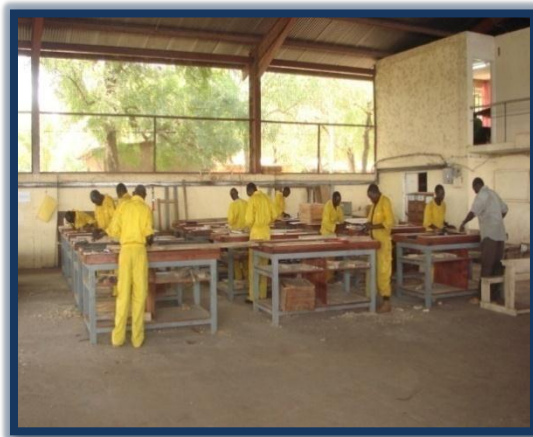


Kim Jial Liah

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) in post conflict South Sudan:

*A study of challenges facing reintegration of ex-combatants (XCs) in selected areas of South Sudan.*



Master Thesis

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*Kim Jial Liah, September 2011, Juba, South Sudan*

## **DEDICATION**

*I dedicate this thesis with love and gratitude to the 'war children' who also came to be known as the lost boys and lost girls of South Sudan. Because of the bitter conflict between North and South, they lost everything that was dear to them, including their childhood, parents, families and communities. They were separated and scattered around the world; always longing, hoping and praying for lasting peace and stability in South Sudan. I also dedicate this thesis to the heroes and heroines of South Sudan who started the idea of liberation but perished in the process. These are the real icons and liberators. They will always remain lasting symbols of hope for us to follow and their legacy will live in our hearts and minds forever. Unfortunately they were not there to celebrate with the rest of us when, on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2011, South Sudan finally became an independent country that will now chart its own destiny.*

## **ABSTRACT**

This study critically examines the strategy and the challenges of the reintegration of ex-combatants in South Sudan. This study was conducted in Juba and Unity State. Data for the study were collected and analyzed using qualitative approaches. The main data collection techniques were in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and observations.

The reintegration model used in South Sudan emphasizes education, skills training and income generating activities as the key strategies of achieving economic reintegration. Social reintegration is achieved through reunification with families and participation in cultural, religious and recreation activities. To help XCs achieve political reintegration, they are encouraged to participate in decision making processes at the community level. Psychosocial care is also offered to help the returnees deal with trauma and stigma.

The number of agencies involved in the implementation process has made standardization difficult and urgently calls for a mechanism of providing oversight to the reintegration process. The XCs are not properly briefed at the point of demobilization creating high expectations among them. There is little follow-up of XCs in their communities of return to assess their progress. The slow pace of economic reintegration is evidenced by complaints about food, lack of education opportunities, training and job placement, among others.

Many XCs complain about the high fees imposed by the school system. Corporal punishment was also found to be a common practice in schools. Although many agencies are expending a lot of resources in the provision of psychosocial support to XCs, the model employed uses group rather than individual counseling, which seems to be less effective.

The reintegration policy does not seem to have given special consideration to the protection and empowerment of women as a vulnerable group in South Sudan. Although many households are headed by women, they are nevertheless subjected to discrimination and gender based violence, including rape. Little attention is given to other vulnerable groups of XCs, especially those who are physically challenged as a result of injuries sustained during the war.

Insecurity is still a serious problem in many parts of the country despite some efforts in peace building. The study noted that armed militias are still terrorizing communities. More effective strategies of ensuring peaceful coexistence of XCs in their communities of return are needed.

Such efforts could include the establishment of peace and reconciliation committees at the grassroots that involve XCs as instruments of peace more meaningfully.

The issues and challenges faced in the reintegration process in South Sudan are closely interrelated. They define a complex web of reciprocal causations, making it difficult to neatly separate causes from effects. Such a multifaceted system requires a holistic identification and analyzes of the existing inter-linkages in terms of thematic areas of the programme. The final product should be a conceptual framework of the national programme, accompanied by an elaborate M&E system that provides regular checks and balances to ensure transparency and accountability.

## KEY TERMS

CAAF<sup>1</sup>: “A child associated with an armed force or armed group: refers to any person below 18 years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities”.

Child reintegration<sup>2</sup>: “According to the article 39 of the convention on the rights of the child, ‘states parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote...social reintegration of a child victim of...armed conflicts’. Reintegration includes family reunification, mobilizing and enabling the child’s existing care system, medical screening and health care, schooling and/or vocational training, psychosocial support, and social and community based reintegration. Reintegration programmes need to be sustained and to take into account children’s aspiration”.

Child soldier<sup>3</sup>: “Any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and those accompanying such groups, other than purely as family members. It includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms”.

DDR: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: A process that contributes to security and stability in a post conflict recovery context by removing weapons from the hands of the combatants, taking the combatants out of the military structures and helping them to integrate socially and economically into society by finding civilians livelihoods.

Disarmament<sup>4</sup>: “(Is) the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosive and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. Disarmament includes the development of responsible arms management programmes”.

Employability<sup>5</sup>: “A combination of skills, knowledge and attitudes that improve a person’s ability to secure and retain a job, progress at work and cope with change, secure alternative employment if he/she so wishes or have been laid off, and enter more easily into the labour market at different periods of his/her working life”.

Empowerment<sup>6</sup>: Refers to women and men taking control over their lives: setting their own agendas, gaining skills, building self-confidence, solving problems and developing self-reliance. No one can empower another; only the individual can empower herself or himself to make choices or to

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<sup>1</sup>Paris Principles (2007)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid

<sup>3</sup>Paris Principles (2007)

<sup>4</sup>DDR (2006)

<sup>5</sup>Paris Principles (2007)

<sup>6</sup>DDR (2006)

<sup>7</sup>DDR (2006)

<sup>8</sup>DDR (2006)

<sup>9</sup>Ibid

<sup>10</sup>Ibid

<sup>11</sup>Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Reinsertion or reception package is a special assistance (usually called *transitional safety net*) to help ex-combatants cushion the effects of this shock and cover their basic material needs and those of their families such as

speak out. However, institutions, including international cooperation agencies, can support processes that can nurture self-empowerment of individuals or groups. Empowerment of recipients, regardless of their gender, should be a central goal of any DDR interventions, and measures must be taken to ensure no particular group is disempowered or excluded through the DDR process.

Ex-combatants<sup>7</sup>: “A person who has assumed any of the responsibilities or carried out any of the activities mentioned in the definition of ‘combatant’, and has laid down or surrendered his/her arms with a view to entering a DDR process. Former combatant status may be certified through a demobilization process by a recognized authority. Spontaneously auto-demobilized individuals, such as deserters, may also be considered ex-combatants if proof of former combatant status over a period of time can be given”.

Reinsertion<sup>8</sup>: “Is the assistance offered to ex-combatants during the demobilization but prior to the longer-term process of reintegration. Reinsertion is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families and can include transitional safety allowances, food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short term education, training, employment and tools. While reintegration is a long term, continuous social and economic process of development, reinsertion is a short term material and/ or financial assistance to meet immediate needs, and can last up to one year”.

Reintegration<sup>9</sup>: “(Is) the process by which ex-combatants acquire a civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time-frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility, and often necessitates long-term external assistance”.

Demobilization<sup>10</sup>: “(Is) the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or armed groups. The first stage of demobilization may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, encampments, assembly areas or barracks). The second stage of demobilization encompasses the support package provided to the demobilized, which is called reinsertion”.

Livelihood<sup>11</sup>: “The capacities, assets (including both material and social assets) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustained when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, and maintain or improve its capacities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base”.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid

<sup>8</sup>Ibid

<sup>9</sup>Ibid

<sup>10</sup>Ibid

<sup>11</sup>Ibid



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

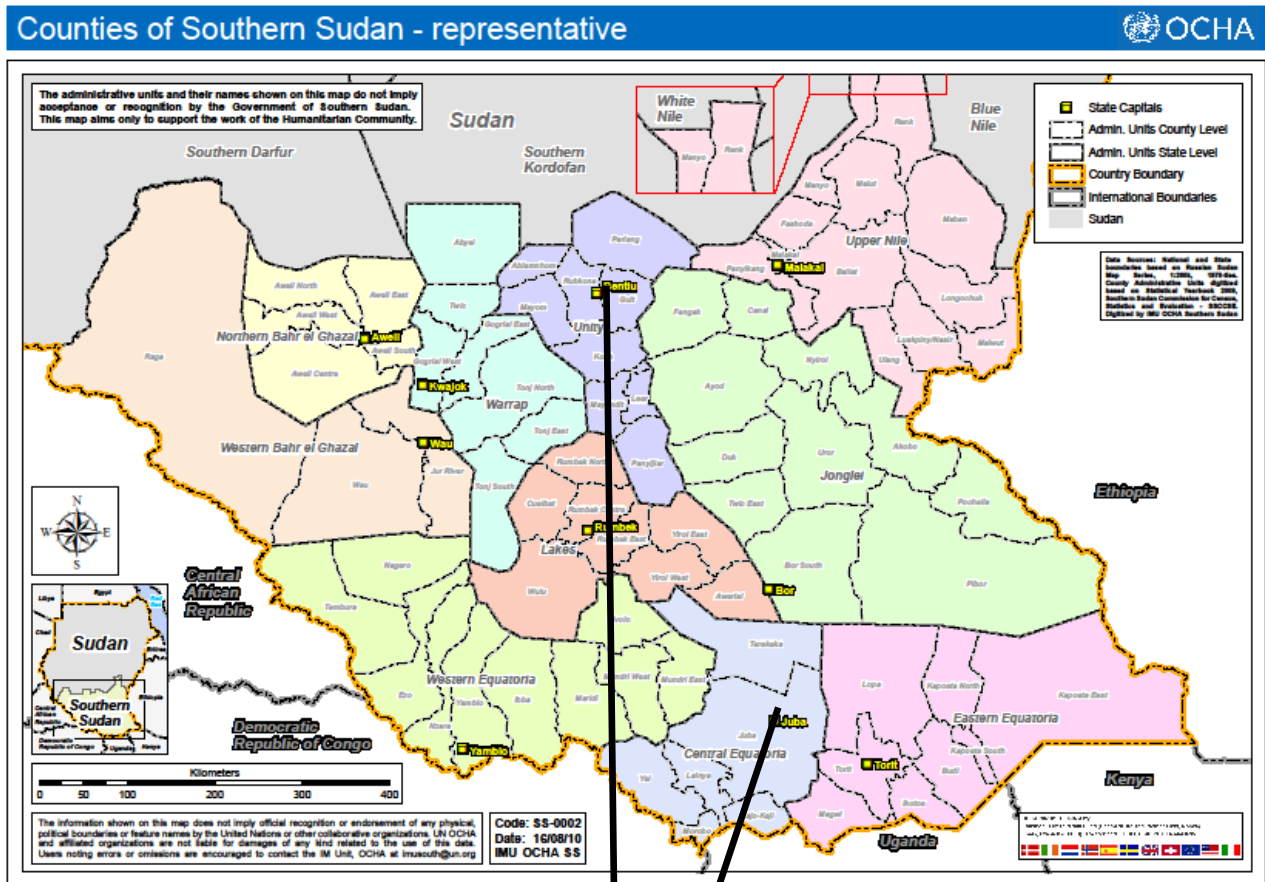
AES	Alternative Educational System
ALP	Accelerating Learning Programme
CAAF/G	Children Associated With Armed Forces or Group
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DDR	Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration
DDR	Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration
FTR	Family Tracing and Reunification
GoSS	Government of South Sudan
GoS	Government of Sudan
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICRS	Information Counseling and Referral Services
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority for Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
IDDRS	Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards
IUNDDRU	Integrated United Nations DDR Unit
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
MYDDRP	Multi-Year Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Project
MTC	Multi-Purpose/Service Training Centre
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
SIDDR	Stockholm Initiative on Disarmament Demobilization Reintegration
SSDDRC	South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission
SAF	Sudan Armed Forces

SPLA/M	Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement
SNG	Special Needs Group
UN	United Nations
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan
US	Unity State
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
VSF	Vétérinaire sans Frontières
WFP	World Food Programme
XC	Ex-combatant

**\*Photos (front page):**

1. The disarmament photo was taken by the researcher in 2006 when working for UNICEF in a demobilization exercise conducted in Khorfulus County, Upper Nile State.
2. The reintegration photo was taken by the researcher during the field visit to MTC training center where former XCs are undergoing training on reintegration opportunities in October 2010 during the field research exercise in Juba Central Equatoria State.

# MAP OF SOUTH SUDAN



(Source: UNOCHA, South Sudan: 15/11/2010)

Research sites

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.0. Overview

Prior to the referendum and subsequent granting of independence to South Sudan on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2011, the whole of Sudan was Africa's largest country with a total area of approximately 2.5 square kilometers. Similarly, the total population for the whole country in 2008 was approximately 39 million. According to SSCCSE (2010), the area of South Sudan is 644,329 square kilometers and the population is approximately 8.26 millions. Sudan has always been divided heavily along ethnic, religious and ideological lines. The people of Northern Sudan are predominantly Sunni Muslims; South Sudan is predominantly Christian; while marginal groups of people still practice African traditional religion. Arabic is widely spoken in the North but English and other African dialects are the *lingua francas* of South Sudan (Sidahmed&Sidahmed, 2005).

The new republic of South Sudan has witnessed one of the longest and most brutal civil wars in Africa. The country was basically in a state of war from independence in 1956 till the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. The journey to self-determination for the people of South Sudan started with the signing of the CPA on 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2005 (Hartog, 2008). According to the CPA, the people of South Sudan got their right to vote in an internationally monitored referendum in which they overwhelmingly voted for separation from the North. The referendum was held between 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> January 2011. After an interim period of approximately six years from the CPA, South Sudan finally became an independent country on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2011.

There is no doubt that the people of South Sudan went through a long and bitter struggle. The conflict resulted in millions of deaths, displacement of people and massive destruction of property. In addition, the economic development of the region totally stalled during the war. The signing of the CPA brought great expectations and potential. The Disarmament Demobilization Reintegration (DDR) programme was, among other things, designed to accelerate the resettlement of former ex-combatants (XCs) into peaceful coexistence with their communities as well as help build the necessary material and human capital for sustainable development.

The war in South Sudan had been heavily commercialized by leaders whose only interest was to maximize their profits regardless of the ensuing losses. It is estimated that more than 3,000,000 people died as a result of the war. Some of the casualties were due to actual fighting in the frontlines but others were due to the terrible conditions associated with war, such as starvation and disease. Thus, the number of deaths due to the conflict exceeded those witnessed in Bosnia, Chechnya, Rwanda and Somalia combined (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2001).

It is also estimated that 4,500,000 people were internally displaced. South Sudan therefore ranks among the countries with the highest number of internally displaced persons in the World (ICG, 2001; United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2007). The war had a terrible impact on human development. For example, food production stalled, education was abandoned, public health was ignored and construction of public utilities neglected. Not a single tarmac road was constructed during the war period. The negative effects of the conflict were witnessed throughout the country, from the central regions to the peripheries.

In the early 1980s and throughout the 1990s, over 14,000 child soldiers in South Sudan had been recruited jointly by the local chiefs and Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). As described later in this chapter, the term child soldiers refer to minors who are recruited to fight during the war and therefore engage in armed combat. In South Sudan, these children were referred to as the 'Red Army'. Child soldiers are different from children associated with Armed Forces/Groups (CAAF/Gs). According to Betancourt, Borisova, Rubin-Smith, Gingerich, Williams and Agnew-Blais (2008), CAAF/Gs are children who live with soldiers in the barracks and are used by soldiers as cooks, porters or messengers but do not carry guns or engage in armed combat, as described later in this chapter.

The child soldiers recruited into the "Red Army" were taken for military training in Ethiopia with the approval of the former Ethiopian Head of State, Mengistu Haile Mariam. The aim of the SPLA was to equip these children with military skills so that they could return to Sudan and fight alongside the rebel forces. After three years of military training, some of the children were taken to the frontlines where they experienced brutal fighting and killings between the tender ages of 10-12 years.

It was not until after the 1990s that the international community realized that the SPLA leadership was recruiting children into the war. As a rebel movement fighting for self-rule, they were criticized and requested to stop the use of child soldiers. Child Rights advocates used various instruments to oppose the use of children in the war. Generally, according to the Optional Protocol of the Convention of the Rights of the Child:

Armed groups that are distinct from the armed forces of a State should not, under any circumstances, recruit or use in hostilities persons under the age of 18 years..... State parties shall take all feasible measures to prevent such recruitment and use, including the adoption of legal measures necessary to prohibit and criminalize such practices.... (*Article 4, Para. 1 & 2*).

Disagreements arose within the movement on the issue of the recruitment of children into the war with one faction led by Nasir, opposing the practice. This disagreement eventually led to a breakaway between Nasir's faction and the faction led by the late Dr. John Garang De Mabior. The warring parties within Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) turned a blind eye to the international legal standards that required them to stop the recruitment of children. Their continued recruitment of children into the war led to many children being killed, maimed, enslaved or raped.

It was not until various stakeholders such as Save the Children, World Vision, and International Rescue Committees for the Red Cross (ICRC) joined the international community in condemning the recruitment of children into the war as a violation of human rights that steps were taken to end the practice. There was a move, first to identify child soldiers and CAAF/G; and secondly, to find out which other vulnerable groups existed in the army. Other vulnerable groups were defined as old people, the disabled and chronically ill soldiers. These groups were to be separated and taken back to their communities for purposes of reintegration. This led to the creation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) initiative headed by the South Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (SSDDRC).

