989). The entire therapy session can be constructed without deviating from the game. In order for this style of therapy to be successful it must be administered by trained child psychiatrists capable of facilitating the

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47 Lenore Terr provided six steps that the therapist can take to guide recovery of the child: 1. identify connections between repetitive behaviors and traumatic experiences; 2. work with child’s dreams, fantasies and behaviors alongside play to show any other traumas that might be present; 3. demonstrate what reasons child has attached to trauma to compensate for feelings of helplessness; 4. show overgeneralizations the child makes in relationships at home and school behavior; 5. supply new coping strategies and 6. Incorporate reward and rehabilitation into child’s play. (Lenore Terr, "Treating psychic trauma in children: A preliminary discussion." *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 2, no. 1: 3-20).
healing process through play. It would be beneficial to have local psychiatrists conducting the sessions and at the very least culturally appropriate toys for the children.

In order for the GAPT to be implemented there must be sufficient personnel on hand to oversee the process. To accomplish this I recommend the program be carried out by non-governmental organizations (NGO)s. I specifically advise working with the NGO Committee on Mental Health, which was established in 1996 under the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO) in Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The Committee focuses in mental health issues on a global scale. They have several working groups that are applicable to the challenges of former child soldiers, such as Children Youth and Mental Health, Gender Perspectives and Mental Health, Human Rights and Mental Health and Trauma and Mental Health (mentalhealthngo.org). The Committee works with the UN and its specialized agencies to organize, promote and facilitate mental health reforms in areas of need. Besides this organization, there are many others that could be utilized in strengthening the mental health systems in developing countries. The rehabilitation of the former child soldiers is contingent on the availability of mental health professionals in the area, thus a larger NGO presence has the likelihood of meeting these demand and increasing the probability of child soldier rehabilitation.

I did not foresee the existence of a cultural mental health stigma prior to conducting my research, yet it proved to be a significant challenge for the rehabilitation of former child soldiers. To combat the stigma, I recommend implementing a public relations campaign to familiarize the public and spread awareness of mental health issues. Public relations campaigns have proved successful in addressing other health issues in
Africa. The World Hepatitis Alliance sponsored the World Hepatitis Day on July 28, 2013 which was largely successful in engaging harder to reach communities of Africa by utilizing a targeted SMS text-blasting campaign. Of the 1.45 million people contacted, 24.5% responded requesting more information (Craig 2014). The use of technology in spreading awareness of the disease allowed the same message to be spread throughout multiple geographies. The national government could capitalize on this communication channel as well as using more traditional methods of a public relations campaign to spread awareness of mental health issues in conflict areas.

Another unforeseeable psychological factor was the existence of the spirit phenomenon in northern Uganda. Neuner et al. conducted a study which identified the existence of spirit phenomenon in 14.3 percent of abducted children in northern Ugandan (Neuner et al. 2012), which resulted from prolonged exposure to a highly spiritualized, traumatic war environment. The spirit phenomenon is classified as a dissociative disorder. After repeated exposure to trauma a child will separate himself from the actual incidents by transitioning into a different state of consciousness. This becomes a problem post-conflict because the child can no longer control the lapses in consciousness. Lenore Terr suggested the use of hypnosis to realign the child with the proper state of consciousness. Hypnosis has proven successful in treating children who have experienced childhood trauma. However, Terr cautioned the influence the hypnotist may have over the child when using hypnotherapy (Terr 1989). Nonetheless, hypnotherapy has yielded successful results in previous cases of dissociative disorder and could be implemented in Uganda.
Adequate Funding

