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The voices of the invisible girls

Reintegration of former female child soldiers in Burundi

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Abstract

Child soldiers are used in armed groups and forces around the word. Children as young as seven years of age have been reported to actively participate in armed conflict. The phenomenon of child soldiering has become increasingly recognized in recent decades. Females constitute between ten per cent to one third of the fighting forces worldwide. Despite this, girls and women have until recently been highly invisible in both research and intervention programs. Former female child soldiers often experience social exclusion through rejection, marginalization and stigmatization when returning to civilian life, often due to the traditional and cultural aspects of the society. Regaining family and community acceptance is essential for a successful reintegration. This thesis seeks to be a voice for these girls, expressing their challenges in the social reintegration with family and community. What they consider their main challenges when returning to civilian life will also be investigated; and within the reintegration process, the role of Burundian traditional and cultural aspects will be further explored.

Key words: Burundi, female child soldiers, reintegration, family and community reunification and reconciliation, tradition and culture

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to several organizations and people, whom, without their assistance and support this work could not have been carried out.

Audrey Niyonzima, my translator and interpreter, has become a dear friend and been of great importance to my work. Through her a lot of knowledge was gained, not only due to her assistance during interviews, but through long and interesting conversations about Burundi´s history, culture, and current situation.

Great appreciations goes to my supervisor Christian Webersik, who has, throughout my entire work, guided me in the right direction and provided me with valuable feedback and support. I also want to thank the entire staff of the Department of Development, as well as my fellow students who have given me valuable knowledge and experience throughout this entire study period.

The President and founder of Training Centre for the Development of Ex-combatants (CEDAC), Eric Niragira, became a good friend and mentor. He and his organizations were instrumental for information gathering and contact with the interviewees. Additionally, CARE Burundi, with Bena Musembi and Générose Nzeyimana, amongst others, provided great assistance in obtaining information about former female child soldiers and in facilitating communication with the girls. Within these organizations a special thanks goes to the people working in the communities who introduced me to the interviewees, such as Générose from CEDAC and Roger and Lucie from CARE. I also want to thank Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) for providing me with valuable information and for letting me participate in the graduation ceremony of former child soldiers and war affected youth, through their partner.

Further, I am grateful for all the countless hours of proofreading and comprehensive comments and feedback provided by Nancy Fiator.

The greatest gratitude is directed to all those girls who used their time to share their incredible powerful backgrounds and experiences with me. I am forever grateful. Without you this research could never have been carried out.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ADC(-Ikibiri)	l'Alliance des Démocrates pour le Changement au Burundi /Burundi´s Democratic Alliance for Change
ADBG	African Development Bank Group
BIF	Burundian Francs
CEDAC	Centre d'Encadrement et de Développement des Anciens Combattants / Training Centre for the Development of Ex-combatants
CNDD	Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie / National Council for the Defence of Democracy
CENI	Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante / National Independent Electoral Commission
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation & Reintegration
DRC	The Democratic Republic of Congo
FDD	Forces pour la défense de la démocratie/ Forced for the Defence of Democracy
FRONDEBU	Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi / Front for Democracy in Burundi
FNL	Forces nationales de libération / National Forces for Liberation
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ILO	International Labour Office
ICG	International Crisis Group
JPH	Jeunesse Patriotique Hutu / Patriotic Hutu Youth
LRA	Lord´s Resistance Army
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NGO	Non- Governmental Organizations
PDC	The Parti Démocrate Chrétien / Christian Democratic Party
PALIPEHUTU	Parti pour la Libération de Peuple Hutu / Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People
PNDRR	Programme National de démobilisation, réinsertion et réintégration / National Demobilisation, Reinsertion and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants Programme
SNES	Structure nationale pour les enfants soldats / National Structure for Child Soldiers
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease

UNICEF	United Nations International Children´s Emergency Fund
UPRONA	Union pour le Progrès National / Unity for National Progress
UNAMID	African Union - United Nations Mission in Darfur
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN OSAA	United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
USD	United States Dollar

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background

Child soldiers are present in nearly all regions of the world. It is almost certain that wherever there is armed conflict, there are children participating in it (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008:10). Child soldiering is the worst form of child labour (Specht, 2009:191). It is a grave violation of children´s rights (CAUCS, n.d., quoted in Rivard, 2010) and "the most alarming trend in armed conflict" (Machel, 1996:16). The international attention towards the phenomenon of child soldiering increased in the 1990s (Rivard, 2010). Today, children's participation in small-scale conflicts has turned into "a global humanitarian crisis and a media sensation" (Rosen, 2005).

However, until recently, the participation of young girls and women in these conflicts has been mostly ignored (Annan et al., 2009:1). Despite the fact that girls are used in armed conflict around the world for a variety of tasks, including sex slaves and fighters (Mazurana & McKay, 2004:24), they have been largely ignored and marginalized both during and after conflict (Burman and McKay, 2007:316).

There are specific gender concerns and differences that need to be taken into consideration in the research and implementation of reintegration efforts such as DDR programs. An example is the high degree of stigmatization that the former female child soldiers receive compared to their male counterparts (Wessells, 2007:20). The stigmatization and marginalization that girls receive, often results in the rejection from their families and communities. The rejection could be a great obstacle for successful reintegration back into society and when the girls are attempting to regain life as a civilian (Machel, 1996:14, Hill and Langholtz, 2003, Boothby, 2006). Research needs to take into consideration these aspects concerning the stigmatization, as well as issues concerning a secure demobilization, and the girls´ individual needs in the aftermath of war, such as health and education (Coulter et al., 2008:5).

This research seeks to identify challenges that the girls experience in their reintegration process. It is mainly their challenges in relation to social reintegration that is of interest, such as family and community reunification and reconciliation. However, in order to identify the importance of social acceptance, what the girls see as their main challenges when regaining life as a civilian, is of great interest. This research also seeks to identify cultural and traditional aspects of the Burundian culture, and further investigate whether these have a

positive or negative impact on the girls´ social reintegration. The aim is to be a voice of these women, and to better understand their difficulties when regaining a civilian life, providing valuable information with the hope that future reintegration assistance can be better adapted to their needs.

1.2 Study Area

Burundi is located in Eastern Africa, in the heart of the Great Lake Region, landlocked

between Rwanda in the north, Tanzania to the southeast and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to the west. The country has been affected by conflict for several decades. Waves of massacres and grave abuses occurred long before the civil war initiated in 1993. The outbreaks of violence were particularly grave in 1965, 1972 and 1988, resulting in thousands of people losing their lives (Caramés and Sanz, 2009:30). The ethnic conflict has characterized and affected the country for decades.

Figure 1: Map of Burundi (Source: CARE (n.d.:a)

Since 1962, when Rwanda and Burundi became independent from the colonial powers as separate countries, the Tutsis have dominated the powerful and influential positions within governments, security forces, judiciary system, education, business, and media (Dilworth, 2006:2). The Hutus have challenged the domination of the Tutsis on several occasions with violent acts and killings. The result every time has been severe violence and assassinations against the Hutus by the Tutsi security forces (Dilworth, 2006:2, Caramés and Sanz, 2009:30). The conflicts that have occurred in Burundi have been linked to the conflicts in both Rwanda and the DRC "through cross-border insurgencies, cross-border ethnic linkage, and cross-border economic ties" (Prendergast & Smock, 1999:1). Burundian Hutu armed groups have, for instance, supported other Hutu forces in both Rwanda and the DRC (Child Soldier International, 2001).

Within all three of these countries, the use of children in their conflict has been widely known. The amount of children involved in the Burundian conflicts is disputable and varies from 2,000 to 14,000 (Child Soldiers International (CSI), 2001). Both boys and girls have

been used for a variety of tasks within government forces, paramilitary groups, militia and armed opposition groups (McKay & Mazurana, 2004:21). After the end of the civil war, succeeded by peace negotiations, official Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) efforts were initiated. Other reintegration projects were also initiated by several local and international organizations. The aim is to reintegrate the former soldiers back to civilians and start the reconstruction of the country.

1.3 Research Objective and Research Questions

The *main objective* for this research is to identify the challenges faced by former female child soldiers in the family and community reunification and reconciliation process in the aftermath of conflict, as well as identify their main challenges when retuning to civilian life, with a particular focus on the role and importance of traditional and cultural aspects.

The *research questions* are the following:

1. What are the challenges facing former female child soldiers in the family and community reunification and reconciliation process, when returning from the armed groups?
2. What are the main challenges faced by former female child soldiers when returning to civilian life?
3. How do traditional and cultural aspects impact the reintegration process for former female child soldiers?

1.4 Methodology in brief

A qualitative strategy was used for this research, with the primary data collection taking place in Burundi in January and February 2013. The research design is a case study, using in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation, as well as document analysis for the collection of data.

1.5 Thesis outline

Chapter 1 gives a brief introduction to the phenomenon of child soldiering and of the study area, in addition to stating the research objectives and research questions. **Chapter 2** describes the theoretical background, and gives a description of several topics concerning former female child soldiers, general information about Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration programs, as well as the political background of Burundi, the country´s use of DDR and its traditional and cultural aspects with relevance for reintegration for former female

child soldiers. **Chapter 3** describes the methodology applied for this research, as well as the limitations of such, and the ethical considerations concerning research on the topic. **Chapter 4** presents the findings and the analysis. The chapter is divided into five parts. *Part 1* gives general background information on the girls, and their lives before, during and after their time with the armed groups. *Part 2* explains their challenges in relation to family reunification and reconciliation, while *Part 3* concerns the community reunification and reconciliation. *Part 4* expresses the girls' views on what is considered their main challenges when returning to civilian life. *Part 5* is based on the traditional and cultural aspects of Burundi, and their importance for the family and community acceptance. **Chapter 5** draws the conclusion out of the findings and analysis.

Chapter 2: Theoretical background

2.1 Child Soldiering

2.1.1 Defining a child soldier

To find an internationally, mutually agreed upon, definition of a child soldier can be a challenge. First, there is the issue of age. When does one go from being a child to becoming an adult? Different distinctions are made depending on the culture or country. Cultures in developing countries might define a person as an adult when they have taken part of the "culturally appropriate rites of passage" (Wessells, 1998:640, quoted in Pauletto & Patel, 2010:48). In some cultures a person is considered an adult from the age of fourteen or fifteen (Children´s Right Portal, n.d.). A girl can be considered a woman from the time she gives birth to a child, independent of her age (Farr, 2005:2). But despite the different cultural understandings of who is a child, an international framework for this has been created; although, this framework still fails to provide a global understanding. From a humanitarian perspective, the international treaty, The Convention on the Rights of the Child, defines a child to be any person under the age of eighteen (UNICEF, n.d.: a). On the other hand, The International Criminal Court (1998:Art. 8, Para. 2 (b)(xxvi)) has declared it as a war crime only if a child is under the age of fifteen when recruited into the armed forces. However, humanitarian organizations that work with children's rights, including UNICEF, defines a child as any person under the age of eighteen (Amnesty International, 2004:2) and the most commonly used definition of a child soldier is made by the Cape Town Principles (UNICEF, 1997);

> *Any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members. The definition includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriage.*

Not only does this definition state guidelines of when one is to be considered a child, and therefore a child soldier, but it also bring up the issue about the diversity of roles that children take on during their time with the armed groups. The topic of child soldiers does not simply refer to a combatant or fighter. Children have a variety of roles within the groups and using such terms might not be an appropriate when children have taken on other besides being directly involved in fighting.

Terminology is also a discussed issue when talking about girls. The terms used for girl soldiers vary in literature, especially when it comes to girls that have been sexually abused (Tonheim, 2010:15). Some of the terms used are "forced wives", "bush wives", "sex slaves", "girl mothers" and "forced mothers" (Tonheim, 2010:15). Both latter terms are used for the girls that have given birth, both during, but also after their time with the armed groups (Tonheim, 2010:15). Burman and McKay (2007:317) use the term "girl mothers" when referring to girls that have given birth to a child through forced sex. An argument could be made for the lack of accuracy with these terms, seeing how the roles that girls take on within the armed groups are not limited to sex slaves, forced mothers or wives. However, taken into consideration that girls are neither solely combatants, nor solely wives, sex slaves and mothers, the terms that will be used in this research is simply the term "girl" or "former female child soldier", which should be interpreted as girls with any role within the armed group. And the Paris Principles will further be used as this research´s general definition of a child soldier.

Additionally, when talking about former female child soldiers and their participation in *armed groups* in Burundi, the term *armed group* is referring to any "armed organizations that challenges the state´s monopoly of legitimate coercive forces" (Small Armed Survey, n.d.), which means any armed group that is not of the government´s armed forces. This includes "opposition and insurgent movements, pro-government militias, and community-based vigilante groups" (Small Armed Survey, n.d.).

2.1.2 The global use of child soldiers

Child soldering is a global problem. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW)(2012:a) more than fourteen countries are currently using underage children in combat. Children as young as seven years of age are recruited around the world (Lorey, 2001:3, International Labour Office (ILO), 2003:vii). The total number of child soldiers that exist in the world today is disputable. The number 300,000 is an estimate that can be found in a variety of literature, but an accurate count has yet to be tabulated. According to Gates & Reich (2009), this number emerged in the mid-1990´s by child advocacy groups in order to gain attention towards the issue. However, even if this number was accurate at the time, it has since proven imprecise due to the fact that many of the conflicts occurring at the time have since ended (Gates & Reich, 2009). Tonheim (2010:18) points to Brett & McCallin (1996:27) who argue that the number of both child soldiers in general, as well as the number of girls within these groups are "not only unknown but unknowable" due to the immeasurable hurdles that arise when collecting data.

When the issue of child soldiering is mentioned, it is often the image of young boys with weapons that is the first common thought associated with the phenomenon. However, a large percentage of girls take part of the armed groups as well. From 1990 to 2003 it was estimated that girls were a part of the fighting forces in a total of fifty-five countries around the world, and in thirty-eight of these countries girls were directly participating in armed conflict (McKay and Mazurana, 2004:21). From the period of 1990 to 2003 girls were actively involved in fighting in the Americas, Middle East, Africa, Europe and Asia[1] (McKay and Mazurana, 2004:21). Children are used in combat by government forces, paramilitary groups, militia and in opposition groups (Mazurana et al., 2002:103). Throughout Africa girls have been present within in all these forces (McKay, 2004:21). Girls are estimated to constitute between ten to thirty per cent of "national armies, guerrillas or armed liberation movements" (Bouta, 2005:5). They have taken on a variety of overlapping roles, ranging from domestic duties, slave labour, sex slaves, spies, porter, suicide bombers and fighters, amongst others (Mazurana & McKay, 2004:24).

The conflicts in the Great Lakes regions of Africa is well known for its use of child soldiers (United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (UN OSAA), 2007:18), and Burundi is no exception. Burundian children have fought with Burundian armed groups in both Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), as well as with armed Congolese groups operating in the DRC (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child soldiers, 2004:31). Both girls and boys have been recruited into Burundian armed groups (ILO, 2003, Jordans et al. 2012, Mazurana & McKay, 2004).

2.1.3 Increased international attention

Since the 1990s there has been an increased international attention towards the phenomenon of child soldiering (Rivard, 2010). In 1989 ninety-one countries signed the International Convention of the Right of the Child and the issue was finally put on the United Nations international agenda (Rivard, 2010). Another event that increased the attention towards child soldiering was the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions, which in the end of the cold war increased its missions, together with Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programs (DDR)(Rivard, 2010). Both these two events lead to the publication of Graça Machel´s report "The impact of Armed Conflict on Children" in 1996 (Rivard, 2010). This

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[1] For specific information about which countries and groups, see McKay and Mazurana (2004) *Where are the girls?*

was a ground-breaking report according to UNICEF (n.d: b), which "brought global attention to the devastating impact of armed conflict on children".

In 1998, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers[2] was established by several leading human rights and humanitarian organizations (Child Soldiers International (CSI), n.d.). Due to the Coalition (amongst others) there is now a significant increase in the amount of information available about girl soldiers (Mazurana et al., 2002:102). However, girls in armed groups have not received much attention, and are particularly marginalized both during and after conflict (Burman and McKay, 2007:316).

2.2 Motives for recruiting children

One of the reasons for recruiting children in armed groups could simply be the need of additional members in order to increase the size of the group (Wessells, 2007:11, Coulter et al., 2008:12). The tendency seems to be that the longer a conflict lasts; more women and children get recruited as the amount of male recruits decreased (Bouta, 2005:7, ILO, 2003:26, Specht, 2009:191, Machel, 1996:12). Children have also been favoured due to their obedience, as they do not question orders and are easier to manipulate than adults (Machel, 1996:11, Wessells, 2007:11, ILO, 2003:26). They are believed to be easier to "sculpt" into effective fighters (Specht, 2009:194). In a survey conducted by the International Labour Office (ILO) in Congo, Rwanda, The DRC and Burundi, the recruiters themselves gave a variety of reasons for why they were recruiting children (ILO, 2003:26). They claimed that children were tough, dynamic, competent and effective (ILO, 2003:26). They are, additionally, assumed to be more daring than adults, "because they are unaware of death" (ILO, 2003:26). Additionally they are seen as cheap labour (ILO, 2003:26).

However, ILO (2003:26) argues that these assumptions and interpretations of children can be due to factors and conditions within the group. What is explained and interpreted as "courage" could be "a result of physical and moral doping" (ILO, 2003:26). Having been given drugs and alcohol, the children are less aware of the dangers related to the events in which they are involved (ILO, 2003:26, 45). What is characterized as "compliance" could be explained as a result of harsh punishments when children do not obey. When the recruiters blame the recruitment of children to be based on "toughness, competence and efficiency" this is part of "the flattery with which the leaders of armed groups keep a hold on the young,

[2] The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers has now changed it´s name to Child Soldiers International. Documents published before the name change will be referred as the Coalition.

alternating humiliation and compliments" (ILO, 2003:26). They are also cheap labour because of the promise of payment that is not been kept to the children (ILO, 2003:26).

Additionally, children are also used due to the fact that they are more effective in performing difficult tasks such as laying down mines, being scouts, or spies (ILO, 2003:26). For instance, girls are seen as capable of carrying heavy cargo for long distances, and can therefore reduce the risk of being caught by the enemy, as the use of mechanised vehicles would make a significant greater amount of noise (Wessells, 2007:11). Girls could also be preferred to boys, due to the labour and sexual services they are set to provide for the male soldiers (Wessells, 2007:12).

An additional factor in the increased use of child soldiers is the swell in the availability of small and lightweight weapons (Specht, 2009:193, ILO, 2003:4). The small size and light weight prove manageable children to carry, use, strip and reassemble the weapons (Specht, 2009:193). The access to weapons, the need for group members, as well as the assumption that children are more than capable enough and easy to "mold", makes them attractive and accessible tools in war.

2.3 How the recruitment happens

There are a variety of ways in which children become involved with armed groups, and their recruitment can be a challenge to classify. One cannot simply define the recruitment to be voluntary or by obligation. The issue is much more complex. ILO (2003:27) differentiate the mode for recruitment into three categories; abduction, forced recruitment, and personal decision.

With *abduction,* ILO means the recruitment that takes place by force and under threats of weapons (ILO, 2003:27). This has been the predominant pattern in Africa, where children have been abducted from homes, communities and schools (McKay and Mazurana 2004, quoted in McKay, 2004:22). In addition, Machel (1996:12) points out that abduction also takes place in the streets and from orphanages. Many girls are forcibly recruited by abduction (Mazurana, et al. 2002:106, Coulter et al. 2008:10). Between 1990 and 2003 girls had been abducted into fighting forces within 27 countries worldwide (Mazurana & McKay, 2004:23).

By *forced recruitment*, ILO refers to the situations where children have no choice but to join, such as when they experience moral pressure or obligation (2003:27). Some might become members from the time of their birth, due to having parents that are members and thereby becoming "born into" the fighting forces (Mazurana et al. 2006:108). Another type of

forced recruitment can be seen in Colombia and Cambodia, where girls were given to armed groups by their parents for "tax payment" (Mazurana et al. 2002:108).

The last category of recruitment is based on a *personal decision* to join an armed group based on own initiative (ILO, 2003:27). Such a personal decision can be based on a variety of factors. Some join for their own protection and they feel safer when possessing a gun (Machel, 1996:12), for instance if parents have been killed (McKay, 1998:387). As for girls, having a weapon can be seen as a protection against rape (Gislesen, 2006:19).

Coulter et al. argues that some girls join the forces due to a *survival strategy* (2008:10). As Wessells explains, some children join the forces due to the difficulties of obtaining "security, food, power, prestige, education and positive life options through civilian means" (2005:363). In Colombia, DRC and Sri Lanka, it has been suggested that the girls entered the armed groups because the fighting forces "provide food, shelter, and a sense of security" (Mazurana et al. 2002:106). Girls might also join with the hope of escaping their situation at home, such as living in a home where they experience mistreatment, where the economic situation makes it hard to make ends meet or where the girls are in threat of sexual violence (Gislesen, 2006:10). Being associated with a group, can also be seen as manner of getting power, which can be a motivator when people feel either powerless or if they are unable to obtain the basic resources (Machel, 1996:12). In addition, vengeance can also be a motivator for joining an armed group (ILO, 2003:29).

In some countries girls might join the armed forces due to *ideological reasons* (Coulter et al. 2008:10, Wessells, 2005:336). Children might be particularly easy targets for persuasion, as they are in the period of their lives when personal identities are being developed, and they are often in the search for "a sense of social meaning" (Machel, 1996:12). Additionally, children might "identify with and fight for social causes, religious expression, self-determination and national liberation" (Machel, 1996:12). However, Coulter et al. (2008:10) argues that in a variety of research done on recent post-independence wars, few girls stated that their motive for joining was religious or based on ethnic reasons, but rather in order to escape poverty, abuse and violence at home.

In some cases children can be persuaded by family members of friends to join an armed group (Specht, 2009:197). It can happen that a group of friends decide to join together (Specht, 2009:197).
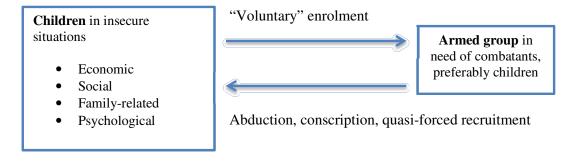
Some children might get "gradually recruited" due to being mixed with the groups, for instance by living in the same neighbourhood where a group is located (ILO, 2003:35). According to ILO (2003:35) "being in their company enhances the aura that young soldiers

have for children", and children often get "a taste of a world that attracts them" by gradually being invited into the groups through the participation in different activities.

Several of these recruitment practises can be said to be voluntary recruitment, but Tonheim (2010:15) states that there are several researchers that question the authenticity of such "voluntarism" due to the lack of other options in the time of recruitment. Some girls choose to join, but the "notion of choosing to volunteer is highly contested; many girls' options are already so limited that the idea that they freely make this choice is doubtful" (Mazurana et al. 2002:106). According to ILO (2003:vvii) such volunteerism "cannot be considered to be a real choice". In some cases when children present themselves for service within an armed group, it is misleading to call this voluntary, as such choice can be driven with several factors, including cultural, social, economic or political pressure (Machel, 1996:12). ILO (2003:26) presents an illustrated figure of such "voluntary" enrolment and abduction, conscription and quasi-forced recruitment:

Figure 2: Recruitment modes

2.4 Children´s roles within the armed groups

Children are used for a variety of roles within armed groups. Depending on their age and time within the armed forces, their roles vary between varieties of essential tasks (McKay, 2004:22). This could be seeking and carrying food and water, producing food and washing (McKay, 2004:22). Other roles assigned to children could be as spies, first-aid workers, training of other soldiers, assigned to command positions or in intelligence and communication functions, or as porters, messengers and lookouts (McKay, 2004:22, Machel, 1996:13). As porters and carriers, children might have to carry up to 60 kilograms of loads, which could be everything from ammunition and wounded soldiers (Machel, 1996:13). It is not only directly serving as combatants that put children's lives in danger. Those who might have roles, such as porters, can end up in the front line during performing their tasks as

transporters of wounded and dead (Amnesty International, 2004:2). Being a messenger is also life threatening to children (Machel, 1996:13). Additionally, the children risk severe punishments or death if they are not able to perform their duties, such as carrying the heavy loads assigned to them (Machel, 1996:13).

Generally, children receive the same treatment as adults within the groups (Machel, 1996:12, ILO, 2003:vvii), and roles are not gender-specific (Machel, 1996:13). However, Mazurana et al (2006:109) argue that the roles of the girls within the armed group may reflect the roles that girls might have had during the course of their lives, such as cooks, cleaners, gathering food, childcare and rearing. But it has been shown that girls have a much higher variety of roles within the groups than simply performing domestic duties. Girls have additionally been reported to having served as porters, spies, carriers of supplies, plundering villages, suicide and bombing missions, and sweep paths for land mines (Mazurana et al. 2002:110). Girls have also been used to provide sexual services for other group members (Machel, 1996:13). They are often systematically forced to supply both young and adult men, within the armed groups, with sexual services (Mazurana et al. 2002:110, Mazurana & McKay, 2004:26). Sexual violence against these girls is common experience for many of them (Mazurana & McKay, 2004:26). According to Mazurana & McKay (2004:26), this is in particular the case for most abducted girls, who have "their bodies and their domestic and sexual labour are commodities that are coveted, traded, and at times, fought for". Mazurana & McKay (2004:26) provide a list of twenty countries worldwide where, between 1990 and 2003, recruited girls were forced to provide sexual services. An example can be drawn to Uganda and with the rebel group the Lord´s Resistance Army (LRA), where females were mainly recruited in order for them to be "wives" and "mothers" (Annan et al., 2011:884). The girls were forced to marry, and the marriages were characterized by "shared domicile, domestic responsibilities, exclusivity and sex" (Annan et al. 2011:884). According to Mazurana et al. (2002:111) "girls´ vulnerability, size and low status make them susceptible to widespread physical and psychological abuse and sexual assault by boys and men". However, this might not be the common pattern in all groups, and additional research is needed in this field (Mazurana et al. 2002:111). Additionally, in a study conducted in Sierra Leone, the girls who had become wives of the rebel commanders ended up gaining authority within the rebel group (McKay, 2004:22).

Girls do not only serve as sex slaves, wives and mothers; they also serve as combatants and fighters. Between 1990 and 2003, thirty-six countries have been reported to use females as fighters (Mazurana & McKay, 2004:25). However, as of 2003, the number was

decreased to include eighteen countries, which at the time were using females as combatants (Mazurana & McKay, 2004:25). An example from Sierra Leone, the oldest of the girls within the groups were participating in the conflicts as fighters by looting, committing atrocities, and killing (McKay, 2004:22).