The SSDDRC is therefore a government institution created and empowered by the CPA (2005) and mandated to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate former ex-combatants (XCs) and child soldiers into the communities. Its work is supported by NGOs, CBOs, and UN agencies.

As soon as the SSDDRC embarked on its work, the commission soon realized the process of reintegrating XCs back into their communities, with the expectation that they live normal lives,

faced major challenges. This study was therefore motivated by the desire to understand the experiences of XCs during the reintegration process, the challenges they face in the new South Sudan Republic, their coping mechanisms and the possible mitigation to such challenges.

The signing of the CPA brought stability and put an end to the war. The parties that were signatories to the CPA – the SAF and SPLA - unanimously agreed to the DDR programme, as a key strategy for the implementation of the CPA. According to the National DDR Strategic Plan (2007),

The DDR programme shall take place within a comprehensive process of peace and national reconciliation, post conflict stabilization, peace building, conflict reduction and confidence building, and most importantly, reintegrating XCs into the civil society, while according priority to vulnerable and high risk groups like children, women, disabled and the elderly (p. 2).

Although the National DDR Strategic Plan covers both North and South Sudan, the focus of this study is exclusively the reintegration of XCs in South Sudan. It is with this regard that these and other key documents are referred to. The implementation of the DDR programme in South Sudan calls for enormous resources, effort and discipline. Hence, achieving the objectives of the programme is a mammoth task for a young nation with limited resources, ravaged physical infrastructure and a population that has been at war for decades. To realize results within a reasonable period, the programme will have to involve a multitude of agencies and partners and be extremely participatory. Programmatic support will have to be provided by the government, development partners, donors, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations and international financial institutions (Multi-Year Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Project [MYDDRP], 2008).

### **1.1. The DDR Programme in South Sudan.**

Initially, the DDR programme in South Sudan focused on children. After the massive recruitment of children into the war by the SPLA and other forces involved in the war in South Sudan, human rights organizations intervened and started negotiating for their release. These organizations were relying on international legal standards, such as the Paris Principles, the African Charter, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to advocate for, and obtain the release of the children.

The Paris Principles generally outlined the steps that should be followed when reintegrating children. For example, after they are reunified with their families, children below 15 years should be helped to return to school, whereas those above that age need to be provided with a combination of catch-up education and vocational training to increase their chances of finding gainful employment (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2007).

The process of reintegration is more difficult and slow compared to disarmament and demobilization. It continues over a long period, requiring careful planning and a great deal of commitment by the implementing parties. According to MYDDRP (2008), the XCs will benefit from the "...economic reintegration packages, which will also have a psycho-social and/or a life skills component to address the psychological and social aspects of XCs' and SNG's reintegration" (p. 19). The reintegration process should also benefit the communities in which XCs return. Such communities should be provided with basic social services. According to UNESCO (2010), it is generally important to:

....establish schooling as quickly as possible for communities and individuals affected by conflict because it provides stability, an investment in the future and a place where children will be cared for, freeing up parents to set about the task of reconstructing their communities and their livelihoods (pp. 184 -185).

In the early 1990s, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the SPLA and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The parties agreed to the release of all children who were in the forces in South Sudan. Therefore, the SPLA is credited with being the first rebel movement to accept in principle the release of all children that were within their ranks. According to UNICEF (2001), more than 14,000 child soldiers had been disarmed, demobilized and reunified with their families in South Sudan by the end of the 1990s.

Soon after the release of the child soldiers, it became apparent that there was little reunification and reintegration happening and the process needed a more stringent approach. For example, in Bhar el Ghazel in 2001 and 2003, most of the children released from the fighting forces had been kept in a compound in Rumbek town without reunification and proper reintegration. They had only been given reinsertion packages as morale boosters before they were taken home. Back in their communities, they had difficulties adjusting to the daily life in the villages (UNICEF, 2008).

The DDR was the main tool of implementing the CPA. Both parties to the conflict took the agreement seriously and a widespread programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of XCs was initiated in the entire South Sudan. Sources such as UNICEF (2010) estimated that up to 3,000 CAAF/Gs had been removed from the SPLA and its allies between 2005 and 2010. Yet a sizable number of children were left in the barracks of SPLA because their parents lacked the resources to support them at home, given the high levels of poverty in South Sudan.

In 2009, SPLA carried out a rapid registration of the categories of vulnerable groups that needed to be removed from their forces. The SSDDRC and SPLA registered 42, 256 XCs in South Sudan, Southern Kordofan and the Blue Nile state. This registration was first and foremost done to help the SPLA identify and remove child soldiers who were still in their army. It was also meant to downsize the SPLA army in order to create a more professional force in readiness for an independent South Sudan. Hence the DDR programme was ongoing in South Sudan at the time of this study.

## **1.2. Reintegration Process in the Republic of South Sudan**

The main objective of the reintegration process is to facilitate the transition of XCs from the military to civilian life. A successful reintegration programme should therefore facilitate the XCs to join their communities, live in harmony and start earning a sustainable livelihood (SSDDRC, 2008). According to the CPA (2005), the key dimensions of the reintegration process include psychosocial, economic and political reintegration.

MYDDRP (2008) describes the process of psychosocial reintegration at various levels and the priority areas that should be addressed. The policy states that:

“...the programme will also advocate for the design and implementation of local, regional, and national mechanisms to address psychosocial concerns and foster reconciliation and an emotional healing process” (p. 21).

The psychosocial reintegration of an XC also takes into consideration the family within which the person is expected to live. SSDDRC (2006) asserts that:

the “social reintegration, as part of the DDR process, is in part an effort to re-establish trust, rebuild social capital, and restore social cohesion between ex-combatants, families, communities and the state” (p. 59).

In South Sudan, the return of XCs to their families and communities is taken seriously. Traditional rites are performed by community leaders, elders and traditional healers to welcome the XCs. The XCs are requested to discard their military clothes and are immediately provided with civilian clothes to wear. The wearing of civilian clothes is symbolic and signifies a return to peace and harmonious coexistence with the rest of the community. This serves as the beginning of the psychosocial reintegration of the XCs in South Sudan.

The economic reintegration of XCs in South Sudan emphasizes education and skills training. However, upon return to their communities, they are given short term support in form of food rations for three months to cater for five people. A basic kit of non-food items is also provided together with a one-time cash handout amounting to 860 Sudanese pounds for transport home. The MYDDRP (2008) policy states that:

Through the economic reintegration support services, linkages will facilitate access of XCs and SNGs to livelihood options, skills development and referral services, aimed at linking beneficiaries with national programmes, UN, NGOs, private sector and donor funded projects and programmes for employment, self-employment, formal education and other livelihood support services (p. 19).

Political reintegration of XCs in South Sudan has been somewhat difficult because the communities are still fearful of the XCs. Some of the XCs have been involved in crime and violence against communities. In such situations, efforts to reintegrate the XCs into civilian life are often hampered by mistrust and suspicion (SIDDR, 2006). Despite these challenges, current efforts in South Sudan have focused on involving the XCs in community affairs such as local welfare committees. According to SSDDRC (2008), political reintegration is about having the status of XCs respected and their voices heard in the communities.

### **1.3. Profile of the XCs in South Sudan.**

In this study, an XC is defined as any person who took part in the armed struggle in South Sudan. Although most of the XCs were fighting for the liberation of South Sudan within organized groups such as the SPLA, there were other soldiers who were fighting in different factions and militias with varying agendas and ideologies. The conflict in South Sudan involved various categories of people. Male adults were the first people to be recruited into the fighting by various groups. Soon, the fighting forces started recruiting women oftentimes by force or

abduction to work as cooks, porters, sexual partners or wives. There were however women who voluntarily joined the fighting, especially as the war progressed.

Child soldiers were the third category of people to be recruited into the fighting forces as earlier stated. In a detailed report on the social reintegration of children in armed conflict, Betancourt *et al* (2008) recommend the use of the widely accepted UNICEF definition of a child soldier as: “Any person under eighteen years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers, and those accompanying such groups, other than purely as family members” (p.9). This definition includes children who are recruited forcibly as well as those who join the forces voluntarily. Girls under eighteen years of age who are recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriages are also included in this definition. Betancourt *et al* (2008) also define CAAF/Gs as children who spend time with armed groups or live in the barracks but are not engaged in armed combat pp. 8-9). These children are often used as messengers, cooks or porters.

It is however important to stress that the conflict in South Sudan was rather complicated and it sometimes becomes difficult to make clear distinctions and delineations among some of the groups of people that were involved in the fighting. For example, because the war took so long, children who had initially been recruited as child soldiers matured into adults while still fighting. Other children who may have been born and raised in the camps grew up to take up guns and become adult soldiers. Women who may have been abducted for sexual purposes or forced marriages eventually joined the forces and became experienced fighters. Similarly, single women who may initially have joined the conflict voluntarily may have gotten married to soldiers and raised children in the barracks. Therefore the XC in South Sudan can be any or a combination of these categories.

In this study, informants were sourced from among the different categories of XCs. These included adult male and female XCs and former child soldiers. This was deemed important because different categories of XCs have unique experiences and needs. As Maxted (2003) asserts, former soldiers tend to have complex and diverse experiences both during and after the war and these experiences most likely shape their psychosocial outcomes and adjustment during the reintegration process.



Because of their harsh and cruel backgrounds, XCs are sometimes reluctant to fully abandon the option of armed struggle and embrace reintegration. Harsch (2005) has noted that former soldiers are more likely to become criminals when no positive options are available to them. Similarly, they may become war mongers or war lords and wage war against the establishment whenever they are overwhelmed by frustrations and hardships. For example, Joseph Kony of Uganda recruited former soldiers, including child soldiers, into the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The soldiers refused to be reintegrated into the National Resistance Army (NRA) of Uganda. Kony and his militia have been waging a guerilla war against the Ugandan government of President Yoweri Museveni for decades and are responsible for horrifying atrocities against innocent civilians. Chapter Two looks at some of the leaders involved in similar illegal activities in South Sudan.

#### **1.4. Problem Statement**

The Republic of Sudan is not the first country to adopt the DDR as a strategy for implementing peace agreements. Similar initiatives have been carried out in Uganda, Congo, Nigeria, Kosovo, Somalia, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Tibet, Bangladesh and Indonesia (UN - Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards [IDDRS], 2006). In these countries, child soldiers, CAAF/Gs and adult XCs were disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated into their communities. The Republic of South Sudan therefore can learn from the experiences of these countries.

This study will focus on the reintegration process as a component of the DDR programme in South Sudan. Betancourt *et al* (2008) have asserted that reintegration is the most difficult phase of any DDR programme. It is a treacherous journey for the XCs especially, because most of them carry the invisible wounds of their war experiences while facing an uncertain future in their communities of return. This is also the period when psychosocial issues among the XCs begin to take precedence. Helping the XCs transition into civilian life is also expensive; sustaining the process requires considerable financial, technical and managerial inputs (Harsch, 2005). Although in general such difficulties may be common with reintegration programmes in post-conflict situations, the critical issue here is how South Sudan is managing the reintegration process. This is the gist of this study.

The intricacies of the reintegration process are perhaps not clearly understood by most people, especially those involved in its implementation. Harsch (2005) further observes that implementation takes long and the allocated budgets are usually not enough to meet the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries. Such shortcomings, if not properly addressed, would continue to encourage the re-grouping of XCs into militias and outlaws.

A compounding factor in South Sudan is the high level of illiteracy among the population including the XCs. Many XCs never received a formal education in the army and all they have going for them are the military titles, such as major or brigadier, which they hold in high regard. The socio-political, psychological, and economic issues also seem to play a critical role in the reintegration of the XCs. The reciprocal relationships among these factors need to be exposed and understood clearly.

### **1.5. The Objective of the Study.**

The objective of this study is to examine the challenges faced and the coping mechanisms applied in the reintegration of XCs in selected areas of South Sudan after the CPA and to inform policy debates on the reintegration of XCs in South Sudan's DDR programme.

### **1.6. Research Questions**

The research questions of the study are:

1. What are the challenges faced in the interpretation, application and implementation of policies on the reintegration of XCs?
2. What challenges do the XCs face in the reintegration process and what are some of their coping mechanisms?
3. How do various institutions (NGOs, government and civil society) support the reintegration of XCs, with regard to education, training, employment?

### **1.7. Need for the Study**

South Sudan achieved independence after decades of war and the citizens now hope for a nation where they will be able to access basic social services such as education, health, water, food and justice. They also look forward to living in a peaceful country where the rule of law and human rights are observed.

The speed at which the people of South Sudan are able to establish the structures needed in the running of a modern state will depend on the successful implementation of the CPA and the DDR programme. Currently, there is a need to understand the challenges faced in the reintegration of XCs as part of the CPA and DDR programmes. Røed (2009) looked at the reintegration process of school children associated with armed forces and groups but this study will focus on both male and female adults XCs and child soldiers. The study should therefore help fill some important knowledge gaps with regard to the reintegration process.

Findings of this study should also indirectly assist implementing agencies in understanding the existing barriers to conflict resolution and peace building efforts in South Sudan. If the reintegration process and peace building efforts fail, XCs may be tempted to return to war thus sabotaging the establishment of a new South Sudan and the aspiration of millions of people. The study should also inform the political leadership and other stakeholders on the level of success of the existing policies as well as the progress made in various reintegration interventions. The findings of this study should lead to the design of better strategies for managing the DDR and other related programmes.

Researchers, scholars and programme officers in the region should also benefit from this study. Organizations working with vulnerable children, such as UNICEF, will find the results of this study particularly useful in designing child protection programmes in conflict zones. Similarly, the study will provide rich secondary data on DDR for experts in the subject.

### **1.8. The Structure of the Thesis**

This Thesis comprises of seven chapters. Chapter One is an introduction to DDR programme and outlines the objective of the study as an investigation of the challenges faced in the reintegration of XCs in South Sudan. Chapter Two of this thesis will discuss the contextual background which will help to best understand how the historical background of the war has affected and shaped the reintegration process of XCs in South Sudan. Related literature and the theoretical framework are covered in Chapter Three. Chapter Four will describe the methods used in conducting the study. Chapter Five will present the findings and answer the three research questions, while Chapter Six will cover the discussion and analysis. Finally, Chapter Seven will give the recommendations and conclusions of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.0. Overview**

This chapter provides a historical background of the forces and events that have shaped the lives, experiences and aspirations of the people of South Sudan. The prolonged war in Sudan attracted international attention for decades. Across the years, many individuals, groups of people, organizations, foreign governments and non-governmental organizations as well as international organizations have been involved with events in South Sudan. The influences of these different groups of people on the events in Sudan have been both positive and negative.

The history of South Sudan is intricately tied to the history of the whole of Sudan. That history falls into three convenient time periods, namely: the period prior to independence or before 1956, the war period (1956-2005), and the post-conflict period after 2005. The bitter and prolonged conflict between North and South can only be understood within a clear historical context that takes into account these three historical time periods.

Although the North laid the initial foundation for the conflict, there is evidence to show that other external forces and groups were drawn into the mix by a progression of varying interests and motivations at different time periods. However, there is a caveat; this research is not about the history of the conflict between North and South, but specifically about the reintegration of XCs in South Sudan. Therefore the war and the historical undertones discussed in this chapter are only important as far as they help one understand clearly the reintegration process and its challenges.

The chapter also discusses some other issues that are critical to the success of the reintegration process such as alternative education system, vocational training and livelihood support as means of empowerment. The problem of high levels of poverty, the plight of female soldiers and existing militias are presented as challenges to the implementation of the DDR programme. Finally, the chapter also discusses existing international tools, legal structures and frameworks that are relevant in the successful implementation of the CPA and the DDR programme. These include: the Rights of the Child (CRC); the Protocol on Armed Conflict (PAC); the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC); the International Convention on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

## **2.1. The Period before Independence in 1956**

From the start of the Christian era up until about 1820-21, Sudan comprised several small and independent kingdoms (Oyenek, 2006). In 1821 the Turko forces of Egypt conquered the country and set up an Islamic state. After several years, the Turko administration was overthrown by the Sudanese Nationalist Insurrection after several years (ICG, 2001). The new leadership continued to impose a theocratic Islamic state under an Islamic religious crusader known as Mohammed Al-Mahdi (Oyenek, 2006). The regime survived for eighteen years until 1898, when it was overthrown by the Anglo-Egyptian condominium rule.

In 1898, the British and the Egyptians overthrew Mohammed Al-Mahdi's regime and took over the control of Sudan. This was the beginning of the Anglo-Egyptian condominium rule, which meant that both countries had joint administrative powers over the country (ICG, 2001). Under this arrangement, the British took control of the South, leaving Egypt to manage the North. This was the status quo until Sudan gained independence in 1956 (Sidahmed&Sidahmed, 2005).

During the Anglo-Egyptian condominium rule, there was no free movement of trade between the North on one hand, and South Sudan, Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile on the other (Oyenek, 2006; Deng, 2010). Although the blockade was imposed to stop slave trade, only businessmen from the North could travel south to sell their products; people from South Sudan were not allowed to travel north.

The formation of an imaginary barrier between North and South by the colonizers created a dichotomy with two different development agendas, lifestyles, cultures and systems of governance. The North remained predominantly Islamic in faith and Arabic in language and culture. In sharp contrast, the South became widely Christianized and the people kept close to their African roots (Majok, 2002). Over time, a vicious cycle developed, which Deng (1995) describes thus: "in the Sudanese context, the more the North asserts its Arabness, the more the South asserts Africanness as a counter identity" (p. 4).