In all of the cases, the DDR(R) programs struggled to secure adequate funding and suffered from a subsequent lack of institutional capacity and continuous delays which destroyed it credibility and ultimately its ability to successfully reintegrate the former child soldiers. In the case of Sierra Leone, the program was originally intended for ninety days, but was soon streamlined to six to eight weeks and eventually was cut to three weeks in 2000, due to lack of funding (Keen 2005, 258). Considering the program was intended for three months and eventually cut to three weeks, it is hard to imagine all the program was able to satisfy all the needs of former child soldiers. There was no comprehensive program designed to facilitate the rehabilitation of former child soldiers in Uganda. NGOs and local communities were responsible for carrying out the rehabilitation program, but struggled to meet the adequately accommodate former child soldiers due to a lack of capacity and could not provide a comprehensive rehabilitation program. The Liberian DDR(R) grossly underestimate the number of former child soldiers in need of rehabilitation and thus also suffered from a lack of capacity. For example, the first day the expected number of prospective combatants was 250, when in reality well over a thousand appeared. (Daboh 2013). Because of institutional discrepancies, such as lack of funding and capacity, the DDR(R) programs were unable to fully rehabilitate the child soldiers.

Recommended Policy

Securing external funding was a challenge for all the DDR(R) programs analyzed and because of this many participants faith in the process. The national government should take a more active role in the development of the rehabilitation program because
successfully rehabilitating youth can decrease the likelihood of future conflict. Had the DDR(R) programs been able to secure funding, maintain adequate facilities and avoid delays there is much higher likelihood they would have been successful in their overall mission.

Community Level

In the following section I will present the challenges of the community level recovery efforts in each of my cases. I will immediately follow with my recommended policy suggestions which are intended to rebuild the community so that former child soldiers have something to reintegrate back into. The recommendations I have provided are tailored to specifically address the gaps in the recovery efforts of my case studies. In order for former child soldiers to successfully reintegrate, communities must be able to heal and reconcile with the tragedy of prolonged conflict. Ensuring this reconciliation is key to developing a sustainable, holistic rehabilitation program for child soldiers.

Community Acceptance

Community acceptance has also been identified as a significant variable impacting the ability of former child soldiers to successfully rehabilitate (Betancourt et al. 2010). One of the key components of the DDR(R) programs is the reintegration aspects. However, in all the case studies the reintegration component was largely ignored. There was no statistical evidence of community acceptance among child soldiers post-conflict in Liberia. However, it should be noted that after completing the DDR(R) program many children could not find their families are were forced to resettle alone in refugee camps in neighboring countries or in the streets of Monrovia (Munive 2008). My research
suggested that in association with the DDR(R) program, two issues affecting the achievement of community acceptance of former child soldiers in post-conflict communities: former child soldiers are viewed as different from rest of community, gender specific discrimination

Community level healing from the conflict is also necessary post-conflict. Post-conflict many communities were reluctant to accept former child soldiers and consequently many former child soldiers were afraid of retaliation by community members (Betancourt et al. 2010; Humphreys & Weinstein 2004). Understand the context of the conflict and human rights abuses that occurred can facilitate reintegration of child soldiers. TRCs were applied in all three cases, yet all failed to accomplish their goals. The TRC were fraught with institutional and logistical problems (Dougherty 2008; Quinn 2004), which only served to undermine their ultimate goal of establishing transitional justice. A TRC can provide an outlet for healing a forgiveness crucial to a country moving on.

Link between civilians and former child soldiers

Humphreys and Weinstein concluded that in Sierra Leone there was little attention or thought given to the “R” portion of the programs. The program did little to establish a link between civilians and former combatants (Humphreys & Weinstein 2005). The negative view of former child soldiers as outsiders was strong enough to affect familiar relations. For example, many of the Sierra Leonean child soldiers rescued were able to reunite with their families and even there they suffered rejection and a stigma because of their association with RUF (Denov 2010). This could have potentially
been alleviated had the proper sensitization of the community and former child soldiers toward human rights issues been carried out by the DDR program.

*Gender Specific Discrimination*

Studies from Uganda also reveal that although there was initial community acceptance, former female child soldiers were more likely to face community stigmatization because of their involvement with the LRA (Annan et al. 2013). Because of the role female child soldiers played in the conflict, many view them as sexually unclean or promiscuous. Moreover, if they returned with child they would face even more scrutiny and social ostracization. The associated stigma with female former child soldiers can decrease their likelihood of securing a husband, which greatly limits their ability to survive. Female child soldiers face unique challenges that must be taken into account when developing a holistic rehabilitation program.