Some argue that the recruitment into the armed forces is not simply negative. By joining an armed group, girls might simultaneously gain new opportunities, such as positions of power and new skills, according to Mazurana & McKay (2004:17). However, using such strengths when returning to the community might be of a challenge as community members might repress such behaviour, as it goes against the traditional gender roles. As pointed out by Mazurana & McKay (2004:17), girls are often "urged to resume traditional gender roles instead of using the strength they have developed to make new choices and seek broader opportunities" when returning home.

2.4.1 Actively involved or passive victims?

The literature discusses that the roles of the children participating in armed conflict should be considered as either actively involved or passive victims. An extensive amount of literature defines the children as victims, which is argued by Hart & Tyrer (2006:9) to be due to three reasons. Firstly, children are of a smaller stature than adults and have less of an understanding about different situations, and they are additionally in a greater exposure to suffering from conflict. It is therefore understandable that they are in need of greater protection. Secondly, Hart and Tyrer (2006:9) blame the perception of victimhood on European and North American cultures, amongst others, as the views of childhood are that children's lives "should be conducted solely within safe, carefree world set apart from harsh realities of adult existence". Children in situations of armed conflict are therefore seen as victims. Thirdly, the blame is laid on the aid agencies, which according to Hart & Tyrer (2006:9), uses the victimhood of children in order to achieve greater attention and support.

Despite the fact that women are either combatants or providing other types of support in almost all conflict (Annan et al., 2011:878), they are typically seen as victims (Annan et al., 2011:878, Coulter et al., 2008:7). Girls are often perceived as "mourning family, fleeing, struggling to care for a child, or sexually abused" (Annan et al., 2011: 878). Due to this, women are therefore denied agency (Coulter et al., 2008:7). However, there have been testimonies that in the modern wars of Africa, women are as capable as men in performing violent acts, and that they have even been described as more brutal and cruel than men (Coulter et al., 2008:7). Denov (2007:ii) argues that girls in fighting forces are "not simply

victims, but active agents and resisters during armed conflict". In Uganda, females who had been members of the LRA, report similar level of violence as men, such as the killing of civilians, soldiers, family members and friends (Annan et al. 2011:884). Coulter et al. (2008:10) claims that many female soldiers will only admit to have participating in the fighting sporadically, in between other task given to them. This is due to the unstable situation in a post-war society (Coulter et al., 2008:10). Not openly admitting their role and participation as combatants can lead to complications in the identification of the roles of the woman, and when attempting to separate the "fighter" from the rest (Coulter et al., 2008:10).

Within humanitarian and human rights groups it has been widely accepted that children are seen as victims, and should therefore not be prosecuted for their crimes (Rosen, 2009:84). These groups have been highly successful in preventing the prosecution of children under eighteen (Rosen, 2009:84). The Rome Statute, put in force in 2002, has no jurisdiction to prosecute children under the age of eighteen for their war crimes (International Criminal court, 1998:Art.26). This creates what Rosen (2009:84) calls an "ironic consequence", which is the creation of a group consisting of children between fifteen and eighteen years or age, who can legally be recruited into armed forces, but cannot be punished for their actions. Despite the international community condemning the prosecution of children associated with armed group, the local authority of Burundi have been accused of torturing and detaining children, who have been suspected to have links with political groups, for long periods of time (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child soldiers, 2004:32).

2.5 Consequences of child soldiering

2.5.1 Development aspects

Child soldiering has enormous consequences both on the children but also on the societies affected by conflict (Wessells, 2007:2). In many of these countries, children constitute half of the population (Wessells, 2007:2) and they are a major contribution to the reconstruction in the aftermath of war (Specht, 2009:211). Direct consequences to children include the loss of education and severe physical and psychosocial trauma (Blattman & Annan, 2010:882). These affects will impact the social capital of a country, and can lead to decreased productivity and growth for decades in post-conflict economies (Blattman & Annan, 2010:882). Children constitute a significant part of the total amount of the fighting forces (Wessells, 2007:2). Specht argues that in conflicts where youths are recruited, the majority of the combatants are actually youths (2009:211). When these children are recruited they enable the armed forces to continue the fighting (Wessells, 2007:2). The societies are in risk of what

Wessells calls inter- generational fighting, arguing that the "socialization of children into fighting and systems of social division and hatred sets the stage for on-going cycles of violence" (Wessells, 2007:2). This, Wessells argues, indicates that child recruitment is also an issue of peace and human development, in addition to being a human rights issue (Wessells, 2007:2).

2.5.2 Humanitarian aspect

Amongst the many direct consequences on the children themselves, is the severe physical and psychosocial trauma that many will experience in the aftermath of conflict (ILO, 2003:ix). Additionally, soldiers are often living under bad conditions, which exposes the children to a variety of diseases (ILO, 2003:ix). It can also be difficult for the children to establish relationships with adults and children, due to the violence that the children have either participated in, or witnessed (ILO, 2003:ix). According to Mazurana et al. (2002:115) boys develop a tendency towards aggressive behaviour and girls are more likely to withdraw. These are all consequences that can affect both boys and girls; however, there are several gender-specific and critical consequences on girls.

When separating from the group, many children try to carry on with their life the same way as before the recruitment, and realise that the problems are the same as before joining (Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2006:8). Not only are the pre-conflict challenges still present in a post-conflict environment, but additionally the children face new challenges in the time after being associated with the armed group, such as hostility and distrust from their neighbours (HRW, 2006:8). This is said to be a challenge in particular for girls, who often experience a higher degree of stigmatization than boys (Wessells, 2007:20). In particular those girls who have experienced sexual abuse can find it difficult to live with their families, and to find a husband due to cultural beliefs and attitudes (McKay, 1998:337). In some cultures, the girls who do not marry are victims of stigmatization, together with their families (Mazurana et al., 2002:115). Without a husband, the girls´ future economic prospect is threatened (Mazurana et al., 2002:115). Some girls might end up as prostitutes due to the poor economic situation and the few alternatives available for them (McKay, 1998:337). Many girls also might return home with children after their time with the group. Even their children experience the stigmatization, and risk being labelled as "undesired" "children of bad memories" or "children of hate" and suffer from consequences of this identity (Mazurana et al., 2002:115). Further challenges of social reintegration when the girls return to their families and communities will be elaborated on in section 2.6.6.

For victims of sexual abuse, the consequences on the girls can be horrendous. It can cause several *psychosocial effects* on the girls, such as "shock, loss of dignity, shame, low self-esteem, poor concentration and memory, persistent nightmares, depression and other posttraumatic stress effects" (Mazurana et al., 2002:115). *Pregnancy,* as a result from sexual abuse, can lead to a variety of complications and dangers for the girls. Young girls who become pregnant are in high risk of complications due to their physical immaturity (McKay, 1998:338). Unsafe and incomplete abortions can lead to infections (McKay, 1998:338). When the girls give birth without trained personnel and under poor hygienic conditions they risk contracting diseases such as pelvic inflammatory disease and muscle injuries, which can further cause incontinence (McKay, 1998:338). Girls who are malnourished or affected by hunger, trauma and exhaustion, are not able to nourish their children when breastfeeding or physically support their pregnancies (McKay, 1998:338). Additionally, abuse and sexual assaults have enormous consequences on girls´ *sexual and reproductive health,* such as sexual dysfunction, genital prolapse, abdominal vaginal bleeding, chronic pelvic pain, infertility, rectal fistula, urinary fistula, vaginal/perineal tear and abdominal vaginal discharge (ISIS-Women´s International Cross Cultural Exchange, 2011:5). Girls can also be victims of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS. These diseases might be passed on to their children through pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding (Mazurana et al., 2002:112). There are also *hygienic concerns* that differ by gender. Many girls had their menstruations stop during armed conflicts (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2000, quoted in Mazurana et al., 2002:113). It is important for the girls to keep themselves clean in order to protect themselves from infections during their menstruation and otherwise (Mazurana et al., 2002:111). It might even become an embarrassment and cause mental distress when such personal issues become public due to the lack of sanitation supply and washing facilities (Mazurana et al., 2002:111).

2.6 Official effort of intervention

2.6.1 Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Programs

The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs, aims at turning former soldiers into civilians. In the process combatants lay down their weapons, become removed from any military structure or fighting force, and receive assistance in becoming reintegrated back into society, both economically and socially (African Union - United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), n.d.). The United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping (n.d.) defines the process as below.

Figure 3: Defining the Disarmament, Demobilization & Reintegration process

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

Disarmament is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons from combatants and often from the civilian population.

Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces and groups, including a phase of "reinsertion" which provides short-term assistance to ex-combatants.

Reintegration is the process by which the ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. It is a political, social and economic process with and open time frame, primarily taking place in communities at local level.

Source: United Nations Peacekeeping (n.d.)

The last "R" in the "DDR" can be divided into different terms and stages. Caramés and Sanz (2009:8) divide the "R" into *Reinsertion* and *Reintegration* (DDRR), but it can also in some cases represent *Rehabilitation*, *Resettlement* and *Reconciliation* (Caramés and Sanz, 2009:8). The organization Peace Women (n.d.) for instance, ads "*Repatriation*" and *"Resettlement"* to the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process (DDRRR), while the UN Peacekeeping (n.d.) have the term "*Reinsertion*" under the demobilization phase. However, the majority of organizations simply use the term "Reintegration".

DDR programs have become an integral part of post-conflict consolidation (UN Peacekeeping, n.d.) and its one of several elements in the process of regaining peace (Peacebuilding Initiative, n.d.). These programs can assist in the creation of a secure environment allowing other elements of the recovery and peace-building process to initiate (African Development Bank Group (ADBG), 2011:1). DDR processes can separate combatants from their weapons; break up command structure, in addition to give the rebel groups a reason for giving up their weapons without being seen as surrounding (Peacebuilding Initiative, n.d.). The process can also help build trust and confidence between combatant and non-combatants that will permit other parts of the peace process to proceed (Peacebuilding Initiative, n.d.). In addition the DDR process can give the former combatants and their dependents "a short-term safety net" and also commence the process of change concerning the habits and identities of the former combatants (Peacebuilding Initiative, n.d.).

By giving the former soldiers an alternative way of living, as well as reducing the amount of weapons that are available, the level of violence and insecurity can decrease (UNAMID, n.d.).

Not all DDR programs are successful. If the DDR process fails to succeed this can lead to the continuation of violence and also weaken the broader process of peace building (Gislesen, 2006:3). An example from Africa, where the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (UN OSAA)(2007:4) claims that sixty per cent of those states that slipped back into armed conflict did so due to failed DDR programs. A specific example of an ineffective DDR program is in the Sudan. The DDR program was not able to secure employment, nor was the program able to make the necessary social and psychosocial accommodations for the former soldiers to successfully reintegrate back into the society (UN OSAA, 2007:5). The process cannot solve conflicts, nor prevent violence alone, but should be used in addition to extensive development programs (ADBG, 2011:1). The DDR process should not be the same in all countries, but rather adapted specifically to each country or region where it is being implemented (Peacebuilding Initiative, n.d.). Pauletto and Patel (2010:38) also argue that "the nature of conflict, the local attitudes towards it, the nature of conscription of children, and the psychosocial effects of war" are all different depending on the region and country, and the DDR programs should therefore be specifically developed according to this context. The Peacebuilding Initiative (n.d.) stresses the point that even if the normal standards that lay down policy are based on lessons learned, this should "not provide a panacea", and because situations vary, possible solutions need to do the same.

2.6.2 DDR programs with specific focus on children

Both adults and children go through the DDR programs, but there are some essential differences when dealing with children compared to adults. A main difference is that adults are seen to voluntarily join the fighting forces, but when children join it is argued that it is a violation of their rights, even if the recruitment was voluntarily or not (Pauletto and Patel, 2010:42). Due to this, the more traditional DDR processes for adults involves transitional justice, which means that the former soldiers can be held responsible for crimes committed, while children are not accountable for their actions, but rather seen as victims of "the criminal policies of adults" (Pauletto and Patel, 2010:42). Another difference is that the DDR programs for children are conducted both during and after conflict. This is because the demobilization of child soldiers is seen as a human right (Pauletto and Patel, 2010:42). It is not possible to conduct the adult DDR programs during the conflict, and therefore such programs are only conducted after the conflict has ended, thus making it possible to maintain

peace and security in order for advancement in long-term development to take place (Pauletto and Patel, 2010:37). Pauletto and Patel argue that children´s DDR programs should remove the children from the violence and demobilize them to a safe place in order for them to continue their development in a nurturing surrounding (2010:42). These programs should aim to re-establish the children´s right to "enjoy a happy childhood free from exploitation" (Pauletto and Patel, 2010:37).

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (2008:10) criticizes many of the official DDR programs, stating that several of these did not take into account the children's needs, as well as lacking the long-term economic and political support needed for a successful reintegration. Additionally the Coalition argues that programs on community level, which are known as essential for recovery and reintegration, was not sufficiently supported (2008:10). Countries that have failed in such are reported by the Coalition (2008:10) to be Afghanistan, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Liberia and Southern Sudan.

2.6.3 Reintegration

The reintegration is the most time consuming and complex process in the DDR (Gislesen, 2006:23). It is only when the reintegration process is a success that long-term peace and security can be accomplished (Gislesen, 2006:23). In a post-conflict environment, and when the children return from the forced groups, becoming reintegrated into the society and becoming civilians is of high priority (Wessells, 2005:364). Machel (1996:14) stresses the need for the reintegration process to establish new foundation in the children's life based on their individual capacities. A large amount of children have spent much of their lives without their families and deprived of "many of the normal opportunities for physical, emotional and intellectual development" (Machel, 1996:14). While the children have been with the armed forces, the context of family and community life might have changed drastically. The poverty within the society might have increased; friends and family members might have lost their lives and the possibility of displacement and resettlement may have increased (Verhey, 2001:15). According to Verhey (2001:15) the reintegration process should involve elements of support concerning health and other basic needs, psychological assistance, a family context, the establishment of positive relationship, and the opportunity for obtaining education and income. Wessells (2005:366) argues for something similar, pointing out four important elements of the reintegration process: (1) family tracing, (2) psychological support, (3) vocational training and life skills and (4) education and literacy.

The first element is *family tracing* which involves finding the children´s families and reunite the children with their families, in addition to providing some support to the families in dealing with the challenges that might arise. Secondly there is the stage of *psychological support.* This process aims to assist the children in coming with terms with their war experiences and help in the reconciliation of the former child soldiers with their communities (Wessells, 2005:366). The war experiences will have enormous consequences on the former child soldier's physical and psychosocial health (Gislesen, 2006:23). The reintegration processes therefore consists of physical rehabilitation (for malnutrition, diseases, mutilation, drug addiction and abuse) and psychosocial rehabilitation (for trauma, re-establishing of identity and response, in addition to taking into consideration the culturally appropriate intervention) (Gislesen, 2006). The children´s psychosocial problems need to be addressed in order for a successful reintegration to take place and if these problems are not addressed the former child soldiers "may have destabilising impact on society even many years after the conflict ends" (Gislesen, 2006:3). Thirdly, there is the *livelihood support*. This involves vocational training and life skills that the children need in order for them to obtain and hold jobs and earn an income (Wessells, 2005:366). The fourth stage is *education and literacy*, seen as essential for a positive future for the returning children (Wessells, 2005:366). Education does not only give the child the possibility of future employment, but also normalizes their lives, and assists in developing an identity different from that of a soldier (Machel, 1996:14). Education can help the older children to survive by future employment, and additionally it can help in the acceptance within their families (Machel, 1996:15).

2.6.4 How to define successful reintegration?

The main factors needed for a successful reintegration, or the determents of when a former child soldier is successfully integrated into the society, vary between scholars. A clear definition and mutual understanding of this does not seem to exist, and the author will not try to find such a definition, but some views will be presented. According to McKay (2004:23) the determining factors on whether a girl´s reintegration is a success depends on the time they spent in the armed forces, if they joined voluntarily or were abducted, what their task were within the forces, as well as the manner of their return.

Amnesty International (2004:3) argues that the success of the DDR programs depends on the "ability of communities to which they return, to accept and integrate" the former child soldiers. Other reintegration project, initiated by Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), can play an important role by complimenting the formal DDR process, by preparing both the

children and the communities for their return, and to initiate rehabilitation projects (Amnesty International, 2004:3). ILO (2003:ix) also points out the importance of community and family involvement, arguing for the importance of simultaneously targeting the youth, his/her family and community where the former child soldier comes from. Further, the ILO argues, "with all three, medium and long-term follow-up is indispensable if re-enlistment is to be avoided" (ILO, 2003:ix). The research conducted by Machel (1996:14) points to some other factors that are important in the process. The study found that there needs to be a link between education, vocational opportunities for the former child soldiers and the economic security for their families, all of which are important factors for a successful reintegration and the prevention of re-recruitment.

For this research, it is the social part of the reintegration, such as the family and community reunification and reconciliation that will be explore, as this seems to be essential in order to achieve a successful overall reintegration (Hill and Langholtz, 2003:282, Boothby, 2006:245, Verhey, 2001:15). However, a link between all the aspects of the reintegration is clearly present, making the success of one dependant on the success of another.

2.6.5 Family and community reunification and reconciliation

For many former child soldiers, the reconciliation and reunification with families and community was one of the most important parts of the healing process (Hill and Langholtz, 2003, Boothby, 2006). The re-establishment of relationship and contact with families and community is an essential step in the reintegration process (Machel, 1996:14). The United Nations´ Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations Human Rights, 1990) recognizes the family as an important part of the child's well-being and development:

> *"Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding."*

The importance of family and community reunification and reconciliation is shown in a variety of research. In a study of child soldiers in El Salvador, the children themselves pointed out that the relationship between themselves and other members of their family unit was the most important aspect of the reintegration process (Hill and Langholtz, 2001:282). Also in Cambodia it was evident that children living with their family after returning back to the society had fewer psychiatric problems, compared to those who lived alone or in foster care (Hill and Langholtz, 2001:282). In a longitudinal study of former child soldiers in Mozambique, the interviewees themselves stated that in order for them to have a substantial

recovery and reintegration, the acceptance by their families and communities were seen as the most important factor (Boothby, 2006:245). In some communities, such as in Mozambique, Boothby (2006:255) states the importance of the extended family´s support, as "the extended family normally provides a form of 'social security' to its members, that follow longstanding patterns of personal and kinship relationships" (Boothby, 2006:255). Boothby (2006:255-256) goes on to state that the "community support is also expected for significant life events such as childbirth, initiation ceremonies and weddings, for personal crisis such as sickness and death, and for external crisis such as drought, flood, crop failure and war", and that "social harmony and responsibilities are key attributions in rural communities where the outcomes of many activities is a function of teamwork". Also for girls, the community support is proven to be of great significance. McKay (2004:19) states that during the post-conflict period, the community has an important role in social and cultural reconstruction. Community support is essential in order for the girls to establish and obtain their human rights and security (McKay, 2004:19).

2.6.6 Challenges with family and community

In order to gain the family and community´s acceptance, and to be able to reunite and reconcile, the former child soldiers face a host of challenges. Many times, the reunification with former child soldiers and families is impossible. This could partly be due to families having perished in the war or the fact that it is not possible to trace them (Machel, 1996:14). The stigmatization of girls, due to cultural beliefs and attitudes can make it difficult for the girls to return to their families, particularly for the girls who have been sexually abused (Machel, 1996:14). According to Wessells (2007:4), the stigmatization is one of their biggest challenges for reintegration. Some girls simply choose not to return to their original villages in fear of such stigmatization (Wessells, 2007:15). According to McKay (2004:19) girls typically either return to their communities, migrate to areas where friends or relatives live, or resettle in urban areas. The latter comes with the risk of forced prostitution, sexual assaults, STDs and HIV/AIDS (McKay, 2004:19). But also other circumstances, such as lack of alternatives, force girls into prostitution (Machel, 1996:14). For those girls who actually do return home, their strategy is to return without being identified as former child soldiers (McKay, 2004:25, Gislesen, 2006:16) in order to avoid stigmatization (Wessells, 2007:15). In some cases this might work such as in Sierra Leone, where most girls return directly to their families and communities (Burman and McKay, 2007:316-317). Often this does not work, forcing them to go elsewhere (McKay, 2004:25). It is especially difficult to keep their past a

secret when girls return with children because said children are also evidence of their violation of community norms which does not allow sexual activities when they are under age and unmarried (McKay, 2004:25). Even the children born to girl soldiers are referred to as "rebel children" and experience the same stigmatization as their mothers (Gislesen, 2006:16). Verhey states, "It is clear that the community´s socio-cultural conception of girls and women constitute and obstacle to their reintegration process" (2004, quoted in Tonheim, 2010:20).

Another challenge is, that when returning to the community, former child soldiers might see violence as a way of getting what they want (Machel, 1996:15). A challenge is to put this type of "energy, ideas and experiences of youth into contributing in positive ways to the creation of their new, post-conflict society" (Machel, 1996:15). Another factor for rejection from family and community could be fear. Children have often been forced to commit violence and crimes within their own villages, which is show in ILO´s study in Burundi, Congo, the DRC and Rwanda (ILO, 2003:4). The community, who has "strong prejudices against them", rejects the children and as much as 80 per cent of the parents interviewed stated that they thought that the child soldiers "represented a danger for the population" (ILO, 2003:ix).

2.6.7 Girls neglected in the DDR programs

A variety of research has demonstrated that the current DDR processes are neither adequate nor satisfying when it comes to its capacity in both reaching out to the girls, as well as meeting the needs of said girls. (Tonheim, 2010:18, Coulter et al. 2008:5). These programs often neglect former female soldiers (Coulter et al. 2008:5, Wessells, 2007:15, Annan et al., 2011:878, Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2008:10). Girls achieve little consideration both during and after conflicts (Burman and McKay, 2007:316). An important group that has been neglected both by researchers and reintegration programs are the girl mothers and their children who have been born in captivity (Tonheim, 2010:19). DDR programs have to take into account the need of women, both the women who have been former combatants, but also the women that have had other roles in the fighting forces (Farr, 2005:3).

A study was conducted by Mazurana of eleven African countries, including Burundi, showing that the majority of girls and women in fighting forces did neither participate nor did they benefit from DDR programmes (2005, quoted in Coulter et al. 2008:22). An example from Sierra Leone showed how only 506 out of 12,056 girls went through DDR programs (McKay and Mazurana 2004, quoted in Burman and McKay, 2007:317).

The reasons for the small amount of girls participating in DDR programs are varied. Some DDR programs neglect girls due to bad planning (Mazurana et al. 2002:118). In some DDR programs, the demobilization process has the requirement "one man, one weapon" (Gislesen, 2006:14), meaning that people that do not carry weapons are not eligible in the DDR process. This clearly is a requirement that neglects some children, and in particular exclude girls that have not been carrying guns (Gislesen, 2006:14). The women also fail to attend due to being unable to produce a gun in order to prove that they had been fighters because the men would claim the guns in order for themselves to become eligible for DDR benefits (McKay, 2004:23). Additionally, girls would be discouraged from enrolling in the DDR programs due to their placement in centrally located sites with high levels of insecurity and violence within these sites, in addition to lack of medical and hygienic facilities (McKay and Mazurana 2004 quoted in McKay, 2004:23). Due to the fact that many of the girls are essential for the forces to function, they are often released last in the disarmament and demobilisation process (McKay, 2004:22). One reason for girls not being part of the DDR process could be because the male soldiers do not want to relinquish their "possessions" (Mazurana et al., 2002:118). In many cases, the commanders of the rebel groups have prevented the girls from joining the DDR process due to their purpose as both fighters and sexual slaves (Gislesen, 2006:16). In addition, some of these girls have given birth to the commanders´ children, and the commanders might not let the girls go into the DDR programs due to fear of never seeing their children again (Gislesen, 2006:16). Some might also take their legal wives or other family members through the DDR programs, but leave their "bush wives" behind (Gislesen, 2006:16).

Many girls have not joined the DDR programs in fear of being labelled as former soldiers, which for many mean rejections from their families, stigmatization by the communities (Gislesen, 2006:16) and being classified as "used goods" with no hope of getting married (Mazurana et al. 2002:115, quoted in Gislesen, 2006:16). Some girls experience so much stigmatization that they choose to not participate in the DDR process out of fear that they will get identified as former soldiers, and rather chose to self-mobilize and self-reintegrate (Tonheim, 2010:20). The fear of being stigmatized does not only hinder girls from participating in the DDR process, but also child soldiers in general. The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (2008:10) states that tens of thousands of children have not registered for DDR processes due to the fear of stigmatization, although not specifying the percentage of female.

The differences between boys and girls needs to be taken into consideration when making an effort to adapt and improve the DDR programs to involve and reach out to girls to the same extent as it does to boys (Tonheim, 2010:18). Wessells points out that one of the major differences is the much higher degree of stigmatization that the girls experience compared to boys (2007:20). Different experiences between the genders, perceptions related to stigma and victimization as well as the motivation for demobilizing and reintegrating varies quite a bit between girls and boys (Tonheim, 2010:18). Example of where DDR processes have failed to include girls are to be found in Liberia, where 3000 girls were demobilized while as many as 8000 did not take part of the program, and in the DRC, only 15 per cent of the girls were officially demobilized (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008:10).

2.7 Trends in literature and research gaps

Despite the fact that between twenty to thirty per cent of all combatants are females, depending on region and country (Denov, 2008:814), there are major research gaps concerning the reintegration process of former girl soldiers (Tonheim, 2010:19). Girls have until recently been invisible or marginalized in the study of child soldiers (Wessells, 2007:2, Annan et al., 2009:1). The majority of the research that exist within DDR and reintegration of former child soldiers are conducted with boys. According to Wessells, this can be explained partly due to the patriarchal values within the society that "systematically privilege males over females" (Wessells, 2007:2). Annan et al. (2011:878) blames the lack of research on reintegration with female focus partly on the fact that women are perceived as victims, rather than active agents in the war. This cause research, as well as programs and policies, to not sufficiently take into consideration the females participating in war.

According to Wessells, more attention is now being brought upon former girl soldiers, but "research on girls is still in its infancy" (Wessells, 2007:3). Several scholars and practitioners stress the need for girls to be more visible in the literature. Coulter et al. (2008:5) calls for more attention to be drawn to the "issues of stigma, safe demobilization, and individual concerns about post-conflict marriage, health and education" which all needs to be addressed in a more "gendered way" and "with an appropriate understanding of young women´s agency in both peace and war". Also Tonheim (2010:17) stresses the need for former girl solders to become visible in academic writing. Gender-specific knowledge is highly needed in order for the reintegration process to be more appropriate and of more assistance for former girl soldiers (Tonheim, 2010:18). Researchers need to be aware that

formerly recruited girl soldiers are not in the same situation as their male counterparts (Wessells, 2007:20).