The dichotomy that the colonizers created eventually became a permanent defining feature between the people of South Sudan and the people of Northern Sudan. Deng (1995) further observed that there existed an underlying connotation among the people of Northern Sudan that their close association with the Arabs and being Muslims made them a more superior race

compared to the people of the South. These feelings may have originated from the period that the South Sudanese were taken as slaves and forced to treat their owners from the North as superior masters. The eventual conflict in South Sudan can therefore be traced to this early beginning.

## **2.2. The Period after Independence in 1956**

The first transitional government in Sudan was inaugurated in 1954 but full independence from Britain was achieved on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1956, under a provisional constitution. However, the Arab-led Khartoum government reneged on promises it had made to the Southerners regarding the creation of a federal system. This type of government would have given the South some degree of autonomy. Given the historical tensions that already existed at the time of independence, the Khartoum government's failure to institute a federal system sparked off a mutiny by Southern army officers (Hartog, 2008). Thus the first phase of the civil war in Sudan officially started and was to last for 17 years (1955 -1972).

The National Unionist Party (NUP), under Prime Minister Ismail al-Azhari, dominated the first cabinet but later was replaced by a coalition of conservative political forces. In 1958, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Ibrahim Abboud overthrew the parliamentary regime in a bloodless coup. However, he did not carry out his promises to return Sudan to civilian government. A popular resentment against army rule led to a wave of riots and strikes in late October 1964 that forced the military to relinquish power. The civil war intensified with various leaders from the South agitating for secession (Ouma, 2005).

In April 1965, a coalition government of the Umma and National Unionist Parties under Prime Minister Muhammad Ahmad Mahjoub was formed. The following couple of years, Sudan had a series of governments that proved unable to either agree on a permanent constitution or to cope with socioeconomic problems. The early post-independence governments were dominated by Arab Muslims who viewed Sudan as a Muslim Arab state. In fact, the 1968 constitution was arguably Sudan's first Islamic-oriented constitution. Such actions fueled the civil war even further (Sidahmed&Sidahmed, 2005).

Dissatisfaction culminated in a second military coup in May 1969 by Gaafar Muhammad Numeiri (Hartog, 2008). The new regime abolished parliament and outlawed all political parties. In 1972, the Addis Ababa Agreement led to a cessation of the North-South civil war and promised a

degree of self-rule. This led to a period of 10 years of hiatus in the civil war although tensions and random attacks by armed factions still lingered on. In September 1983, as part of an Islamization campaign, President Numeiri incorporated traditional Islamic punishments drawn from *Shariah* (Islamic law) into the penal code. He later declared a state of emergency, in part to ensure that *Shariah* law was applied more broadly. For example, amputations for theft and public lashings for alcohol possession were common during the state of emergency. Southerners and other non-Muslims living in the North were also subjected to these punishments. These events, and other longstanding grievances, in part led to a resumption of full scale civil war that had been in abeyance during the period 1972-1983.

Numeiri was overthrown in April 1985 and a transitional military council was named, chaired by Gen. Suwar al-Dahab. The council appointed an interim civilian cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Al Gizouli Defalla. Elections were held in April 1986, and the transitional military council turned over power to a civilian government as promised. The government, headed by Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi of the Umma Party, consisted of a coalition of various parties. This coalition dissolved later and reformed several times over the next few years, with Sadiq al-Mahdi and his Umma party playing a central role (Salih, 1990).

During this period, the civil war intensified in lethality and the economy continued to deteriorate. When prices of basic goods were increased in 1988, riots ensued, and the prices were reduced. When Sadiq al-Mahdi refused to approve a peace plan reached by the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and SPLA in November 1988, the DUP left the government. The new government consisted essentially of the Umma and the Islamic fundamentalists. The new establishment intensified the government war against the rebels fuelling the conflict to horrifying levels (Hartog, 2008).

In February 1989, the army requested Sadiq to move towards peace or be thrown out. He formed a new government with the DUP and approved the SPLA/DUP agreement. Nevertheless, in June 1989, military officers under Col. Omar Hassan al-Bashir took over the government with al-Bashir as president and chief of the armed forces assisted by a civilian cabinet. Bashir's regime banned political parties and introduced detention without trial. He further imposed Islam on non-Muslims in the South and enforced *Shariah* law. There were widespread human rights violations by the police and the military especially among the Southerners (Hartog, 2008).

By then, the SPLA controlled large areas of Equatoria, Bahr al Ghazal, and Upper Nile provinces and also operated in the Southern portions of Darfur, Kordofan, and Blue Nile provinces. The government controlled a number of the major Southern towns and cities, including Juba, Wau, and Malakal. An informal cease-fire in May broke down in October 1989 and fighting intensified. In August 1991, internal dissension among the opponents of the late John Garang's leadership of the SPLA split to form the so-called Nasir faction of the rebel army. In September 1992, William NyuonBany formed a second rebel faction, and in February 1993, KerubinoKwanyinBol formed a third rebel faction. In April 1993, the three dissident rebel factions announced a coalition of their groups called SPLA United at a press conference in Nairobi, Kenya. However, frequent clashes among the factions made the coalition lose credibility and slowed the peace efforts.

In 1997, the government signed a series of agreements with rebel factions, led by Lieutenant RiekMachar, under the banner of "Peace from Within." These included the Khartoum, Nuba Mountains, and Fashoda agreements that ended military conflict between the government and significant rebel factions. Many of those leaders then moved to Khartoum where they assumed marginal roles in the central government, or collaborated with the government in military engagements against rebel factions (Hartog, 2008).

### **2.3. Education as a Tool of Oppression during the War in South Sudan**

Education has historically been used as an instrument of domination by oppressive systems throughout the world. Apple (1979) and Giroux (1983) observed that, even in modern times, the curriculum and the school environment have systematically been used to perpetuate social inequalities, injustices and discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender and social class. In South Sudan, the education system was used as tool of domination by the North, particularly in popularizing Islamic education and ideology. This historical development was of course met with strong resistance by the Southerners during the war years.

When President Omar Hassan el Bashir took power in 1989, he specifically embarked on a campaign to impose and popularize *Shariah Law* throughout Sudan. Realizing that the education system was an extremely effective avenue of achieving an Islamic state, he set about restructuring the system. Almost immediately, the education system in the Khartoum-controlled areas changed dramatically. Islamic values were added into the curriculum at all levels. Breidlid



(2005) observes that “In this connection new curricula and textbooks were developed for schools and at university levels, where compulsory courses based on the *Qur’an* and the recognized *Hadiths* were established” (p. 251).

The Southerners who had been displaced by the war and had moved to the North were stigmatized most. They found it difficult to fit into the new system but had no choice. Breidlid (2005) observed that: “...Arabic-language newspapers called them traitors and accused them of bringing diseases, alcohol, and prostitution to the city...” (p. 256).

After the educational policy was changed, one national curriculum was in use throughout the country and Arabic became the medium of instruction. English was taught as a subject and the management of education became the sole responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Education (Breidlid, 2005).

Religious values and the teaching of Arab history were intricately built into the school curriculum. Breidlid (2005) observes that: “...the emphasis on Arab history is conspicuous with hardly any information on the history of the tribal society ... the history of South Sudan is more or less absent from the textbooks and Arab slave trade into the interior of the South is not mentioned” (p. 249). Christian schools that resisted this curriculum were threatened with closure.

#### **2.4. Conditions of Soldiers during the War**

As mentioned earlier, the prolonged war in South Sudan had devastating effects on the population and the physical infrastructure of the country. People were unable to grow food or earn money to feed themselves; malnutrition and starvation therefore became widespread. The lack of investment resulted in what international humanitarian organizations call a “lost generation” who lacked educational opportunities and access to basic health care services. They had little prospect for productive employment in the small and weak economy. Following an internal outcry in March 1989, the Khartoum-led government agreed with the UN and donor nations (including the U.S.) on a plan called Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), under which some 100,000 metric tons of food was moved into both government and SPLA-held areas of South Sudan. Nevertheless, South Sudan has continually been under the threat of starvation due to instability, drought and a whole host of socio-political problems (Rhodes, 1998).

The fighting and the poor economic conditions made the lives of the soldiers fighting for the liberation of South Sudan extremely hard. These soldiers were fighting against a more sophisticated army from the North that was relatively well trained, well fed and well equipped. Soldiers from South Sudan had limited support from outside the country and little resources to acquire enough food, leave alone modern fighting weapons. Those who were captured by the government forces were often subjected to torture and other human rights violation (Human Rights Watch, 1996).

Lack of resources also affected the level of training that a soldier could receive and many were killed by the Khartoum-led forces simply because they lacked military skills and strategies. Lack of food also meant weak soldiers who were easily drained of energy and sometimes the will to fight. The soldiers were also drained by the constant wanderings in the vast regions of South Sudan as they played hide and seek games with the well-armed government forces. Most of the traveling was on foot, which also made life extremely difficult in the bush. The soldiers had very poor access to proper health services, shelter from extreme weather, clothing, clean water or education for the children. Deng (1999) observes that assistance from donor community hardly reached those who needed it most, including the fighting forces, because of managerial and logistical challenges.

The child soldier including CAAF/Gs found it particularly difficult to survive in the bush given the physical demands of combat life, including constant movement, poor nutrition, insecurity, physical and emotional abuse, etc. These minors were particularly exploited by the adults; they were often made to carry heavy gear and the soldiers' personal belongings for long distances with little food and water. The girls and women were sexually exploited as already observed thus violating their rights. Many children did not have access to normal health care services such as immunization and psychosocial care (Hanwana, 2006; Maxted, 2003).

Sometimes the soldiers had to resort to robberies to obtain food and other necessities when life became unbearable. The undisciplined life in the barracks also encouraged some soldiers to become petty thieves among the communities they came into contact with using their weapons. Punishments within the fighting forces were harsh and sometimes bordered on torture. Such situations arose, especially when a soldier was accused of sabotage or passing information to the enemy.

## **2.5. Road to Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005**

The root causes which propelled the war in Sudan included disputes over resources, power, the role of religion in the state and self-determination. The ensuing conflict devastated Africa's largest country, depriving millions of people peace, happiness, self-determination and development. Millions of people were killed, maimed, internally displaced or scattered throughout the globe. The conflict also brought misery and insecurity to the region (Flint & de Waal, 2005).

Over the long years of war, there was a plethora of attempts by various external players, including foreign countries, concerned donors, as well as the parties themselves, to bring the conflict to an end. However, the immense complexities of the war and the lack of political will prevented an earlier resolution. In 1993, the Heads of State of the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) became involved in a more aggressive initiative to bring the parties together. The United Nations closely followed and supported the regional peace initiative under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

Under the mediation of IGAD, the government of the SPLM/A signed a series of agreements referred to as protocols. The Protocol of Machakos was signed in July 2002, in which the parties agreed on a broad framework; setting forth the principles of governance, the transitional process and the structures of government as well as the right to self-determination for the people of South Sudan, and on state and religion (Young, 2007).

The signing of the first protocol set ground for five more protocols. In September 2003, the Protocol on Security Arrangements was signed followed by the Protocol on Wealth-Sharing in January 2004. In May 2004, the following protocols were signed: the Protocol on Power-Sharing; the Protocol on the Resolution of Conflict in Southern Kordofan, Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile States; and the Protocol on the Resolution of the Conflict in Abyei.

There were disagreements on some key issues relating to cease fire and the talks stalled briefly. Talks resumed in October 2004, when the first Vice-President, Ali Osman Taha, and the Chairman of the SPLM/A, the late John Garang, met and issued a joint communiqué on the resumption of talks (Young, 2007).

The CPA was finally signed on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2005, mandating power and wealth sharing arrangements aimed at ending decades of political and economic marginalization of South Sudan (Hartog, 2008). The CPA also mandated that some changes should start to be implemented as the country worked towards independence. For example, new schools were to be developed and vocational centres created to offer skills training as discussed next.

## **2.6. Alternative Education Systems (AES) as a means of Empowerment**

The signing of the CPA brought drastic changes to the curriculum as well as the methods of instruction in schools in an effort to move away from Islamic education. The semi-autonomous Government of South Sudan developed its own educational curriculum borrowing heavily from other countries, such as Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia (Arora, 2003; Deng, 2003; Brophy, 2003). Teachers from neighbouring countries were initially recruited to teach in schools (Sudan Tribune, 2006).

Further, during the conflict many children from South Sudan did not have access to education. The interim government soon realized that there were huge numbers of children of varying ages who needed to be enrolled in school. The ministry, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), embarked on a massive 'Go to School' campaign. Approximately 1.5 million children were enrolled in schools in South Sudan under this campaign (Thomas, 2009). With support from donors such as World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP, South Sudan has made huge strides in enrolling children of school-going age in schools. Nevertheless by the time of this research, a lot remains to be done.

Many adult learning centres also opened up in different states and those who previously missed out on formal schooling are now pouring in daily in search of an education once denied. The XCs are among those joining the mushrooming learning centres in the new dispensation. They often enroll for day or evening classes under the "catch programmes" in their reintegrated communities. Those who are not willing to join the basic education programme enroll in "skills programmes" to help them learn a trade, as mentioned earlier. The Government of South Sudan has flexible educational programmes that target different categories of people. These categories range from XCs who missed out on school because of their involvement in the liberation struggle, to others who dropped out of school because of various reasons. It includes XCs who

missed out on education because they were recruited as child soldiers or CAFFs but became adults in the military.

The Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) is a component of AES. Under the ALP, those who missed out on schooling and are capable can complete primary education in four years rather than eight years (UNICEF, 2008). Many of the XCs who have been demobilized from the army take advantage of the ALP. These different education opportunities are contributing positively to the reintegration efforts.

### **2.7. Vocational Training**

Vocational training, including apprenticeship, is a key strategy of empowering XCs within the DDR programmes (SIDDR, 2006). Through the programme, XCs and others with special needs are given an opportunity to acquire skills based on their aptitudes, abilities and interest. It is however important to consider the employment opportunities in the community where XCs live. According to the ILO (2008), the curriculum should be designed to suit the needs of those who are willing to attain the skills and the demands of the labour market.

Vocational training also aims at making XCs economically self-reliant as well as equipping them with innovative ways of thinking (ILO, 2008). Much of the vocational training in South Sudan is currently supported by donors who also provide exit strategies aimed at benefiting the XCs to the maximum. Some of the organizations offer micro finances to XCs so that they can start their own income generating activities (IGA).

### **2.8. The Plight of Female Soldiers in South Sudan**

Women were part and parcel of the fighting forces and they need special mention because of their vulnerability during conflicts. As observed in Chapter One of this thesis, women were often forced into the conflict as sexual partners, cooks or porters. This does not imply that there were no women who volunteered to join the forces without coercion. However, once in the forces, some of the women were forced into prostitution and their rights grossly violated. They were also subjected to gender-based violence and physical and emotional injuries often associated with such violence.

In his evaluation of the IGAD peace process, Young (2007) critically argues that key stakeholders were excluded from the talks. The mediators' narrow and ultimately negative view

of civil society groups, academicians and constituents meant that interests of certain groups, especially women, were not exhaustively addressed. Harsch (2005) further argues that, in many DDR initiatives around the world, female combatants are often left invisible and their needs overlooked. It is also important to note that communities in South Sudan are quite patriarchal. Men hold power and resources in the family while women care for the family and do most of the agricultural work.

## **2.9. Militias in South Sudan**

In South Sudan, some of the former military leaders have resorted to frustrating the peace efforts after the signing of the CPA by recruiting some of the XCs to continue fighting. The XCs so recruited are often those who, for some reasons, have not found it easy to reintegrate back into their communities. Some of the soldiers involved in this recruitment are former military leaders, for example, Gabriel Tang and George Athor in Upper Nile and late Gatluak Gai in Unity State. These soldiers form illegal militias that terrorize communities through robbery and violence. These rag-tag gangs of undisciplined militias continue to cause untold terror and mayhem in some of the communities despite the continuing peace efforts.

Harsh retaliation from the North has compounded the problem and there has been grave concern from the international community regarding the North's perpetuation of war in the oil-rich Abyei region (African Monitor, 2011). Young (2007) argues that the failure of the mediating parties to deal comprehensively with the dispute in the Abyei region, and especially the North's refusal to implement the Abyei Border Commission's report, will continue to cause conflict in South Sudan.

The former military leaders who are involved in the illegal recruitment of XCs are themselves frustrated by the CPA perhaps because they feel politically isolated by the agreement. Again, Young (2007) has argued that many of these leaders were deliberately marginalized and ignored during the IGAD peace talks. Such leaders will definitely be a threat to the peace process and the stability of the country in the coming years. Examples exist in Africa when long wars were fought after independence because some leaders were power hungry or were unfairly isolated from the political leadership (Harsch, 2005). The government of South Sudan will need to establish ways and means of diffusing such dissatisfaction before it becomes unmanageable.

## **2.10. Poverty as a barrier to Reintegration**

One of the major hindrances to the implementation of the DDR and the reintegration of XCs in particular is the high levels of poverty in post-conflict South Sudan. Conflict and poverty have reciprocal causal relationships; conflict leads to poverty, which leads to more conflict. In South Sudan, people were easily lured into joining the military because they could get food in the barracks, which otherwise was not available at home (Røed, 2009). The barracks also offered a more stable and secure environment compared to the dysfunctional communities from which they had come. Under the DDR programme, the XCs have now returned to the same communities that they left; only to find them languishing in worse poverty than before.

Poverty in South Sudan has been compounded by high population growth rate among rural communities. Over-cultivation and damage to watersheds have negatively affected the resource base. Low agricultural productivity and volatile food prices affect household food security leading to frequent famines and starvation among a huge proportion of the population (Rhodes, 1998; Deng, 1999).