*Recommended Policy*

The acceptance of the community is largely determined by the efforts at the community level. However, it is important that the individual level rehabilitation program incorporate members of the community into the design process as they are the key stakeholders. In determining the plan of action for the target community, the GITTO program begins by mobilizing community leaders and club staff to discuss gang issues specific to the area, clarify roles and develop a strategy to offer alternatives to youth other than gang life (Boys and Girls Club of America 2005). Involving the local community leaders in the process can increase the likelihood that the results will yield higher rates of community acceptance.
Individual perceptions of community acceptance are especially important to the rehabilitation of child soldiers. The GITTO program was successful in establishing feelings of safety, which is notable considering after completion of the DDR(R) Ugandan and Liberian children reported feeling fear and lack of security in their communities (Veale & Starvou 2007; Woodward & Galvin 2009). After completing the GITTO program, on a scale of 1-10, with ten being the safest, 80% of youth rated the club as an 8 or higher (Arbreton & McClanahan 2002). The literature also identified that many of the former child soldiers struggled with developing a sense of belonging post-conflict, while over half (56%) of the children participating in the BGCA gang intervention program reported feeling a sense of belonging to the BGCA club (Arbreton & McClanahan 2002). The results of the GITTO program suggest that it may be a viable alternative to the DDR(R) program in terms of establishing individual levels perceptions of overall community acceptance.

The social exclusion of former female child soldiers could potentially be assuaged by a public relations campaign similar to the mental health campaign I suggested above. The campaign could incorporate both issues. The fact that female child soldiers were forced to act as sex slaves in order to survive and in no way were complicit should be highlighted in the campaign. Hopefully by understanding the reality of rebel life for a female child soldiers, the community will be accept females into society rather than viewing them as immoral, thus increasing their likelihood for successful rehabilitation.

*Failure to establish transitional justice*

In all three of the case studies the TRCs were developed in order to investigate human rights abuses, determine those responsible and hold them accountable for their
actions. As Jappah and Smith noted the decree to which victims are able to heal and forgive is dependent on whether their perpetrators are able to freely live among them with impunity (Jappah & Smith 2013). However they all struggled is establishing legitimate transitional justice in the country. Both the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SLTRC) and the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL) were established to provide redress in the aftermath of the conflict. The SLTRC granted amnesty for all, while the SCSL prosecuted perpetrators for war crimes. The dual existence of the institutions negated any possibility of forming a single narrative for the conflict, which is essential for comprehensive healing. The contradictory nature of the two institutions, in terms of amnesty, also undermined the credibility of the SLTRC. The Liberian TRC also conflicted with the SCSL. The Liberian TRC released Taylor to Sierra Leone to be indicted by the SCSL in 2006 and he was subsequently transferred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague. Because of this transfer, the Liberian TRC was unable to access his testimony and indict him for war crimes in Liberia. Jappah and Smith claim that victims are better able to heal with perpetrators are acknowledged and held accountable for their actions. The perceived impunity of their perpetrators is detrimental to the healing process (Jappah & Smith 2013). Although Taylor was sentenced for war crimes committed in Sierra Leone, the Liberian victims never received the acknowledgment of war crimes committed against them.

Also the Liberian TRC lacked the political will to prosecute based upon its recommendations. In its final report in 2010, the Liberia TRC prescribed that the current president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf resign and be barred from office for thirty years (De
Yeaza 2013) because of her support for Charles Taylor. The Liberian Supreme Court later found these recommendations unconstitutional and Sirleaf remained in office (De Yeaza 2013). The Commission into the Inquiry of Human Rights Violations (CIHRV) of Uganda was also unable to hold presidents accountable for their role in human rights abuses. Created by President Museveni, the CIHRV was only able to investigate human rights abuses that occurred before President Museveni’s reign. The inability of the CIHRV to investigate current human rights abuses did not present a legitimate opportunity for civilians to heal and forgive. The persistence of the perpetrators’ reign of power at the expense of the victims is exacerbated by the wealth gap in many developing counties and presents a serious roadblock to the healing and reconciliation process (Jappah & Smith 2013).