2.8 Contextual background

Burundi is a country with a high level of corruption, ranked as number eleven of the most corrupt countries in the world (Transparency International, n.d.). Its poverty level is high, and the country is amongst the ten least developed countries in the world (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), n.d.:a). This war-effected country is facing great challenges for further development, and its progress is restrained by the high poverty level, an overpopulated country, a shortage of cultivatable land, exploitable natural resources and ecological obstructions such as drought and floods (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:3). Additionally, the country has been extremely unstable since its independence in 1962. Burundi had as many as six different governments from 1962 to 1966 (Daley, 2006:658). The country´s monarchy was abolished in 1966, and four coups where successfully achieved in 1965, 1976, 1987 and 1996 (Daley, 2006:658). In 1993 Burundi held its first democratic election, but only months later the president was assassinated (Daley, 2006:658). This was one of the factors that set off the civil war (Nindorera, 2012:9). Part of the violence that has affected the country can be seen as based on ethnic issues, mainly between the Hutu and Tutsi population, a conflict which is said to have initiated during the colonial times (Nindorera, 2002-2003:3, Krueger & Krueger, 2007:23, Uvin, 2009:7).

2.8.1 Political background

Before the European colonization of Africa, Burundi had a socio-political hierarchy (Uvin, 2009:7). The King was on top of the hierarchy, followed by the princely aristocratic Ganwa class (Uvin, 2009:7). Below them were the Tutsi classes, and on the bottom was a large amount of Hutu (Uvin, 2009:7). The King did not belong to any of these categories but was personified with the population as a whole (Uvin, 2009:7). Despite some stereotypes and some inequality, there was no conflict between the ethnic groups at this point in time (Uvin, 2009:7). The system was legitimate to a fair degree and was able to tend to social conflict (Uvin, 2009:8).

During the colonization of Africa, which took place between 1870s and 1900 (Iweriebor, n.d.), Burundi was under both German and Belgian powers for a total of four decades (Uvin, 2009:8). The country was first a under German control in the colony named Ruanda-Urundi (Daley, 2006:662), which today is known as Rwanda and Burundi (Krueger & Krueger, 2007:6). The colony, consisting of these two countries shared language, customs,

and ethnic groups (Krueger & Krueger, 2007:25). The Belgians took over when Germany got overthrown during the First World War, and were in power until independence in 1962 (Daley, 2006:662). During this time the king was still in power, together with his court and administration, and the authorities of the colonial powers were "simply as an extra layer on top" (Uvin, 2009:8). It was during the colonization that the first signs of discrimination took place. The Belgians saw the Ganwas and the Tutsis as decision makers, while the Hutus were seen as the group that were simply expected to follow orders (Uvin, 2009:8). Due to this, colonization changed the nature of the political structure deeply (Uvin, 2009:8). The Hutus experienced inequality and prejudice against them, in political, social, and economical relations (Uvin, 2009:8). Only Tutsi and the Ganwa had access to education (Uvin, 2009:8). In literature, little is mentioned on the role of ethnic minority Twa, and the ethnic conflicts are generally referred to as existing between the Tutsi and the Hutu (Nindorera, 2002-2003:3, Krueger & Krueger, 2007:23, Uvin, 2009:7).

The state that was created during this period is defined by Uvin (2009:8) to be a "deeply interventionist but low capacity" state. It was not until in the 1950s that it became allowed to engage in political activities (Store Norske Leksikon, n.d.). So in 1958, the current King´s son, Prince Rwagasore, created the multi-ethnic pro-independence party Union pour le Progrès National (UPRONA)(Uvin, 2009:8). However, as a counter strike, the pro-Belgium party, The Parti Démocrate Chrétien (PDC) was founded, with help from the Belgian administration (Uvin, 2009:9). But Rwagasore was well liked amongst the population, with links to the Hutu community, and when the election took place in 1961, UPRONA claimed victory (Nindorera, 2012:10). The victory was would prove to be short lived as Prince Rwagasore was assassinated later the same year (Nindorera, 2012:10). According to Uvin (2009:9) it was the PDC that assassinated Rwagasore. Nindorera (2012:10) claims that this was the first violent act in Burundi, and Uvin (2009:9) explains this event to have historic significance; "it is truly a day which doors were closed for Burundi". Uvin (2009:9) points out the importance of looking at the relation to Rwanda during this period of time. Also in Rwanda, the Hutus had fought for the power over the Tutsi since independence in 1962 (Krueger & Krueger, 2007:32). Almost parallel to these events in Burundi, Rwanda was going through its "social revolution" between 1959 and 1962. During this time Rwanda´s monarchy was overthrown, and several thousands of Tutsi was killed, while several tens of thousands were forced to flee the country to neighbouring countries, including to Burundi (Uvin, 2009:9). From this point forward, "the Rwandan term *demokarasi* referring to ethnic

majority politics" would have an increased appeal to the Hutu population of Burundi, while provokes fear for most Tutsi (Chretien, 2000 quoted in Uvin, 2009:9).

In 1962 Burundi gained its independence. From the murder of Rwagasore in 1961 and until 1965, the country´s politics were highly unstable and gridlocked (Uvin, 2009:9). After independence Burundi became a constitutional monarchy (Nindorera, 2012:10), with six governments between 1962 and 1966 (Daley, 2006:658). The population consisted of 85 per cent Hutu, 14 per cent Tutsi, and the remaining part was Twa (Nindorera, 2012:10). Despite the Hutus comprising the majority of the populations, they had few representatives in the state institutions, where the Tutsis were dominant (Nindorera, 2012:10). Then, in 1965, Burundi´s current Hutu Prime Minister, Pierre Ngendandumwe, was assassinated (Nindorera, 2012:10). Ngendandumwe was a close friend of Prince Rwagasore and these two assassinations are recognized as two of the factors that cause the ethnic hatred and the political instability of the following period (Naniwe-Kaburahe, 2008:149).

This same year, 1965, the Hutus attempted a coup, leading to the assassination of thousands of Tutsi civilians (Nindorera, 2012:10). Nindorera (2012:10) explains that the coup was a reply to the King´s denial of putting the candidate of the Hutu elite (of the UPRONA party) as new Prime Minister. The coup was contained by the army, who also executed part of the Hutu military elite as the results of a trial that followed (Nindorera, 2012:10). In the time after the attempted coup, the Hutus were excluded from both the army and the government (Verwimp and Bavel, 2011:7).

In 1966 a new coup took place (Verwimp and Bavel, 2011:7), this time a successful one, led by the Tutsi Major Michel Micombero. Micombero, who was the officer in charge of repressing the Hutu attempted coup the year before (Uvin, 2009:9), was offered a position within the government (Uvin, 2009:9). Only a few months later he gained power, abolishing the monarchy, declared the First Republic and put himself as head of state (Uvin, 2009:9).

Micombero belonged to the Tutsi Hima clan, which would now be the military rule in the following three decades: Micombero from 1966 to 1976, Bagaza from 1976 to 1987 and Buyoya from 1987 to 1993 (Uvin, 2009:9).

In 1972 a Hutu rebellion emerged from the southwest of the country (Verwimp and Bavel, 2011:7), causing the assassination of approximately one thousand Tutsi (Nindorera, 2012:11). The Tutsi army repressed the rebellion, and systematically killed a high amount of educated Hutus around the country during a two-month period (Uvin, 2009:9). The number of people that lost their lives in this massacre is disputable and ranges from 80,000 (Dilworth, 2006:2) to 300,000 (Krueger and Krueger, 2007:3). Additionally, the conflict ran tens of

thousands of Hutus into exile (Nindorera, 2012:11). The Hutu population became a persecuted underclass, and for over one generation they reduced their future opposition (Verwimp and Bavel, 2011:7).

In 1976 a new coup was successfully accomplished by the Tutsi Coronel Jean - Baptiste Bagaza (Nindorera, 2012:11). The ruling of Bagaza was not much different from the previous government of Micombero and the Hutus were still not included in the decision-making process (Nindorera, 2012:11). But the government added a new policy that additionally regulated the Hutus access to education (Nindorera, 2012:11). The system was unjust and inefficient, the economy reached an impasse and debts increased (Uvin, 2009:11).

Then in 1987, Tutsi Major Buyoya managed to seize power by a new coup (Nindorera, 2012:11). Only one year after Buyoya gained power, Hutu insurgencies began again, this time in the North (Verwimp and Bavel, 2011:7). It was the Parti pour la Libération de Peuple Hutu (PALIPEHUTU) that attacked the local Tutsi, and hundreds were killed (Uvin, 2009:11). The response from the army in 1988 was as harsh this time as in 1972, and many Hutus lost their lives (Verwimp and Bavel, 2011:7). Only in the month of August it is estimated that 20,000 people lost their lives (Daley, 2006:658). The difference between the massacre in 1988 and 1972 was that this time the conflict gained international attention. The massacre was condemned by the international community and put pressure on Buyoya´s government to liberalize the political system (Verwimp and Bavel, 2011:7).

2.8.2 Civil war

Due to the pressure by the international community, President Buyoya initiated several important reforms, and was including Hutus within political positions (Uvin, 2009:11). Five years later, in 1993, Burundi held its first democratic election (Verwimp and Bavel, 2011:7). It was the country´s first multi-party election and the country got its first Hutu president in June of 1993, President Ndadaye (Dilworth, 2006:1). President Ndadaye´s party Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi (Front for Democracy in Burundi, FRODEBU) won with 80 % of the seats in Parliament (Krueger and Krueger, 2007:1). This came as an undesired surprise for the current Tutsi president and the Tutsi community and armed forces, which at this point had grown accustomed to the power and control they held for decades (Dilworth, 2006:1). The new elected president took the same cooperative stand as Buyoya, and formed a government also including some Tutsis from the defeated parties in order to encourage public opinion. After only 100 days in power President Ndadaye was assassinated in a failed *coup d'état* (Uvin, 2009:13). The murder of president Ndadaye was one of the factors that triggered the

civil war (Nindorera, 2012:9). The event caused a constitutional crisis and waves of violence that lasted for years (Uvin, 2009:13). It is said to have initiated when the peasants of the rural Hutu population heard the news of the president´s assassination, and started a new massacre towards the Tutsi and UPRONA Hutus (Verwimp and Bavel, 2011:8), where thousands of Tutsis were killed (Uvin, 2009:13). Also this time the army intervened in an attempt to repress the killings, but instantly began its own "indiscriminate killings of the Hutu" (Prunier, quoted in Uvin, 2009:13). The main Tutsi parties accused the government of assassinating Tutsis after the killing of the president (Nindorera, 2012:11). The youth from the Tutsi population formed armed groups assisted by the Tutsi army (Dilworth, 2006:2). On the other side, the Hutus did the same. The Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD) and its army, the Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (FDD) gathered all the armed Hutu groups, allied with political parties dominated by Hutus, and their movement arose in the area of the capital, Bujumbura (Dilworth, 2006:2). The CNDD-FDD went against the country´s army and demanded the "return to constitutional law, the institution of democratic majority rule and, most especially, the reform of the Tutsi-dominated army that was viewed as the centre of power" (Nindorera, 2012:9). This was the start of the worst conflict Burundi has experienced, concerning not only the amount of humans lives that were lost, but also concerning socio-economic consequences (Verwimp and Bavel, 2011:7). It is estimated that a total of 200,000 people were killed, and 350,000 people were forced into exile (quoted in Daley, 2006:658).

The cohesion between Rwanda and Burundi seems to be present throughout history, in particular between the similar ethnic groups, with same colonial history and similar challenges concerning more recent ethnic conflicts. Both countries have received refugees from the other, due to massacres, civil war and genocide. Right after the Burundian civil war initiated, the Rwandan genocide occurred in April 1994, forcing over 100,000 Rwandan Hutu to flee the country and seek refuge in Burundi in less than four months (Krueger & Krueger, 2007:51 – 61). An example of the cohesion between the ethnic groups is given by Krueger and Krueger (2007:61), who claims that, though not publicly known, after the genocide, Rwandan and Burundian armies (both dominated by Tutsi) went together and massacred the Hutu in the refugee camps of Burundi on several occasions.

2.8.3 Peace negotiations

It was not until 1998 that peace negotiations started (Nindorera, 2012:9). Finally, in 2000 the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement was signed (Daley, 2006:658). However, the agreement did not involve the two major Hutu groups that were fighting at the time of the signing (Dilworth, 2006:3), the National Forces for Liberation (FNL) and the CNDD-FDD. Additionally, the agreement was a peace and reconciliation agreement without a ceasefire (Nindorera, 2012:9). An important part of the agreement was the creation of the Transitional Government, with both Hutu parties, such as FRONDEBU and CNDD, and minor Tutsi parties, with a Tutsi President (Buyoya) and a Hutu Vice President (Ndayizeye)(Uvin, 2009:16). Buyoya left his position 18 months after, leaving Ndayizeye to power (Uvin, 2009:16). Despite the signing of the agreement, some of the observers argue that the violence increased after the agreement, rather than decreased; because the major Hutu rebel groups had not been involved in the negotiations (Uvin, 2009:17). It was not until 2003 that the ceasefire agreement was signed between the main Hutu rebel movement, the CNDD-FDD (of Pierre Nkunruziza), and the Transitional Government (Ndayizeye)(Nindorera, 2012:9, Uvin, 2009:16). The agreement increased the peace in the country, except in areas where the last active rebel group, the FNL, was still operating (Nindorera, 2012:9).

2.8.4 The 2005 election and the end of the civil war

When the government held its elections in 2005, a new condition was presented, stating that the government and all parties had to have both Hutu and Tutsi candidates (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:2). This was decided in order to prevent confrontations between parties that consisting purely of one of the ethnic groups (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:2). The same year the CNDD-FDD had become a political party (Nindorera, 2012:9). The 2005 election was won by the CNDD-FDD (Nindorera, 2012:9). The party´s leader, former rebel leader, Pierre Nkunruziza, became the new President of the country, and his party gained control over most state institutions (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:2). However, the government was now representing, for the first time, the Hutu majority (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:2). Despite a general peace throughout the country, the new government sporadically came up against the FNL in armed conflicts (Dilworth, 2006:3). The civil war did not end until 2006 when the FNL signed a ceasefire agreement together with the Burundian government (Jordans et al., 2012:2). But it was not until 2009 that all the fighters of the FNL became demobilized (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:2). In April the same year the FNL registered and became a

political party (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:2). This event increased the general security in Burundi seeing how after two decades there were no longer any rebel groups with political motivation operating in the country (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:2). Additionally, having the FNL as a political party sharpened the competition and the party became a major challenger for the CNDD-FDD (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:3). The FNL was the party that now considered themself "the true voice of poor rural Hutus" (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2013:3).

2.8.5 The 2010 election

In the 2010 elections, tension was high between the party in power, CNDD-FDD, and the remaining parties (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:3). This was due to two issues. First, the fighting over the Hutu votes between the three Hutu oriented parties that were up for election. Secondly it was the issue of the former ethnic polarization (Hutu-Tutsi) (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:3). The election resulted in 64 per cent of the votes to CNDD-FDD, 14 per cent to FNL, 6.25 per cent for UPRONA and 5 per cent to the Burundian Democratic Front (FRODEBU)(Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:3). The CNDD-FDD clearly won the election, but all the opposition parties rejected the result as fraud (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:3). This was despite the fact that both local and international observers had a general opinion that the election was correctly conducted (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:3). After the claim of election fraud was declined, the opposition formed a coalition; l'Alliance des Démocrates pour le Changement au Burundi, (ADC-Ikibiri) (International Crisis Group (ICG), 2011). The ADC announced that unless the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) cancelled the result, the opposition would not have any further participation in the following election process (ICG , 2011). This demand became rejected (ICG, 2011). Having almost all the opposition parties boycotting the parliamentary and presidential elections, the CNDD-FDD got an overwhelming victory and formed the government together with UPRONA parties (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:3). According to Bertelsmann Stiftung (2012:3) "an important barrier against authoritarian neglect of democratic rights" had now been removed due to the lack of opposition (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:3). The ADC could have been a challenger for the dominant party, but the party has very limited resources in addition to internal differences (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:3). After the election, the government used the pretext of violent incidents that had happened during the elections and arrested a high number of people from the opposition, causing the leader of ADC to leave the country (ICG , 2011). The leader of FNL, Rwasa, went underground together with several other opposition leaders (ICG, 2012). In the aftermath of the elections there were several confrontations between the government

and what has been referred to as "armed bandits", who were suspected to be linked to opposition leaders (ICG, 2011).

2.8.6 Prospect of progress

Daley calls Burundi an "in-between state", a country with neither peace, nor war (Daley, 2006:658). The political violence, that took place in 2010 and 2011, ceased in 2012 (Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2012:b). However, some argue that the FNL will return to being a rebel movement (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:3). The ICG (2011) deny the possibility of a new civil war but points out that "by marginalizing and repressing the opposition, the CNDD-FDD is in effect reinforcing a nascent rebellion and doing harm to democracy". The ICG (2011) announced in 2011 that there had been no official communication between the government and the opposition. The corruption was increasing, the oversight institutions where weak "and a stalled transitional justice agenda are each immediate threats to democratic consolidation" according to ICG (2011). The system of power-sharing which was defined in the Arusha Peace Agreement is no longer relevant due to the ruling party´s control over the institutions and the lack of opposition (ICG, 2012). Since 2010, there has been little respect for the political minority (ICG, 2012). The CNDD-FDD uses its power however they wish, and the only system of control is the media and the civil society (ICG, 2012). Despite the fact that the country´s institutions are seemly functioning, Burundi is regressing (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012:3, ICG, 2012). However, some hope exists, as there has been initiated communication between the European Union and the government, as well as between the political actors of Burundi (ICG, 2012). Despite the fact that violence had diminished in 2012, as recently as in September 2012, Reuters published an article stating that the FNL had declared war against the government, demanding the president to step down (Nduwimana, 2012). Additionally, at the time when the fieldwork took place in Bujumbura, the city´s market, referred to as the "heart" of the city or the business centre of the town, burned to the ground. This event left hundreds of people directly affected, with ripple effects to a significant number of people in the city, and in the country as a whole. The cause is unknown. The effects of the process, as well as how the government chooses to overcome the social, political and economic challenges now facing the country, might play an important role in the future development of Burundi.

2.9 Burundi´s armed forces and groups and its use of child soldiers

The conflict in the Great Lakes region in Africa is well known for its use of child soldiers (United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (UN OSAA), 2007:18), and Burundi is no exception. All parties participating in the conflicts in Burundi have used children in combat (Dilworth, 2006:2). Below follows a description of armed and political groups that has been present both during and after the civil war of Burundi.

Figure 4: Armed forces and groups during and after the war in Burundi

List of armed forces and groups during and after the war

- *Forces Armées Burundais (FAB)*: The former Burundian Army – Tutsi dominated.
- *Forces de Défense Nationale (FDN)*: The current government army, of mixed ethnicity

- *CNDD/FDD*: Current party in power, former rebel group
- *CNDD Nyangoma*: A wing of the former CNDD
- *Kaze FDD*: another wing of the CNDD

- *Palipehutu FNL*: The last rebel group to sign the peace agreement
- *FNL factions*:
    - FNL (Agaton Rwasa)
    - FNL (Kossan Kabura)

- *Gardiens de la Paix*: local home guard or self-defence groups, associated with the army
- *Sans Echec* **and** *Sans Défaits*: Tutsi youth extremist movements – some of the Militants Combatants

(Source: CARE Burundi, n.d:2)

The number of child soldiers in Burundi is in dispute. Before any official demobilization initiated in 2003 (Uvin, 2007:1), UNICEF made an estimate that there were between 6,000 and 7,000 child soldiers that needed demobilization (Dilworth, 2006:9, Amnesty International, 2004:3). The total number of child soldiers would to this date have been much higher, seeing how six years passed between the DDR initiated and the FNL became demobilized. According to Child Soldier International (CSI) as many as 14,000 children has been part of the civil war of Burundi (2001).

Also girls have been associated with the armed groups in Burundi. Between 1990 and 2003, girls were participating in government forces, paramilitary groups, militia, and armed opposition groups within the country (McKay & Mazurana, 2004:21). The recruitment

happened through both abduction and by voluntary recruitment (Amnesty International, 2004:1).

2.10 DDR programs of Burundi

The DDR program for children in Burundi initiated in 2003 and was conducted by UNICEF and the National Structure for Child Soldiers (*Structure nationale pour les enfants soldats*, SNES) (Uvin, 2007:1). Much of the program was carried out by ten provincial partners, such as NGOs, church agencies etc. (Uvin, 2007:1). According to Uvin, the program achieved to demobilize a total of 3,015 children before it ended in June 2006 (Uvin, 2007:1). From the documents encountered the number of females out of the demobilized child soldiers was not stated. However, the Training Centre for Development of Ex-Combatants (CEDAC) provided a list which affirmed that a total of 1388 children had been demobilized between 2004 and 2010, whereas 34 where girls. After the end of this program the demobilization of children was integrated into the formal DDR program initiating in 2005 (Uvin, 2007:1, United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (UN OSAA), 2007:8). This was before the FNL signed the peace agreement, which meant that the participants of the program were from all other groups, except the FNL (World Bank, 2009:13). This first program ended in December 2008, having demobilized a total of 26,283 former soldiers (516 adult women), including over 3,000 child soldiers (World Bank, 2009:24). There were 3 components in this project, the *reinsertion, reintegration* and the *customized reintegration assistance* for special groups, such as child soldiers, female soldiers and disabled soldiers (World Bank, 2009:5). The reinsertion involved giving the former soldiers an allowance for a period of 18 months (World Bank, 2009:5). Reintegration included information and referral, counselling, advocacy from implementing agency to local communities, training (vocational, on the job training, and apprenticeship), micro-projects and micro-finance, facilitation of access to land, and social reintegration (World Bank, 2009:5). The customized reintegration was to separate women and children into separate facilities, provide medical assistance and rehabilitation for those who were disabled. Additionally, the program was to provide counselling and gender-awareness in the communities (World Bank, 2009:5). The overall goal of this project was to demobilize a max of 55,000 former soldiers, although only a little over 26,000 benefited from it (World Bank, 2009:12). However, the World Bank states that:

> *"While this may be interpreted as a failure to achieve the objective, the number*
> *supported represent 100 % of the eligible combatants for demobilization in Burundi*

and as such, the project has achieved its goals, albeit below the full utilization of the available capacity" (World Bank, 2009:12).

A second DDR program initiated in 2009 and is scheduled to end in December 2013 (World Bank, n.d.: b). The overall goal of this program was to demobilize 6,564 soldiers, but the total target will according to the World Bank "depend on ultimate demand" (World Bank, n.d.: b). By July 2012 a total of 6,884 soldiers were demobilized, including 243 female adults and 380 child soldiers, whereas only eight of these were female child soldiers (World Bank, n.d.: b). During this project, former soldiers from the FNL were included, and consisted of 4,950 of the total demobilized soldiers (World Bank, n.d.: b).

One big challenge for any DDR program is that many children, who are recruited when they are under the age of 18, are demobilized when they are above this age, and therefore no longer considered children. Not only do these young adults fall out of the DDR process, which is specifically designed for children, but it also makes it a challenge to encounter the accurate number of child soldiers that exist. Dilworth (2006:9) states that there is a general understanding that there are thousands of more children involved in the conflict, than those who have been demobilized. The total amount of child soldiers is not clear, and Dilworth (2006:9) further states "it is not clear whether efforts were made to identify them as a specific group, or to look into their specific needs resulting from their early recruitment". Additionally, Amnesty International (2004:2) points to two groups of youth that might fall out of the demobilization programs specifically designed for children; those who have spent a large amount of their childhood in these groups (and are over 18 when demobilized), and those who have separated from the group outside the official demobilization programs (e.g. by escape). These young adults might be neglected from the demobilization process despite serious trauma and psychological legacy from what they have experienced (Amnesty International, 2004:2).

2.10.1 Other reintegration projects in Burundi

In addition to the official DDR program of the government, several national and international organizations have initiated programs of reintegration assistance for former combatants in Burundi. Some of these programs include a particular focus on woman and/or child soldiers, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), CARE International Burundi, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and Training Centre for the Development of Ex-

combatants (CEDAC) amongst others. UNDP has assisted women, youth and former combatants and other vulnerable groups, in gaining short-term jobs (UNDP, n.d.:b). CARE International have initiated several projects in Burundi, in which one, the NABACU Project aimed at economically securing 3000 war-affected youth and self-demobilized former child soldiers, improving their socio-economic conditions as well as assisting them in becoming reintegrated in the community. For this project at least 50 per cent were girls and young women (CARE Burundi, n.d.:ii). NCA have programs with the goal of reintegrating former soldiers, both male and females, which have been implemented together with local partners. CEDAC have assisted in the socio-economically reintegration of 25,000 former soldiers with target groups including child soldiers and women and soldiers who have already been demobilized with the governments DDR program (CEDAC, n.d.). This has been achieved through training, peace building, development project, human rights promotion and community activities on a grassroots level (CEDAC, n.d.).

2.11 Choice of site

A total of twenty-three interviews with former female child soldiers serve as the base for the following findings and analysis. The interviews were conducted in the province of Cibitoke and in and around the areas of the Burundi´s capital Bujumbura. Cibitoke is the most north-western province of Burundi, with borders to both Rwanda and the DRC. The province was chosen based on several interviews with aid organizations that could informed that in this area there where a relatively high amount of both former child soldiers as well as reintegration efforts. The province was also in the combat zone during the civil war (ILO, 2003:15). The interviews were conducted in two communes, Rugombo and Buganda. Within Bujumbura Mairie province, the interviews were conducted within the suburban and urban areas of the country´s capital, Bujumbura. The interviews took place mainly in Kinama and Kamenge, which are the suburban parts of the city, but the city centre of Bujumbura was also used for interviews. Bujumbura was initially chosen due to logistic reasons. As the country´s capital, this was also the place where the relevant organizations had their headquarters. Additionally, in both Kamenge and Kinama, there were a high amount of female former child soldiers, and Kamenge is one of the poorest neighbourhoods in the city (Uvin, 2007:1). In both these communes, CARE initiated their Nabacu project for self-demobilized former female child soldiers (CARE Burundi, n.d.:4). A research permit was granted from the Ministry of Education in Bujumbura.