Movement of people, goods and services is hindered by the poor state of the infrastructure. Settlements located away from main thoroughfares have little or no access to social services and markets. Rural folks, especially the XCs, with limited resources and few employable skills mainly depend on subsistence activities within their locales. Unpredictable weather patterns, frequent crop failures, and erosion of natural resources are also among the root causes of poverty in South Sudan. Further, small scale farmers are often hindered by the limited size of their landholdings, low rates of productivity and an inability to improve their incomes. Access to credit and distribution and marketing channels for farm produce are lacking for most rural households (IFAD, 2007).

## **2.11. Livelihood Support**

Livelihood support, as a way of helping communities in South Sudan to recover from the effects of war and poverty, has been documented. Muchomba (2006) presents an evaluation of his findings in his research on livelihood profiles, as follows:

The success or failure of all livelihood systems in South Sudan rests on the ability of people to move and to trade. Mobility allows people to take advantage of seasonal food opportunities in

different areas, such as fish and wild foods; it is also crucial for the survival of the livestock, which depend on the regular migration between dry and wet season grazing areas. Trade (in labor, cattle, and various local products) increases wealth and capital for better-off households, and helps to offset localized production failures in years of bad rain (p. 18).

Many models on livelihood support have emerged in recent times. Such models present alternatives ways of providing support to households with emphasis on the assets and opportunities that are available within an individual household. According to UNESCO (2007), “Livestock may represent the single greatest asset owned by South Sudanese; many of the ethnic groups in South Sudan are pastoralist, owning vast herds of cattle and goats” (p. 19).

In South Sudan, the traditional livelihood support system at the household level is based on cattle rearing, crop production, fishing, collection of wild food, etc. Trade in various combinations of these elements makes up most of the households’ economy, depending on the geographical location (Muchomba, 2006). However, due to decades of war, farmers have generally tended to use antiquated farming methods and are caught in a web of low-level productivity and poverty.

On the other hand, external support from the donors, NGOs, UN and DDR technical committees focuses a lot on income generating activities (IGAs). Such a model seems slow to produce tangible outcomes, especially for CAFFs. For many adult XCs, crop production and animal husbandry have been the primary sources of income. Again these would not be practical options for former child soldiers because forcing children to work on land for long hours denies them access to education. However, most former child soldiers are now grown up and can engage in these activities and still attend training centres part time.

## **2.12. Legal Frameworks**

The implementation of the CPA requires the concerted efforts of all the parties involved; the international community; and the existing international tools, legal structures and frameworks. In particular, the implementation of the CPA will draw heavily on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Protocol on Armed Conflict (PAC). Other frameworks and structures that are relevant to the implementation of the CPA include: the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC); the International Convention on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). These legal frameworks and structures are briefly discussed below.



### **2.12.1. The Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and signed in November 1989. A total of 193 countries have ratified the convention to date, including Sudan. The CRC sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children (Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General [OSRSG], 2009).

The Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict (PAC), as a supporting document to the CRC, came into force in February 2002. The goal of PAC is to prevent the use of children in armed conflict. The instrument is also supposed to protect children caught in the crossroads of war. Under both the CRC and the PAC, parties to the conflict who recruit minors into war violate the rights of the children they conscript.

The CRC is a particularly detailed document with regard to child rights and child protection but even many stable countries in the third world find it extremely difficult to effectively implement it. This is perhaps because the CRC is poorly understood and many poor countries do not have the resources and the technical capacity to effectively implement the convention. There are also fundamental differences between child rights and child protection as enshrined by the CRC. These differences are also not well understood and addressed by policy makers including governments (UNICEF, 2004; Save the Children, 2008).

According to the CRC (1989), child rights are the human rights of children, where the child is any person who has not attained the age of eighteen years. These rights are many and varied but generally include the children's right to human identity, association with both biological parents, access to basic needs of food, universal state-paid education, health care and criminal laws appropriate for the age and development of the child. Interpretations of children's rights range from allowing children the capacity for autonomous action to the enforcement of children being physically, mentally and emotionally free from abuse. Other rights include the right to care and nurturing, play and appropriate participation in state affairs (Bandman, 1999). All children in a country are entitled to these rights regardless of their ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender or socioeconomic background.

Child protection is also a key component of the CRC and is used to refer to structures that have been established by the state to protect children from abuse and maltreatment and

encourage family stability. In countries that are signatory to the CRC, the NGOs and the civil society groups partner with the government in providing child protection services including foster care, adoption, children welfare homes and centres that provide care and support to vulnerable children. A critical element of child protection is the existence of a government-run child protection system that comprises proper investigation of child abuse cases and a referral system to health services including psychosocial care. The referral system should also include investigation, prosecution in a court of law and imprisonment of perpetrators of child abuse, child abduction and trafficking, child neglect and abandonment and other crimes committed against children. The final element in a child protection system is the establishment of family courts or separate courts for minors who are in conflict with the law. Children who are alleged to have committed crimes are therefore not held in custody with adults where they are likely to be abused and their rights further violated (Wulczyn, Daro, Fluke, Feldman, Glodek, & Lifanda; 2010).

In South Sudan huge numbers of children had been recruited into the war as child soldiers or CAAF/Gs while others grew up in the barracks under terrible conditions. Abductions of girls were common. Those directly involved in the war either participated in terrible atrocities or witnessed horrific scenes. Even those who were not involved in the war did not necessarily get appropriate attention and care because of instability, constant movement, hunger and abject poverty within the communities.

A significant proportion of children in South Sudan therefore missed out on their childhood and now must be accorded their rights, including their right to education, health, nutrition, play, citizenship, etc. They must also be protected from further violence as the country recovers from the effects of war. Hence, both the CRC and PAC provide the necessary framework particularly for the reintegration of former child soldiers, CAAF/Gs and generally all children in South Sudan. The real challenge lies in establishing the structures necessary for the effective implementation of these instruments.

### **2.12.2. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court**

The Rome Statute was established by the International Criminal Court (ICC) and adopted in Rome on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July 1998. It came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2002. About 108 countries are parties to this convention. Sudan as a country did not sign or ratify the statute. The ICC

prosecutor, Louis Moreno-Ocampo, has investigated cases of war crimes in countries such as Kenya, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Sudan particularly has been on the radar of the ICC for a long time. The US has often prevailed upon the ICC to investigate crimes committed on innocent people in Darfur, including murder, rape and torture (Robertson, 2005). As a result, President Omar Hassan el- Bashir of Sudan became the first seated head of state to be indicted by the ICC in 2009. It was alleged that soldiers under his command committed war crimes and crimes against humanity, including genocide.

### **2.12.3. The International Convention on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

The International Convention on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 16<sup>th</sup> 1966. It came into force on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1976. A total of 160 countries have ratified the convention including Sudan. The ICESCR has a commitment to work towards providing services such as economic, social and cultural rights to individuals. These rights include the right to work, health, education and adequate standard of living.

The convention is relevant to the reintegration of XCs in South Sudan because it accords the XCs a decent life, education and better health. According to Robertson (2006), XCs must be "...fed and housed and educated; able to find work and paid sufficiently, to make leisure time - spent with family and in the cultural life of the community - a fulfilling experience" (p. 175). For a successful reintegration programme in South Sudan, the ICESCR must be used in conjunction with other tools and frameworks.

### **2.12.4. The United Nations Security Council**

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is charged with maintenance of international peace and security. It has the power to establish peace keeping forces in countries under crisis. It can enforce international sanctions and authorize military action (OSRSG 2009). The powers of the UNSC are legally binding to all the nations who are members of the UN.

One of the main goals of the DDR programme is to maintain peace and security in South Sudan through the effective and efficient implementation of the programme across the country (MYDDRP, 2008). Occasionally, peace has been compromised by squabbles among political

leaders and splinter groups. Some of the former military leaders, who have been unhappy with the new dispensation, have continued to recruit people into militia groups without any known agenda. Were the fragile peace to be grossly threatened in some of the volatile regions of SouthSudan, the DDR implementers could propose to UNSC the use of peace keeping forces to ensure that the CPA is not compromised.

### **2.13. Conclusion**

The conflict in Sudan is strongly tied to the country's history. Over the years, many countries and groups have influenced events in Sudan fueling the conflict between the North and the South. Millions of people have died in the conflict while millions of others have been maimed or displaced. In addition, the people of SouthSudan have been subjected to socioeconomic, cultural and political domination and marginalization by the North for decades.

The fighting forces who are now being reintegrated endured harsh conditions during the conflict. They lacked adequate access to basic social services such as food, shelter, health services, clean water and education. Female combatants and child soldiers, including CAAF/Gs, found it particularly difficult to survive in the bush given the physical demands of combat life, insecurity, constant movement, poor nutrition and physical and emotional abuse.

The signing of the CPA was the culmination of many years of negotiations involving countless people, foreign governments and organizations. The CPA and the referendum that decided on the separation from the North ushered in a new era for the people of SouthSudan. The implementation of the DDR, which includes the reintegration of XCs and child soldiers; and ultimately the socioeconomic development of the people of SouthSudan, now remain the key challenges that the country must focus on.

The reintegration process in SouthSudan will require the concerted efforts of all stakeholders including government, NGOs, the donor community, etc. The process will also need to draw heavily on various international conventions, instruments and legal frameworks such as the CRC, PAC, ICESCR, ICC and UNSC.

## CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.0. Overview

Chapter Three provides a theoretical framework and supporting literature that underpin the study of reintegration of XCs in post-conflict situations. Theories and literature relating to key dimensions of the reintegration process are outlined and discussed. Socialization and social identity are first presented as fundamental principles of the reintegration process. Economic and political reintegrations are then discussed as key dimensions of the reintegration process of XCs. The literature on trauma and stigma, as outcomes of war, is then reviewed. Lastly, the concepts of psychosocial recovery and resilience are discussed in relation to reintegration.

### 3.1. Socialization

Socialization is a term used by sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists and educationists to refer to the process of acquiring norms, customs, behaviour and ideologies by an individual in a particular social setting. Clausen (1968), a sociologist, asserts that socialization provides individuals with the attitudes, skills, and habits that they need to become active members of their particular communities. It is therefore the means by which group norms are achieved and cultural continuity sustained across generations.

During the reintegration process, XCs return to their communities after long absences during which they are exposed to harsh and sometimes unstructured military life. Upon return to civilian life, the XCs have to learn, adopt and sustain community norms, values, rules and roles. In his discussion of the *Social Context Theory*, Earle (2000) claims that the socialization process helps the individual fit into the community and access existing social activities and support networks. In order to understand important aspects of the reintegration process for the individual XC, two theories will be presented in the next two sections. The two theories are the *Ecological Systems Theory* developed by Bronfenbrenner (1977) and the *Constructed Reality*, which was advanced by Berger and Luckmann (1966).

### **3.1.1. Socialization within different environments**

Bronfenbrenner (1977) was one of the first psychologists to adopt a holistic perspective on human interaction and development within different environments. A Russian-born American psychologist, Bronfenbrenner is best known for developing the *Ecological Systems Theory*, which has informed and influenced many scholars and practitioners in psychology. His theory initially described four structures of the ecology of human development namely: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. He later added the chronosystem. These structures are closely interlinked and contain roles, norms and rules that powerfully shape human development. These levels, including their relevance to the reintegration process, are described below.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), the microsystem is “the complex of relations between the developing person and the environment in an immediate setting containing that person” (p. 513). It is the setting in which the individual operates or lives, such as home, school or workplace; and engages in various activities taking on roles, such as being a parent, a teacher, an employee, etc. It is in the microsystem that the most direct interactions with social agents take place; with peers, colleagues, friends and teachers (p. 513).

The individual is not a passive recipient of experiences in the microsystem, but someone who helps to construct the setting. In the context of South Sudan, the microsystem is the setting within which the reintegration of XCs takes place and includes the returnees, their families, the agencies and all other parties directly involved in the process. This could be taking place in children’s clubs, sports clubs, vocational training centres, schools and other learning institutions or other settings where XCs are undergoing or receiving basic skills.

A mesosystem comprises the relationships among microsystems. It is “the interrelations among major settings containing the developing person at a particular point in his or her life” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; p. 515). These occur as a chain of interrelationships such as the relation of family experiences to school experiences; school experiences to church experiences; and family experiences to peer experiences. For example, children who have been rejected at home may have difficulties developing positive relations with teachers and peers at school. For XCs, the schools, churches, etc., must work in close collaboration with families and communities and vice-versa for the reintegration process to be truly effective.

The exosystem is "...an extension of the mesosystem embracing other specific social structures, both formal and informal, that do not themselves contain the developing person but impinge upon or encompass the immediate settings in which that person is found, and thereby influence, delimit or even determine what goes on there" (p. 515). For example, a CAAF/G's experience at home may be influenced by her mother's experiences at work. The mother might be required to work overtime for long hours to support her children, which in turn requires her to be absent from home for long periods of time. The children are then left at home without much parental care and become frustrated and undisciplined.

A macrosystem refers to "the overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture, such as the economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems, of which microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem are the concrete manifestations. Macrosystems are conceived and examined not only in structural terms but as carriers of information and ideology that, both formally or informally, give meaning to particular agencies, social networks, roles, activities, and their interrelations" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; p. 515).

Therefore, the macrosystem also includes the norms, beliefs and activities that are commonly accepted within particular subcultures. For example, upon demobilization, the XCs are enrolled into schools and institutions to learn new skills or basic numeracy. The classes they are enrolled in become subcultures or macrosystems to them because they operate under a common system and use a common curriculum. They receive the same instruction and graduate with similar skills across all the schools and states where the same education system and training are offered.

The fifth dimension in human interaction and development as defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979) is the chronosystem and represents the socio-historical circumstances and environmental events that shape an individual's life. Santrock (2007) adds that historical events have strong causal influence on an individual's personality, identity, behaviour, motivation and even the way they interact with others and internalize group norms. Strongly held group norms and ideas themselves are also changed by socio-historical circumstances and trends. The socio-historical circumstances and experiences that have shaped the lives of the XCs during the conflict in South Sudan are important to understand and address during the reintegration process. The goal is to facilitate the XCs transition into normal lives within their communities.

### **3.1.2. Socialization and the social construction of reality**

The work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) is also relevant to understand the reintegration process. Berger was born in Vienna, Austria and later immigrated to the United States, where he became a professor of Theology and Sociology and the Director of the Institute of Culture on Religion and World Affairs. Thomas Luckmann was a Professor of Sociology at the University of Constance in Germany. Together, they introduced the concept of *Constructed Reality* in the social sciences thus influencing many later social theorists and scholars.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) posited that people brought together by destiny or design, slowly develop distinct ways of interacting together as a social group. They develop concepts, ways of doing things and common behaviours and customs over time. These concepts, mental representations of each other's actions and other commonalities eventually become habituated into reciprocal roles played by the actors in relation to each other. Once these roles start being adopted and played out by the majority of the members, the reciprocal interactions among the group become institutionalized. Common interpretations and meanings of events gradually become integrated within the social interactions, actions, norms, beliefs and the value system of the society. Reality is then said to be socially constructed.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) identify two categories of socialization among human beings, into group customs and norms. These categories are secondary and primary socialization. Secondary socialization occurs in adults while primary socialization takes place among children growing up in the society. Secondary socialization includes the acquisition of role-specific knowledge that dictates an adult's place in the social division of labour. It is learned through training and specific rituals although not emotionally charged. Training for secondary socialization can be very complex (e.g. full-time teachers, health workers, etc.) and depends on the complexity accepted in the division of roles in the society. Primary socialization, on the other hand, is much less flexible than secondary socialization. For example, children often learn through making mistakes. Hence, there is more tolerance with fewer or no penalties in primary socialization. By implication the reintegration process in SouthSudan must take into account the different theoretical arguments as they relate to adult male and female XCs on one hand, and child soldiers and CAAF/G on the other hand.



Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that human beings are strongly tied to their environment, with intense social interaction. This relationship is imperfectly structured by their biological constitutions. Further, their engagement in different social activities enhances the institutionalization process. These arguments are of great relevance to XCs in South Sudan because of the strong ties to the traditional social environments, including customs, beliefs, thoughts, rituals, etc. Reintegration of XCs will almost certainly require institutionalization of community life, customs, beliefs and behaviour, perhaps long forgotten by the returnees.

In studies of human development, there is a growing trend for researchers to move beyond mere identification of causes in form of risk factors. The recent trend is to focus on protective factors such as traits, conditions and coping mechanisms that alter or even reverse negative outcomes in individuals (Segal and Armezy; cited in Bernard, 1991). The development of a human being is affected by interrelationships within the immediate setting and the larger formal or informal contexts as well as their socially constructed realities (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). To understand the complexities of the reintegration of XCs in South Sudan, one needs to critically examine the theoretical structures and linkages within which the XCs have operated and the current socially constructed realities within emerging communities.

### **3.1.3. Reintegration within the family context**

The family is the first contact an XC has at the beginning of the reintegration process. The family environment therefore plays the important role of supporting the XCs in their initial efforts to achieve social cohesion upon return to civilian life. Halberstadt, Cassidy, Stifter, Parke and Fox (1995) emphasize that the family environment influences the individual's values, social skills and peer relations that to a large extent determine the outcome of the reintegration process for the individual.

Family acceptance is especially critical in the reintegration of former child soldiers. For example, in Northern Uganda, Annan, Blattman and Horton (2006) found that family acceptance was remarkably high with over 94% of former child soldiers reporting that they were accepted by their families without insult, blame or physical aggression. Only one percent of the child soldiers reported that their family was unhappy or unwelcoming upon their return. In addition, family connectedness and social support were more likely to have lower levels of emotional distress and better social functioning. The research concluded that the re-establishment of relationships with

positive adult role models in the family facilitated faster reintegration of former child soldiers into community life.