**Recommended Policy**

Jappah and Smith have argued that importance of transitional justice facilitating healing and reconciliation. Healing and reconciliation are key to developing community level acceptance of former child soldiers and destroying stigmas that exist. No two post-conflict societies are the same, thus prescribing a one size fits all solution would be ill-advised. The cases of Sierra Leone and Liberia illustrated that competing institutions can be counter-productive to the overall goals of transitional justice. Yet it is still important that human rights violations be addressed and those most responsible, typically at the top of command, be prosecuted. Moreover, unlike the case of Liberia, the national government must seriously address the recommendations of the commission. Jappah and Smith also advise that justice must be victim-centric, as healing and reconciliation for the
victims should be the ultimate priority (Jappah & Smith 2013). One recommendation cannot be prescribed unilaterally to every case, some require amnesty, prosecution, truth or a combination of the three (Ibid). Scholars should take into account the specific historical and political experiences, extent of human rights abuses, economic wealth and political will of a country when developing a TRC. A TRC customized to a country’s needs has a significant likelihood of success in establishing the transitional justice necessary for healing and reconciliation.

*Institutional and Logistical*

The institutional and logistical challenges of the TRCs greatly impeded their ability to establish credibility. Originally the SLTRC was predicted to as a $10 million venture, but its final budget was only half at $5 million (Dougherty 2004). The lack of adequate funding also delayed the entire process for two years, thus causing many victims to lose faith in the process. The SLTRC hiring process was also criticized as politically driven and employees were “unqualified and redundant” (Dougherty 2004, 42). The Ugandan CIVHR was responsible for looking into over 25 years’ worth of human rights violations which overextended the capacity of the CIHRV and a possible explanation for the frequent loss of evidence by the commission. Joanna Quinn also noted that the commissioners particularly struggled to maintain fluidity when violations had been committed by various different power seeking perpetrators throughout various government power exchanges (Quinn 2009). Similar to the SLTRC, the Liberia TRC suffered from notable delays and only managed to release its report five years after inception, in 2010 (De Yeaza 2013). Jappah and Smith argued that because TRCs are underfunded and under-resourced, they
are seriously constrained in their ability to achieve their specific mandate (Jappah & Smith 2013). As evidenced by the case studies, the lack of funding is seriously detrimental to the completion of the TRC’s mission.

**Recommended Policy**

A properly funded TRC would greatly benefit war torn societies. Moreover, the healing from the trauma of victimization can decrease the likelihood of retaliation, revenge and pre-emptive acts of violence by victims (Jappah & Smith 2013). Jappah and Smith cited Staub and his colleagues when positing that the establishment of a shared historical narrative can lessen feelings of blame, mistrust and antagonism (Ibid), which can greatly enhance the likelihood of progress for a country. Continuous delays, logistical challenges and missed deadlines discredit the work of the TRC both locally and nationally. TRCs must be fully functional in order to properly facilitate reconciliation and healing. Determining the sources of funding for future TRCs is outside the scope of this project. However, the research conducted highlights the importance of adequately financing the commission. The national government should finance as well as fundraise for the TRC so that its mission will not be undermined.

**National Level**

Overall the national level challenges were specific to each of the case studies. There was commonality in the levels of employment and corruption between the cases, however the relevant policies were particular to each case. I will present each challenge and immediately following provide my policy recommendations to address the challenge.
Although the relevant policies are unique to each case, it does not discount its relevance in the rehabilitation of child soldiers. In each of the cases the relevant policies impeded a child’s ability to successfully rehabilitate and thus should be taken into account when developing a comprehensive rehabilitation program.