2.12 Burundian tradition and culture of possible importance for reintegration

2.12.1 Defining Tradition and Culture

Research question three is concerned with how the tradition and culture of Burundi affect the reintegration of the former female child soldiers. In order to find these possible negative and/or positive effects, one has to identify what are the traditions and cultures of the country. So what are we searching for, and how does one define tradition and culture? The Merriam Webster online dictionary (n.d.) defined *tradition* to be "an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thoughts, action, or behaviour", which could be a religious practice or a social custom. The online Dictornary.com (n.d.) defines *culture* to be "a particular form or stage of civilizations, as that of a certain nation or period", and it is "the behaviour and beliefs characterized of a particular social, ethnical, or age group".

These aspects are investigated by first identifying what characterize Burundian tradition and culture, and further examining if this has had a positive or negative, if any, impact on the reintegration process. This is of great importance for several reasons. Firstly, the culture and tradition of a country varies greatly between nations, and in some cases even between societies and communities from the same country. Secondly, having an understanding for which culture and traditions that exist within the country in question is important in order to adapt a program that is sufficiently effective and best adapted to the context in which it operates. It has been criticised how the "Westernized" views and opinions have been too greatly reflected within the aid and DDR programs in general, also in the reintegration process of children. Research has shown that in order for the family and community to accept the former child soldiers, traditional and cultural aspects should be taken into consideration (Green and Honwana, 2001, Boothby, 2006, Denov, 2010). According to Wessells and Monteiro (2001:8) psychologists with western training seem to arrive to war-affected countries focusing on clinical problems such as trauma, a term that focuses too much on individuals rather than the communities. As pointed out by Wessells and Monteiro (2001:10), in Angola it is believed that "wounds of war are communal, so approaches to healing should also be communal".

2.12.2 Rituals and ceremonies

Research shows that in the family and community reunification and conciliation process, local traditional values, beliefs and practices have proven to play an important role. When returning from war, studies show that many child soldiers go through traditional rituals before becoming accepted back into the society (Green and Honwana, 2001, Gislesen, 2006,

Chicuecue, 1997, Boothby, 2006, Wessells and Monteiro 2001). In the attempt of regaining the trust and acceptance by family members and community, these rituals are said to be essential (Green and Honwana, 2001:95). Such as in Northern Uganda, where many children go through traditional cleansing rituals, performed by the elders from the community, when returning from the fighting forces (Blattman and Annan, 2008:8). In Mozambique rituals were essential for the reconciliation with the community (Boothby, 2006:257). Boothby defines traditional ceremonies as "local beliefs put into practice, they facilitate the re-alignment of individual, family and communal relationship" (2006:253).

While research might show that traditional cleansing rituals might have had a positive effect on former boy soldiers, this might not be the case with girl soldiers and forced mothers. Additionally, no literature or research was found concerning Burundi, and its use of rituals and ceremonies.

2.12.3 Traditional view of a women

According to Jordans et al. (2012:7) "it is essential that any analysis into the plight of female fighters in Africa is sensitive to local context, including in particular local understanding of gender" (Jordans et al. 2012:7). It is therefore important to gain more knowledge of the understanding of how a woman should act and behave, according to the Burundian tradition and culture. Coulter (2008:14) points to Keairns (2002) who argues that women who decide to join armed groups often possess a set of qualities such as "strength, independence, courage persistence and character" (Keairns, 2002, quoted in Coulter, 2008:14). Coulter (2008:14) further argues that such qualities in a woman, often goes against the society´s traditional view of women "which often promote submission, servility, and willingness to endure and accept their subordinate position". Additionally, Lorey (2001:6) argues that children become remarkably resilient in the time with armed groups, as they have developed strength within the groups, such as "ingenious coping skills and strong leadership experience". These old but also new developed skills and qualities might cause the women to have additional challenges after their time with the armed forces as it might go against traditional understanding of women.

2.12.4 The Bashingantahe council

Within Burundi, there exists a traditional system of conflict resolution, called the *Bashingantahe* council. Its importance can be seen throughout the history of the country and Nindorera (2002-2003:3) even points to the possibility that it was due to the Bashingantahe

council that there were no ethnic conflict existing in Burundi before independence. However, its importance and role within the society today, is disputable.

For the Burundian population, the word *Ubushingantahe* means a set of personal qualities, such as "a sense of equity and justice, a concern for truth, a righteous self-esteem, a hardworking character" (Nindorera, 2002-2003:2). A person who possesses these qualities is an *Umushingantahe* and by going through training and monitoring, and by gaining the community´s acceptance, this person can join the *Bashingantahe* council (Nindorera, 2002-2003:2), the system of what can be defined in English as the "wise men". Traditionally, the Bashingantahe council had three levels of power; moral, social and political. One was the moral level where the Bashingantahe "served as models of these traditional values and pass them on to the next generation" (Nindorera, 2002-2003:2). A second was the social level, where the council was an important factor in solving disagreements, a place to file complaints as well as keeping the peace and order in the community (Nindorera, 2002-2003:2). The third level was a political one, where the council would be the representative from the community and give suggestions to the King on important issues (Nindorera, 2002-2003:2). The agreements reached by the system of the Bashingantahe, were imposed solely on social norms, and were legally binding (Baribeau, 2011:3). During the First Republic, the president prohibited the Bashingantahe and the communal administrators, who had been appointed by the government, were now playing the role of the Bashingantahe (Dexter & Ntahombaye, 2005:15). The Bashingantahe is still consulted today, especially in the *collines*[3] (Dexter & Ntahombaye, 2005:6). But it is argued that when the system was restored, the traditional training and monitoring, as well as the process of gaining the community's acceptance was not used, but representatives and council was rather put together by presidential decree (Nindorera, 2002-2003:2, Dexter & Ntahombaye, 2005:6). Nindorera (2002-2003:2) states that due to this new manner of appointing the council members, "the Bashingantahe so designated were thus far less accountable to the community than to the authority who appointed them". Dexter & Ntahombaye (2005:6) states the same, claiming that due to the lack of the traditional method of choosing the council members, which was the base of the confidence given to the council, some now see the members representing one political party or one ethnic group. However, Dexter & Ntahombaye (2005:6) further claim that the institution does represent both ethnic groups, but has been accused for corruption. From the

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[3] The *collines* word translates into hills. According to Dexter and Ntahombaye, the administrative term refers to a group of hills or what would be considered a neighbourhood or villages, and the *Bashingantahe* are appointed and act within this geographic circumscription (2005:6).

study made by Dexter and Ntahombaye the Bashingantahe was said to have a great importance in the reconciliation of parties, especially within families (2005:15). Additionally, the study showed that the Bashingantahe "invited people to repair the wrongs they had done to other people". Today, the Bashingantahe assist in the resolution of the daily problems, such as disagreements, disputes over land[4] as well as the resettlement of refugees and displaced people (Dexter & Ntahombaye, 2005:6).

2.13 Theoretical Framework
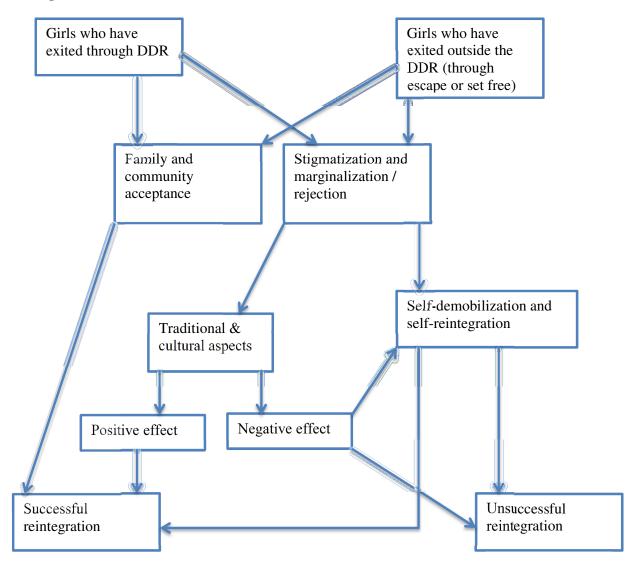
Despite having a wide range of definition and opinions of what factors are important for successful reintegration, the focus for this research is on the social aspects, such as family and community reunification and reconciliation.

The family and community acceptance have been argued to be essential for a successful reintegration in the aftermath of war (Hill and Langholtz, 2003:282, Boothby, 2006:245, Verhey, 2001:15, Machel, 1996:14). However, many girls who exit the armed groups, whether it is through the official DDR programs or by escaping the armed groups or being set free, experience stigmatization by family and community members (source). Such stigmatization and marginalization often lead to rejection by the society, and often, girls decide to self- demobilize and self-reintegrate (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008:10), move to new areas (Wessells, 2007:15), and choose to keep their past hidden and identities anonymous (McKay, 2004:25, Gislesen, 2006:16). The stigmatization experience is said to be one of the biggest challenges for reintegration (Wessells, 2007:4). However, research has shown, in particular concerning male child soldiers, that cultural and traditional aspects have been of great importance in getting family and community acceptance, and should be taken into consideration (Green and Honwana, 2001, Boothby, 2006, Denov, 2010). These traditional and cultural aspects, when resulting in a positive effect of social acceptance, could lead to a successful reintegration. However, if they tend to have a negative impact, it could lead to additional challenges or at least slow down the reintegration process. In particular for girls, as stated by Verhey, the community´s socio-cultural understanding of females can compose a challenge for the reintegration (2004, quoted in Tonheim, 2010:20).

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[4] Burundi has had a great amount of land disputes mainly between the refugees and the current residents. Baribeau, G. (2011) explores the issues and problems it causes, in the report "Land Conflict in Burundi. A strategic Review of Programming". Search for Common Ground. January 2012. Washington, DC. Retrieved: http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/burundi/pdf/BDI_EV_Feb12_Land%20Conflict%20in%20Burundi%20A%20Strategic%20Review%20of%20Programming.pdf Assessed: 25.01.2013

Figure 5: Theoretical Framework

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Strategy

A research strategy is defined by Bryman (2008:22) to "simply mean a general orientation to the conduct of social science". There are mainly two directions within research strategy that can be chosen, a qualitative strategy or a quantitative strategy. Within social research the distinction that is commonly drawn between these two is according to the relationship between theory and research, the epistemological considerations and the ontological considerations (Bryman, 2008:22). Based on various factors, a qualitative strategy has been chosen for this research. Here, the theory will be generated out of the research, in an *inductive approach,* rather than the testing of theories (*deductive approach*)(Bryman, 2008:22).

On the *epistemological issue*, which is the question of whether the social world should, and could, be studied in the same manner as natural science (Bryman, 2008:13), this research takes the *interpretive* epistemological position, which is based on the belief that social science differ from natural science, and that social research should use a "different logic of research procedures, one that reflects the distinctiveness of human as against the natural order" (Bryman, 2008:15). An emphasis is put on the manner of the individuals' interpretation of their social world which bases data collection and analysis on words rather than quantification (Bryman, 2008:22). Child soldiering is a delicate topic that depends on the researcher´s deeper understanding and the ability to handle the topic with sensitivity in order to gain knowledge. The researcher has to gain trust and confidence, and on such a topic where several of the interviewees might have been involved in, or witness to, violent activities, sexual abuse and war experiences, a quantitative strategy with a social survey would not gain the necessary knowledge (Bryman, 2008:27). This research will take the *ontological* position of *constructivism*, which holds the view that "social phenomena and their meaning have existence that is independent of social factors" and "it implies that social phenomena and the categories that we use in everyday discourse have an existence that is independent or separate from actors" (Bryman, 2008:19).

3.1.1 Research Design

The research design that is chosen is the *case study*. This design has the intention of exploring, in depth, one single case (Bryman, 2008:52). For this research the case is former female child soldiers and their reintegration back into civilian life within the geographical area of urban and suburban Bujumbura, as well as the rural areas of the province Cibitoke, in

Burundi. The aim of this design is to create an intensive and detailed examination in this particular case, which will be used in a theoretical analysis (Bryman, 2008:57). It is important to point out that a case study does not have external validity or generalizability (Bryman, 2008:55). This means that the researcher does not intend to imply that the result of this research apply to other areas, communities or countries. As pointed out by Bryman (2008:55), researchers using case study design "does *not* think that a case study is a sample of one".

A methodological *triangulation* is applied for this research, by the use of multiple methods for data collection. This was done through the use of in-depth interviews, focus groups and participant observation. By using multiple methods, one is able to gain the "most complete and detailed data possible on the phenomenon" (Hall & Rist, 1999:296).

3.2 Sampling

Due to the sensitivity of the topic and the fact that many of these girls kept their background hidden from other community members, identification and access to former female child soldiers was dependant on assistance from organizations working within the field. Prior to the fieldwork, a variety of international and local organizations involved in different intervention programs for former child and adult soldiers, was contacted. The aim was to get information and knowledge about the topic, as well as establish contact with girls that could serve as interviewees. In this process contacts were established though *snowball sampling*, where some contacts, who were initially gained prior to the fieldwork, where used to establish new relevant contacts (Bryman, 2008:184).

Generally throughout the fieldwork *purposive sampling* was applied, as the sample was not selected on a random basis (Bryman, 2008:15). Through purposive sampling, the aim is to ensure that there is a certain variety in the sample, and that some key characteristics were different between the interviewees (Bryman, 2008:415). In order to identify female child soldiers´ challenges when returning back to the community, getting participants that had both been member of the government´s demobilization and reintegration program, as well as those who were self-demobilized, was important for the variety in the sample. After meetings with a number of organizations, further work ended up being more accessible and relevant through the CEDAC and CARE International for a variety of reasons. One being that CARE´s Nabacu project, had a special focus on self-demobilized girls while CEDAC´s contacts, could to a large extent, provide girls who had gone through the government demobilization process, which when combined gave a necessary variation in the sample.

In this initial stage of the research, *convenience sampling* was also applied. This approach of sampling is a result of the restrictions laid on the researcher, such as the difficulties gaining access to the interviewees, and the fact that the organizations were selecting a contact person on behalf of the researcher (Bryman, 2008:458). This was the case when both CEDAC and CARE selected a contact person or partner in the local communities in the interest of the researcher. Further one can characterise the sampling approach as a *mix of purposive and convenience* sampling. This due to the fact that the contact persons where selecting the interviewees on behalf of the researcher (convenience sampling), though with some restrictions and guidelines as to how this should be done, in order to ensure variety (purposive sampling) such as gender, recruitment age and participants from different armed groups. Through CEDAC several girls were contacted for interviews, both in the urban and suburban areas in Bujumbura Mairie province, as well as in the more rural areas of Cibitoke province. *Theoretical sampling* was also applied. Bryman defines this to be an approach that means "sampling interviewees until your categories achieve theoretical saturation, and selecting further interviewees on the basis of your emerging theoretical focus" (Bryman, 2008:459). During the research this approach was used after some of the interviews was conducted, and in the selection of further interviewees. Depending on the characteristics of the interviews obtained, the contact person was asked to select girls with theoretical relevance. Both theoretical sampling and snowball sampling are examples of purposive sampling (Bryman, 2008:415). The sample consisted of total of twenty-three former female child soldiers. In addition to former female child soldiers themselves and representatives of international and local organizations, other relevant people were also interviewed, such as a local expert on Burundian culture and traditions as well as a community member, with important knowledge concerning the system of Bashingantahe (wise men). However, the main focus for this research was the view and opinions of the former child soldiers themselves and emphasis is therefore mainly on their statements and interviews. According to Mazurana et al. (2002:118) the girls needs to be recognized as active agents "who have developed a variety of coping mechanisms to help mitigate their experiences". They should ideally be included in planning and carrying out the programs that are developed for them (Mazurana et al., 2002:118). Therefore, the participation from the girls, their opinions and statements are of the greatest importance as they have important knowledge on how to improve their own well-being.

3.3 Data collection

The data collection was mainly conducted during two months of fieldwork in Burundi in January and February 2013. The first three to four weeks were used interviewing organizations and other stakeholders in order to gain more specific and first-hand knowledge concerning the topic in general but also on the history and culture of the country. This was a time consuming, but necessary process, as it is a sensitive topic that requires at least a modest amount of local knowledge and understanding. In the second half of the fieldwork interviews with the girls initiated in the provinces Bujumbura Mairie and Cibitoke.

3.3.1 Text and documents as source of data

It was important to get an overview of the documentation that exists on relevant topics. The documents could be mainly from official documents issued by states or private sources, but also from media coverage and Internet resources amongst others. This is essential for the literature review and for obtaining necessary information and documentation. However, for the topic of female child soldiers in Burundi, the existing literature is close to none. Only a few research documents were found that included knowledge about girls who have participated in Burundian armed groups and forces (Jordans et al. 2012, ILO, 2003, Uvin, 2007). Some of the research touches upon the topic of stigmatization and marginalization of girls and the process of reintegration. However, finding any literature that includes the traditional and cultural aspects of Burundi in relation to this proved impossible. Therefore, much of the literature found is mainly concerns similar topics in the neighbouring countries of Burundi, or other African countries, as well as relevant studies which have been conducted on former male child soldiers.

3.3.2 Interviews

Within qualitative research there are two types of interviews, the *semi-structured interview* and the *unstructured interview*, both were applied here. In the first period of the fieldwork, the interviews conducted with organizations and professionals where of the *unstructured* type. The aim here was to gain more general information, and few questions were planned prior to the interviews, letting the interviewee respond freely, while only some follow-up questions were asked if and when necessary. The interview was more of a conversation, which is a typical characteristic for the unstructured interviews (Bryman, 2008:438). Formal interviews with professionals and organizations and more personal and informal conversations with local residents were conducted in the first three to four weeks. This provided the researcher with

knowledge about local beliefs and culture, which was an essential step before initiating the interviews with the girls.

When interviewing the girls, *semi-structured interviews* were conducted (see Appendix 1). The interview guide consisted of a list of relatively specific topics, but giving the interviewer the freedom of adding questions, or changing the order of the questions when appropriate (Bryman, 2008:338). If the interviewee is allowed and free to talk about what they want it gives a valuable insight to what they themselves see as important and relevant, rather than reflecting the researchers concerns, such as in quantitative interviewing (Bryman, 2008:437). Going on "babbling" is encouraged (Bryman, 2008:437). If the interviewee gives too much detailed information about one subject the researchers will still be able to get "back on track" by asking the next question in the interview guide. To ensure cultural appropriate questions, both the interpreter as well as CEDAC´s founder and president, assisted in making necessary adjustments to the interview guide before two *pilot interviews* were conducted, in order to test the questions and the flow of the interview, as well as to gain some experience (Bryman, 2008:443). Further adjustments were made before proceeding with the remaining interviews. Both pilot interviews are part of the sample and provide base for analysis.

While interviewing organizations and other relevant professionals, conversations were conducted in English. In the interviews of the girls, an interpreter was hired, as the spoken language of the girls was Kirundi. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, the interviewees' response to questions as well as their answers varied a great deal. During the interviews, the interpreter gave recommendations to whether elaboration or additional questions in the guide were appropriate or not. This was valuable for the researcher, as such signs and understanding is hard to comprehend when being a foreigner. The duration of the interviews varied from 45 minutes to two hours. Initially the researcher used open questions, but when specification was needed closed questions where necessary (Bryman, 2008:231-235).

3.3.3 Focus groups

Two focus group interviews, with three to four participants, were conducted in order to explore more on specific issues related to the topic (Bryman, 2008:473). The results from focus groups might be quite different than from the interviews. During the focus group discussions people can probe each other's view on a topic. This could lead to a situation where opinions might be qualified or modified due to the answers of others (Bryman, 2008:475). The different views of one group members might be challenged by other members, and that way the researcher could end up with "more realistic accounts for what

people think because they are forced to think about and possibly revise their views" (Bryman, 2008:475). But it should also be mentioned that the opposite could occur, having people not express their true opinion due to strong feelings and opinions from other members with more "power" within the group and/or community. In the end of the fieldwork, and subsequent to most interviews, two focus groups were conducted, giving the researcher the opportunity to go more in-depth on some of the issues. The participants had all been interviewed prior to the focus group. This decision was made based on the sensitivity of the questions asked, which required some type of relationship and some background information on each participant. New knowledge was gained, and already known information was explained with further details. The small amount of participants was based on the difficulties of following the conversations when using an interpreter.

3.3.4 Participant observation

Participant observation or ethnography means that the researcher (as the participant observer or ethnographer) gets involved in a group for an extended amount of time, observes the behaviour, listen to conversations, and asks questions (Bryman, 2008:402). By using participant observation as an addition to semi-structured interviews and focus groups, unplanned activities that the researcher ends up participating in, such as conversations or the natural behaviour amongst community members or between people might give valuable unplanned information. Such behaviour might vary from their spoken opinions and feelings, and could be valuable observations, e.g. girls being "physically" accepted by their families but that the families deny supporting the girls and their children (Verhey, 2004:16, quoted in Tonheim, 2010:19). Prior to the fieldwork the aim was to spend some weeks visiting training programs and associations. This became difficult to achieve based on a variety of reasons, one being that during January, two of the programs had ended and participants had returned to their communities. During the fieldwork, participant observation was therefore used to a very small degree. However, the researcher had the opportunity to visit one centre, which engaged in a 6-month program for former child soldiers and war affected youth, and was additionally invited to their graduation ceremony. During the graduation a play was acted out based on the life of the participating youth, before the war, their time in armed groups, and after the separation with the armed group.

3.4 Data analysis

For the data analysis, grounded theory was used as a strategy. This is an interactive strategy, which involves a "repetitive interplay between the collection and the analysis of data."

(Bryman, 2008:539). Grounded theory "is concerned with the development of theory out of data and that the approach is interactive, or recursive, as it is sometimes called, meaning that data collection and analysis proceed in tandem, repeatedly referring back to each other" (Bryman, 2008:541). After the collection of data, the information from field notes, interview transcripts and other documents was broken down into categories and labelled with codes. The codes are made by using words or expressions that with few words describe a section or paragraph, until in the end one is left with one set of codes for the entire data material gathered (Tjora, 2010:160). Coding is a key process in grounded theory, as the information gained through fieldwork, is what determines the kind of codes, rather than as in quantitative research where the information gathered needs to fit into already established and standardized codes (Bryman, 2008:542). This coded information was then gathered into categories. The categories were decided based on its relevance in relation to the research questions (Tjora, 2010:160). Further, these categories were divided into concepts, which were the base for the theories established through the research. According to Tjora (2008:161), this is the point in the research where the more theoretical part initiates, having both the established theories in mind and analysing it in relation to the categories established out of the data material.

3.5 Limitations encountered during fieldwork

There are several limitations or challenges that were encountered during the fieldwork.

Cultural differences often lead to misunderstandings or simply the lack of understanding for certain situations and behaviour. According to Wessells (2007:7), when conducting research on female child soldier in Angola "an essential first step was to develop a culturally appropriate, ethically sensitive means of identifying, selecting, and engaging with the girls". For this research this was done through one month of interviews and informal conversations in order to understand the culture, adapt as best as possible, and prepare any interaction with the girls in the most appropriate manner as possible. The cultural differences, such as the researcher being an "outsider" and a foreigner, could also in some cases have a positive effect, such as with Baaz when conducting interviews in DRC (Baaz and Stern, 2008:62). Due to a very tense relationship between the civilian population and the military in DRC, it was mentioned that due to a foreign interviewer the former adult soldiers found it easier to open up and let their guards down. The interviewees urged the researcher to "re-tell their stories and difficulties to a wider range of audience" (Baaz and Stern, 2008:62). The latter was the case for many of the informant in this research, although it should also be

assumed that some information was withdrawn due to lack of an established relationship and culture differences between researcher and informants.

There were also limitations concerning *security and transportation*. Traveling outside the Bujumbura city area was not recommended after nightfall due to insecurity. This restrained the sampling size, as the amount of interviews in Cibitoke was limited by the necessity of returning to Bujumbura. The cost of the transportation also put some limitations on the amount of days which research could be conducted outside the Bujumbura area, as a driver and car was needed for this.

One important limitation was the *recollection difficulties* that the former female child soldiers had. According to Jordans et al. (2012:10) "those with high levels of current mental health problems and psychosocial distress are more likely to appraise earlier experiences negatively and recall stressful life events, and they are less likely to recall experiences of support". This view also causes us to critically look at the information found in this research. The vast majority of this research is taken from the view of social science. The limitations that this presents as pointed out to us by Jordan lead us to believe that other branches of academia including but not limited to psychology need to be explored to fully gain an understanding of this topic.

Additionally, not all conversations were audio-recorded, when requested by the informants, and in these cases only field notes were used. Because of this, in the transcription of interviews there might be the possibility of lacking details or important information. The transcription was done right after the interview or within a day or two in order to recall as much as possible from the interview.

There were several limitations and challenges in relation to *language*. Most interviews with organizations and other people of interest were conducted in English. However, with all the former female child soldiers, an interpreter was needed. This could have led to some valuable information being lost in the process, as neither the interpreter's nor the researcher's native language is English. During some interviews the informants would contiue talking (as encouraged in in-depth interviews), which could also have led to some translation difficulties. There were also some difficulties in understanding and explaining some words, as the meaning and manner of explaining is quite different between Norwegian, English and Kirundi.

One factor that could have caused some limitations to this research was the fact that the interpreter was not of the same ethnic background as the majority of the informants. However, the interpreter did explain, when needed or appropriate, that her background was of

no significance for the work she was set to do. Additionally it is worth mentioning that on several occasions the interviewees seemed to gain a higher degree of trust in the interpreter, sith whom they established a good relationship. This allowed the interpreter to gain valuable information which would not have been known without such relationship.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Certain ethical considerations must be followed when conducting social research. As explained by Diener and Candall (1978, quoted in Bryman, 2008:118) in order to maintain ethical research, one must always avoid harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy, and deception.

Harm to participants is agued to be "physical harm, harm to participants´ development, loss of self-esteem, stress, and inducing subjects to perform reprehensive acts" (Diener and Candall, 1978:19, quoted in Bryman, 2008:118). When conducting research an aim is to learn from these girls, both how they have been affected but also learning about their current situation. However, this needs to be done in a manner that does not increase the girls´ stigmatization (Wessells, 2007:4). Additionally, during the interviews, questions might be asked that could "trigger powerful memories and feelings" (Wessells, 2007:4). One should take into account how to support the girls and avoid harm (Wessells, 2007:4). There is a risk that the after the interviews the girls might be "in a state of heightened vulnerability" (Wessells, 2007:4).