Not all XCs including former child soldiers are able to join their families upon return because their families and immediate relatives were killed or displaced during the war. Returning XCs may find distant relatives or friends to stay with while former child soldiers more often are placed with foster families. In a study of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone, Alexander (2006) found that those who were placed in foster care or with distant relatives reported feeling unequal treatment and discrimination both within the community and in their homes. They described having to work long hours in menial chores while receiving little support in terms of food, clothing, and educational materials. Without the social support provided by families and relatives, XCs and former child soldiers find it harder to adjust to normal life within and without the family settings (Alexander, 2006).

Grzywacz, J. and Marks, M. (2000) claim that an individual's family experience provides greater opportunities and resources to the individual that can be used to promote growth and better functioning in other life domains. The multiple roles an individual plays in the family exert additive and potentially interactive effects at the community level. The interaction of XCs with their families should help them flourish within their communities, schools, places of work, clubs and other social places that they come into contact with. Berger & Luckman (1966) also claim that the interaction experienced by individuals during the school learning process is critical in enhancing their ability to socialize in the wider context. The developmental competencies that XCs gain in schools and training institutions include mental ability, academic achievement, social skills and technical skills, etc. These should in turn enhance the XCs' capacity to relate with others at the family level and the community at large.

#### **3.1.4. Economic reintegration**

Pugel (2007) observed that economic empowerment of XCs is a key element of the reintegration process in former conflict areas. He argues that civil wars deny millions of people the opportunity to acquire formal education and learn useful skills that could help them earn livelihoods. UNESCO (2007) also states that countries afflicted by war suffer high rates of illiteracy; they lack human capital and the necessary economic base that can comfortably support communities.

Education and skills training have proved to be important contributing factors to economic reintegration in post-conflict countries (Porto, Parsons, & Alden; 2007). Watson (2010) however argues that setting up training programmes in such countries is often hampered by limited resources and other competing priorities. The problem in countries such as South Sudan with low resource-base is setting aside enough resources to provide skills training to large numbers of XCs so that they can have a competitive edge in the job market.

It would be a double tragedy for XCs in South Sudan to live idle lives in the communities because the same communities are themselves experiencing high levels of poverty and are not able to provide much support to the returnees. Brown (2005) asserts that XCs who feel idle and are not economically reintegrated into the communities are likely to participate in illegal activities, such as banditry, to support themselves and their families.

ILO (2007) advises agencies and institutions working with XCs to design reintegration programmes that meet the returnees' varied economic needs. Adult XCs should be offered vocational skills training and given opportunities to work in the agricultural sector as well as establish small businesses, while former child soldiers should be enrolled in schools (MYDDRP, 2008). Self-employment, especially within the agricultural sector, provides food and income at the household level with the potential of initial assistance from aid organizations and the host government (Brown, 2005). Others suggest that XCs should be engaged in reintegration efforts and become agents of change themselves as they earn a living by working in the communities (UNICEF, 2008).

### **3.1.5. Political reintegration**

During conflicts, political groups such as militias and guerrilla groups are formed to further the aims and objectives of the war. Such groups use violence and intimidation to achieve their objectives (Nilsson, 2005). Although the violence is aimed at grabbing power and changing existing political structures, communities inevitably bear the brunt of the war.

Political reintegration of XCs starts with the involvement of the returnees in community affairs and decision making. It is crucial that the XCs are allowed to influence decisions that affect them in the society (Nilsson, 2005). When XCs participate in community affairs, they make their voices heard and feel good about it. They become stakeholders in community affairs. As

they participate in community activities, the XCs learn how to respect the rule of law, social norms and community values.

### **3.2. Social and Personal Identities**

Tajfel and Turner (1979) developed the theory of social identity, which proposes that people have an inbuilt tendency to categorize themselves into one or more groups. They claimed that people build a part of their identity on the basis of membership to a particular group (in-group), while enforcing boundaries with other groups (out-groups). Identifying with a specific group maximizes individual distinctiveness and offers both self-identity and self-esteem. Mackie (1986) further asserts that people who identify with a group consider themselves to be more similar to each other, feel a stronger need to agree with group opinion and are more likely to behave in similar ways.

Deaux (2000) argues that social identity should also refer specifically to those aspects or characteristics of a person that identify the individual with others in the group. Many forms of social identities or characteristics exist, reflecting the many ways in which people connect to other groups and social categories. These types of social identities include ethnicity, religious beliefs, political ideologies, vocations, gender, stigmatized groups, etc. Deaux (2000) also argues that social identities carry deep emotional feelings. For example, many wars in the world are the result of group differences on the basis of ethnic, political, religious, economic, race or cultural affiliations. In each case, identification with a particular group has a strong affective element that underlies the cognitive meanings associated with the identity.

While social identity focuses on why individuals identify with social groups, self-identity is concerned with an individual's self-image. Olson (2010) defines personal identity as the way people view themselves; it is one's perception of self and is closely related to a person's self-esteem and behaviour. Personal identity affects the way a person behaves and relates to others, especially under challenging situations. It includes: who one is, what makes them unique, personality and character, values, goals and aspirations. The development of a strong sense of personal identity helps one integrate properly into the society and culture. Accordingly, a deficiency in self-identity increases the chances of identity crises. Olson (2010) further argues that a person with identity crisis mistrusts others and is suspicious of their intentions even when they mean well. Such a person is unable to fit in with the crowd and the society in general.

Theories of social identity and self-identity are relevant to the reintegration process because they help define the psychosocial background of the XCs. During the war, the XCs were initially recruited into an army of soldiers with close ties and similar sense of purpose. The barracks replaced their homes, families and communities. Their training and conditioning in the military constantly shaped their attitudes, thinking, behaviour and relationships with other people. Upon return to the communities, their lives are influenced by a totally new environment. The immediate social structures are the family, friends, schools, community, churches, etc. This can also be viewed in line with the concept of “resocialization” as elaborated by Berger and Luckmann (1966).

The reintegration process must take cognizance of the fact that war experiences alter the group identities and self-identities of XCs. The development of a strong group and self-identity helps one integrate properly into the society and culture. Accordingly, a deficiency in self-identity increases the chances of identity crises. A person with an identity crisis mistrusts others and is suspicious of their intentions even when they mean well. Such a person is unable to fit in with the crowd and the society in general (Olson, 2010).

### **3.3. Trauma**

In the context of war, trauma is the emotional stress and psychological damage suffered by an individual because of horrendous war experiences, events, fears, threats, disasters, violence, etc. These diverse and often violent experiences of armed conflict have profound effects on the emotional development and mental wellbeing of soldiers, especially child soldiers (Herman, 1992). Betancourt *et al.*, (2008) have analyzed the relationship between trauma caused by war and the psychosocial status of an individual. The term “psychosocial” when used in relation to conflicts is intended to underline the dynamic relationship between psychological and social effects of war on people. The psychological and social effects continually influence each other over time. According to Betancourt *et al.*, psychological effects are those that affect a person’s emotions, behaviour, thoughts and memory, learning ability, perceptions and understanding. On the other hand, social effects refer to altered relationships due to death; separation; family and community breakdown; damage to the social fabric including values and traditions and customs; and the destruction of social facilities and services. Armed conflict also destroys the economic support systems and physical infrastructure, making many people and families destitute.

The literature on stress and trauma is particularly important to the reintegration of XCs precisely because the manifestations often have a negative effect on one's behaviour (Sommers, 2002). Aid workers must have the technical ability to identify and address psychosocial issues associated with trauma among the XCs.

### **3.3.1. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**

According to Moroz (2005), post-trauma is the distress that persists after a person experiences a harrowing event. The condition continues to afflict the person with varying symptoms long after the initial experience. For example, the individual may have difficulties sleeping, eating, relating to others or engaging in social activities. The symptoms also include flashbacks of past events so fresh that they seem real. Any activity, event or thought that may provoke the original traumatic experiences is avoided. Literature indicates that PTSD is a common condition among XCs (Røed, 2009). Sommers (2002) observed that: "Trauma is serious and widespread among war-affected children, which creates a picture of a child's life as a chasm of tragedy beyond repair" (p. 8).

Previously, PTSD was conceptualized as a normal response to overwhelming psychic ordeals. However, emerging research indicates that exposure to trauma may not always be sufficient to explain the condition. Vulnerability factors are believed to play an important role (Brewin, 2000). This means that some individuals may be predisposed to PTSD compared to others. According to UNESCO (2007), there are certain predicaments associated with conflict that trigger PTSD in certain individuals. These often impact negatively on the abilities of the individual to cope with daily activities such as learning.

British psychologists, Bisson, Churchill and Wessely (2009) have also argued that there is no current evidence that psychological debriefing is a useful treatment for the prevention of PTSD after traumatic incidents. Those suffering from PTSD must be accorded long term psychosocial care because they involuntarily re-experience aspects of the traumatic event in a very vivid and distressing way. These include flashbacks in which the person acts or feels as if the event were recurring; nightmares; and repetitive and distressing intrusive images or other sensory impressions from the event, which arouse intense distress and physiological reactions. PTSD sufferers often try to push memories of the event out of their mind and avoid thinking or talking about it in detail, particularly about its worst moments. On the other hand, many ruminate

excessively about questions that prevent them from coming to terms with the event, for example about why the event happened to them, about how it could have been prevented, or about how they could take revenge (Moroz, 2005).

Compared to adults, PTSD among children associated with conflict is more complex and sometimes difficult to deal with. The children are recruited into the war in their formative years and so the images of violence remain vivid in their memories as years pass by. Children are also easily affected by traumatic events much more easily. For example, they are easily affected when their lives or the lives of the people who care for them are in danger (Bloom, 1999). According to Gbla(2003), “The type of trauma experienced by former CAAF/Gs depends on factors such as mode of recruitment and training, type of activities engaged in during the war, age of recruitment and the length of the time spent in the armed group” (cited in Røed, 2009, p 16). Victims of war whether children or adults, carry with them terrible physical and emotional scars. Life in the barracks and on the battle field is cruel (Røed, 2009). The experience of death and destruction is forever imprinted in their memories. The impact of war on children is especially damaging because of their fragile emotional resilience. The hundreds of thousands of children recruited into the war over time need special psychological attention to rehabilitate them back into society. These are the critical issues that psychosocial programmes have to identify and effectively address during reintegration.

### **3.4. Stigma and Discrimination**

Social stigma is a severe social disapproval of particular individuals or groups who are perceived to possess characteristics different from other members of the society. Stigmatization is the process through which some individuals are physically and psychologically isolated by the rest of the society because of their physical or psychological attributes, behaviour, beliefs or identity (Heatherton, Kleck, Hebl& Hull; 2000). According to Goffman (1990), an individual or group is likely to be stigmatized because of some physical deformity, psychological condition or his or her association with a particular race, religion, belief, cult, organization, etc.

Crocker and Major (1989) have observed that society stigmatizes certain groups through negative attitudes, stereotypes and beliefs. They further argue that: “although some of the dynamics of the interaction between stigmatized and non-stigmatized individuals are generally characteristics of in-group–out-group relations, stigmatized groups are devalued not only by

specific in-groups but by the broader society or culture” (p. 609). The group that is disassociated from the rest (out-group) will have a feeling of inferiority and outcast among the community members. They will feel rejected and valueless in the society.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) elaborated on the concepts of ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’. They maintained that individuals naturally strive for positive self-image within a social group and social identity is enhanced by the process of categorizing people into in-groups and out-groups. In-group bias is the tendency for people to give preferential treatment to those they perceive to be in the same group and to be prejudiced against those outside their group or the ‘out-group’. The in-group could be based on culture, gender, profession, etc. The basis of in-group identity, then, is socially constructed through arbitrary boundaries such as beliefs, rituals, social practices, etc. In-group members view themselves as better, more informed and more varied compared to members of out-groups. These perceptions lead to feelings of prejudice, stigmatization and discrimination towards the members of the out-group (Kurzban & Leary; 2001).

As was briefly noted in Chapter Two, some communities in South Sudan may treat XCs with suspicion and isolation because they still associate most of them with crimes committed against some members of these communities. The XCs are therefore treated as ‘out-groups’ by the very communities that are supposed to help them settle back into civilian life. Some XCs may therefore feel stigmatized and discriminated with this type of treatment. The XCs who face such stigmatization have a high likelihood of returning to military life or joining militias.

When discussing reintegration of former child soldiers, it is particularly important to consider how their families and the communities treat them upon reunification. In certain contexts, community members may be open to accepting a child back despite his or her war experiences. In other situations, community members may be scared or fearful of former child soldiers due to the atrocities these children may have perpetrated in their own communities. Annan *et al* (2006) found that in Uganda, former child soldiers who indicated that they were easily accepted back into their families and communities were less stigmatized compared to those who experienced rejection. Lack of acceptance was described by the former child soldiers as insults, blame, lack of material support, etc. Those who were insulted by the family and community were three times more likely to have negative social behaviors and high emotional distress.



Stigma has a gender dimension too. Betancourt *et al* (2008) have stated that the stigma facing girls and boys may differ and the outcomes are also quite varied. For example, stigma of girls often includes the label of being sexually “loose” or having being defiled. Burman and McKay (2007) claim that the consequences of such stigma often generate a compounded risk for girls and present obstacles to marriage and other markers of community acceptance. This is particularly common in post-conflict African societies where cultural beliefs regarding marriage are rigid and discriminatory practices against women. The patriarchal nature of the Sudanese communities has already been noted in Chapter Two.

Prince and Prince (2002) claim that stigma has many effects on the victims including feelings of low self-esteem, isolation, and hopelessness. Stigma, in any form, is a serious impediment to the well-being of those who experience it, especially when they are discriminated against on a daily basis. Perhaps one of the most serious dimensions of stigmatization is the inability of the victims to easily access basic services including jobs, education, training and healthcare because of discrimination. Those who stigmatize others prevent them from benefitting from the pool of common resources (Kurzban & Leary, 2001).

It is definitely important to investigate the extent to which stigmatization and discrimination of XCs are part of the challenges that face the reintegration process in South Sudan. The extent to which the DDR programme recognizes and addresses such issues is also critical to the reintegration process and worth investigating.

### **3.5. Psychosocial Recovery and Reintegration**

Psychosocial interventions are often aimed at helping XCs and former child soldiers recover from the negative effects of war. Rather than focus on individual symptoms and disorders, these interventions aim to strengthen the individual’s ability to interact with the outside world in a healthy manner. Betancourt and Williams (2008) claim that psychosocial interventions are rooted in the principle that reintegration is most likely to succeed in the context of community and family supports. However, this is based on the assumption that the XCs and the former child soldiers will readily be reunited with their families. Thus, psychosocial responses emphasize local participation and restoring indigenous protective processes. In general, psychosocial approaches focus on restoring connections to families and communities, recreating social

networks and providing XCs and former child soldiers with greater capacity to deal with the challenges they face during reintegration (Wessells, 2007).

Betancourt et al, (2008) have observed that psychosocial programmes may include many things. They cite community sensitization on how to identify and handle psychosocial issues; family tracing; remedial education; skills training; provision of food and school fees; and reconciliation initiatives. Most of these programmes are run by NGOs, for example in post-conflict countries like Sierra Leone and Liberia. Findings from a youth reintegration and education programme in Sierra Leone showed that XCs and former child soldiers had a positive self-image after completing the programme. Community members also reported that the participants were able to function better within their communities because the programme improved their understanding of cultural norms and values and helped them control their tempers (USAID, 2000).

Betancourt *et al*, (2008) discuss other models that have been successfully used, especially in post-conflict African countries. The first one is a clinical group intervention that is ideal because it is also addressing the resource-constraints inherent in most post-conflict countries in Africa. One example of a clinical intervention is the group interpersonal therapy that is developed for the treatment of depression and short-term group crisis. The programme uses drawing, storytelling, free play and expression of feelings to focus on withstanding an identified crisis.

There is also a classroom based Intervention Programme developed by the Boston Center for Trauma Psychology, which has been used for children and adolescents exposed to trauma in Burundi and Sudan (HealthNet, 2007). The programme aims to identify and strengthen existing coping resources and strategies among traumatized youth in order to improve psychosocial outcomes over time. The highly structured expressive-behavioral activities included in the intervention are designed to reduce traumatic stress reactions, anxiety, fear, and depressed mood through playing, learning, and creative problem-solving. It is also expected to provide long-term positive effects including increased ability to problem-solving, increased hope and sense of safety, increased self-esteem as well as positive views of the self and community.

Most of the post-conflict countries in Africa, including Sudan, rely on NGOs and the UN in the delivery of psychosocial interventions as part of the recovery process. Many of the NGOs also organize post-conflict psychosocial interventions in post-conflict countries aimed at engaging

children in creative activities (music, dance, drama) and recreational activities (football, volleyball, athletics, etc.) that tend to emphasize cooperation, imagination and the development of other social, emotional and cognitive skills. UNICEF (2008) states:

This 'psycho-social' model when applied to child DDR addresses rejection, stigma, and behavior modification through the development of positive interpersonal relationships during the reintegration process. Given the lack of resources to provide individual counseling, the UNICEF reintegration strategy supports the idea of youth centers and children's clubs to foster positive interpersonal relationships, self-confidence and leadership (p. 16).

It will be important to find out the types of interventions that exist on the ground to help XCs in their recovery and enhance reintegration. Equally important are the coping mechanisms that XCs rely on to help them deal with daily challenges in the communities.