**Employment**

Securing viable employment was a common challenge for former child soldiers in all the case studies. Providing viable employment opportunities is the responsibility of the national government; however, action can be taken at the individual level to develop job skills during the rehabilitation process, thus it is both a national and individual level issue. For clarification purposes, I have divided employment into two subcategories: job training and national programs. The challenges are not mutually exclusive, in fact both are necessary to increasing the likelihood of former child soldiers finding employment and therefore increasing their likelihood of reintegration.

**National Programs**

A common theme across all three cases studies was the lack of employment before and after the outbreak of conflict. In Sierra Leone and Liberia there was a national program to address the pervasive poverty and unemployment of the countries. In both cases, the programs ultimately failed. In 2009 Sierra Leone still retained high levels of unemployment for males and females under the age of 24 at 45% and 68%, respectively (Peeters et al. 2009). In 2013 Liberia had a remarkably high level of youth unemployment at 85% (Dunmore 2013). In the case of Uganda, there was no evidence indicating a
comprehensive economic reform program in northern Uganda, where the impact of the conflict was greatest. The latest data on the Uganda concludes that the unemployment rate of the youth is at 62% (Lule 2013). Youth unemployment has been linked to the higher incidences of child soldiers and thus is an important aspect in their rehabilitation process.

Job Training

Ensuring viable economic opportunities for former child soldiers has proved especially important in their rehabilitation process. Scholars have concluded that there is a higher risk of conflict when there is a lack of job opportunities for youth (e.g. Humphreys & Weinstein 2007). Many participants in the Sierra Leonean DDR program complained of boredom, with nothing to do except smoke marijuana (Keen 2005, 258). The lack of a daily schedule exacerbated feelings of government inefficacy among former child soldiers, possibly explaining why over half of the demobilized Sierra Leoneans returned to the RUF (Keen 2005). The DDR program of Sierra Leone has also been criticized as reducing the likelihood of former child soldier being employed (Ibid). In Uganda, only 23% of demobilized youth were able to find work for on average less than $2 a day (Blattman & Annan 2008). Similarly, two surveys reported in Liberia in 2006 reported roughly 25% of former child soldiers reported finding work (Sanz 2009); however, there is also evidence that the DDR(R) program of Liberia actually increased the crime rates among former child soldiers (Ibid). In all three of the studies the DDR(R) programs were unable to foster legitimate employment opportunities for youth post-conflict, which is especially important to avoid remobilization.
**Recommended Policy**

The remedy for high rates of youth unemployment can be found at the national level. In the case of Sierra Leone, researchers concluded that the persistence of youth unemployment can be linked to the institutional values of the country. After the conflict ended many of the tribal elders favored returning to chiefdom system, which involved forced youth labor through intimidation and arbitrary punishment (Peeters et al. 2009). The literature argued that Liberian youth possess adequate skills for employment, there are simply no jobs available (International Monetary Fund 2012). Moreover, the Ugandan government failed to take any interest in the economic recovery of northern Uganda and failed to provide few if any programs facilitating the transition from training to paid work. Ugandan youth were left with few viable economic opportunities other than joining the UPDF as male and prostitution as a female (Robinson & Alpar 2009). Securing viable economic opportunity for youth is important because it can decrease the likelihood of remobilization. It is outside the scope of this thesis to determine the economic recovery plan for a post-conflict society. However, my research has indicated that it is an important viable to consider in the rehabilitation of child soldiers. Further research should be dedicated to developing a feasible economic solution for African post-conflict societies that will ensure increases in employment especially for the growing youth population.

I chose the Gang Intervention through Targeted Outreach (GITTO) program because of its focus on developing job related and education skills. The entirety of the program consists of the child’s participation is an activity designed by the club. The GITTO activities fall into five key areas: character and leadership development;
education and career building; art; health and life skills; and sports, fitness and recreation (Keen 2005). The five activity areas would be applicable to former child soldiers, especially character and leadership development; education and career building; and health and life skills, all of which could be modified to fit culturally needs. After choosing an activity the children are required to spend several hours daily, typically after normal school hours, completing that activity under the direction of a supervisor. Although, this will not account for the whole day, it will provide a semblance of responsibility and daily schedule that many the former child soldiers lacked. Providing the training and a daily schedule for former child soldiers will only accomplish so much if there are no jobs available for the children to apply these skills. The national government must ensure that there are viable jobs for former child soldiers, once they have developed the skills or else they will inevitable turn to crime, such as the case of Liberia. I will discuss my recommendations for national level action later in the chapter.