Each girl was presented with an *informed consent* form, in the spoken language (Kirundi), which stated all the points mentioned by Peel (2004, quoted in Bryman, 2008:123):

- The participation was voluntary
- The participant was free to refuse to answer any of the questions
- The participant could redraw from the interview at any time
- The participant can withdraw their data within (e.g.) two weeks of the interview

Additionally, the informed consent form stated the purpose of the research, some background information about the researcher, that the information would be kept anonymous, as well as asking the question of whether they allowed recording of the conversations. According to Wessells (2007:7) there are more concerns than usual about respecting confidentiality and obtaining informed consent, due to the girls' situations (Wessells, 2007:7). Taking into account the illiteracy of many of the girls, the informed consent was read to them, allowing them to ask for clarification when needed. Following Wessells´ advice, no personal identification information was on the tapes or field notes, but individually coded (2007:9).

Invasion of privacy might occur during the interview. Seeing that some of the questions were concerning sexual experiences, religious beliefs, and war experiences amongst other personal and delicate matters; it was important to make clear that the participants could refuse to answer any question they saw fit, withdraw from the interview at any time, and even retract statements from the interview at a later date (within the agreed upon time frame). These conditions were set in place to shield the participant from any feelings of intrusion upon their privacy, as well as in helping them understand that they were under no obligation whatsoever to share personal information. Another important part of maintaining privacy was simply a matter of providing a reassurance of anonymity. As some also sought to keep their identity hidden from community members, the place of the interviews was also carefully considered. According to Wessells (2007:9) interviews should be conducted not in the homes but in locales of NGOs or other places that afford privacy. However, although local NGO offered their places for interviews, this could be perceived as revealing information, as most of the local population knew the NGO´s purposes.

Deception was avoided as much as possible through explanations concerning the research, its aims and purpose. It was carefully explained prior to initiating the interview that this research seeks to be a voice for these girls, while indicating the limited audience that exists for a master thesis. Since several organizations kindly requested a report on the findings, the interviewees were informed that hopefully the researcher will be able to report back to the organizations in the area about their situation. However, they were advised that the researcher could not make any promises for further assistance or support by neither the researcher nor organizations in particular to the informants themselves, but that they would be assisting in providing necessary knowledge about their situations.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Disposition

This chapter is presenting the findings for this research and the analysis of such. It is divided into five parts. **Part 1** gives an introduction to the background of the girls, such as the sample´s age dispersal, and their living conditions before, during and after the war. It shows how the recruitment happened, to which group they joined, how they experienced their time within the armed group, in addition to giving a further explanation to how they exited the group. **Part 2** states how the girls experienced the reunification and reconciliation with their families, whether this was with members of their family unit, extended family members or other caretakers. **Part 3** explained the girls´ reunification ad reconciliation with community members. It explores the degree of community rejection the girls received upon return, its consequences, and the girls opinions concerning why some experienced stigmatization and marginalization and others did not. **Part 4** is concerning the additional challenges that the girls experienced when attempting to regain their civilian lives, which were concerning economic and health issues. The girls also reflect on what type of reintegration assistance they were most in need of when returning from the armed groups, and how the DDR programs failed to support them. It is also discussed how family and community acceptance did not seem to be the main challenge for several of the girls. Additionally, this part presents the challenges that this research face when not comparing the results with never-recruited peers of the former female child soldiers. There also seem to be a link between several reintegration aspects that are presented and elaborated. **Part 5** presents the traditional and cultural aspects of the Burundian society and its role in the reintegration process. Here, the traditional view of a women as well as the Bashingantahe council had proven to be of importance.

Part 1: Background information on the girls

4.2 Age dispersal

Obtaining an accurate place in time for the previous life events of the girls was not a linear process. Some girls were able to provide reliable information, while others had various degrees of uncertainty and inaccurate figures. This could be partly because girls in Burundian culture are normally not asked, or do not comfortably answer questions regarding their age. However, there were also two other possible reasons for why this was difficult for the girls to state. The first possibility could be explained by the lack of education. Additionally there is the cultural aspect; being able to state the year of birth, or knowing in which year certain events occurred is not commonly known, in particular in the rural parts of the country. Several of the girls mentioned the latter to be the main reason. It is also evident in Machel´s study, which points to the fact that "in many countries, birth registration is inadequate or non-existing and children do not know how old they are" (Machel, 1996:11). Another aspect includes the difficulties the girls may have with recollecting events, a known symptom of trauma (Headington Institute, n.d.), also mentioned in the methodology chapter. The topic will not be explored any deeper, as the psychological aspect is far beyond the researcher´s knowledge, as well as outside the scope of this research. The figures are made as accurate as possible based on the knowledge gained and some discussion with the girls, but should however, be taken as an approximation.

The girls stated their current age ranging from the youngest being twenty-one years and the oldest being thirty-seven years at the time of the interviews. When interviewing girls with a relatively wide age range one can obtain a better picture of the recruitment throughout the years and in the various stages of the war (Wessells, 2007:6). For this sample the recruitment took place as early as in 1990, and the most recent recruitment occurred in 2007. The girls were on average 28.7 years of age at the time of the interviews. The median of their current age was 29 years, while mode was 27 years.

Despite the fact that all the participants were above eighteen years of age at the time of the interviews, they were all below eighteen when recruited. The lowest age of recruitment was seven years, while the oldest was seventeen when joining the group. The average recruitment age for this sample was of 14.3 years. This is quite close to the finding by Jordans et al. (2012:5) on child soldiers in Burundi, where average recruitment age was 14.6 years. The median recruitment age for this group was 15 years of age, while mode was 16 years. According to ILO (2003:4), the minimum age of recruitment into armed forces in Burundi is

16 years. Of the girls interviewed, 57 per cent were below the country´s legal age for recruitment (thirteen girls), while 43 per cent of the girls where above the legal recruitment age (ten girls). In the study by Uvin (2007:3) the child soldiers (interviewees still under 18 at the time of the interviews) were mainly recruited between 9-14 years. Uvin (2007:3) also interviewed adults, who were former child soldiers, who reported to have been recruited at this same age. Uvin's findings seem to contradict both the studies in this report as well as those of ILO (2003), which both have a relatively similar result showing how the majority of the recruited youth in ILO were above 14 years of age (fifty-seven per cent), and this study´s findings show the group to represent fifty-two per cent. However, the small sampling size of this research might mislead the overall statistics on this aspect.

Amongst the girls, the amount of time they spent with the group ranged from one year to ten years. Between the girls the average time within the armed group was 5.4 years, slightly higher than the findings from Jordans et al (2012:5), who had an average of 4.2 years. The mode of the time served was 4 years, while the mean was 5 years.

Table 1: Age dispersal

	Current Age	**Age of Rec.**	**Duration in group**
Mean	28.7 years	14.3 years	5.4 years
Median	29 years	15 years	5 years
Mode	27 years	16 years	4 years

4.3 Living condition before recruitment

The conditions in which these girls and their families were living in before the time of the recruitment were critical for the majority of the girls. According to ILO, "children are the first witnesses of atrocities committed on their loved ones" (2003:25). For many of the girls this was their experience. Fifteen girls had lost one or more members of the family, either before or during the war. One girl had lost her entire family, including both parents and her six siblings. Two lost both their parents, while another one lost her father, sister and brother in the war. The other eleven girls had either lost one of their parents or a sibling.
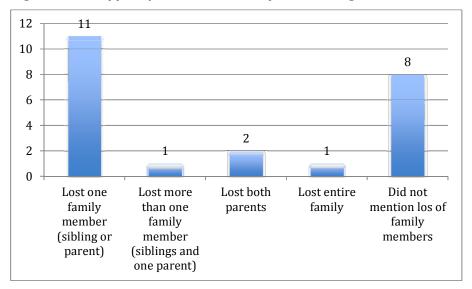
Figure 6: Loss of family members either before or during the war.

Such losses, in particular having one or both of the caretakers in the family losing their lives, affect the entire family, both emotionally as well as economically, and puts the children in a highly vulnerable situation. When the father dies, the insecurity increases and the mother is left carrying the material and moral responsibility for the family (ILO, 2003:24-25).

> *We lived with our mum because our dad was dead. We were four kids, but my mum*
> *was poor, we were living like orphans, watching out for ourselves and how to survive.*
> *I was 16 and my siblings and me were doing the same as today, cultivating for other*
> *people, and we were given beans and small amount of rice as payment.*

Informant 6

Eight of the girls were living under what they themselves characterized as "bad conditions" at the time of recruitment. However, for the rest of the girls their situations were anything but easy. Many had to flee, and two were separated from their families while on the run. There were also three girls who were refugees together with family members either in Burundi or in Tanzania. For the girls who were forced to flee with their family members due to the war, the families not only lost their source of income (ILO, 2003:24), but their lives in refugee camps changed drastically from the life before, with no field to cultivate, no jobs for the adults or schools for the children (ILO, 2003:25). The war causes lifestyle changes not only for the children confined to refugee camps, but also has the effect of drastic decrease in the amount of children attending school (ILO, 2003:24). In Burundi, between 1993 and 1999 the percentage of children in schools dropped from twenty-nine to nineteen per cent (ILO, 2003:24). Ten of the girls had attended some years in school, but had to drop out, either due

to the lack of economic means to continue, or because of the war itself, as one explained, her classroom burned down in the conflict. Out of all the girls, only one said that, together with her family, she was living under "normal conditions" as farmers.

If the family loses its income due to war and displacement, or by the death of a parent, and the school attendance for children drops, children are forced to find other ways in satisfying their needs (ILO, 2003: 24). When children are not able to continue their social, economic or educational development, this, together with various other factors, can make the children vulnerable for recruitment.

4.4 Recruitment

The manners of recruitment for the interviewees showed how the predominant pattern was voluntary recruitment, or what ILO (2003:27) defines as personal decision. Only two girls reported that they had been *abducted*, four girls became *forcibly recruited* and as many as seventeen joined by *personal decision.*
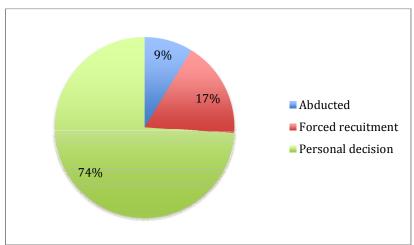
Figure 7: Mode of recruitment

These findings are similar to those found in the study of former child soldiers (both girls and boys) of Burundi by Jordans et al. (2012:5), where the majority of the participants, as many as 69.4 per cent, joined voluntarily. Also in ILO´s study, the majority, as many as 60 per cent joined by personal decision (2003:vvii). The figure of forced recruitment stood at 16.3 per cent, while recruitment by abduction was 8.4 per cent. This is however, not in line with literature that places abduction as one of the most common patterns for recruitment in Africa (McKay and Mazurana 2004, quoted in McKay, 2004:22). As in Angola, where Wessells found that all forty former female child soldiers interviewed named abduction as their recruitment method (2007:10). This study found two instances of abduction; one was

kidnapped along with a cousin after the rebels murdered her father, while the other was taken by force during the night.

The difference between the *abduction* and the *forced recruitment* is understood by the author to be the use of weapons, which is used in the case of abduction, and the fact that the *forced recruitment* is based on the children's lack of choice due to moral pressure or obligation (ILO, 2003:27). However, for girls who reported to have been forcibly recruited, but not abducted, the author does not exclude the possibility that weapon were used. And there is a fine line between these two, which in some cases is hard to distinguish. As an example, one girl explained:

> *The rebels were seeking kids that were at my. They came to our home and told my parents that they have to send some kids to go with them. I was the sharpest of my siblings so I decided that I would go.*

Informant 20

This type of recruitment can certainly be classified as an obligation for the families to hand over a child to the rebels, and both an obligation and moral pressure for the girl to enrol to save her siblings from recruitment. Whether or not weapons were used has not come to the author's knowledge, but can however, not be ruled out.

Another one stated:

> *The rebels would go to a chosen family and just point, saying we have chosen you, and you, and you…. (…) That's what happened for me, they were naming the children, and asked us to follow.*

Informant 10

Another girl ended up with the rebels as a result of escaping the ongoing fighting at the age of seven. After becoming separated from her family members, she found herself in the forest where the rebels were located. In the case of another girl, was that she was "tricked by other kids" to go to the rebels, with the belief that she was going with them to search for jobs. Whether these children were deceiving her on purpose, on behalf of the rebel group, or acting in good faith, is unclear. However, despite the fact that the recruitment did not happen by force, they were forced to stay.

The majority of the girls, as many as seventeen, became voluntarily recruited, what ILO (2003:27) defines as a *personal decision* based on own initiative. Their reasons for making the decision varied, and were based on a variety of factors. Most girls gave more than

one reason for making the decision of joining the groups. Eight of the girls say their decision to join was made with the aim of obtaining a better life, and improving their life conditions. As pointed out by Mazurana et al. (2002:106) some children joined in the belief that the group would provide them with food, security and shelter. As one girl pointed out:

> *When I went there I was thinking I was going to get a better life than I had with my mum, but that was not the case. I didn't know that I would have such a bad life in the armed group.*

Informant 1

Six girls mentioned the lack of safety, the fear of being killed and being tired of running away as motivators for joining. These factors could all be seen as what Coulter et al. calls a *survival strategy* (2008:10). As stated by ILO (2003:25), "a child who grows up near a combat zone and whose family is directly affected by the war is much more likely to be enrolled than others". This is evident in their study, where the children who had been recruited, compared to the children who were never recruited, had to a higher degree of experienced combat around the home, had their houses ruined or family members wounded (ILO, 2003:25). As mentioned above, as many as fifteen girls had experienced loss of family members.

Three girls mentioned how anger was part of their decision to join, while one stated that the need for revenge had given her the desire to learn how to shoot and kill due to her entire family being assassinated during the conflict. The anger could be said to be due to a variety of factors, such as the direct effects of the war as mentioned above, or, as for the case of two girls, due to being refugees and chased out of their own country.

Specht (2009:197) mentions the persuasion by family members and friends as a reason for joining, which was corroborated by the same two girls in the refugee camps, who grew up being influenced by other family members talking about the history of the country and the loss of family members for decades due to conflicts and civil war. Additionally two girls stated that they felt that the recruitment happened partly due to being convinced by family or friends, and one explains how her decision to join was decided together with a group of friends.

These reasons mentioned above are also seen in the study by Uvin (2007:4), whereas the predominant reasons for voluntary recruitment were "insecurity and anger, an ideological agenda and poverty". The motivating factors mentioned by the girls were accompanied with some *political and ideological* thoughts for seven of the girls. Some were pointing to the lack of democracy and justice in the country. One stated how she loved her country and simply

wanted to fight, however, she had also at this point become separated from her family. When mentioning political reasons or ideological reasons, several of the girls expressed their anger and their desire to "fight for a good cause." However, out of the seventeen girls who made the personal decision to join, eight did not really know, or care, for which rebel group they were fighting, and many decided which group to join based on coincidence or accessibility of the group.

> *I was not carrying about names, groups; my main target was to keep myself alive. I didn't know so much.*

<div align="right">Informant 7</div>

Another informant explains:

> *The war started in 1993, my parents were killed in 1995, and I joined in 1996. I had seen that only one group were killed. Hutus got killed. At one point an armed group came and told us "you see, there is no democracy in Burundi, they are killing us, come and lets go and fight for democracy". I did not understand well what they were saying, but since I saw the Hutus getting killed, I joined."*

<div align="right">Informant 9</div>

Several of the girls had easy access to the group, either by simply knowing where to find them in the forest, or associating with group members in the communities. As mentioned by ILO (2003:35), when mixing with the groups the children often get gradually recruited. Proximity to the rebel movements as well as any additional influence from friends and family could prove to make recruitment more accessible and attractive to the children. Ten of the girls had some kind of contact with the group upon recruitment. Such contact, and the fact that their group of choice was often based on coincidence, seemed to be overlapping factors for choice of group. Whichever group was present in the neighbourhood was the group to which they most regularly joined. One girl even explained how the ideological reasons for fighting came after joining.

Of the participants in Uvin´s (2007) study, only one person mentioned the attractiveness of being member of a group, as a reason to join. Also Wessells (2005:363) mentions prestige as a reason for joining. However, like in Uvin´s study, this does not seem to be a dominant pattern, as only one of the girls mention something which could be slightly associated with prestige, stating that her thought was that by joining, her mother would in turn be able to gain respect.

There might be underlying social, political, cultural or economic reasons for joining (Machel, 1996:12), which leads to both anger and a desire to fight. These underlying causes might give the children a lack of alternative options for survival. All this, together with easily accessible groups, and influence from family members, friends as well as from the group member themselves (through propaganda), can lead to the so-called voluntary recruitment.

4.5 The armed groups

Despite the high number of armed groups in Burundi during the civil war, and the fact that all the groups within the country were known for their use of child soldiers (Dilworth, 2006:2), the girls interviewed represented only four groups: FNL, CNDD-FDD, Sans-Echecs and the Jeunesse Patriotique Hutu (JPH, Patriotic Hutu Youth).
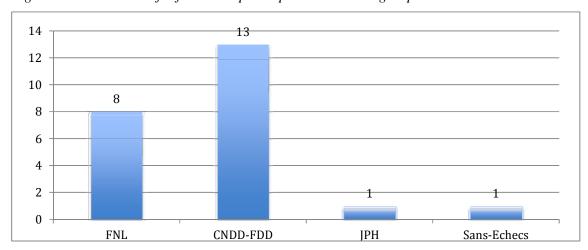
Figure 8: Distribution of informant's participation in armed groups

Despite the fact that there did exist several fractions of both the CNDD-FDD and the FNL the girls did not specify which fractions they belonged to. It seems to only be a question about whether they were associated with either of the two. Additionally, the girls were participants of all armed forces, and none had been associated with government armed forces. See figure 4 for an overview of the armed group and forces in Burundi.

4.6 Roles within the group

The roles that the girls took on during their time with the armed groups varied, and few had only one task, but rather multiple roles within the group. Of the girls, 74 per cent served as fighters, or "shooters" which they themselves described to be the same as a fighter, specifying that they were the ones to shoot and use the guns in the field. This constitutes seventeen of twenty-three girls, six of which had fighting as their only task, while the remaining eleven had

other tasks and roles in addition. Out of these seventeen girls, fourteen were girls who had made the personal decision to join, while the other three were abductees or girls forced to join.
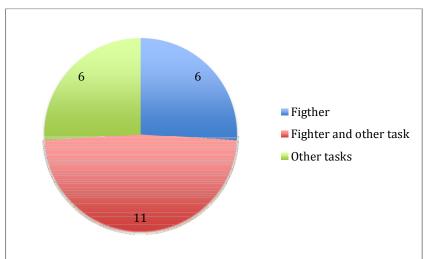
Figure 9: Roles within the groups

Other tasks were explained to be carriers, where the girls were sent to carry things for the rebels. They were forced to seek for food and water, including stealing such from the communities, as well as preparing food. They could also be in charge of getting the wood for the group. In addition to such domestic duties, the girls were also involved in getting information, working as spies, porter, gatekeepers and peacekeepers, front soldiers, recruiters and advisers.

Only seven girls stated that their roles included things other than being directly involved with the fighting. However, two girls explained how their role had involved participation on the battlefield, but not as fighters. One of these explained her role as a *front soldier,* meaning that together with other people she would walk in front of the rebels in order to make sure that it would be safe, and that no enemy was nearby, before the rebels came in. Another girl who had not been a fighter, explained how her role was to carry the wounded to safety.

Amongst the variety of tasks, there were two roles that the author has not yet found described in previous literature. Three girls mentioned the role as an *adviser.* Such a role was explained to have the aim of making the group stay together, by advising the members to follow the guidelines of the groups and behave according to such norms. This could be to advise the member of not engaging in sexual activities, preventing rapes or making sure that members did not give out information to non-members. There was also the role described as a *peacekeeper* mentioned by one of the girls. This was initially explained to be a task similar to

the role of a judge. If and when a hostage was caught, the girl´s role was to decide if this person was guilty, and according to her, "allowed to be killed". However, her testimony was later changed as she explained her role to be one of conversion, where she would explain the group´s ideology to the hostage(s) and convert them to their cause. When further asked what would happen if the hostage decided not to join, the girl replied that this was never an issue as all the hostages willingly joined.

When the girls were asked about their group, its size and the ages of its members, their answers varied quite a bit. The *group* could consist of anything between 12 to 300 people. However, it became evident that such a definition was quite unclear for the girls. Some of the girls asked for clarification, and further explained how the movements where divided. They explained how there were companies, consisting of several battalions, which again were divided into sections.

Although the girls were not asked directly to name their positions within the groups, but were rather asked about their roles, it became clear that at least three girls had gained powerful positions within their respective groups. They held positions as Under Officer, Sargent and Chief Corporal within groups of representatively 20, 11 and 60 people of both gender between 12 and 60 years of age. As for the girls who stated to have roles as advisers, one explained how her group consisted of 74 people, between the ages 14 to 17. The other one explained that they were 25, between 10 and 35 years old. The girl who held a powerful position as peacekeeper claimed to be in a group of 32 people, between the ages of 14 to 60. All of the groups were consisting of males and females, although the latter being the minority. Amongst the entire sample, their explanation of their group size was similar to these examples. All except for the one girl were in groups consisting of a mix between children and adults. This one girl stated that her groups consisted of members below the age of 18.

These positions within the armed groups, as well as the roles as advisers and peacekeepers shows that the girls had a large amount of responsibility, perhaps more than one could assume. It has been evident in some wars, such as in Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Mozambique, that women gained powerful positions due to their participation being seen as a strength in obtaining the overall aim of liberation (Coulter et al. 2008:17). However, such positions and responsibility does not stand out as a predominant pattern. However such instances of positions of power and rank seem to be the exception and not the rule, which could explain its absence in formal research.

4.7 How they got treated within the groups

The general situation of the interviewees during their time with the armed groups was difficult living conditions. Several pointed to the lack of food and water, the cold weather and the difficulties in finding places to sleep. Some mentioned how it could be days without water, food or sleep. There was also a general understanding that the working conditions were bad, where young girls were given hard and difficult tasks, forced to walk hours or even day on end with no rest. Gender, age or physical capabilities were not considered by several of the groups with whom the girls were associated.

> *There was no place to sleep, and we could spend days without eating. We walked many miles. We were asked to bring weight that we were not able to carry. We were beaten. There were no consideration that you were a child, you were carrying like any other. Even if you were not able to carry it, you would be obligated and you would have to do it in order to save your life. We asked them to let us go back to our home. They said no, "if you go back to your place we will kill you".*

> Informant 1

A certain "welcoming ritual" was explained on more than one occasion where the girls would be severely beaten upon joining the group. One interviewee explains how her whole body was swollen, while another one explains how the beating was so severe that they would have to crawl instead of walk. Additionally one explains how the newcomers would get their hair shaved off in order to differentiate them from what was called the "ancients", a role that everyone gained when their hair grew longer, and a role that included more respect.

> *We were not treated well because there were no freedom(s) there, we were like in a cage, you couldn't ask to go anywhere, if you tried to go by you self they could kill you. We were in bad conditions, and not treated well.*

> Informant 17

Some stated that they were treated well. However, how and what this is compared to is difficult to say. Whether or not the conditions became worse or improved within the group compared to the life they had before the recruitment may have affected the girls´ replies. As one girl states:

We were respected, there were no differences, because seeing the condition of how we were with our uncle, and how we were living in the field, I can say that I was better treated in the group, than in the family.

Informant 22

An interesting part is, despite the fact that many of these girls have participated in atrocities and violent actions, none of the interviewees mentioned their difficulties in accepting or living with these experiences. It is however, an assumption that these violent acts took place, based on the roles as fighters which the majority of the girls possessed. One girl explained how she got pregnant during her time with the group. Her group's policy included severe punishment for engaging in sexual activities, where punishment could include being beaten or hit up to one-hundred times. This punishment, received by both her and the boy, cause the girl to have a spontaneous abortion. Regardless of these conditions the girls still mentioned living conditions as the least satisfactory part of their stay with the group.

4.7.1 Sexual abuse within the armed groups

In Burundi, girls associated with armed groups have often been victims of sexual abuse (Amnesty International, 2004, CARE Burundi, n.d., ILO, 2003). As stated by Amnesty International (2004:14) "sexual violence, by all belligerents, has been a consistent feature of the armed conflict and other political violence".

Of the sample, a total of nine girls answered that within their group sexual abuse was happening. Only one of the girls did report that she, personally, had been a victim of rape. The sensitivity of the topic made it inappropriate to ask such the girls directly if they were victims of sexual abuse. However, taking visual cues based on body language, what was said, and what was not said and assumption could be made that this girl was not the only one to suffer from sexual abuse. When the girls gave short answers, seemed unwilling to further discuss topics, or showed how some topics where difficult to talk about no further answers were sought.

Fourteen girls denied the occurrence of sexual abuse within their group, while seven girls were able to expound on the strict rules within the group regarding sexual activity, whether it be consensual or by force. Other girls talked about how any kind of sexual activity could result in one being killed, and that in one group boys and girls were not allowed to even speak in private in order to "remain in the spirituality of fighting, not talking or thinking about sex and other things. Such "harsh punishments, strict codes of behaviour, and puritanical

creed" were also present in the LRA in Uganda (Annan et al. 2009:16). One girl explains the consequences of engaging in sexual activities

> *They could advise you and forgive you the first time, maybe the second, but then the third time they could even kill you. They were really strict and serious about the education and behaviour. For those who got pregnant, didn't matter if it was forced or not. To show respect, it was not only the girls who were beaten, but also the boy. At least 100 hits when getting beaten. And you also had to pay an amount of money because it was a shame. You are here to fight not have sex. Families could sell everything they had because they had to pay because their girl got pregnant during their time with the rebels.*

<div align="right">Informant 6</div>

Annan et al. (2009:16) explains that in Angola such "indoctrination was essential due to the decentralized operations of mobile units. It was reinforced by cultural norms, including prohibition of rape outside marriage, and the accumulation of many "wives" by powerful elder males".

One of the girls further explained that sexual abuse could happen if you were separated from the group. Another stated that the group respected minors, but she did not exclude the possibility of rapes happening with the older girls. One stated that it started after a while, for those who stayed when the war got really intense. As she explained, "it was hard because they married the rebels". The statement was not elaborated, and whether or not these were forced marriages was not specified, although this might seem to be the most probable conclusion. It is argued by Amnesty International, that girls in Burundi have been victims of forced marriage to rebel leaders (2004:14-15). One girl explained how many girls decided to live with the rebel leaders in order to get food, sanitation articles and other items. This, she explained was in particular lacking for the girls who were not fighters. Rebels in the field could steal such needed items or food when they were in the field. For those girls who stayed behind, their need for such things made them live with the rebel leaders. According to this girl´s explanation, all girls within her groups had someone they were living with. This basically made them the leaders´ slaves, as she explains, "the leaders could do whatever they wanted with the girls", including sexual services. This can be seen as what Amnesty International defines as sexual slavery occurring within Burundian armed groups, where girls were forced into marriage with other rebels, and set to do domestic services or other types of forced labour which included sexual activities (2004:14-15). It could also be seen a survival

<div align="right">66</div>

strategy, as mentioned by Coulter et al. (2008:10). Another girl mentioned how rapes happened by group members against the civilian population. Three girls gave a short and concise "no", with no further elaboration.