### **3.6. Resilience, Recovery and Reintegration**

In her work, *Lessons from Research on Resilience in Human Development*, Marsten (2009) defined resilience in psychology as the capacity of individuals to cope with traumatic experiences and adversity. Resilience theory has been used by different writers to explain how changes occur to individuals who have undergone serious traumatic experiences. Redman and Kinzig (2003) defined resilience as the ability of a system to remain functionally stable when faced with stress. It is the capacity to be flexible, when the stressful situation is removed and includes the capacity for the individual to learn and adapt to new situations that involve increased organizational complexity. Reintegration of XCs involves transformation and adaptation from military life to civilian life hence it is important to understand the relationship between resilience and recovery from the trauma of war. This transformation should also be seen as a form of "resocialization" as conceptualized by Berger & Luckmann (1966).

Further, Redman and Kinzig (2003) emphasize how individual adaptive cycles are nested in a hierarchy across time and space. The adaptation of an individual to new environments may be slow and could be hampered by reoccurrences of the past life. Nevertheless, through proper support, the individual is able to transform in time. Experience in South Sudan shows that, even with proper referral mechanisms and availability of counseling services, some people adapt faster than others. UNESCO (2006) suggests that some individuals accommodate change faster than others because of specific attributes such as resilience. UNESCO, 2006; cited in Fonagy *et al*,

(1994) suggested that: "...the term resilience is used to describe a collection of qualities that support adaptation and the capacity for normal development under difficult conditions" (p. 231).

Bernard (1995) cited in UNESCO (2005), claims that there is a natural human competence and a capacity for resilience and recovery. Resilient individuals can develop social competences, problem solving skills, a critical consciousness, autonomy and a sense of purpose regardless of their past traumatic experiences. Furthermore, factors such as family, school or community support, caring relationships and high expectations help children cope with life stressors (UNESCO, 2006).

According to Masten (1994), resilience is best understood as a process and not assumed to be a trait of the individual. Most research now shows that resilience is the result of individuals interacting with their environments and the processes that either promote well-being or protect them against the overwhelming influence of risk factors. Werner (1995) distinguished three contexts for protective factors: personal attributes, family attributes and community attributes. Personal attributes relate to being assertive, outgoing, bright, and positive. Family attributes include having close bonds with at least one family member or an emotionally stable parent. Community attributes relate to having friends and peers who provide support or counsel.

Although children are particularly vulnerable to trauma there are scholars who suggest that they also have capacity for resilience. According to Benard (1991), a team of researchers conducted a study on children and found out that, contrary to common belief, children are invulnerable, stress-resistant, hardy, ego-resilient, invincible and resilient, in spite of severe stress and adversity. Most of the research reviewed by Benard (1991) focused on children who had been brought up by mentally ill, alcoholic, abusive or criminally involved parents. Other children in these studies were brought up in poverty-stricken or war-torn communities. The general findings were that, despite what they have gone through and with proper support, children overcome the odds and live normal lives through resilience.

Indicators of social competence among young people are qualities such as responsiveness, especially the ability to elicit positive responses from others; flexibility, interpersonal communication and inter-cultural sensitivity. Problem-solving skills encompass skills required in planning, seeking help from others and thinking critically, creatively, and reflectively. Critical

consciousness includes being aware of exploitive environments and being able to avoid them. Autonomy is having a sense of one's own identity and an ability to act independently and to exert control over one's environment. Lastly, resilience is manifested in having a sense of purpose and a belief in a bright future, including goal direction, educational aspirations and motivation, achievement, persistence and optimism (Benard, 1995). It will be important to explore the XCs' attitudes and future aspirations because the success of the reintegration process for the XCs is closely tied to their own positive attitudes and a belief in their purpose and destiny in life.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.0. Overview**

This chapter presents the methodology that was followed in conducting the study. The key issues discussed include: research sites, research design; target population; sampling techniques; data collection methods; data coding and analyses; validity and reliability of the data and ethical issues related to the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the challenges that were encountered by the researcher in the field.

### **4.1. Research Sites**

This study was conducted in Juba and in Unity State in the counties of Leer, Mayom and Rubkona in what is now the Republic of South Sudan. The informants from Unity State were exclusively former child soldiers. Unity State is one of the ten states in South Sudan. It shares its northern border with two states located in Northern Sudan namely South Kordofan and Abyei states. Currently, disputes exist in this region regarding the actual demarcation between North Sudan and South Sudan. The coordinates at the point of confluence are yet to be agreed upon and delineated. Unity State is rich in resources including oil, grazing pasture, wood and other agricultural produce. The presence of resources has been a contributing factor in the border dispute and as a result, the state experienced some of the fiercest fighting during the conflict.

The bitter fighting experienced in Unity State triggered massive displacement of people (Muchomba, 2006). Further, the Sudanese government needed the oil money to fund the war machine. It was therefore necessary to expand its oil operations to produce more oil. The expansion of the oil fields led to more displacements of the communities from their ancestral land. Government forces were used to forcefully remove people from their homes leading to massive destruction of the communities' properties and their way of life.

The displaced communities were unstable, disoriented and an easy target for various armed groups that were recruiting people into the war, including the SPLA and SAF. Many people were forced, or voluntarily opted to join the army. These people included children who had been separated from their families. After the signing of the CPA in 2005, many people who had left the state to fight in the conflict poured back into the area. Therefore, Unity State has many XCs who are at different stages of the demobilization and the reintegration process, making it ideal as a study site.

The other study site was Juba, which is the current capital city of the new Republic of South Sudan, although the name might be changed. Juba is a fast-growing city with a population of approximately 400, 000 people. It is the seat of the new government of South Sudan and home to several international organizations. Businesses are opening up rapidly in the city because of the country's oil resources and inflow of people from other countries. Although the city's infrastructure may not compare with other cities in the region, construction of various facilities is underway, while others are planned.

The informants from Juba were exclusively adult men and women who had returned as XCs. There were some methodological constraints related to collecting data from this category of informants. Sometimes the XCs had difficulties in giving up their time to take part in the interviews. Other times they arrived late for appointments. They were also initially suspicious and reluctant to talk to the researcher and even some demanded payment as discussed later in this chapter. However, with time and effort, rapport was gradually established and data collection proceeded although with some delays.

Government officials and NGO staff in Juba and Unity State who are involved in the implementation of the DDR programme were contacted in their offices as key informants, given their knowledge and experience with the DDR policies and programmes. The officers also provided important documents on the DDR programme. The researcher held informal discussions with some of the officers on the implementation of the DDR and the reintegration process in particular. These informal discussions proved extremely valuable and gave the researcher useful insights regarding field operations before data collection commenced.

## **4.2. Research Design**

Kvale & Brinkman, (2009) claim that the choice of the research topic is linked to the paradigm within which the researcher situates himself or herself. They state that the particular paradigm constitutes a world view, frame of mind, beliefs and values of a particular society and within which the researcher anchors the study. In this study, a qualitative approach was employed to investigate the challenges faced by XCs during reintegration into their communities. Kvale & Brinkman's ideas and approach are particularly relevant to the choice of the topic for this study because the researcher believed that reintegrating XCs into the society is critical to building a peaceful and democratic new South Sudan.

The research approach required an examination of the views, values, and beliefs of the respondents, which were significant in shaping their attitudes as well as the reintegration process. According to Bryman (2008), this descriptive approach helps the researcher understand human problems based on tested theory and critically determine whether the predictive could be generalized into a given situation.

In this study, the researcher carried out an *expo-facto* analysis of the strategic social issues in order to establish the thematic areas, the guiding theory and the variables of the study. An inductive approach was used in which investigations were scrutinized, results interpreted and the findings generalized to make conclusions. According to Bryman (2008) “the findings are fed back into the stock of theory and the research findings are associated with a certain domain” (p. 9). The inductive method thus involves an interactive strategy of weaving back and forth between research data and theory in order to understand others people’s perspectives.

The respondents in this study were divided into categories and sub-groups, which facilitated their full participation and the collection of primary data. Attempts were made to ensure that the natural setting was maintained. This allowed the respondents to give information in a natural environment. The study gathered detailed data through in-depth interviews with open ended questions, focus group discussions and observations. These data collection techniques were used because they allowed the researcher to interact more closely with the respondents and obtain rich qualitative data regarding their experiences, attitudes, beliefs and challenges in relation to reintegration compared, say to the quantitative approach. Data were also collected through document analysis of policy documents on reintegration of XCs especially those nested within the CPA and DDR policies. These data collection techniques are described in more detail in other subsections below.

Data collected through the interpretative approach contributes to basic knowledge in the social sciences. Interpretive approaches assume that people create and associate their own subjective meanings as they interact with the world around them. The Interpretive approach therefore attempts to understand other people’s environments and experiences through the meanings given by those who interact with those environments. Cited in Holmarsdottir (2005), Lincoln stated that research comprises a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. In his view, he reiterated that these issues are presented in a series of representations, including field



notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, “qualitative researchers study people and objects in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 157).

### **4.3. Target Population**

In Chapter One, XCs were defined as adult males and females who had taken part in the conflict in South Sudan. Child soldiers were defined as children less than 18 years of age who engaged in combat or those who took part in the conflict in any capacity such as cooks, messengers or porters and included girls abducted for sexual purposes. Data for this study were obtained from adult XCs and former child soldiers. According to the CPA (2005) and the demobilization plan, a total of 45,000 adults and 14,000 former child soldiers were to be released and reintegrated in South Sudan. In Unity State, one of the two study sites, there were approximately 9,000 adult XCs and 1,000 former child soldiers who were undergoing reintegration at the time of the study. In Juba, the other study site, there was large number of XCs who had come to the city in search of better opportunities, but firm statistics at the time of the study were not available. In addition, the number of XCs coming to Juba keeps increasing as more soldiers are released from the military.

### **4.4. Sampling Procedures**

As indicated by Bryman (2008), research requires that a segment of the population be selected and each member of that segment be consistently subjected to the same investigation. The process of selecting respondents for a study can either be through a probability or a non-probability approach. In a non-probability sample, also referred to as a non-random sample, subjects do not have the same chances of being selected for the study. This is called purposive sampling and was used in this study

Purposive sampling is a qualitative sampling technique used to obtain respondents for a study based on their level of knowledge on the topic. Respondents selected through purposive sampling are the most likely to provide rich information on the problem being investigated by the researcher.

The main informants for this study were XCs, former child soldiers and officers from the government, NGOs, UN and other organizations involved in the implementation of the DDR programmes. The respondents for the study were contacted at their various schools, places of

work, and homes. The SSDDRC, who doubles up as the lead agency for the DDR programme in South Sudan, gave the names of the schools where XCs and child soldiers were attending. The study used non-random clustered sampling where the various respondent groups were clustered into classes at the direction of the schools institutional heads. Once the classes were identified, the respondents were selected randomly from those classes to take part in in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Scholars undertaking similar research in schools associated with the armed forces have faced various challenges in sampling. Røed (2009) narrates how, in some cases where voluntary sampling was used the teacher picked the students on her behalf while she waited outside the classroom, although sometimes she was able to randomly select them. Voluntary sampling is a type of qualitative sampling technique in which the researcher conveniently selects respondents as they become available. According to Røed (2009), researchers should be sensitive when using voluntary sampling because those who volunteer may be driven by different motives that could bias the results. For example, in voluntary sampling, respondents offer to participate in the study but their participation may be driven by the expectation of monetary rewards. In this study, some XCs requested payment before they could participate in the interviews and FGDs as later discussed in this chapter.

#### **4.5. Data Collection Methodology**

This study utilized both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through interviews and FGDs conducted with XCs and former child soldiers. The XCs and former child soldiers were also observed for a time as they went about their daily lives to gauge the quality of their interactions with their families and communities. Secondary data were collected through analysis of relevant documents obtained from government offices, libraries, journals, the Internet and other publications related to the DDR and especially the reintegration process in post-conflict South Sudan. The research also incorporated information collected from formal and informal discussions that the researcher had with gatekeepers, informants and some officials of the NGOs. The key techniques used in collecting the primary data are discussed below.

Four research assistants who were fluent in the local dialects as well as English assisted with translations and interpretations because majority of respondents could not communicate in English.

Prior to data collection, the researcher recruited five research assistants mainly because most respondents could not communicate in English and the research assistants helped with translations and interpretations. The local dialects spoken by the majority of the respondents in the study sites, and in which the assistants helped in translating and interpreting were Nuer, Dinka, Shilluk, Mundari and Bari. It was also necessary to have research assistants because of time limitations in conducting the study. The research assistants assisted the researcher with data collection and recording. They used a digital voice editor to document the information in the original form as well as used notebooks for field notes.

The research assistants were recruited on the basis of their familiarity with the study sites; knowledge of the local dialects and culture; and willingness to work with XCs. They were trained for three days on basic interviewing techniques. This training focused on how to conduct in-depth interviews and FGDs; how to build good relationships with respondents or rapport; how to record information; and communication and listening skills. The research assistants were drilled on the use of the interview guide and techniques of probing the respondents for in-depth information. The training also included piloting the interview guide with the researcher and refining the questions. The research assistants conducted about half of all interviews and FGDs. The researcher maintained close supervision and held meetings daily with the research assistants to compare notes and solve issues as they arose.

#### **4.5.1. In-depth interviews**

The interview is a common technique of collecting data but poses some challenges to researchers. According to Berger and Daphe (1991), the interview technique provides an opportunity for the informants to tell their own stories in their own words. The researcher may tape interviews and thus preserve the original discussion for present and future use. Kvale (2009) observes that interviewing is an intense interaction between the interviewee and interviewer; it is an active process whereby two people build rapport. When the right environment for the exchange of ideas is established, the interview method generates rich ideas that lead to knowledge about a given phenomenon.

Practitioners have often emphasized that rapport must be established quickly and maintained throughout the interviewing process. Prior to the actual interview, the interviewer should achieve rapport with the respondents in order to clear initial doubts and build confidence. Bryman (2008)

claims that, in some cases, a respondent might agree to be interviewed but, given the nature of the questions, decide to terminate participation due to poor rapport or the bond and relationship with respondents. On the other hand, too much rapport may lead to lengthy interviews.

In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with individual XCs and former child soldiers. Other stakeholders involved in the reintegration process such NGO staff, government officers and teachers were also interviewed. A standard procedure of conducting interviews was followed. The respondents were contacted prior to the date of the interview and their consent obtained. In case of former child soldiers, a parent or guardian was requested to give consent on behalf of the child. To maintain privacy and confidentiality, interviews were held in secluded rooms provided by schools or other public institutions. After introductions, the researcher explained the purpose of the research to the respondents and explained their right to withdraw from the interview at any time if they so wished. Rapport was established through small talk and respondents' questions were answered prior to the interviews.

In this study, interviews were conducted using an interview guide. An interview guide helps the interviewer steer the discussion in a systematic way according to the objectives of the study. This study used semi-structured interviews in which some questions were open-ended while other questions provided categories of responses for respondents to choose. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) have argued that semi-structured interviews demand the interviewer to probe for more detailed information from the respondent and hence can be time consuming (p. 86). A total of 37 participants were interviewed in Juba and Unity State. Participants were XCs, former child soldiers, teachers and officers from government, NGOs and other organizations involved in reintegration. In Unity State, the interviews took place in Leer, Koch, Bentiu, Mayom, and Rubkona. Interviews were conducted at different time intervals depending on the availability of the participants. Most of the interviews took place from 9:00 a.m. in the morning and ended by 5 p.m. The average numbers of participants interviewed in a day were about 3. Field work took about 3 months to complete. The researcher worked with trained research assistants.

#### **4.5.2. Focus group discussions**

The researcher decided to use FGDs in addition to semi-structured interviews as they seemed to be appropriate for the design. Kvale (2009) argues that “the group moderator introduces the topics for discussion and facilitates the interchange; the moderator’s task is to create a permissive atmosphere for the expression of personal and conflicting viewpoints on the topics in focus” (p. 150).

During the FGDs, a series of open-ended questions were posed to participants and the various views, ideas, arguments and responses recorded. These open-ended questions generated in-depth insights on participants’ choices, experiences and feelings that informed the study. It is important however to note that processing in-depth insights and responses to open-ended questions tends to be problematic to researchers. It requires a high level of probing and analytical skills.

Krueger (2002) argues that the first few moments in an FGD are critical. In a brief time, the moderator must create a thoughtful and permissive atmosphere, provide ground rules and set the tone for the discussion. Setting a favorable environment encourages the respondents to share their views with one another selflessly. Bryman (2008) observes that more data is likely to be generated from the discussion through the use of direct, straight and honest talk.

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) suggest that FGDs should comprise between six and ten people so that each participant has a fair chance of contributing to the discussion. In addition, the discussion should be characterized by a non-directive style of interviewing, where the prime concern is to encourage different viewpoints on the issues under discussion (p 85). About five FGDs were held in five different locations such as Bentiu, Leer, Koch, Rubkona and Juba. Each FGD was attended by a maximum of six people to ensure reasonable participation by all the respondents in each group. Recording was done through the use of a tape and short hand notes.

It is important to use more than one technique to collect data in social research. Mugenda (2008) argues that using more than one technique to collect similar data from the same subjects is a way of validating the information. In addition to in-depth interviews, using FGDs gave the researcher a chance to clarify some of the issues that had arisen during in-depth interviews as these were conducted first. Because the FGD comprises several people with different experiences, the researcher was able to obtain varied views on critical issues. Other times, FGDs brought out

similarities among the participants especially in their experiences, beliefs, attitudes and values. The researcher, with help from research assistants, was able to identify appropriate former child soldiers and adult XCs to form the FGD groups. It was also noted that most participants felt good about their participation in FGDs. They seemed inspired by the fact that their views mattered and were considered important in the communities and beyond.