Corruption

Corruption can impede a government’s ability to provide basic need to its civilians such as employment and education. In all of the cases, there was significant levels of corruption in the post-conflict governments. The International Crisis Group concluded that the judicial system of post-conflict Sierra Leone was unwilling to prosecute those accused of corruption and that diplomats were purposely ignoring allegations of corruption among elected officials (Hanlon 2005). A report released by Human Rights Watch in 2013 documented multiple cases of corruption is which large sums of money were mysteriously diverted, lost or stolen. Similar to Sierra Leone, the report concluded a
lack of political will in prosecuting those accused of corruption (Human Rights Watch 2013). Despite regime change, Liberian officials have been accused of suspicious transfers of public ownership to private enterprise and possessing expensive cars for little to no cost, all of this is achievable because there is a notable lack of transparency in the Sirleaf’s government (Cook 2005). Corruption can lead to political instability and in turn civil unrest both of which can act as catalysts for conflict.

**Recommended Policy**

Eradicating the corruption of post-conflict African countries is an enormous venture in need to further research outside the scope of this thesis. It is however important to rid governments of corruption ensure a successful rehabilitation of the child soldiers. Corruption can increase the likelihood of conflict, which can increase the likelihood of remobilization of child soldiers.

*Relevant Policies: Politicization of Ethnicity, Education, and Displacement*

Throughout my case studies chapters I have identified the relevant policies that were a factor in the outbreak of conflict. Each of the policies is unique to the case and proved to be a challenge for reintegrating former child soldiers. In Liberia the ethnic cleavages were politicized through government favoritism. The government responded to civil unrest through state sanctioned violence justified by policies, such as Decree 88A (Kandeh 1996). Much of the violence was targeted at the Gio and Mano ethnicities. When Doe was murdered, Taylor was elected and only continued the cycles of violence, specifically targeting women. Almudena Torel reported that between 60% and 90% of all
women were raped during the conflict (Toral 2012). When President Sirleaf was elected post-conflict she implemented the toughest antirape measures in the region (ibid). Additionally a survey conducted in 2010 by University of Berkeley researchers concluded that ethnic cleavages are no longer as contentious. A high percentage of respondents (89%) described their relations with other ethnic groups as good or very good, while Only 8% of respondents mentioned having problems with other ethnic groups (Vinck et al. 2011). Of the three cases studies, only Liberia has taken successful measures to address the policies that contributed to the outbreak of conflict.

Conversely, Sierra Leone and Uganda still struggle developing success policies designed to combat the causal factors of the outbreak of conflict. In Sierra Leone the dismal education system prevented former child soldiers from developing the necessary job skills for sustainable employment. Post-conflict the Ministry of Education promised free education and learning materials for students. The Comprehensive Rapid Education for Primary Schools (CREPS) was also introduced and the education budget increased 19% between 2001 and 2004 (Maclure & Denov 2009). Despite the policy reforms and increases in spending, researchers Maclure and Denov concluded that education was still costly to many families and the classrooms were under-resourced. Moreover, the problem will only worsen with increasing levels of enrollment (Maclure & Denov 2009). The displacement of the Ugandan population into government sponsored IDP camps resulted in a breakdown of societal ties that further complicated the reintegration of child soldiers. Although the camps were decommissioned in 2005, many families remained living in them. Whyte and her colleagues posited that many chose to remain due to the loss of
previously owned land because of death of the male land owning family member, new marital bonds of squatters. Individuals, especially widows, are left isolated in poverty without any welcoming family to help (Whyte et al. 2012).