Although the question was not asked directly, it became clear throughout the interviews that at least six girls had become pregnant while in the armed group, five of which met their husbands there.

4.8 Exit modes from the armed groups

Amongst the girls interviewed there were three exit modes that occurred. As many as thirteen girls got demobilized in the official DDR process of the government, while seven escaped from the groups, and three girls were set free by the groups themselves.
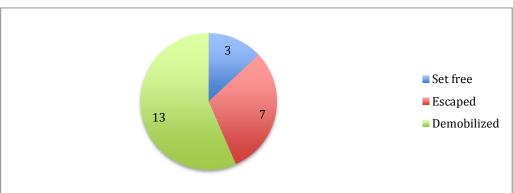
Figure 10: Exit mode

4.8.1 Participants of the DDR program and their benefits from such

In 2003 the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement was signed (Nindorera, 2012:20). The National Commission for Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration (CNDRR) was a part of several structures that were implemented as a result of the Arusha Accord and subsequent ceasefire agreements (Boshoff, 2005:138). In March 2004, Burundi´s National Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration program initiated (Programme National de démobilisation, réinsertion et réintégration, PNDRR) (Uvin, 2007:1).

Thirteen of the girls went through the official DDR process. All these girls, except one, were above 18 years of age when they got separated from the group. The age at the time of exiting the group is an important aspect since the former child soldiers, who were demobilized after turning 18, were no longer perceived as children, but would rather have participated in adult DDR programs. Only one girl, who was 17 when becoming demobilized, would have participated in the DDR program customized for children (Participant 3). The

remaining twelve girls should however have received customized reintegration assistance tailored for females (World Bank, 2009:5). However, the type of program that the girls participated in, and whether or not it was specialized for children or females, was not made clear during the interviews.

Several girls mentioned how the demobilization initiated with negotiations between the rebel leaders and the responsible for the DDR process. The rebel leaders provide a list containing the names of its group members in order for them to be part of the demobilization process. According to some of the girls, they were told that most soldiers could choose between demobilization and being inserted into the army or police force. Having the option of being inserted into the police or army, instead of becoming demobilized as civilians, seemed to be a choice for several former soldiers (Uvin, 2007:9, Boshoff, 2005:149). However, several of the girls mentioned how they were not given this opportunity. Only one of the thirteen girls did serve as a police officer in the time after exiting the group. She did, however, get demobilized after three years in the police, something that was not her personal decision. Some girls seemed to have chosen demobilization with the hope of receiving economic support. One girl explains how she chose to be demobilized, as she was promised a good amount of money that would allow her to "have a good life, a forever good life". However, this same girl was only given 50 000 Burundian Francs (BIF)(Approximately 32 United States Dollar (USD)), and she explains how the girls who now work within the police or army, at least have a salary to live on. Another girl with a similar opinion explains how the wage was her primary reason for wanting to join the police force, she, however, was never given an option to do so. She further explains this to be due to the lack of available positions within the police force, and how the decision was up to the rebel leaders to fill these positions. For those who had influence or people to speak for them, it was easier to get on that list, as the lists were made according to contact network.

When becoming demobilized several girls went through the Demobilization Centres located in different areas of the country. For the demobilized soldiers, the duration set up for the Demobilization Centres was to be seven days, with a maximum of ten days (Boshoff & Vrey, 2006:21). However, several girls spent a significantly longer amount of time there, without the possibility to leave. One claimed she was there for six months, a second girl claims three to four months, and a third said two months.

One girl explained how the identification process involved questions about the guns, was asked to shoot, or put apart and assemble the guns or other test which could prove they had been rebels. As for the girls who could not provide satisfying answers or performed the

practical test, they were sent home. This process clearly neglects the girls who have not participated directly in the fighting. A similar requirement is the "one man, one weapon", as mentioned by Gislesen (2006:14), both requirements are based on the assumption that people who do not carry a gun or obtain knowledge on how to use a weapon are not considered former soldiers, thus cannot participate in the DDR.

The customized support system for females was to separate the females from the males in cantonments. This may have been the case for some of the girls, however it was clearly not the case for all girls seeing as how one girl met her husband in the Demobilization Centres, while another became pregnant in her time at the centre.

According to the girls, the support received in the Demobilization Centres included training on behaviour, and how to socialize with other people once returning home. However the several informants mentioned broken promises by the program, such as the promise of receiving handicraft workshop or medals for their efforts, which were never received. This, in addition to being aware of the differences in their payments made several of the girls disappointed and frustrated.

The reinsertion involved giving the former soldiers an allowance for a period of eighteen months (World Bank, 2009:5). This fixed reinsertion allowance, was given in order to assist the former soldiers with their socio-economic reinsertion (Boshoff & Vrey, 2006:21). The first payment was equivalent of nine month of wages, then, each three months a new allowance was issued, equivalent of three months wage, for a total of three payments (Boshoff & Vrey, 2006:21). The size of the payments was made according to rank (Boshoff & Vrey, 2006:22). The minimum payment per former soldiers was set to be 566.000 BIF (Approximately 360 USD) in cash and first payment was made when leaving the Demobilization Centres (Boshoff & Vrey, 2006:22). The amounts received, stated by the girls themselves are shown in the table below (in USD)[5].

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[5] Currency per 13.05.2013, from CoinMill.com http://no.coinmill.com/BIF_USD.html#USD=1.00

Table 2: Economic support received through the DDR program

Part. No.	1st Payment	Second	Third	Forth	Total Cash	Project	Cash + Project	Group
1	380,95				380,95		380,95	CNDD
2	177,78	57,78	57,78	57,78	**351,11**	285,71	636,83	**CNDD**
3	0,00				0,00		0,00	FNL
4	380,95				380,95		380,95	CNDD
5	31,75				31,75		31,75	CNDD
6	317,46				317,46		317,46	CNDD
7	31,75	31,75			63,49		63,49	FNL
8	31,75	31,75			63,49		63,49	FNL
9	31,75				31,75		31,75	FNL
10	380,95	31,75	63,49	63,49	**539,68**	380,95	920,63	**CNDD**
11	317,46	114,29	114,29	114,29	**660,32**	380,95	1041,27	**CNDD**
12	190,48	57,14	57,14	57,14	**361,90**	380,95	742,86	**CNDD**
13	190,48	190,48	190,48	190,48	**761,90**	380,95	1142,86	**CNDD**

Five girls received the full allowance of four payments, three of which received well above the minimum and between 500 – 770 USD, while two received amount approximate to the minimum, 350 – 360 USD. These five girls were also the only ones who additionally received support for projects after the end of the cash flow, representing values of between 285 and 380 USD in materials. Two girls were given a one-time payment slightly above the average (380 USD) while three girls only received between 30 and 65 USD. According to one girl, no money was received, but rather plates, mugs and cups. A slightly interesting finding is how the girls who received the highest amount of money were former CNDD-FDD members, the currently ruling party, while former FNL members have received amounts between zero and a 63 USD.

4.8.2 Self-demobilized girls and other reintegration efforts

The total number of child soldiers that exist in Burundi is much higher than the number of children demobilized. Many children have never been participants of these programs due to being separated by the groups by either dismissal from the group or by escaping (CARE Burundi, n.d.:2). These children does not receive any assistance "despite the heavy psychological legacy and trauma of their experience" (Amnesty International, 2004:2). Those who have left the group without the consent of their superiors, are often referred to as deserters (CARE Burundi, n.d.:ii). Many children, in particular former FNL soldiers, have been captured by the army or arrested by the police (CARE Burundi, n.d:2). According to Human Rights Watch (2006:3), at the time their report was published in 2006, a minimum of

sixty-five children (most likely many more), were in government custody due to either being an FNL soldier or a supporter of the group. A reliable number of children who have been associated with armed forces in Burundi, and who have not been registered in the demobilization process, do not exist (CARE Burudi, n.d.:2).

According to CARE Burundi (n.d.:3) some girls become separated from the group with the leaders´ consent, often due to being emotionally and physically affected. This could be seen as the case for one of the girls, how she was let go, or rather left behind due to being wounded. However, for the other two girls who were set free, this did not seem to be the case. They simply got the option of receiving some money if they wanted to leave, which they agreed to, both receiving 50 000 BIF (approximately 32 USD) by the rebel leaders themselves. Neither of the girls were aware of the demobilization process and the possible benefits from such at the time of their separation with the group in 2008-2009, nor had they participated in other reintegration efforts.

Amongst the seven girls who escaped the armed groups, only four had gone through the reintegration project Nabacu, organized by CARE International, while three girls had not received any kind of support after separating with the groups.

Additionally, amongst those demobilized, five of the girls had gone through other reintegration projects in addition to the official DDR, three of which had been participants of CARE´s Nabacu project, one girl explained how an organization called "Pradec", had given her reintegration assistance, while another one had received reintegration support from CEDAC.
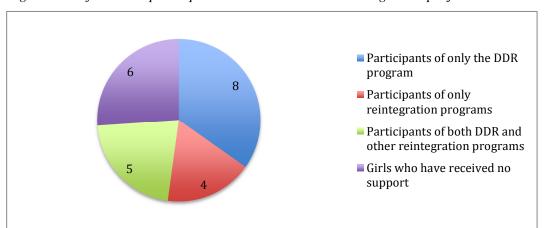
Figure 11: Informants´ participation in DDR and other reintegration projects

4.9 Re-recruitment

None of the girls could report that they had been re-recruited. However, several could report that they had, at some point, been approached in an attempt to become re-recruited. A total of 9 girls said that one or several groups had approached them to convince them to join again. However, they all declined to re-join. An interesting finding is in relation to the time when these attempted re-recruitments took place. Three of the girls had been approached after their separation with the group, but before the official demobilization of the FNL in 2009. However, six of the girls reported the rebels were actively recruiting between 2010, starting during the election period, and as recent as in 2012. This touches upon a highly controversial and sensitive topic, which is the question of to which degree rebel groups are still active in Burundi. What the girls said about the topic varied, and some revealed more details than others. Seven of the girls mentioned that people claiming to come from the FNL were conducting the re-recruitment. One explained how the FNL approached her in 2010 and attempted to convince her to re-enroll. However, several of the girls stated their doubt and distrust in the recruiter´s claims of being from the FNL. Two had been approached by what they called "armed groups" or "thieves groups". One of these girls said the following:

> *Yes, I got approached by those who are around the country, those called armed groups or thieves groups... They do not have an identity, they are a MSD (political movement) or Rwaza (former FNL leader, who went underground) some call them FNL and MSD. They might not be from neither, but they use their names and say they are from there. But they don't specify too much about which they belong to.*

Informant 8

Another expressed her distrust in the recruiters being FNL members:

> *It was 2011, there were those people who claimed to be from the FNL and came to recruit us. I said no when I remembered how life was there. The recruiter was undercover of FNL. Since we are no longer fighting, so how could he come and claim that he was from the FNL, when we have been disarmed?*

Informant 13

When asked about their significance, reason for recruiting and their size, another girl explained;

They didn't give us an explanation, they called them self a NEW group, without name. But what we heard in the radio and in the news, there is a difference in what they are fighting for; we hear that they have stolen things here, killed people here, but for us, we were fighting for peace and human rights. For that reason I think that they are a small group.

                                                                                    Informant 9

The ICG (2011) also mentioned these "armed bandits" and how there were several confrontations between these groups and the government in the aftermath of the elections in 2010. During the fieldwork this was said to be the government´s definition of rebel movements, in order to make them illegitimate and diminish their importance. These "armed bandits" were however suspected to be linked to opposition leaders (ICG, 2011).

One important aspect to take into account when asking such questions is to which degree the girls are open, and willing to answer questions concerning the activities of rebel groups in recent time. One girl did not want to say when she was most recently approached, nor which group approached her. Concealing information might occur if they still have some direct connection with the group, or continue to support the ideology of the movement. Some were still expressing their disappointment for not achieving their goals they had hoped for when joining, and remaining angry due to the injustice still existing within the society. One girl said she would do it all again, without a doubt, while two others expressed some possibility to do it all over again.

I'm feeling that there are still some spiritual beliefs, and what we were fighting for is still inside of me. I think I could go back. Even if I die in the field I don't mind, I can go back. I didn't gain so much the first time, but I am still convinced of the belief of the movement.

                                                                                    Informant 6

If the conditions that made me go there were the same, then yes I would go there. Even now, because nothing has changed, that's why the war in Burundi will never end. I don't see how I can explain this to you.

                                                                                    Informant 11
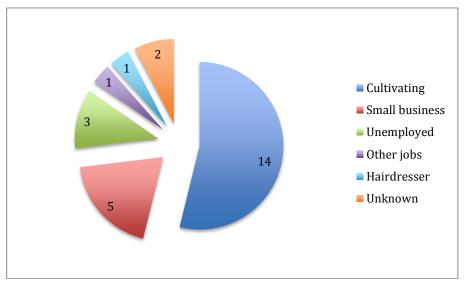
4.10 Current living conditions

Fourteen girls had the occupation of cultivating land, whereas 6 dis so for other people, while 3 rented their own land and 5 simply said that cultivating was their occupation. One explained

how by cultivating for others she would earn 500 to 1500 BIF (0.31 – 0.95 USD) a day. Five girls had some kind of small business. When explaining their "small business" it was clear that this involved buying a variety of small articles, everything from tomatoes, small fishes, salt, oil, or as one explained "whatever is cheap that day". Three girls were unemployed. One could explain how this was due to it not being season for cultivation at the time, which was her normal occupation. While another explained how her job was in the market that just a few days before the interview, had burned down, leaving her without a job or an income. One girl was currently working with CEDAC with information awareness. One girl was working as a hairdresser, a skill she had gained through a reintegration program. The total number of occupations exceeds the total number of twenty-three informants, as a few had two, or in one case, three jobs. However, the majority of the girls gave some kind of statement, pointing to the insecurity of their current occupations, whether it was in connection to their difficulties of buying and selling the articles/products in their small business, or in relation to actually being hired to cultivate for others on a regular business.

We are living by god's hands day by day.

Informant 3

Figure 12: Current occupation

Despite the low percentage of unemployment, when the girls where asked about future plans, their responses were devastating to hear. A high degree of the girls stated that they did not have any high hopes for the future. These comments concerning the future were based upon the belief that there was no future for these girls. In order to have a future one needs to start from somewhere or with something, since these girls felt they had neither, they felt they had

no future. Many were living day to day, concerned about whether or not they and their children would eat that day. Most laughed when the question about future plans were asked. While one said "I am satisfied as long as I have food, a place to live and that I am no longer afraid of getting killed". Most of the girls´ opinions and views concerning their own future reflected distrust and hopelessness.

> *The future plans can be many, but how can I have future plan when I don't have anything.*

> Informant 13

4.11 Summary

The most predominant pattern of recruitment was without a doubt personal decision, made by seventy-four per cent of the sample. Although the difficult living conditions at the time of recruitment could be a major factor for making the decision, including the fact that a high percentage of girls had suffered from the loss of their loved ones. Their choice of group to enrol into, seemed more like a result of factors of convenience, rather than thoroughly considered choice. However, the key groups for this sample were the FNL and the CNDD-FDD. After enrolling the girls took on a high range of task, although the majority, seventeen girls, were actively involved in the fighting as combatants. Additionally a few girls also possessed powerful positions within the group. However, their time there was characterized by extremely difficult living conditions. Not only where the girls deprived from essential needs such as food and sleep, their health was in also in great risk. Additionally, several girls confessed that within their group there was sexual abuse. Their exit mode varied between exiting through the official DDR process, to escaping or being set free. Most girls had received some kind of reintegration support through either the DDR program or other reintegration projects. However, their future prospects and day to day struggles might demonstrate the insufficient result of such intervention programs.

Part 2: Family reunification and reconciliation

4.12 The girls living arrangements after return

During the conflicts of Burundi an estimate 300 000 people were killed and around one million people became displaced (International Alert, 2013). It has been reported by the Internal Displaced Monitoring Centre (n.d.) that by the end of 2012, Burundi had as many as 78 000 Internally Displace People (IDPs), with no new displacements since 2008. The girls´ living arrangements after returning from the armed group were influenced by both these factors, creating challenges for family reunification, and for some, making it an impossible task. Some also made personal decisions of not returning to their homes in the following period as they were in the stage of their lives to get married and live with their husbands. The distribution of the girls´ living arrangements after return from the armed group is shown in the figure below.
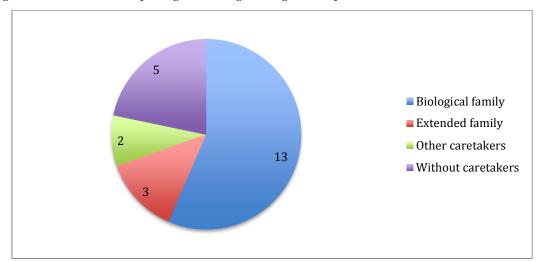
Figure 13: Distribution of the girls´ living arrangement after return

Thirteen of the girls went back to live with their biological family. Amongst the three girls who all lived with extended family members, all had lost their parents. One had been under her brother care for years, and upon exiting the group, went to live with her uncle. Another girl went to her aunt's place in the time after separating from the armed group, as her parents were killed during the war, and the third went back to her uncle with whom she was living before the conflict. Two of the girls went to live with caretakers. For one of these girls the caretaker was a female friend of her mother, and for the other it was a stranger, a woman who decided to care for her, as she was left alone at the age of ten, after escaping the group. For the five girls who ended up on their own, living by themselves, their reasons for doing so

varied. Two girls stated that they had nowhere to go as their parents were dead, while one simply did not feel ready to go home after being away for nine years. Another girl was reinserted into the police and went to live on her own with her children. The last girl had met her husband in the field and went to live with him after exiting the group.

4.13 Family reunification and reconciliation

According to the large majority of the thirteen girls who returned to their biological families, they were all welcomed back. Some of these families were not aware of their daughters whereabouts and/or lived in the beliefs that their daughters where dead. Most of the girls who made the personal decision to join, did not inform their parents or family members about the decision. Additionally, three of these girls were either forced to join or were abducted. Therefore, most of the girls stated they were happily received when returning to their homes. This is not in line with the situation of girls in eastern DRC, for whom, according to Tonheim (2011:5) "rejection from biological parents appears to be relatively common". For these girls, the opposite seems to be the predominant behaviour. Only two girls experienced rejection or negative emotions when returning to their biological families. One girl explains how her mother was sad, telling her how she was expecting her to come home with some sort of support.

> *"My daughter went to fight, but now she is coming back with nothing, now people will laugh at me. People will be laughing at me, because you didn't say anything before you joined, now you're an ex-combatants, and you came home without anything"*
>
> Informant 13

Another girl experienced strong fear from her family members upon return, which she explains with devastating details.

> *When I reached my family, they were afraid of me, because they knew I had been in the armed group. I thought, let me stay here and at a point they will understand that I'm not that mad, not that thirsty of blood, so for example my parents said, ok, let´s take her back. But when the evening was coming they would ask me to go to sleep, and to lock my room, because they were too afraid. And I could ask if one of my sisters could sleep with me, and they would say "there is no blankets and sheets there, sleep alone, you will see them tomorrow." They were afraid that I could have nightmares and keep something near me, and kill my sisters.*

Until today the relationship remains tense. She explains,

> *"I don't have the best relationship, especially with my siblings because those who didn't go to the field they have that connection and love for each other. For example if I have a problem, I can´t call them, they would not be the first people to come to mind if I have a problem, because they will not react as quickly as they would do for anyone else"*

The first girl who returned with no support, now reports that the relationship between herself and the other members of her family unit has improved since then. This, she says, is because she now has a job, earning 2000 BIF (1,26 USD) a day and is therefore able to help with the economic support of the family, which she says has created respect and acceptance. During the focus group, when girls were asked the difference between them, why some were not accepted by family members, one girl explained how it would be easier for the demobilised girls to become accepted by their families, as they had been given money, while those who escaped came home empty handed and would be "just another mouth to feed". The demobilised girls would be able to bring economic support to their family, something that would facilitate the reconciliation. In this way, "the families will think that they actually fought for something, because they actually came home with something", as explained by the informant. However, for this sample, the two girls who returned to their biological families and got rejected or experienced some kind of negative emotions in relation to their return, were both demobilized girls. It does seem, in both cases, that being able to economically assist your family is of importance in the reconciliation process.

4.14 Living with extended family or other caretakers

The five girls, who did not reunite with their own families, but rather went to live with extended family or other caretakers, were experiencing much more discrimination and rejection than those who returned to their biological families. Only one girl stated that her caretaker had taken her good care of her. When returning as a ten year old to the community after escaping the group, she was taken care of by a widow and her children, who raised her well and taught her right from wrong, according to the girl. With the help from her caretaker she was eventually reunited with her siblings. She explained how her siblings where happy to see her. Since she had not gone by her free will, they were not angry.

Being marginalized or experiencing some kind of rejection within the families which whom they were living, was evident in the remaining four cases. One girl who lived with extended family claimed that the family "raised her as their own child", but further explained how life was hard because she was used as a maid within the household. Another girl, who went to live with her uncle, received continuous resentment and rejection from him. She seemed to not expect anything more from anyone. When asked how he received her, she explains how "he tried, because you know, when you are from there, no one will welcome you well." She was asked to go back to where she came from by her uncle. By keeping quiet, she manages to stay, she explains. If she missed a meal she would have to wait until night time, as he would tell her that it would not be a problem from her, seeing how she could go days without food when with the armed groups. At the time of the interview she had recently been told that she would be kicked out of his house in the upcoming days. Another girl who went to live with her mother´s friend, explains her relation to the woman

> *"I can't say she welcomed me, I wasn't rejected, I was just there. But I can't say she loves me or hates me. It's kind of cold, neutral. I can´t say I'm treated well, I'm just there, when it´s time to eat, I eat, when the evening come I sleep. But I'm saying that I'm not treated well because for example if I need something, I can´t go to her and ask her if she can give it to me. I will be the one to seek for it. And normally when you are treated well you will have someone to talk to, but that's not the case."*

Informant 18

Suspicion coming from extended family was a problem for one of the girls. When she returned to her uncle, she could describe how the uncle's wife had a great deal of suspicion against her, thinking that she had returned in order to recruit others. This rejection caused her to leave and go to live with her brother and an older woman who was his caretaker. She can, however, explain how her relationship is better today, which she blames on the time apart that caused her uncle´s family to be more receptive of her, giving her more trust as time went by.

4.15 Being without caretakers upon return

Amongst the five girls who went to live without caretakers after their separation from the group, three girls could tell how they were reunited with family members at a later stage in time, and experienced both fear and rejection from their family members. One explained that after reuniting with her siblings, they were afraid of her, thinking she would kill them. A second, claimed her problems with her community was due to their knowledge of her reasons

behind joining the group, and her desire for revenge, "they knew that I went there to shoot" she explains, but does not elaborate on the kind of problems she had with family members. The third explains how the fear that her stepmom holds towards her causes her to, until today, run away when the girl comes back in town.

4.16 Summary

The girls who were not able to reunite with their biological family seem to have more challenges in relation to the reconciliation with the people living in the household. In some cases there were however some contradictions in their statements, concerning their acceptance within the families. This could be due to the girls´ lack of desire to tell the author the entire truth, as the details revealed by the girls varied a great deal. Another theory could be that what the girls themselves see as reintegration or acceptance varied. Or in other words, being accepted might vary from a successful reintegration. The girls might think that when asking if they have been accepted the most appropriate answer would be "yes", as physically they were accepted within the family or by their caretakers, but did however, feel some rejection. This is evident in Tonheim´s study from the DRC, where she states that even though girls are "physically a part of the family, they often seem to feel excluded and alone"(2011:9). There also seemed to be a lack of expectations of acceptance, and a few girls had to some degree accepted that they were rejected as nothing else was expected.

Part 3: Community reunification and reconciliation

4.17 Community rejection

When interviewing the girls, it became obvious that in many of these cases, girls were removed from the armed groups, and relatively quickly returned to either their old community or resettled in new areas. Few, if any, had received extended/sufficient reintegration assistance, and returned to the civilian life almost directly after several years with the rebel movements. Without a doubt, rejection from community members when returning from an armed group was strikingly the predominant experience for most girls. Close to 87 per cent could share their experiences about some sort of rejection, marginalization, or stigmatization by community members. Such experiences were either verbal or physical, such as name-calling, insults, taking behind their backs, being avoided by the community members. Only three girls out of the whole sample stated that there was no such social rejection. However, none gave much explanation or elaboration to their response. One girl explained how the relationship was good because she was the only one who ever returned out of the group she joined with. Despite on girl being clear on the fact that there was no verbal or physical rejection, she said that there was some ethnic tension, "there are no words, just that feeling" she explains, but does not elaborate on this, assuring that there was no rejection. A third girl moved to her husband's village and stated to have received no rejection of any kind.

> *"They didn't mention anything. It was not a problem because I was coming without a*
> *gun. I didn't have a gun, I was like any civilian so they adapted to me easy."*
>
> Informant 14

4.18 Stigmatization and marginalization due to fear and prejudices

The rejection and difficulties of community reconciliation was often due to fear or prejudices by community members. Despite the fact that many of the girls believed to have fought for their country´s independence, for justice and for peace, and as many as thirteen of the twenty-three girls belonged to the CNDD-FDD, the party currently in power. Soldiering, no matter which group they were associated with, did not seem to be considered a respectable occupation for the family or community members. This is also evident in the South Kivu, DRC, where Tonheim points out that the general population is suspicious to anyone who has been associated with the armed forces or armed group, no matter gender or age, and also here, "soldiering is not viewed as an respectable profession" (2011:6). For this study, the girls´

opinions about gender differences in the reintegration and concerning rejection will be elaborated in section 4.33.

In both Tonheim´s study, and here, fear and prejudices from the community was a common occurrence. The fear amongst the community members seems to be a persistent occurrence in a large majority of the girls´ lives, having as many as twenty out of the sample of twenty three girls stating that they did not have community acceptance upon return.