#### **4.5.3. Observation method**

The observation method, sometimes referred to as participant observation, is a research technique widely used in anthropology, education, sociology and psychology. Researchers use the observation method to gain a close and intimate familiarity with a given group of individuals such as a religious group, cultural group, etc. Douglas (1976) claims that the observation method helps the researcher understand people's ways of life, practices, values, beliefs and interactions through an intensive involvement with the people in their natural environment. The observation is usually done over an extended period of time depending on the objectives of the study, time and resources. One of the features of the observation method is that the researcher actually takes part in some of the activities of the community he or she is studying. In this sense it is participatory observation. These activities could include cooking, grazing, fishing, farming, recreation activities, etc. This helps the researcher understand the community faster and better. An obvious strength of the observation method is the opportunity to check for discrepancies between what participants say or believe and what they actually do. Information obtained through interviews and FGDs should ideally be compared with the results obtained from the observation method to check for balance and fit.

The observation method was used to obtain information on how the XCs and former child soldiers were settling down in their communities. The researcher sought to identify and observe factors that tended to isolate or enhance reintegration of XCs and child soldiers, especially where such factors were imposed by the social environment. In addition, the researcher was curious to note tendencies of XCs to make comparisons between their previous life in the military and life in the communities in which they now lived. The XCs and former child soldiers who were observed were selected from those who had participated in in-depth interviews or the FGDs and hence the researcher had some prior information about them.

These observations were made by the researcher for a period of time in the respondents' homes and during social gatherings soon after the interviews and FGDs had been completed. The researcher spent almost a month in specific communities observing how selected respondents socialized with other members. These observations revealed a lot of critical issues regarding respondents' response to their immediate environment. In this study, five participants were observed at home, four participants were observed at places of work and two participants were observed at their training centers. There were therefore a total of eleven "observations" in Juba and Unity State.

#### **4.5.4. Document analysis**

A thorough analysis of documents relevant to the research topic is critical in providing support, or otherwise, to the study findings. According to Prior (2003), the significance of documents to the research topic depends precisely on the way in which materials and documents are integrated into the subject area. Finding documents relevant to the issues covered in this study was challenging given the lack of such materials in South Sudan. One of the objectives of this study is therefore to inform policy debates on the reintegration of XCs in South Sudan's DDR programme. Another challenge was that most of the official documents are produced by the State and involve certain bureaucracy to obtain. Sometimes, the time and effort involved in them was daunting.

This study utilized documents on the reintegration of XCs in South Sudan that were in existence at the time of the study. A desktop review of these documents was undertaken in order to identify their relevance and applicability in the reintegration process. The key documents identified and analyzed for this study were: MYDDRP (2008), Sudan DDR National Reintegration Policy (2008), the NDDRCC (2007), CPA (2005) and Field Handbook for ALP (2008). Sometimes some of these key documents referred to other supporting documents that also needed to be analyzed.

#### **4.6. Data Coding and Analysis**

The data obtained through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and the observation method were qualitative in nature. Qualitative data were first transcribed to produce thick descriptions. According to Denzin (1989), thick descriptions are intense, dense and vivid descriptions of social life based on careful observation, through which broader cultural

interpretations and conclusions can be made. The term was developed by Geertz (1973) in the field of anthropology to motivate participants to honestly describe themselves in relation to their environment and to explain their environment in context to themselves.

Cited in Strauss and Crobin, Kvale (2008) stated that data coding is “a process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data into simple components” (p. 76). After breaking down and examining the data, the process of analyzing the text becomes easier to achieve and construct new understanding of the situation. What is important about the coding is that it facilitates interpretation, including establishing meanings. Hence, Kvale and Brinkman (2009) observed that coding is undertaken and the analysis is gradually moved from descriptive to more theoretical levels, leading to a saturation of the material when no new insights and interpretations seem to emerge from further coding.

The qualitative data obtained in this study was coded and rearranged into thematic areas. Analyzes was conducted and involved establishing meanings and interpretations. Analysis also involved establishing the inter-relationships and linkages among the thematic areas and interpreting such relationships relative to the stated theories and existing literature. Conclusions were then made based on these interpretations.

The grounded theory approach was used. With this the researcher inductively develops the theory from the data. In this case, the data is analyzed and re-analyzed several times until a theory emerges from the data. The grounded theory approach fits the study well because, as Mugenda (2008) argues, qualitative research requires a posteriori theory that develops as the collection of facts grow and the researcher’s insights into the possible interpretations and meanings grow. A posteriori theory is built upon the data and emerges gradually as the coding of the data and the analyses sequentially proceed (p. 54).

#### **4.7. Reliability, Validity and Generalization**

Data are considered reliable when the study results are repeatable and consistent implying that similar results could be obtained at the same or some future occasion (Bryman 2008). At another level, Joppe cited in Golafshani (2003) argues that “the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is realized is referred to as reliability” (p. 598). If the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar



methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable. It is very important to consider reliability of the data in qualitative research because the quality of a research will be judged based on its reliability by the consumers.

Validity on the other hand is concerned with the integration of the conclusions that are generated from pieces of a research or study that has been carried out. The researcher used triangulation of different data collection techniques to achieve validity in this study. Experienced researchers have argued that the validity procedures used should find convergence among multiple and different sources of information (Golafshani 2003). Furthermore, the “triangulation has risen as an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation [in order to] control bias and establish valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology” (Mathisson, cited in Golafshani, 2003; p. 603).

Validity of findings is a key to the generalization of the results in any study. Researchers always aim at generalizing their findings to other populations and situations beyond the sample (Bryman 2008). Purposeful samples do not necessarily provide results that are statistically generalizable to wider populations. However, the knowledge generated in a specific situation may be safely transferred with caution to other relevant situations (Mugenda, 2008). In either case, the study findings must exhibit validity for any level of generalization to be achieved. But if the level of reliability and validity is acceptable, then the findings can indicate something that might be also applicable to other similar situations or areas. Based on the procedures that were applied by the researcher, the findings obtained in this study could be shared with caution to other settings in South Sudan to a reasonable degree. At the very least, the results would only be applicable to those sites from which the respondents were drawn.

#### **4.8. Research Ethics**

Ethical issues should be put into consideration when conducting social research especially when the researcher is dealing with human subjects. Kvale & Brinkman (2009) state that the interviewer should have enough knowledge of the participants that he or she is going to study and have enough information on issues affecting the study environment to eliminate vulnerability. But vulnerability is always a matter of degree and the researcher may only strive to minimize it rather than strive to eliminate it. For example, the power differential between the researcher and respondent is always a source of vulnerability. These issues are important when

dealing with the informants. And some informants are of course more vulnerable than others, for example, former child soldiers.

Any research that may harm the participants during the research process is regarded as unacceptable by ethical guidelines. The harm to participants may come in different ways, such as physical harm, harm to participants' development, loss of self-esteem, and stress (Bryman 2008). Participants should undergo briefing and debriefing sessions where issues such as privacy, confidentiality of information, voluntary participation and withdrawal are explained and agreed upon.

The participants' rights must be discussed openly. It is also important to discuss the researcher's right to publication of the research and the participant's free access to the report (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The participants should in particular be convinced that the information that they contribute will not be disclosed to others and that such information will be kept under lock in a safe place for a period of time.

The researcher did not encounter major problems with the respondents after explaining to them the purpose of the research and their right to privacy, confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study. It is also important to note that all the informants are made anonymous in the thesis by using fictional names. However there were other problems that faced the researcher during data collection and these are discussed below.

#### **4.9. Challenges Faced by the Researcher during Fieldwork.**

The problems faced by people in SouthSudan, as they try to start their lives all over again, are many and varied. The researcher was moved deeply by the suffering of the people and especially the XCs as they struggled to reintegrate. Despite the massive support offered by the donor community and well-wishers, the issues are sometimes overwhelming. The gaps are too obvious and the more reason why the researcher found the problem of reintegration of XCs and former child soldiers an important one to investigate.

Studying populations that have gone through turmoil presents unique difficulties to the researcher. Mugenda (2008) observes that populations ravaged by war are vulnerable and the researcher needs to be sensitive to ethical issues. Further, such populations may not readily

provide information about their past or present conditions. They need a great deal of assurance and empathy.

The researcher found the fieldwork difficult, despite the long years he had been working with UNICEF on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the former child soldiers in similar situations. To mitigate some of the challenges, the researcher used the experience he had previously gained during the implementation of the ‘SPLA Army Child Free’ campaign in South Sudan. His work with UNICEF on Child Protection especially children affected by armed conflict was also helpful in this research. The researcher also knew other officers and aid workers who gave him important tips on how to overcome some of the challenges. Some of the problems that the researcher faced during fieldwork are discussed below.

#### **4.9.1 Suspicion and mistrust by participants**

The researcher observed that most of the XCs and child soldiers were known within their communities and interaction with them created suspicion and raised fears and concerns among them and some of the community leaders. These fears and concerns made it difficult to initially establish and maintain a high level of rapport, privacy and confidentiality. To mitigate such fears and suspicions, the researcher held discussions with community leaders in which he explained the purpose of the study and the type of activities that were involved. He then sought their permission and support in conducting the research in their communities. This took up some valuable time.

#### **4.9.2. Bureaucracy in obtaining documents**

Sometimes the researcher was subjected to excessive red tape and bureaucracy when he needed to obtain relevant documents from government offices and aid agencies. Most of the target respondents, especially the supporting institutions such as the MoEST, NGOs, CBOs, MoSD and SSDDRC among others, were very suspicious and reluctant to give out information. There was also a tendency for some officials to present the prevailing situations in the field as positive, but the visits to the communities revealed a different scenario. In such situations, the researcher often cross checked the information provided by the field officers, with his observations in the field. To reduce the level of suspicion, an assurance was made to officials that the researcher was not a spy or an agency of the government or international community; the information was being

gathered to fulfill an academic requirement. The researcher produced the letter from the university as proof of this claim and the officials seemed reassured.

#### **4.9.3. Demand for payment.**

About 90% of the respondents voiced their opinion that the research was funded and therefore they expected monetary compensation for their participation in the interviews. This got quite serious in some areas to the extent that the researcher found it difficult to recruit people to interview or include in the focus group discussions. The respondents categorically demanded payment for their time.

The culture of dependency is a serious problem facing development work in Africa. This is especially common in conflict areas and areas constantly faced with famine. One of the plausible explanations is that such groups of people are used to relief aid regularly and have come to consider external assistance as a right. It therefore took the researcher time to explain to members of the community about the activities and purpose of the research. Many were eventually convinced and finally agreed to participate. A lot of time and effort were wasted in the process, especially because the researcher had to cancel some interviews or reschedule them.

#### **4.9.4. Language barrier**

The target respondents in the communities could not communicate well in Arabic and English because many of them were illiterate. Most XCs were recruited into the army at the time when they were supposed to join school and had no opportunity to join school while in the army. Approximately 90% of the respondents could not communicate in English and only about 30% could communicate well in Arabic. Majority of the respondents could only express themselves well in their mother tongue. This enabled them to bring out the challenges facing them in their mother tongue. As noted above research assistants were recruited and trained to help with translations and interpretations.

#### **4.9.5. Insecurity**

Insecurity is still a serious challenge in SouthSudan. Unity State, where the research was conducted, experienced insecurity in the Northern parts after the disputed election results of April 2010. The researcher therefore had to select the sample in the Southern counties of the state because of the instability in the rest of the area. Although the state main cities such as Juba

were stable at the time of the fieldwork, insecurity prevailed in the counties. Most of the respondents resided in the interior of the counties such as Payams and Bomas. The study could not be conducted in certain counties such as Payams where security situation had collapsed and militias were ambushing cars at the time. Only military vehicles could move freely beyond the borders of the state capital.

The security situation in SouthSudan is sometimes unpredictable and volatile. Although the signing of the CPA and the just concluded referendum was to herald the beginning of peaceful coexistence, the unresolved ownership of Abyei is a constant threat to peace and stability. Some politicians and former military leaders have used the tension within the communities to stir up trouble causing insecurity and fear for their own selfish ends. At the time of writing this thesis, fierce fighting had broken out in Abyei, one of the disputed states between the North and the South. The nomadic Misseriya, a Khartoum-backed tribe, has been fighting the SouthSudan-backed Dinks Ngok tribe over land and grazing rights. Many have been killed and others displaced from their homes.

#### **4.10. Summary**

This chapter has presented the methodology used in the study. Topics covered included: the study site, target population, research design, sampling, data collection methods and data analysis, the use of the qualitative approach in the collection of data and the application of the inductive method in the analyses and interpretation of such data were also discussed. The type of data that the study aims to collect is qualitative and includes: participants' attitudes, beliefs, values, interactions, meanings and interpretations of their experiences in their social environment.

The chapter also discussed the validity and reliability of data as well as issues limiting the generalization of study findings. Steps taken by the researcher to ensure validity and generalizability of the study were explained. The chapter presented some of the ethical issues that the researcher had to mitigate. Finally, challenges faced while conducting the study in areas that are still relatively insecure were discussed.

Conducting research among populations that have been at war for decades has its own unique difficulties despite a tight design and keen attention to methodological details. Populations in

conflict are vulnerable and this requires the researcher to be psychologically alert to ethical issues beyond text book descriptions. The situation is compounded by the hopelessness and suffering experienced by these populations. Hence, the researcher's emotions and maturity of thought were often stretched to the limit during fieldwork.

## CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

### 5.0. Overview

This study sought to investigate the challenges facing the reintegration of ex-combatants in post-conflict South Sudan. The research questions are: (1) What are the difficulties faced in the interpretation, application and implementation of the policies on the reintegration of XCs? (2) What challenges do the XCs face in the reintegration process and what are some of their coping mechanisms? (3) How do various institutions (NGOs, government and civil society) support the reintegration of XCs, with regard to education, training, employment, psychosocial services and other needs?

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The key participants in this study were XCs and former child soldiers who had previously been actively involved in the war in South Sudan. Information was also obtained from other informants involved in the reintegration process such as officers from the government and NGOs, teachers and community leaders. The primary data for the study were generated through FGDs with XCs and former child soldiers. Primary data were also obtained through in-depth interviews with XCs, former child soldiers, aid workers, teachers and community leaders. The XCs and child soldiers were also observed in their communities. Secondary data were obtained through content analysis of relevant documents.

The chapter presents the findings of the study under the following thematic areas: policy guidelines and constraints; support offered by government and agencies to XCs' including awareness creation; demobilization and reunification; sociopolitical reintegration; economic reintegration; and experiences of female XCs.

Key quotations from the interviews and important statements from the FGDs are shown in italics and set in frames. Fictitious names are used for the interviewees who were adult XCs or former child soldiers. Informants from government are referred to as "info" for "informants" in the quotations, followed by an identifier (number), whereas "NGO" refers to NGO workers. In case of FGDs, the quotations are just labeled FGD followed by a number as an identity. It is noted that FGDs were held with XCs and former child soldiers only. Not all respondents agreed to give their ages, but for those who did, their ages are included, especially child soldiers. The researcher also included the study site from which the respondents came and where possible, the date of the interview.

## **5.1. Policy Guidelines and Concerns**

The first research question raised in this study is: “what are the difficulties faced in the interpretation, application and implementation of the policies on the reintegration of XCs?” The rationale of asking this question is to help understand how some of the barriers to reintegration are related to the interpretation and application of policy documents and eventually to the implementation process.

### **5.1.1. Policies concerns related to adult XCs**

A thorough examination of the CPA shows that this document laid the framework for the reintegration of XCs in SouthSudan. Further, the DDR document is a major tool for the implementation of the CPA. One of the guiding principles in the CPA states that:

Ex-combatants shall be treated equitably irrespective of their previous military affiliations; as well, they shall be empowered by provision of training and information to voluntarily choose their path to reintegration. The reintegration process shall be community based and equally benefit returnees and local communities (CPA, 2005; p. 118)

It is clear on paper then that the reintegration policy as stipulated in the CPA laid the foundation for the implementation of the DDR programmes in SouthSudan. It is also clear that the SSDDRC and other partner agencies are committed in their policies to reintegrate the XCs through the available means or resources in their communities of return. The objective of reintegration is well elaborated in the documents and aims at creating a peaceful environment and social stability for all the communities in SouthSudan. The reintegration policy addressed by the SSDDRC in the National DDR programme has four components that cover economic, social, political and psychological dimensions.

The policy further states that the objective of the DDR programme will include the provision of an enabling environment to human security as well as support the post-peace-agreement and social stabilization across Sudan. The SouthSudan DDR commission, a special task force set up by the UNDP and other agencies to compliment the CPA and support security in SouthSudan states that:

UNDP Sudan is to support a reconciliation and recovery process, drawing from its experiences in other countries as well as from current community recovery activities in Sudan. Community-based peace building will be supported through partner organizations and the network of community peace committees that they support at the grass-root levels. These peace building, security and arms control initiatives will work in tandem... (UNDP,2006; p. 6).



The DDR programme is designed within the parameters of a comprehensive process of national reconciliation and healing throughout the country as part of the peace and confidence building measures. According to GoSS-SSDDRC (2009):

Reintegration is the core of the DDR programme. It is the means by which we can give ex-combatants the skills they need to succeed in civilian life. During the reintegration, ex-combatants choose training in one of the four major areas: farming/livestock, vocational training, small businesses and education (p. 14).

These four areas are aimed at helping adult XCs gain skills and be able to utilize such skills for their economic benefits in their communities. Furthermore, this phase (reintegration) is the most critical and complicated phase of the DDR programme. The XCs will be assisted to gain the skills they need to support their lives independently once they are in the community of return. According to the SSDDRC policy:

The XCs who should be considered for reintegration must: (1). Not be eligible for pensions; (2). Opt not to remain in military service or related structures; and (3). Not be selected for integration into police, wildlife forces, public service or other permanent employment following their demobilization” (SSDDRC 2008, p. 5).