**Recommended Policy**

The lesson to be learned from this policy discussion is what not to do. National governments should avoid politicizing ethnic cleavages because of the subsequent violence that can erupt, as evidenced by Liberia. The inaccessibility of education was a key factor in the RUF’s ability to recruit so many child soldiers. The national government should also recognize the important of refugee resettlement and provide the necessary resources to facilitate that process. A stable, cohesive community is key in the successful reintegration of child soldiers as well as the availability to education which can increase their likelihood of employment and purpose.

**Conclusion**

I developed my recommended policies after conducting research to determine the causal variables of a successful rehabilitation of former child soldiers. After researching the three cases studies, challenges arose that I had not foreseen and thus I altered my recommendations. I advise the implementation of GAPT in concert with the application of the GITTO program to address the challenges facing the individual child. A TRC would greatly benefit in facilitating community level healing and reconciliation post-conflict. The national level policies I have identified require specific methods of redress to avoid the risk of remobilization. Politicized ethnicities can lead to violence with the
potential to destabilize a country. Education is instrumental in providing viable opportunities for children to avoid the idleness and dissatisfaction that can predicate an intrastate conflict. The proper resettlement of displaced people is necessary to provide the level of community acceptance conducive to a successful rehabilitation of child soldiers. Developing a national level recovery program is outside the scope of this thesis, however I have argued that national level policy is an important factor in maintaining the rehabilitation of child soldiers. Additionally, there are many variables not identified in this thesis that affect the national level politics and thus should be developed in a future research.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have presented my policy recommendations, derived from the research. I conducted a literature review to determine the key independent variables affecting the likelihood of child soldier rehabilitation. I analyzed three African cases to develop an understanding of the application of independent variables and assess the efficiency of recovery efforts. I presented my policy recommendations, which were amended to include unforeseen challenges in the case studies. This research revealed the relevance of national level variables in the rehabilitation of child soldiers. The case study research uncovered the notable independent national level variables, which are not present in literature review. Incorporating these variables into the policy recommendations is outside the scope of this project, yet their identification provides a template for future research.

The case study of Sierra Leone revealed the relevant variables of the case, specific deficiencies of the recovery efforts and the significance of education policies in the outbreak and aftermath of the conflict. I chose the Sierra Leonean case because of the high levels of violence and its impact on community acceptance. Additionally, I discovered that not only are individual and community level variables significant in the rehabilitation programs, but also national level variables can determine the likelihood of rehabilitation. Moreover, the recovery efforts that took place in Sierra Leone emphasized
that the need for transitional justice and adequate funding is crucial to fully rehabilitation
former child soldiers.

The Sierra Leonean case provided important insight that is essential to developing a
comprehensive rehabilitation strategy. High levels of violence can inversely affect
community acceptance, thus it is imperative that rehabilitation programs emphasize
establishing link between civilians and child soldiers in high violence conflicts.
Furthermore, rehabilitation should focus on providing educational and job skills for
former child soldiers. Yet, the responsibility ultimately lies in the national level policies
to provide a permanent education system accessible to all civilians. Lastly, the recovery
efforts should concentrate on securing adequate funds and creating a viable opportunity
for transitional justice to develop. Sierra Leone provided understanding as to how the
various levels of variables can interact, yet it does showcased one specific conflict and
thus the strategy developed in not generalizable. Including research from other case
studies, such as Uganda and Liberia, will make the solution more applicable to various
geographies.

The Ugandan case study was unique because of the influence of religiosity on other
dependent variables and the national policy of displacement decreasing levels of
community acceptance. The Uganda case study revealed unforeseen variables such as the
psychological outcome of spirit possession as well as a cultural stigma regarding mental
illness, both of which complicated the rehabilitation process. Additionally, there was a
definite community level discrimination of female former child soldiers. Post-conflict the
previous regime remained in power and did not adequately address the needs of former
child soldiers. In the aftermath of the LRA conflict, the national government neglected to
provide a DDR program or TRC to address the grievances of the fifteen year struggle. The Uganda case study provided necessary insight to the impact of high levels of religiosity on the conflict and the responsibilities of the national government, which is helpful in developing a generalizable rehabilitation strategy for child soldiers.