Eleven girls mentioned how the social rejection was due to fear from the community members who were generally afraid of the girls based on the fact that they had been with the armed groups and on the belief that they were fighters. However, the remaining nine girls who experienced rejection or lack of community acceptance gave statements which all could be seen in relation to fear or prejudices against them. Several girls mentioned how community members thought that they came back to kill them or to "behave in a bad way", influencing other members of the community with their behaviour or ideology from the field, and recruiting their children. Such a fear led to high degrees of stigmatization and marginalization that was revealed by the behaviour of several community members, both adults and children. The girls explain how their peers and adults rejected them, people would run away from them, avoided them and refused to engage in conversations with them.

It was hard, people were afraid, they didn't respond when we greeted them. I was glad to be back home, and I tried to be accepted. If I was sitting on the street people could try to find another way than to pass me.

Informant 21

The girls were seen as to have a "wild side" after being in the bush. They no longer had the trust of the members of the community. Several mentioned how they would be the first to be suspected for any stolen goods or theft. As stated by four of the girls, the community was generally suspicious towards them.

The community was the worst part, because the community, even the children, they, were telling the children that those who went to the field, they were blood drinkers, they have something that they use to kill with, so on one was approaching us.

Informant 17

However, it is not only the community to which they return to who experience such fear. According to ILO (2003:50) all children feel fear when exiting an armed group, fear of being caught, or fear of being accused of being an accomplice of the enemy, or fear of being badly

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treated or killed by community members. However, only one girl testified how she had fear against the community members.

The girls often experience discrimination or rejection through name-calling and insults. As one girl explained how she would hear people talking about her behind her back, saying, "they are killers" or "they have mental disturbance", while another stated who she was verbally attacked directly by similar insults, also her being told how they were killers and rebels and used to kill people.

Such reasons for rejection can be seen as similar for both boys and girls, as also mentioned by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, which argues that child soldiers in general experience stigmatization (and therefore avoids the DDR processes out of fear of such) (2008:10). It is however, argued by Wessells (2007:14) that girls experience more stigmatization than boys. And this could be due to cultural beliefs and attitudes (Machel, 1996:14), in particular for sexually abused girls (Machel, 1996:14).

> *The fact that we have been in the bush, and accused of being raped and the wives of all the soldiers was also another reason for rejection.*

Informant 12

Asking the girls whether or not they were stigmatized and marginalized due to their engagement, or assumed engagement, in sexual activities was a slightly difficult topic to approach. Partly because the topic was directly linked to, and would bring up, the subject of sexual activities and partly out of fear that the girls would feel that the author and the translator had some prejudice against the girls when approaching the topic. However, when appropriate this question was asked during the in-depth interviews. Only one girl mentioned how the rejection could often happen due to the community's belief of how they were prostitutes when being associated with the armed groups. Only a few other girls had something to say about the topic when asked more directly. However, during the focus groups the environment and surroundings made it more impersonal and more appropriate to ask such questions regarding stigmatization, and here, the answers were more detailed and the flow of the conversations was better.

The rejection and stigmatization was often based on people´s *belief* that girl soldiers were "the wives of all the rebels", as mentioned by several girls, insinuating prostitution and sexual activities, not necessarily specifying wether this was by force or consent. It became clear during the fieldwork and when talking to the girls, that in Burundi, a female is called a girl if she is a virgin, while being called a woman if she is not. Several girls explained how

they were now no longer considered girls, but women, simply due to the fact that they had been associated with armed groups, based on the assumptions mentioned above. As explained by one girl "even if you are a virgin, people will still think that after the field you are no longer a girl". Several girls came home with children. And the challenges seemed to increase for these girls, as one girl explained, "it is more difficult for those who come home with children", there is no longer any doubt about their involvement in sexual activities, whether it is by force or consent.

However, the most predominant reason for rejection was, according to the girls, the fear from community members, rather than the stigma in relation to their assumed engagement in sexual activities. When asked if stigma was due to the latter, one girl explained:

> *We don't think that it's the reason for rejecting us, because, yes, there were rumours that that happened there. And in a way is true, most of us came back with children. In a way it is true. But for instance the women in our community are not rejecting us because of that, but they are afraid due to the fact that we have been killers, we have been fighters and in the field. Even the men, they are afraid of us since we have been killers.*

> Focus group participant

Another girl explains what she sees as the main reason for rejection.

> *"It is because they think we are killers. We have been in the bush, so we are wild. And this wild side will never be erased. So because of that they will always be rejected."*

> Focus group participant

4.19 Consequences of rejection

When their communities reject the girls, the consequences are evident in several levels of their lives both social and economic. They have difficulties in finding a husband, in obtaining jobs, and as one explained, finding a place to rent, due to the fear and prejudices from community members.

Several girls mentioned how they felt betrayed and rejected by men in the time after exiting the armed group. Explaining how neither the civilian men, who had never been recruited, nor the men from the field were interesting in them. The lack of marriage prospects, affect the economic future for girls (Mazurana et al., 2002:115). One girl explained how she

had been living with different men, but it only lasted for few months with each man, due to their lack of interest in a former soldiers. As a result she now had three children, with three different fathers, and was now a single mother, forced to prostitution in order to provide for her children. Ending up as a prostitute is also mentioned by McKay (1998:337) as many girls´ only economic alternative. Another girl explains how many girls were living with men in the field, like any other couples in Burundian society, living by the same values and beliefs as other Burundian people. However, coming back the men betrayed them. Of the girls who mentioned the difficulties in finding a husband, one blamed this in the men´s lack of interest in being the only provider within the family, as former child soldiers were suffering from the lack of education. Another girl explained how the men had fear and prejudices against former female child soldiers.

> *Yes, that happened because first the guy will be like "this women can kill me, like she killed others. She knows how to handle a knife, she knows how to handle a gun, and this is not a safe country, she can just rent a gun and shoot me". So they were afraid of us. That happened. You could have a chance that some guy told you the truth, like "I really like you and I would like to marry you. But I'm feeling that your wild side is still there, and I don't want to give it a chance".*

<div align="right">Focus group participant</div>

The feeling of being socially excluded through the verbal and physical rejection can have emotional and psychological consequences for the girls. As one girl points out, after being accused of being raped, she found it hard to socialize with other neighbours. This, she explains, was due to the fear of being stigmatized, and she did not want to be recognized within the community as the one who had been "the wife of all the soldiers". Additionally, the isolation was due to always being the first suspect of theft, when something would disappear or is stolen within the community. People would say, "you have to check on the girl to that guy, you know she is from the front, you have to be careful, they have been killers, they can kill us too", according to the girls. Another girl points to another aspect of social exclusion that had an effect on her. She claims that former soldiers will be excluded from any community or neighbourhood events. Further she explains the feeling of having her freedom stripped away, and having to adjust to a higher degree of society´s boundaries than other never-recruited peers.

Additionally, finding a job was mentioned as a challenge, due to the lack of trust. As explained by one girl, "some are still afraid of giving us work, because they think that if they

don't give us money on time we will kill them". One girl explained how even having your own small business you could experience how people would refuse to buy your items. She explains that when the people know you are demobilized soldiers, they will go and buy their necessities with someone else. There were also difficulties for one girl to get a place to rent. When the owner knows you have been a former soldiers, you can either not get the house in the first place, or if the owner finds out after you move in, you would be kicked out, according to the girl.

The social exclusion left the girls without a support system, which many of them saw as a major challenge. Not having any one to talk to about their experience made their life harder, they felt alone and found it hard to re-establish old friendships, leading them to isolate themselves and with difficulties of socializing.

4.20 Why some experience stigmatization and marginalization while others do not

It was difficult to determine the reasons for why some experienced stigmatization and marginalization, while others did not. Despite having the same background and the same preconditions for becoming reconciled with community members, the girls had some reflections on why this was the case.

According to one girl, whether some girls experienced stigmatization and marginalization was dependent on their tasks and what they have done while with the armed groups. She explained that her acceptance was due to her role as an adviser, always behaving well, while those who get rejected had "killed or behaved badly" according to her. She further explains that there is no need, or point in keeping their roles secret within a community, as the community members talk amongst each other and therefore will always, one way or another, find out what their roles have been and what they have done in the field. Community members do not seem to take into consideration that the roles the girls would take on, or their actions, might not have been based on their own free choice.

Three of the girls could explain how they came home either married or engaged, which helped in order to avoid the stigmatization experienced by other girls.

> *That didn't happen for me (stigmatization), but it happened for others, that people was thinking that way (that girls are engaged in sexual activity and therefore a reason for rejection) but it didn't happen for me, because I was actually engaged, and I had something that showed people that I was engaged. In our community when you are engaged you have something like a watch or something, necklace, or earrings, that*

shows that you are engaged, so that's why I didn't get that type of rejection, but others did.

<div align="right">Informant 17</div>

One girl, who came home with a child, explains:

Yes there were stigmatization, they could be saying "first of all you went beyond the rules going in the bush, and you were a prostitute, addicted to sex, for sure having a normal life will be hard". But after seeing that I was married, and see that I have been with the same man for years, now they said "ah, maybe she change", but they still have that feeling and they are convinced that there were no rules there. They won´t tell you that, but they will feel it in their heart and they will be thinking that maybe you were living that way, even if you are married now.

<div align="right">Informant 19</div>

Some girls explained how they were humble and quiet, and did not let the rejection and the insults and name-calling affect them, even when other community members provoked discussions and fights.

There was some disagreement between the girls as to whether or not the stigmatization and marginalization could be dependent on which armed group one belonged to. Some, in particular former members of the CNDD-FDD, argued that there were no differences between them and former FNL members, as they all faced the same rejection. However, two girls, one from each of the mentioned armed groups, argued that there was a slightly higher degree of rejection toward the former FNL members. One stating that as a former FNL soldiers, you are still prosecuted, but the CNDD-FDD, the current party in power. This statement is backed up by the fact that in 2006, Human Rights Watch stated that a total of 65 children were detained by the government, accused of being associated with the FNL (HRW, 2006:3). The informant further claims that there are some places where she cannot go even today. This was also discovered during the fieldwork, when being explained that certain neighbourhoods within and around the capital Bujumbura, where dominated by one of the ethnic groups, and were additionally often known to be associated with either FNL or the CNDD-FDD. One explains:

"Until now I know there are some places I can't go. The place where I grew up, there are both FNL and CNDD soldiers. But me, as an FNL I'm still prosecuted by the CNDD, It's about the political parties."

<div align="right">Focus group participant</div>

<div align="right">87</div>

When it comes to the challenges of gaining a job, one girl explains how the former members of the CNDD-FDD have an advantage. In the cases where it is the government who are involved in the job creations, as a former FNL soldiers, she will not be able to gain work experience through such projects.

4.21 Reconciliation happened over time for some

In some cases, the reconciliation happened over time, and the relationships and acceptance from community members improved. This was also evident in the study by Annan et al. (2009:2) from former LRA members in Northern Uganda, where many girls did experience rejection upon return, as in this study, but the relationship did however, improve over time. This could be due to some of the girls´ choice of being anonymous in the community where they were currently living. Many girls did explain that the relationship improved due to their own efforts and attempts to prove that they were not killers, that they had changed, that they were not back to recruit others or influence them with their behaviour, but rather how they had changed and had a desire to become a civilian again. One girl explains how she would go help neighbours to cook, tell them how she had changed, how she hoped for a good relationship and how they did not need to be afraid. She explained how she had taken the first move in order to establish a relationship. However, many of the girls did still experience rejection and did not have a good relationship with their community members. During one of the focus groups, there was a clear agreement between the participants that the challenges were still occurring. One girl explains:

> *When we came back, we thought we would be welcomed, that there would be warmth, but what happened made our heart even more "tighter."*

Another adds:

> *Where I am living, I felt that I will not be not be staying there even one more week. Things are getting worse.*

While a third one answers:

> *It's the same for me, the neighbours said, "we do not have a choice, they are now back" but the worst is the lack of freedom.*

However, as when talking about family reconciliation, also in relation to rejection from community there seemed to be a certain acceptance about the fact that the girls were rejected amongst some of them. One explains how the rejection is based on the belief that they have been in the field and killed people, and that they are therefore not welcomed back. She further

explains: "It was not their imagination, it was true, and that's why we went to the field". She then expressed her understanding towards the community, which rejected her, explaining, "that must happen, that's the way it is".

4.22 Summary

It became apparent that despite the fact that most of the girls were able to regain acceptance from their families, regaining community acceptance was far more difficult. Because of the communities' fear and prejudice against the girls, they were stigmatized and marginalized. By insults, name-calling and social exclusion the girls often felt rejected by the community members. To which degree the girls experienced more rejection to boys was hard to determine, as no boys were interviewed for this research. Some argue that girls receive more stigmatization than boys, in particular those who have been sexually abused. However, the girls' opinion was that rejection was not often due to the community members´ belief of them engaging in sexual activities, but rather due to fear and prejudices against them. Some girls did, however, experience reconciliation over time.

Part 4: Economic & health challenges when retuning to civilian life

4.23 Challenges as stated by the girls

The majority of the girls had experienced family and/or community rejection, along with some sort of stigmatization or marginalization. However, when asked about what they saw as their major challenges upon returning, their answers revealed how it was often other challenges that were the hardest part on their return. Several girls, who had been rejected by the society, did not see this social rejection as the most difficult part when attempting regain civilian life. The girls spoke of a variety of challenges that were seen as the most difficult, which could be divided into three categories related to economic, social, and health issues. 65 per cent explained some kind of social aspect to be their biggest challenge, 39 per cent stated an economic challenge, while 4 per cent mentioned health issues. Additionally 8.7 per cent did not have any challenges when retuning from the armed groups. The total percentage exceeds 100 per cent, as some of the girls mentioned more than one challenge. The social aspects will not be further elaborated upon, as this was discussed in the previous sections, but the focus will be on the additional challenges mentioned by the girls.
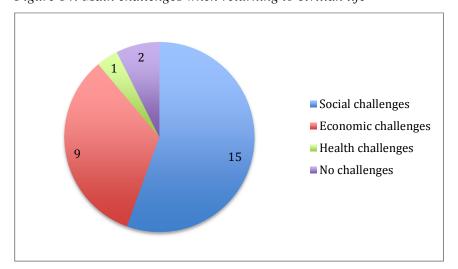
Figure 14: Main challenges when returning to civilian life

4.23.1 Economic challenges

Different economic aspects were mentioned by nine girls as their main challenges when returning to life as a civilian. For two of the girls this was in relation to difficulties in obtaining *livelihood skills*. One explained how her main challenge was to learn how to

cultivate again, use of the tools and gaining the appropriate knowledge regarding the process proved very difficult for her. Another explained how her lack of know-how in creating and running a small business was an enormous challenge. Seven girls explained how "*being sent home without anything*" and starting from scratch was their major challenge. The girls stated that coming home without economic means to start a business and having to ask for food and clothes were some of the hardest aspects of returning as civilians. Many girls expressed the severe consequences this had for them, and their frustration and feeling of hopelessness.

> *"Sometimes I am wondering what I am living for, the best thing is to die"*
>
> Informant 14

4.23.2 Health challenges

Only one girl stated how her health condition was her biggest challenge, and has caused continuous difficulties for her since separating with the group. Due to being hit by a grenade, she got severely injured, and the wound took three years to completely heal. She explains how she was sick for a significant amount of time, in addition to suffering from exhaustion due to the carrying of guns and heavy loads. This has had further complications for her, as she now finds it difficult to continue in her current occupation, which requires manual labour, as she cultivates land for others.

Despite the fact that only one woman said she saw health problems as her biggest challenge when retuning home, several other women explained how their health problems did however have an effect on them. One explained how she still had a bullet in her chest, while another one explained how working in the field was a big challenge for her, due to the exhaustion after many years with hard labour in the armed group. Such physical health issues are also mentioned by Annan et al. (2008:71), in their Survey of War Affected Youth (SWAY) from Uganda, where at least five per cent of females, (and nine per cent of males) returned with severe injuries which prevents them from performing even the most basic tasks. "Chest and back injuries from carrying heavy loads are most common, followed by shrapnel in the body" (Annan et al., 2008:71). Former child soldiers, both boys and girls, also suffer from psychological health problems in the aftermath of war (ILO, 2003:51, Denov, 2008:825). In ILO´s study, it was evident that the former child soldiers were suffering from both these conditions to a greater extent than those never-recruited (2003:51). According to ILO, the "psychological problems of former child soldiers are characterized by the acute anxiety that causes insomnia and frequent nightmares. It also makes it difficult for them to

relate to others, because the other person is seen as a threat. They therefore have a tendency to withdraw and isolate themselves". It could therefore follow that more girls have health problems as a consequence of their time with the armed groups than originally assumed. This is due to some of the social aspects mentioned above, such as the isolation of one self, and the difficulties of socialising can be categorized as a psychological problem, therefore a health aspect, rather than a social aspect.

4.23.3 No challenges

Two of the girls claimed that they did not face any challenges when retuning home. One of them explains how she was taken care of by a woman when returning from the armed group, making the transition easy. It should be mentioned she was recruited at the age of seven, returning from the group at ten years of age. The other interviewee stated that the lack of challenges was due to her openness about her past, with both her husband and her church. However, in her case, the recruitment happened as early as in 1992, before the civil war, to the Sans- Echecs, which according to her was only a "pre-rebel" group, and more similar to a training group, where no fighting took place, with the duration of one year, relatively short compared to the others.

4.24 Assistance most highly needed upon return

During the focus group discussions, the girls were encouraged to elaborate upon the challenges they faced when returning, and were asked what kind of assistance which they were mostly in need of when returning from the armed group, whether it was medical, psychological, economic or other. There seemed to be a mutual understanding between several of the focus group participants, that it was the economic assistance that was mostly needed. Despite the fact that the majority of the girls gained some kind of economic assistance through the DDR programs, this was not sufficient for obtaining a sustainable livelihood, as argued by several girls. One girl explained:

> *We have been given only that amount of money as I told you (600 000). But really, going back in the social life with that small amount, renting a house and trying to survive, it was so little, and it was the only support we got.*

> Informant 9

Economic assistance could also have helped in the acceptance of their families, as one girl explained. Health cards, for health benefits, were also longed for, together with psychological support and someone to talk to.

Before the economical help, we really were in need of people to listen to us. People to teach us how to behave with others, people who could give us a shoulder to cry one. The psychological help was also needed before the economical help.

<div align="right">Focus group participant</div>

The girls in one focus group could explain how they have never received any health benefits from neither the DDR program nor other reintegration programs that they had participated in. Further they explained how in the field their leaders would provide them with basic health services. But as explained by one, "anything concerning sexual relations or genitals you could not check". This was due to the questions and suspicion being raised within the group, based on the illegitimacy of engaging is sexual activities. One would be questioned about your purpose within the group, whether you were there to fight or to have sex, as she further explained.

Only one of the girls claimed to have received psychological support by the organization CEDAC. She was now in the position of helping others overcome their challenges, and had a position of great significance within the environment and the associations made by former female soldiers, children and adults. She can testify to the importance of receiving such assistance, and explain how only a few years ago, before receiving the training, she would have had problems with giving out the information about her background, which she now willingly and committedly gave away.

4.25 Lack of success of the DDR program

The scope of this research is not to evaluate the efforts made through the DDR or other reintegration programs, which, according to some of these projects, were created to provide assistance for former soldiers, and provide them with social and economic support, as well as health services. According to the girls' statements, these projects have failed in doing so. It is worth noting that the girls may have had a higher degree of success in reintegration, as well as an improved civilian life, had these projects achieved their initial intentions.

Those who had gone through the projects initiated by CEDAC, CARE and Pradec were to a high degree satisfied and grateful for such participation, and expressed how such projects had indeed assisted them in their reintegration. This was done by providing savings and loan training, as well as being able to start their own income generating activity through their handicraft training and by receiving an initiation-kit to start their own association with participants of the projects.

The girls who had gone through the DDR program were all highly unsatisfied and expressed a great deal of disappointment and anger due to the lack of support and follow-up from the program. According to Uvin (2007:2), in addition to receiving money, the demobilized soldiers, at the end of the last payment they were to receive "reintegration assistance in the form of training, equipment, an other inputs to support the development of a livelihood or income generating activity". This is said to have taken part in the end of the payment period, which according to Uvin (2007:2) was in its initiation phase in 2007. As table 2 shows, only five girls have received money for such a project, but none explained any type of training, except for some behaviour classes in the demobilization centres. Additionally, those girls who have received only one or two payments were left without any such assistance. The girls who received a one-time payment right after leaving the demobilization centres, found the assistance lacking horrendously. Three of these girls, who got demobilized together, explained how they were given the money, put on a bus, and dropped off in the outskirts of their city, simply told that they now could go home, after eight (one girl) and four years (two girls) away from their community and family, leaving them without any social reintegration assistance, and a minimum of economic support.

The challenges due to lack of support through the DDR was expressed by most demobilized girls, some giving heartbreaking details of their current lives. They feel forgotten, ignored and betrayed.

> *I can't say that we have been demobilized or reintegrated, I can say that our lives have ben erased. Deleted. How can you tell me that being given 300 000 Burundian money, for you to buy clothes, for you to rent a house, for you to buy all the dishes you will need, for you to get health care, and to start a business for that? Instead of giving us money, they could have just kept us in the camps, asking for external aid, providing us food, giving us a place to stay, because that's what you can call a social life, instead of lying and say that they have been helping us.*
>
> Focus group participant

> *But they have forgotten many things when we came back. They have forgotten that we have spent 10 years in the field; we learned some behaviour. They have forgotten that some of us gave birth in the field. How can you come and bring your four, five or six children back to your parents? They have forgotten that we didn't have anything, like economic to start something here.*
>
> Focus group participant

Some of us are sleeping in the gutter, beside the roads. And some are sleeping in the abandoned houses, where there are no windows, nothing; they will just put some blanket for windows, where they will sleep with their children. Most of them are raped during the night with their children watching. I can take you to where they are living to prove it to you. For many of us, that's how we ended.

<div align="right">Focus group participant</div>

4.26 The lack of importance of community and family reconciliation

It is difficult to be able to state what is the most, or one of the most, essential parts of the reintegration process. Whether it is education, vocational training, economic or health assistance to name a few, or as many argue, the family and community reunification and reconciliation (Hill and Langholtz, 2003:282, Boothby, 2006:245, Verhey, 2001:15). Significant number of girls did not mention any social challenges as their main challenge. This could be due to several reasons. One, if there is a high poverty rate within the area or country, such as in Burundi, and there is a general understanding that the possibility and opportunities for economic improvements are few and far between, the greater the impact of social inclusion might have. Being in the same economic situation as the rest of the population, the marginalization though social exclusion might be of greater importance. As stated by one girl:

"Besides not having money, now I can´t even have a social life like others. You feel like you are loosing on all the levels of the society. Not getting married, having no money when you have been fighting, so for sure you have to feel pain in your heart, it´s painful."

<div align="right">Focus group discussion</div>

However, there is the possibility of the opposite. In a country where 81.3 per cent of the population live on less than 1.25 USD a day (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), n.d.:a), there is the absence of basic needs for a majority of the population. This could be seen in relation to Maslow´s hierarchy of needs, which is based on the theory that all humans are born with certain needs (All Psych online, n.d.). Each level has to be fulfilled in order to move up in the pyramid.

Figure 15: Maslow´s Hierarchy of Needs

Source: All Psych Online, The virtual Psychology Classroom (n.d.)

As demonstrated in the hierarchy, the most basic needs to be fulfilled are those of basic survival, such as food, water, shelter, oxygen, and sleep. The acceptance and reconciliation with family and/or community can be seen as within the third step in the hierarchy, the need for belonging and love. Therefore, as most of these girls are struggling with fulfilling their basic survival needs and trying to support themselves and their children with little or no income, the importance of family and community reconciliation could be seen as of less importance than the economic needs.

4.27 Challenges when not comparing to never-recruited peers

Some of these challenges that were stated by the girls, which were not related to the social aspects of reintegration, could however also be present in the daily lives of other war-affected children, youths and adults. The civil war and the ongoing conflicts which have been occurring in Burundi, ever since independence, have affected the country´s population as a whole, not only people actively joining the armed groups. Never-recruited peers will most likely not face the social rejection and stigmatization as former female child soldiers. However, they may lack the same economic means, or livelihood support, health benefits, and suffer from physical and psychological problems due to war experiences, as their peers within the armed groups. It could therefore be of interest to see such challenges, experienced by former female child soldiers, in relation to the challenges of never-recruited peers, as in the studies of Burundian former child and adult soldiers by ILO (2003) and Jordans et al. (2012).

This is also of importance when defining what successful reintegration actually entails. Because, as stated by Kingma (1997, quoted in Annan et al. 2011:879) "at a minimum it implies some resumption of livelihood and social relationship, either to the life before war or that of non-combatant peers". Due to difficulties in obtaining information concerning the general situation of the Burundian people, in particular focused on never-recruited girls it is difficult to state if former female child soldiers are in fact living in a worse situation than the rest of the society, when it comes to aspects besides social reintegration. Such a comparison is out of the scope for this study, but is however an important and highly relevant and interesting topic for further research.

However, in situations where the rest of the community, and or country is living under the same conditions, or perhaps in worse conditions than their recruited peers, due to the assistance received from DDR programs, this in itself could be a reason for rejection. By giving the former child soldiers assistance, one is automatically classifying them as "victims" rather than "active agents". The jealousy and rejection might then come from other community members who feel that demobilized girls or participants of other reintegration programs are getting a higher degree of assistance in the aftermath of war, despite the fact that they have been actively participating in the conflict, without taking into consideration whether or not they were abducted, forced or joined by their own personal decision.
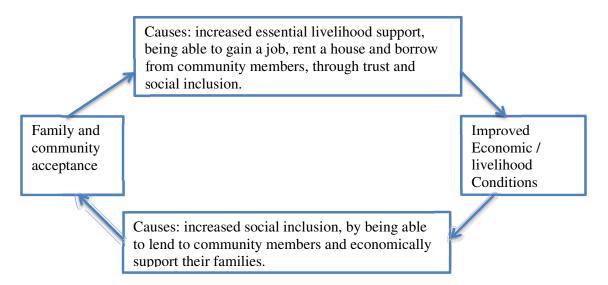
However, the social exclusion is highly present in these girls´ lives, and should not be underestimated, in particular due to the given explanation on how the rejection affects a wide range of aspects of the life of the former female child soldier. It is without a doubt that these women are living under bad conditions, which not only affect them, but also their innocent children, through economic and health issues, as well as the social aspects.

4.28 Link between social and economic reintegration

Despite the fact that the above-mentioned challenges were classified and categorized as being in relation to either economic, social, or health aspects, there seems to be a link between several of them. Machel (1996:14) points out the link between education, vocational opportunities, and economic security for the former child soldiers´ families. The direct link between such factors was evident in this study. Having the family and community´s support might assist in improving the economic challenges by being able to borrow or lend, both money and food, between community members, something which seemed to be essential for any person within the community. Not being able to do so, due to social exclusion, could have direct impact on the economic situation; or simply the fact that the girls would not have had

anything to eat without such support. On the other hand, it seemed to the understanding for several girls that if and when being able to help their families out economically, this would assist in the social acceptance. In Mozambique, for instance, Boothby (2006:255-256) argues that the community´s support is expected in several life events and also in personal or external crises. Without this social acceptance, the consequences could manifest themselves on a psychological level. Therefore, despite some challenges classified as social challenges, they might also be, or cause, psychological challenges. Therefore, a challenge on one level has ripple effect on other aspect of the reintegration.

Figure 16: Correlation between family and community acceptance and economic and livelihood improvements

4.29 Summary

It became apparent that there were more than just social challenges that were of great importance in regaining a civilian life. Most of the challenges mentioned within both economic and health aspects were issues that the formal DDR program were to address. However, few girls had received sufficient support and assistance concerning these aspects, and their lives were severely affected by it. An important feature is the link that is present between these aspects, in particular when speaking about social reintegration versus economic and livelihood conditions. One could argue, as many scholars do, that the social aspects are of the greatest importance, but one should take into consideration that there are more basic needs that perhaps is essential to be addressed and fulfilled before the social reintegration can initiate.

Part 5: Cultural and traditional of Burundi and its importance for reintegration

4.30 Traditional and cultural values relevant for the reintegration

To gain knowledge about traditions and cultural within Burundi was quite a challenging task prior to the fieldwork due to difficulties in obtaining reliable information about the topic. Much of this information was therefore gained upon arrival mainly through informal conversations with locals, as well as foreign residents. The importance of having informal conversations with both locals and foreigners lies in their different understanding of traditions and cultures. It could often be difficult to describe one´s own culture and traditions when one is accustomed to it. This could be particularly relevant to a person who has not had the opportunity of experiencing the traditions and customs of other countries and comparing it to one's own customs and traditions. Therefore, a vast amount of knowledge was gained through foreign residents who had lived abroad for a significant number of years. Based on such conversations, guidelines to where the focus should be was made, and it became clear that two of the aspects that needed deeper investigation were the traditional view of women within the Burundian society, as well as the role of the Bashingantahe council, the traditional system of conflict resolution.

4.31 Spirituality and rituals

The assumption of spiritual or traditional rituals and ceremonies being performed regularly throughout Burundi proved to be erroneous. Every girl interviewed echoed the same sentiments, that these rituals are not present in Burundian life and culture, which is curious seeing as how several other African countries still practice traditional rituals.

        The country´s population is highly religious with as many as 82.8 per cent being Christians, (divided into 61.4 per cent Roman Catholic and 21.4 per cent Protestants), 2.5 per cent are Muslims, 2.3 per cent are Adventist (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 2013). Additionally 6.5 per cent had other religions while 5.9 per cent are unknown (CIA, 2013). Despite the fact that the girls were not asked directly which religion they belonged to, the majority of them mentioned God in some kind of setting during the interviews, while others directly mentioned their Christian beliefs. It also seemed that any practices concerning such rituals or ceremonies would not be approved or accepted by their beliefs. This might cause the girls to refuse to talk about the subject, especially in cases where the girls themselves participated in such rituals or ceremonies. Based on the general and relative openness on a wide range of topics, including this one, there seems to be little reason to doubt the veracity of

the girls' accounts; because of this, any search for similarities between Burundi and other countries in Africa seems futile.

4.32 Cultural and traditional understanding of women

When exploring the traditional views of women and other aspects within the culture and traditions of Burundi, Mr. Adrien Ntabona[6], Doctor in theology and anthropology and Specialist in interculturation, was a good source for information.

Ntabona could explain how the traditional view of a woman in Burundi puts her role to be inside the house, being satisfied with doing domestic duties. She is believed to be polite, does not engage in too much conversation, and is respectful of other people. She is educated, has a great deal of dignity and is conscious of such. She would be ashamed of bad circumstances and would suffer if something is not in line with her own dignity (Ntabona). Traditionally a woman would talk with a piece of clothing or handkerchief in front of her mouth, out of respect (Ntabona). This was observed in some of the interviews when the girls were speaking, and was most evident when the girls would laugh or smile, as they would cover their mouth with a piece of clothing. Also, traditionally, if a girl got pregnant outside the marriage, her family was punished and the girl risked getting killed (Ntabona). Such views have, according to Ntabona, changed due to the educational system amongst other factors, but the mentality of such is still the same. As a Parish Priest, Ntabona states that it is not possible to bless a marriage if the girl is pregnant.

Being a soldier is the other extreme of this (Ntabona). When a girl engaged with an armed group, and is associated with rebel movement it is believed that it changes the character of the girl (Ntabona, personal interview, 04.02.2013). Something similar is stated by Jordans et al. (2012:7)

> "As soldiering has been included in the moral universe of men in ways that it has not for women, fighting women are frequently considered by their very existence to be transgressing accepted female behaviour and the very act of fighting by definition makes women and girls less feminine and by extension "unnatural".

According to Ntabona (personal interview, 04.02.2013), if the woman has no dignity and no respect, it follows that no one will marry her (Ntabona). The reintegration should, according

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[6] Mr. Ntabona was interviewed on the 2nd of February, 2013. He is a former professor at the University of Burundi, author, a parish in Bujumbura and Director of the Centre for Interculturation and development in Bujumbura. More on his biography at:
http://www.storicamente.org/06_dibattiti/societe_de_la_connaissance_link2.html

to Ntabona, put the Burundian women in line with being "real women". Meaning that she should want to be appreciated by her husband, be full of dignity and respect (Ntabona).

According to Machel (1996:14) stigmatization of girls is due to cultural beliefs and attitudes. The rejection due to stigmatization, based on fear and prejudices, can therefore been seen in relation to the cultural and traditional values and beliefs within the Burundian community, in particular the traditional understanding for a woman. Such an understanding could be seen to generally come down to the behaviour of the girls during their time with the armed groups, whether based on facts or assumptions. Based on the girls´ statements as well as the interview with Ntabona and other informal conversations, there are two main views of the understanding of women that puts soldiering and the girls' behaviour as "unnatural" and against the country´s traditional and cultural beliefs. First, the general thought that women associated by armed groups have been engaged in sexual activities.

It was hard to distinguish to what degree any kind of sexual activity was by consent or by force, as many girls did come home with children. While few stated they had been sexual abused, they did however mention the frequent occurrence of rape within their own group, while other married their partner from the field. However, it is worth mentioning that engaging in relationship with males in the filed could be seen as a survival strategy.

Shame and loss of dignity can be experienced by both victims of sexual abuse (Mazurana et al., 2002:115), and girls who stated they were in relationship (without specifying if by consent), due to society's´ norms and values. As explained by one girl,

> *When I tried to start my life I had two kids, and I could never again sit next to my father. I feel ashamed; I feel I do not anymore deserve that honour because I came back pregnant. I left when I was 15 years old. I was beautiful, I was ready to find a family, but I came back with two kids.*
>
> Informant 12

This was evident within the cultural and traditional belief of the society, whether being associated with an armed group or not. One girl who became pregnant after returning from her time with the armed groups was rejected by the woman she was living with, not for being a soldier, but because of the pregnancy. This was a cultural aspect, as several of the informal conversations pointed to the fact that in Burundi, having a child outside of marriage was a reason for being rejected by the family and ending up on your own, no matter if the girl had a background in an armed group or not. This girl was evidence to this. She went from receiving some help, to not being able to ask for anything after having her baby.

Secondly, the simple fact of being a soldier, and the behaviour of one, goes against the traditional and cultural ways in how a woman should behave. At an initial stage, even before joining, the qualities which females are said to possess, such as "strength, independence, courage, persistence, and character" (Keairns, 2002, quoted in Coulter, 2008:14) would go against the belief of being a passive, polite, and respectful housewife. During the time in an armed group, as a soldier, stealing, killing, and performing acts of violence, is going against the local understanding of appropriate behaviour, as well as the generally accepted notions of right versus wrong.

4.32.1 Current behaviour

While both these views concern the girls´ behaviour during their engagement with the armed groups, there seems to also be a possible reason for rejections within their current behaviour as well. When returning from the armed groups, some of the girls stated how they had some kind of behavioural problem that they had to deal with. One girl testified how she had developed an addiction to sex. Another girl explains how, in her opinion, girls from the field often do have behavioural problems, such as a higher ego, explaining how if they were greeted, they would not greet back, further she states "they had that look of superior(ity)" in addition to having anger problems. One girl simply stated how she had a problem with anger, while another one explains more in details,

> *"The way I was looking at people, the way I was behaving. I could look at you and try to look scary, and I could think badly about you, even if I didn't know anything about you, but slowly I changed."*

Informant 18

One girl stated how the anger due to the rejection from the community members gave her the desire to kill the community members.

> *When local community know you are coming back they are afraid. They think you are going to kill them. I went back with another girl who I escaped with. When they saw us they were running away from us. We were asking for food but they were scared that we were coming to kill them. So in our heart we felt it, and I said to the other girl that I was with, we should have brought weapon and killed them all as long as they are not helping us. We were used to steal, so we stole the goods and food, because we needed food.*

Informant 1

Such a behavior could be due to the war experiences themselves, or as a reaction to the rejection the girls receive. Either way, it can be said to be an obstacle for a successful reintegration, or as a factor that slows down the process of reintegration. It is therefore difficult for the girls to reintegrate, having no training in how to behave with others. When girls or women fail to match such traditional understanding of how a woman should behave, it might lead to lack of respect and trust towards them by other community members.

On the other hand, several girls explained how they would be quiet and passive to any type of insults or when people tried to provoke them. One girl explained how being humble and quiet, and not respond has helped in the reintegration. This could be seen in relation to the behaviour they think they *should* have. As mentioned by Ntabona as well, who describe how the girls should, according to traditional views, be passive and quiet.

> *Sometimes they can also try to provoke fights, in order to be able to tell the administration that the demobilized is doing this and that. So because of this we just have to be quiet.*
>
> Focus group participant

However, several girls in one of the focus groups could state that despite their attempt to be passive towards the community´s verbal rejection, they were still not able to gain community acceptance.

> *Yes we are human, of the human race, but the others are treating us as animals.*
>
> Focus group participant

4.33 Gender differences according to the girls

One could assume that the traditional and cultural aspects mentioned here, could cause additional reintegration challenges or increased stigmatization and marginalization against girls. However, interestingly, the girls had quite varied understandings and opinions concerning whether it was the boys or the girls who faced the toughest process upon return. A total of seven girls stated that there were gender differences when it came to reintegration challenges, five of which had the opinion that boys have a worse time getting accepted by the community. Their reasons for such an opinion was due to the boys´ ego gained in the field, explaining how they would come back feeling superior to other community members, giving orders. Additionally, a boy is unable to marry without money, whereas a girl could find a

husband who would provide for them. Also, when girls marry they leave their home community and are able to start over again, while boys who marry stay in their old community and will have to deal with the rejection, as explained by one. Boys will be stigmatized as thieves and rapists. One girl explained how her opinion was that for the boys, changing their behaviour after the field was a more challenging task, than for girls, and community members would assume that they would continue with the same behaviour as when in the field. As explained by another girl, society is more soft and careless about the girls who return. However, one girl explained how it is easier to get accepted for boys, though without any further explanations, but stating an example of how boys were accepted to sit with civilians, sharing drinks at the local restaurants, while girls were not permitted to do so. Seven girls did not see any difference between genders, and argued that both boys and girls have had the same task in the field, they face the same rejection, or as one stated, "there were no rejection for anyone". Nine girls had no opinion about the matter.

As mentioned before, soldiering did not seem to be a respectable occupation for either gender, and many girls pointed to the fact that both genders experienced rejection. But to which degree gender differences exist is hard to determine seeing how no boys were interviewed for this research. However, due to the traditional and cultural understanding of a woman, it is evident that girls do face different challenges than boys, concerning how soldiering and the activities engaged in when in the field, go against such values and beliefs. However, one cannot leave out the possibility of whether or not boys face increased stigmatization, due to the assumptions of being rapists and in relation to other behaviour in the field.

4.34 The role of the Bashingantahe and its importance for reintegration

Through the informal and formal interviews with locals and foreigners, as well as aid organizations and other persons of interest, knowledge was gained about the traditional system of conflict resolution, the Bashingantahe council. The secondary data collection of available literature, showed the significance of such an administrative system, particularly in community and family reconciliation (Dexter & Ntahombaye, 2005:15). Despite this, the system´s role within the reconciliation of child soldiers and their families and communities, has as far as the author knows, not been researched or mentioned in relation to each other in existing literature. It was not until the pilot interviews that the connection between the reintegration and the council´s importance became evident. Despite the fact that the Bashingantahe council has been argued to have lost its importance and role and lacking

accountability towards the community (Nindorera, 2002-2003:2), nine girls stated the Bashingantahe council had a positive role in the social reintegration. For these girls the assistance was seen through counselling and advice on how to behave and act with others. Community members were encouraged to welcome them and show them support. The wise men worked with both partied with the aim of reconciliation.

One girl thanked the wise men, together with her family, for getting her out of jail after being arrested shortly after her escape from the group. She was accused of being a killer upon returning to the community. Despite her personal decision to join, the wise men and her family managed to convince the authorities that she had been abducted and forced to join, and released her as a result. According to one girl, after verbal discussions between her and the community members, the wise men tried to reconcile them. According to the girls the wise men would argue for their rights and for community acceptance as the members of the community felt anger and blamed them for the loss of their own loved ones. She further explains the way in which the wise men approached and spoke to other community members.

"She is an orphan; would you be happy if she had died too? Do you think she hated your kids? Your kids were the ones who decided to join. Now it is time to rebuild the community. Don't blame your kid´s deaths on her. She could have died to. Would that have given you more peace, more joy?"

Informant 6

Several of these girls explain how the reconciliation assistance was of importance and meant a lot to them. How they were telling the community and the former child soldiers to forgive each other and start a new life together as well as preventing any judgemental behaviour from the community towards the girls. One girl explained how when other community members would not invite them home, the wise men would. Another girl explains the importance the wise men had in resolving a land dispute, when she returned home after being away for so long, avoiding hostility from community members.

Three girls stated that they had a negative role. One girl explained how the wise men had demanded money in order for her to obtain a demobilization card from them. This was a card that would identify them as rebels and provide the former soldiers the possibility of gaining reintegration assistance. Another girl stated that the wise men were trying to identify her role within the group, asking her family members for questions about her time with the group, who she went with, how she got there, etc. In this way, the wise men were not assisting her in the reintegration, but rather making an effort to keep the neighbourhood safe.

Despite the fact that one informant claimed that there was no assistance from the wise men, she adds that one meeting was arranged between the community members where the wise men encourage the participants to not hurt the returning soldiers, but rather welcome them and help them back into civilian life.

4.35 Summary

Traditional and cultural aspects do have a significant impact on the former female child soldier reintegration process. Although spiritual rituals and ceremonies are said to not be used in Burundi other traditional and cultural aspect have been of importance. This was most evident in the social reintegration, where the girls are often rejected due to the traditional view of women. Their behaviour both during but also after the conflict is said to go against the expected and approved behaviour of a women. However, the traditional system of Bashingantahe is confirmed to have both negative and positive impact, with the latter more frequent. The wise men have, due to their power and influence within the society, provided reconciliation support between the former female child soldiers and the members of the community.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Despite the fact that research has placed abduction as the predominant recruitment method in Africa (McKay and Mazurana 2004, quoted in McKay, 2004:22), the foremost mode of recruitment for this sample was enrolment by personal decision, as stated by seventeen girls. Although it could be discussed to what degree the girls were left with other choices, rather than to join, due to lack of alternatives in the time of war. The majority of the girls cited their reasons for joining to include hopes of gaining a better life, lack of safety and fear. However, a few girls clearly decided to join based on anger, and the desire for revenge.

A significant degree of the girls were actively involved with the fighting as combatants. Seventeen girls had the role as fighters, either as their only task or overlapped by other roles. Additionally it became clear that a few of the girls possessed powerful positions or roles within the armed group. Despite this, the overall experience of being associated with the groups included horrible living conditions, lack of freedom and possibility of exiting the group, exposure for sexual and physical abuse, all which has severe consequences for the girls in the aftermath of war.

All girls were recruited when they were below eighteen years of age, but the large majority were separated from the group after turning eighteen. They were therefore exposed to marginalisation in the DDR programs. The girls who escaped or were set free by the groups themselves, automatically fell outside the official DDR program. Those who were demobilized were above eighteen, and therefore not eligible for the DDR that was specialized for children.

For those girls who went through the official DDR programs, assistance in form of economic support was received, though with a great difference in amount of money. It was evident that for this sample, those who had been members of the CNDD-FDD, the party currently in power, received a significantly higher amount of money than those who had been associated with part of the opposition, the FNL. The girls who received assistance from other reintegration programs by local or international humanitarian organizations were to a much higher degree satisfied by such assistance and training. The lack of support and the failure of the official DDR program to assist these girls has had remarkable consequences on these girls, who, were in great need for assistance after a significant amount of time with the armed groups. Most of the girls were left on their own, with their families and caretakers, to reintegrate back into civilian life, without any other type of support.

The result of this, and their past, caused the majority of the girls to be stigmatized and marginalized by the community members. Some even experienced this from their own family members, extended family or other caretakers. However, it was in the community that the rejection of the girls was most evident, with 87 per cent of the girls stating that they had experienced some sort of rejection, marginalization or stigmatization.

The majority, as many as fifteen girls, stated that the most difficult thing when retuning from the armed groups was in relation to these social aspects. However, despite literature emphasising on the importance of the family and community reunification and reconciliation in the reintegration process, several of the girls saw other challenges as their main obstacle in returning to civilian life. Twelve girls mentioned issues related to economic aspects or health challenges. The total amount of the girls exceeds twenty-three, as some girls mentioned more than one challenge.

A link between these aspects is clearly present, and the girls noted how an improvement within one of the areas, could also lead to improvement of other areas. As they explained, coming home with some economic support that could have helped their family members would have been of great importance in the reconciliation process. Additionally the benefit of social acceptance would have been of assistance in several aspects of their lives. This was due to the possibility of being able to ask the members of the community for assistance and help if being in need of food, money or psychological support. This could, in best of cases, improve their economic and livelihood conditions.

In regards to the process of reintegration, traditional and cultural aspects of the area were proven to have had an impact. It was clear that within Burundi, traditional healing ceremonies and rituals were not used as they have been in other African countries. Furthermore, the traditional understanding of women had a great impact on the family and community acceptance. Soldiering is not viewed as a respectable occupation, and the behaviour of female soldiers goes against the traditional views of women on several aspects. A girl associated with the armed group is believed to have been participating in sexual activities, and to be the "wife of all the rebels", according to the girls. This, together with atrocities they are believed to have participated in, causes rejection, often through stigmatization and marginalization.

However, the reasons for rejection, which are often argued to be high in particular for girls who have been sexually abused (Machel, 1996:14), and based on the perception that these girls don't follow the norms of the community where sexual relations are not allowed for underage and unmarried girls (McKay, 2004:25), was not often brought up by the girls. It

was rather the fear and prejudices from community members that the girls saw as their main reason for rejection.

An interesting aspect is the role of the Bashingantahe council in the reintegration of the former female child soldiers. Being that they were still considered important and respected within the community, their opinion and their role in reconciliation was proven to be both of positive and negative character for the girls. The importance of including the community and making them understand seems essential for community acceptance, and the Bashingantahe council could provide this type of sensitivity support between community members and the former female child soldiers. In a situation where the Bashingantahe council does not wish to support or actually rejects the girls; this could additionally increase the stigmatization and marginalization. This is an aspect that is in great need of more research, and their role in the reintegration should be taken into consideration.

These former female child soldiers are in great need for reintegration support. What they have received for assistance is far from sufficient. In addition to currently struggling against poverty and difficult living conditions, nearly all the girls are affected by the burden of social exclusion, in particular by community members, makes their lives even more challenging. Few have been able to successfully reintegrate. The majority blamed this on this on social challenges, often due to the traditional and cultural aspects within the Burundian society. The girls own views of the future was characterised by hopelessness and day-to-day struggles and their future prospects were perceived as horrendously lacking. Until these girls see further involvement from close family and friends as well as both the local and international communities we will continue so see re-integration as an endless struggle.

> *You have asked us about our history, our current life, but I can't say our future, because we don't have a future, there are no plans for our future, for us the future doesn't exist.*
>
> Focus group participant

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Appendices

Appendix 1:

Interview guide: In-depth interview with former female child soldiers

A. Could you tell me about your present situation:
1. Where do you live now?
2. Who are you living with?
3. Current occupation?

B. Could you tell me about you life before the war and the recruitment to armed groups?
4. Where are you from?
5. With who did you live?
6. Daily routines? Student? Job?

C. Could you tell me when and how the recruitment happened?
7. What year did you become recruited?
8. How old were you when you got recruited?
9. How did the recruitment happen?

Voluntary:
10. If voluntary, why?
11. Was there any ethnical/political reason/background for this choice?
12. Support from family?
13. Did other forms of recruitment take place?

D. Could you tell me about your time with the group?
14. What group did you join?
15. Your tasks within the group?
16. How were you treated?
17. Sexual abuse within the group?
18. Was it as you expected?
19. Worst part
20. Did you gain anything from it? ("best" part)
21. Looking back on the experience, would you do it again? Why/Why not?
22. How many people/girls and ages?
23. How many of the people in the group would you say was under the age of 18?

24. Did boys and girls have the same tasks?

25. Did girls participate in the fighting?

26. Did all the girls have the same task?

27. How long were you with the armed group?

28. Any requirements to join the armed group?

29. Re-recruited?

E. How did you leave the armed group and what happened I the time after? (Life after the time with armed groups)

30. How and why did you leave the armed group?

31. What happened in the time after being separated from the group?

32. Any time of behaviour and socializing it was hard to get used to?

33. How did your family receive you at the time you came back?

34. Why? (What would be the background for such treatment?)

35. How did the community receive you at the time you came back?

36. Why? (What would be the background for such treatment?)

37. Do you think there is any difference between boys and girls when it comes to the acceptance of the community and family? Why/what?

38. Where there anyone in the community that helped you in the social reintegration?

39. Do you know if there are any traditional values and beliefs that somehow have affected the acceptance from your community and family?

40. Was there any stigmatization? (Explain that many girls experience rejection due to the belief that they were involved in sexual activities during the time with the groups).

F. Where you part of any DDR programs? (Both if they demobilized through government DDR or at a later stage).

41. How did you become a participant of the DDR/reintegration program?

42. Any requirements in becoming a participant?

43. What kind of support did you receive?

44. Did the support help?

45. Any follow up after the program ended?

46. Any other programs/project you have participated in?

G. Main challenge (research question 1).

Explore more on the overall challenges with the armed groups. This is in general and can be answered with whatever they see as the most difficult thing when being separated with the armed group. What

has been the most difficult and what you think could and should have been done to overcome these challenges:

47. What would you say is the biggest challenge?
48. How could this challenge be overcome?

H. The present situation and relationship with family and community
In order to explore more in depth there are some additional questions concerning the social reintegration. I would like to emphasise the difference from family, community where you grew up, and the community you live now, if different from where you are from:

49. How is the relationship with your **family TODAY**?
50. Why do you think that is?
51. What has been done to overcome the challenges with your family?
52. Did this work?
53. What should/could be done to make it better?
54. Have you heard about any organizations that work with such things?
55. Do you think there is anyone in the community that could have helped you in this process?
56. Do you feel accepted?
57. How is the relationship with the **community where you grew up TODAY**?
58. How do the community treat you?
59. Do you feel accepted?
60. Why have they/have not accepted you?
61. What has been done to make the reintegration easier?
62. Has it worked?
63. Relationship with the **community you live now, how is it TODAY?**
64. Do you have any problems in the community you live now?
65. Do you feel accepted?
66. Do they know your background?
67. Why have they/have not accepted you?

I. Resentment or hostility (not sure this part is really needed since it will most likely be evident in previous questions)
68. Have you felt any resentment or hostility from anyone after the time if war in the form of verbal or physical abuse?
69. Who and why?

70. Have you had any resentment or hostility after the time of war?

71. Who and why?

J. Spirituality and wise men

72. Spiritual/religious ceremonies etc.?

73. Wise men´s role?

K. Future plans

74. Future plans?

75. Needed for achieving future plans?

L. Additional:

76. Relationship/contact with the organization who put us in contact (CARE, CEDAC, NCA)?

77. Anything you would like to add or ask?

Appendix 2:

Background on the informants

Informant	Current Age	Recruitment Age	Recruitment	Armed group	Role	Duration (in years)	Exit mode
1	27	14	Personal Decision	CNDD	Fighter	6	Escaped
2	30	14	Personal Decision	CNDD	Fighter & other tasks	4	Escaped
3	26	10	Personal Decision	CNDD	Fighter & other tasks	7	Demobilized
4	30	16	Personal Decision	CNDD	Fighter & other tasks	9	Demobilized
5	37	14	Personal Decision	CNDD	Fighter & other tasks	5	Escaped
6	29	16	Personal Decision	FNL	Other tasks	4	Demobilized
7	22	7	Forced	JPH	Other tasks	3	Escaped
8	33	15	Personal Decision	CNDD	Fighter	10	Demobilized/reinseted in police
9	33	16	Personal Decision	CNDD	Fighter & other tasks	9	Demobilized
10	27	16	Forced	CNDD	Fighter & other tasks	6	Demobilized
11	29	16	Personal Decision	FNL	Fighter & other tasks	8	Demobilized
12	26	17	Personal Decision	FNL	Fighter & other tasks	4	Demobilized
13	25	16	Personal Decision	FNL	Fighter & other tasks	4	Demobilized
14	32	14	Personal Decision	CNDD	Fighter & other tasks	10	Demobilized
15	31	13	Personal Decision	CNDD	Fighter	8	Demobilized
16	27	13	Personal Decision	CNDD	Fighter	6	Demobilized
17	36	16	Personal Decision	FNL	Fighter	2	Set free
18	27	13	Personal Decision	CNDD	Other tasks	7	Escaped
19	29	16	Abduction	CNDD	Fighter & other tasks	4	Demobilized
20	37	16	Forced	Sans-Echecs	Other tasks	1	Escaped
21	24	12	Abduction	FNL	Fighter	3	Escaped
22	22	14	Forced	FNL	Other tasks	3	Set Free
23	21	15	Personal Decision	FNL	Other tasks	2	Set Free