The Ugandan case brought forth unanticipated challenges to the rehabilitation process of child soldiers. The levels of religiosity had unique effects on the psychological outcomes that was not present in the other cases. The gender specific discrimination and mental health stigma are not isolated occurrences, yet in Uganda they were especially palatable. Lastly, unlike the other two cases, the Ugandan national government provided no programs facilitating the rehabilitation process of former child soldiers. The dynamics of this case were useful in determining a generalizable strategy for the region and understanding the importance of national level rehabilitation programs.

My final case study was Liberia. The Liberian case study is important because it echoed many of the challenges of previous case studies, such as high levels of violence impacting psychological outcomes and political instability affecting community acceptance. The most notable characteristic of the case is its relationship with the Sierra Leone conflict. The neighboring countries were linked throughout the conflict. Charles Taylor was eventually indicted for his role in funding the RUF, ultimately disallowing Liberia to punish Taylor for his Liberian war crimes. The Liberian case lacks empirical data on the conditions of child soldiers post-conflict, but taking into account previous literature it is safe to assume that trauma they sustained. Analogous to other cases, the DDRR program failed to address the psychological needs of former child soldiers and the TRC struggled in establishing transitional justice.
The Liberian case reaffirmed conclusions found in both the Sierra Leone and Uganda cases as well as added insight into developing a comprehensive rehabilitation program.

Although there was limited data, the causal mechanisms of the variables were clear and reiterated the conclusions of the other two case studies. The similarities between the Sierra Leone and Liberia cases can be traced to Foday Sankoh and Charles Taylor’s long standing relationship. Liberia had the most successful recovery efforts regarding national policy, possibly due to the regime change that took place in 2005. Lessons can be derived on how to provide redress for previous regime’s disastrous policies, however the country still suffers from high youth unemployment rates and corruption. The Liberian case proved that there is hope that things can be changed, such as national policy that contributed to the outbreak of the conflict, yet there are still many things to be included when developing a comprehensive rehabilitation process.

My individual level recommended policy prescriptions included the implementation of group action play therapy (GAPT) for the psychological outcomes of child soldiers and the Boys’ and Girls’ Club of America Gang Intervention through Targeted Outreach (GITTO) program to teach job training, provide a sense of community other than the rebel group to facilitate disintegration. My community level policy recommendations include a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to rebuild to community post-conflict and sensitize community members to human rights abuses. After conducting my research there were unanticipated challenges, particularly with the Ugandan case, and because of this I had to amend my policy prescriptions. I also included a public relations campaign to address the community level stigma regarding mental health and females
who had been associated with the rebel groups. The prescriptions I have discussed provide a theoretical model of a comprehensive rehabilitation program to address individual and community level challenges.

I did not anticipate the vital role of the national government in the rehabilitation process prior to conducting my research. Furthermore, determining how to eradicate corruption, increase aggregate youth employment and provide redress for destructive national policy is outside the scope of this project. The implications of this thesis are that further research should be dedicated to developing a national level solution conducive to the rehabilitation of former child soldiers. National level variables have proven to effect the outbreak of the conflict as well as the likelihood of former child soldiers to successfully rehabilitate. Regardless of how effective individual and community level programs are, there is little hope for sustainable rehabilitation if national level variables are ignored.

After examining the previous literature to identify key variables effecting the likelihood of child soldier rehabilitation and researching three African case studies of child soldiers active in combat and the recovery efforts I presented a holistic model of child soldier rehabilitation to address individual and community level challenges. My research revealed the necessity of a national level strategy that will facilitate rehabilitation at the individual and community level. I have also discussed the national level variables impacting the likelihood of child soldier rehabilitation, however it is outside the scope of this project to recommend national level policies. Future research is
needed to synthesize the material to create a national level strategy that will provide sustainable rehabilitation program for child soldiers.
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