These conditions were especially set for the adult XCs who could have been deployed within the military, thus having the advantage of being able to move from one government organ to another. But even with the clarity of the guiding documents, the situation on the ground was hardly found to be in tandem with the intentions of the policies and the blueprints.

In general, the researcher found that there were obvious problems in interpreting and implementing some of the key areas of the policy documents including the DDR. Interactions with informants brought out the fact that, despite the clear policy guidelines, there were some problems and challenges that the XCs face in their communities and they are not even aware that such guidelines exist for their benefit. The policy documents seem to exist in the hopelessly weak social, economic, political and psychological environments that the people of South Sudan find themselves in. There is abject poverty; illiteracy; insecurity; disrespect for the rule of law and the rights of the individual; etc.

### **5.1.2. Policy concerns related to children**

All children are considered a vulnerable group and more so the former child soldiers in post-conflict South Sudan. Røed (2009) found out that most of the former child soldiers carry terrible

emotional scars from the war and need to be attended to. One of the most immediate needs for the former child soldiers and many other ordinary children in South Sudan is access to education. An incredible number of children had missed school because of the war. The Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) observed that:

The Education system in South Sudan has been adversely affected by the twenty one years of civil war, depicting one of the worst illiteracy rate indicators in the world. During this period, the illiteracy rate in South Sudan has risen to eighty five percent (85%); ninety two percent (92%) among females and eighty percent (80%) among males (MoEST, 2008; p. 4).

The government has embarked on a massive campaign of providing schools for the former child soldiers and those who missed out on school all together. The needs are sometimes overwhelming despite support from aid agencies and foreign governments. The education system is flexible to allow even older youth to access learning centres. The MoEST again promises that:

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology will provide a system of non-formal education to be called the Alternative Education System (AES) for learners who have missed the opportunity to complete their basic education and those who have never joined basic education (MoEST, 2008; p. 43).

There are provisions in the policy documents for child soldiers to receive adequate reintegration benefits to help them start their lives in their new communities. The different layers of the implementation process would require different resources, players and capacities. Key players would be expected to provide technical, economic, social and political support especially to former child soldiers who are most vulnerable. MYDDRP (2008) has observed that:

The underlining principle is to provide every eligible XC and special needs group with an immediate package of assistance in support of their effective reintegration, by giving them the means to sustain a livelihood (p 12).

It should be noted that most of the policy documents that have been developed for South Sudan draw heavily on best practices which are contained in international instruments. For example, the Paris Principles (2007) is in agreement with MYDDRP (2008) on the need to support the former child soldiers with the material and emotional support that they need to reintegrate back into their communities. According to the Paris Principles (2007):

All services to assist the transition of children to civilian life should be carried within a broad community based child protection framework.....Support is best provided based on needs of all

conflict-affected children, with an aim of promoting.....social integration and minimizing stigma and resentment against children associated with armed forces and armed groups (p. 30).

Support offered to former child soldiers is intended to enhance their ability to prepare for their reintegration into their communities and the ability for the communities to receive them. The SSDDRC and partner agencies are supposed to support their reintegration by providing education and accelerated learning, vocational training, psychosocial support, social care and follow up as part of their reintegration (SSDDRC, 2008).

UNICEF(2008) advocates for greater involvement of humanitarian organizations and government institutions in SouthSudan in supporting the former child soldiers under the DDR programme. But still, former child soldiers complain on what they find at the reintegration sites. But again, the reintegration of a former child soldier should be family-centered and multi-layered in purpose, specifically focusing on:

“..family reunification, mobilizing and enabling care systems in the community; medical screening and health care, including reproductive health services, schooling and/or vocational training; psycho-social support and social, cultural and economic support” (IDDRS, 2006; p. 19).

According to a study conducted by UNICEF, former child soldiers have often complained that there are shortages of food, few livelihood opportunities, insufficient access to primary and secondary education and limited health services such as primary health care; substance abuse treatment; reproductive healthcare; and services for children and youth with disabilities (UNICEF, 2008).

The SSDDRC reintegration strategy document looks at the reintegration of the individual as:

“...a process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and are supported to develop a sustainable livelihood. It is therefore supposed to be both a social and economic process” (SSDDRC, 2008; p.10).

In addition, reintegration is a combination of needs-based approach, social inclusion and psychological, economic and political acceptance in a society of return. SSDDRC (2008) builds on the ideals of the Paris Principles (2007) which states:

Programmes to support the reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups should develop links with all programmes, policies and initiatives which may benefit these children and their families either directly, for example through local or national social welfare

programmes, or indirectly, through reconstruction and rehabilitation of national institutions and other development programmes (p. 31).

Precisely because they relate to a vulnerable group, the policy guidelines on former child soldiers need careful interpretation and application to protect and promote the welfare of children. This also calls for the political will and allocation of appropriate human and material resources to fully address the challenges facing former child soldiers in South Sudan. The MYDDRP (2008) policy considers former child soldiers as a “special needs group” and says:

Through the economic reintegration support services, linkages will facilitate access of XCs and special needs groups to livelihood options, skills development and referral services, aimed at linking beneficiaries with national programmes, UN, NGOs, private sector and donor funded projects and programmes for employment, self-employment, formal education and other livelihood support services (p. 19).

### **5.1.3. Policy interpretation and application by implementing agencies**

There are many NGOs and organizations partnering with the government on the implementation of the DDR and especially the reintegration process. The communities are also involved especially where the local community-based organizations (CBO) are vibrant. One NGO informant interpreted the concept of “reintegration” in this way:

*Reintegration is an early insertion assistance that addresses short term and long term assistance, addressing the immediate and urgent needs of individual family with food items, local building materials and productive activities and community assistance with security and the social protection they need (NGO 5, Unity State).*

Because the returning former child soldiers often have different needs, some system of referral for specialized services is necessary. Different agencies are specialized in different activities depending on technical capacity, resources and geographical location. This is perhaps the main reason why components of reintegration are handled by different agencies who are stakeholders in the DDR programme. One government officer stated:

*The policy we have here in the state is that works are shared by the partners. MoSD will do follow up and link the former child soldier with reintegration opportunities. NGOs and CBOs will provide psychosocial activities and counseling. The social workers will make sure that all the children are going to school. We also facilitate the process of reintegration and coordinate it and transfer some cases to other agencies (Info. 6, Unity State).*

But the multiplicity of NGOs with varying resources and technical capacity sometimes makes standardization difficult. There is also the danger that the structures that should support the process on the ground are fragile. Differences in the interpretation and application of both the CPA and the DDR were clearly noted among the various partners and CBOs. It must be observed that some of these documents are written in a complex language making it difficult to decipher what the original drafters really meant.

## **5.2. Demobilization and Reunification**

Demobilization and reunification of XCs and former child soldiers is carried out by government officials in collaboration with aid agencies. The information about demobilization and reunification was provided to the researcher by the officers from SSDDRC and aid agencies through interviews. Institutions such as SSDDRC treat reintegration as a process that starts with awareness creation, followed by demobilization and then reintegration. More focus is placed on who does what and where. The pre-discharge orientation, which is awareness creation and sensitization of the commanders and XCs in the barracks, is supposed to be organized and implemented by the lead institution. The lead institution in this case is SSDDRC. One official described the procedures thus:

*We (SSDDRC) go to the barracks of the SPLA and talk to commanders about the programme of demobilization including opportunities and support services..... After registration, family tracing and reunification will be conducted, parents will be informed about the coming of their children back into the community and they will be ready to receive them including the local administration of that unit. The SSDDRC team in which I am part of, will brief the XC and former child soldiers about their status of moving away from army life to civilian life. We used to tell them that, from now you are demobilized and you are no longer a soldier. You will live your life like anyone in the community that you are going to be reintegrated into (Info.1, Bentiu)*

During an informal discussion with a child protection officer from an aid agency, the researcher was told that the process of awareness, release and reunification, including the benefits a child gets after demobilization, are all discussed with the area commanders in their respective barracks. The adult soldiers also go through a similar process with the releasing officers. Specifically, the area commanders talk to the soldiers about the disarmament, demobilization and possible reunification of the XCs during the parades in the barracks. Findings show that some XCs are surprised to be told that they are going to be released as noted below:

*We never believed it until the time when they came; then we realized that it was true (Hoth, 17 yrs, Unity State).*

*We were informed that we are going to be demobilized and everyone must go to their families and get reunified (Mathot, 20 yrs, Unity State).*

*We were just informed while they (SSDDRC) were doing registration, and soon after the election in April, it happened. We were demobilized and taken home for reunification (Koang, 19 yrs, Unity State).*

One then gets a sense that some of the soldiers, especially child soldiers, look forward to going back to their communities. However, it appears that such soldiers are only provided with scant information about the programme by their area commanders before they leave the barracks.

Ideally, when former child soldiers are found in a particular barrack, consultations are held with the area commander regarding the presence of the children in his forces. The children are also informed about the possibilities of demobilization and reunification with families. One of the examples given to the researcher by three respondents happened at *Bouth* training center where one morning, a group of child soldiers were informed that they were going to be demobilized immediately.

Officials involved in the rehabilitation of the XCs often insisted that they fully informed the returnees about their reintegration well in advance, in accordance with the procedures. They also stated that they informed the XCs of their entitlement during reintegration. In case of former child soldiers, they were also supposed to receive cloths as well as a haircut, as one official stated:

*My role as a reintegration officer is to go to the barracks to identify of the XCs. I will talk to the XCs about the expectations they have towards the community. I also briefed XCs about things they should not do when they are in the community. I am trying to brainwash them against military life that has stigmatized them for a long time (Info. 1, Unity State).*

*.....UNICEF provides money to SSDDRC to buy clothes for the children - shoes, trousers, shirts are provided to each of the child soldiers as well as a haircut as a token for reintegration. These items are given on the day of demobilization. The military uniform they have will be exchanged with these items purchased for them by SSDDRC (Info. 1, Unity State).*

But some XCs vehemently refuted the claim that these programmes fulfill the promises that they make. They seemed to believe that the promises were a way of enticing them to leave the military camps. One XC had this to say said:

*They promised reintegration opportunities that will be made available once we are at the hands of our parents. We were given forms and we filled them, including our expectations and then we were demobilized and reunified with our families, but still nothing was made available to us (Zony, 21 yrs, Juba).*

### **5.3. Welcoming Rituals for Adults and Children during Reunification**

The literature emphasizes the significance of family acceptance to the returning XCs, especially former child soldiers (Annan *et al*, 2006). In South Sudan, formal welcome for both adult and former child soldiers into their families is a community norm that is taken very seriously. During the field work, most of the XCs including former child soldiers expressed the need for traditional rituals of killing animals as a sign of welcoming them back home during reunification. These rituals were common in the areas covered by the study. However, they also happen in other communities and states beyond the study sites, although with varying form, shape and intensity because of the cultural differences across ethnic groups.

These rituals were described as a process of cleansing sins that someone may have committed while in the military. Those who were welcomed but did not go through the ritual of killing an animal did not feel happy; indicating the value attached to the rituals. The following statements obtained from four respondents demonstrate the emotions attached to the rituals.

*When I came for reunification, it was rapid. Upon our arrival, I found my parents and they asked me to stop outside the compound until their cleansing or traditional way of doing things was settled. A goat was slaughtered and I jumped over it and water was sprinkled all over the compound and on my body too and then they welcomed me into the compound (Hoth, 17 yrs, Unity State).*

*He called a community gathering where a goat was slaughtered and there was some prayer and happiness. The community received me very well and they were all happy that I am back into the community (Mathot, 20 yrs, Unity State).*

*When I went home, my brother slaughtered one bull on the first day, and the second day my other brother slaughtered another bull. People celebrated, danced and sang for many days. They were very delighted by my coming back from the army (Dut, 21 yrs, Juba)*

*They were all very happy except that nothing was slaughtered for celebration and this was because my elder brothers were in Khartoum and there was no one who could do that, based on our tradition (Dador, 19 yrs, Unity State).*

With such rituals, the family and community members believe that the XC is once again pure and safely absorbed into community life. The researcher observed that the elderly in the community were especially emotional about the welcoming ceremonies. Elderly ladies would spit saliva mixed with ground tobacco on the XC's head. This was a symbolic gesture signifying that the moving wind would chase the bad spirits away from the XC and bring peace to the family and the community.

#### **5.4. Socio-political Reintegration of XCs**

The other research question in this study was concerned with how various institutions such as government, NGOs, and civil society are supporting the reintegration of XCs, with regard to social and economic reintegration including livelihood, education, training, employment, etc. During field work for this study, it was sadly observed that the process of reintegration of XCs as intended and described in the DDR policy document is more difficult than would be imagined. Many impediments seemed at play including the different backgrounds of the XCs, suspension among XCs, prevailing poverty in the communities and fragile and bureaucratic systems on the ground concerned with the reintegration process.

##### **5.4.1. Socio-political reintegration of former child soldiers**

Findings indicated that it was critical that the reintegration process for former child soldiers starts by welcoming the person into the community as already described. According to some of the social workers, the degree to which the person later fits into the social and political life of the community depends on the warmth shown at the point of reunification. A public social worker had the following to say:

*Family is the first contact where an XC will be welcomed. This is a sign of acceptance. If this acceptance does not happen, it makes the child rebellious and plan to escape back into the army. If the child is accepted, he will feel at home and realize that he is part of the family, this makes the child happy. This is a serious determinant factor that helps the child to make the decision on whether to go back to the army or remain in the family (Info. 7, Unity State).*

Some elders in certain communities such as the Nuer community were playing mediating roles in these ceremonies. These elder aimed at changing the political views of the young people so that they can start participating in more positive social and political affairs of the community. One of



the former child soldiers was asked to explain how he was welcomed by the returning community, his response was as follows:

*On my arrival in my village, I saw a huge crowd ...The council of elders including my father was there and lamented to the moving wind, expressing happiness that I am back alive. After that a celebration went on until dusk (Mathot, 20 yrs, Unity State).*

The happy reception the community accords to the former child soldiers upon their return from the army begins at the family level. In Nuer culture, the reception comprises the grinding of tobacco mixed with water, pouring of animal blood and elders begging for forgiveness from the ancestors. In other communities the social, political and psychological acceptance of XCs is exhibited through sacrificing of animals. The elders communicate with the spirits of their forefathers and what they say is considered holy and respected by the community. An informant had this to say:

*I was considered dead by my family because they never heard from me for a long time and when they saw me, they were delighted (Koang, 17 yrs, Unity State).*

Despite the positive reception shown by some of the receiving families, some of the former child soldiers also face some rejection at the point of reunification. Some explained how their extended families were not happy with their homecoming. This was the case especially with those living with their step-mothers as a result of losing their biological parents. It was difficult to find acceptance and inclusion in such circumstances as noted below:

*I was brought home and found my step-mother seated and she took the responsibility of accepting me back and signed the social workers' forms. I sat down next to her but she could not talk to me for long. I was excited because she is the only mother that I have had since I lost my birth-mother and father two years ago. We kept silent for a very long time. When it was time to sleep, she showed me a tukul that was out of use for a long time and asked me to clean it and sleep inside (Kong, 16yrs, Unity State).*

The researcher also observed that social workers from the Ministry of Social Development and SSDDRC do not often have time to follow up on issues regarding XCs. They hardly pay regular

visits, interact or discuss issues related to child XCs. As a result, they are poorly informed about the problems, issues and challenges facing the returnees.

One of the informants admitted that after the reunification, he had to go back to the army because of lack of support. He had to be demobilized a second time. This happened because he was associated with tribal animosity that existed between Nuer and Dinka in Sudan. He was accused of supporting a political faction that had different political views from the rest of the community. This is an indication that politics still triggers tensions and animosity among communities, making reconciliation a critical aspect of the reintegration process. There are also tribal and regional issues faced by the returnees as one young informant explained:

*After demobilization, I was reunified with my mother in Bentiu town. The boys and even old men called me Jang that means Dinka and this is because my father came from Rumbek long time ago and settled in Bentiu. This name Jang in Nuer means slave and they think I am Dinka which means slave. My uncles did not conduct any ceremony due to that concept of me being a slave. I think I will go to Rumbek where I have uncles from my father's side to conduct some rites for me (Deng, 15 yrs Bentiu).*

As part of the social reintegration, certain organizations provide materials for games and social activities which support the reintegration of the XCs especially the former child soldiers. The findings indicate that games play a very important role in the lives of the young XCs because they act as social “rehabilitator”. When young XCs lack sports equipment, they join other groups who have the resources. Sometimes they buy their own sports equipment if they have the resources. One informant observed:

*I joined a small group that used to play in the open field and they always welcomed me to play with them. They always asked for contributions and I sometimes contributed when I had the money, but when I didn't have, I always told them so (Dador, 18 yrs, Unity State)*

Although some former child soldiers benefit from the services provided by the agencies, others said they hardly benefited from such services. But a government official insisted that the

provisions entitled to XCs, including former child soldiers were regular and on-going. Such contradictions were noted several times and this raises the issue of transparency and honesty, whether on XCs, agencies or public officers. For example contradictory statements about service provision were presented; one during a FGD with XCs' and the other by a government officer:

*Since the time we were demobilized, we have never seen any organization that came to visit us, leave alone support us. We are now in a dilemma, we don't know if we are civilians or soldiers because we don't fit in either one of them (XCs, FGD 1).*

*Each village where a number of boys have been placed receives footballs, volleyballs and nets, whistle, ludos and skipping ropes. These materials are given once every 3 months (Info. 1, Unity State).*

#### **5.4.2. Sociopolitical reintegration of adult XCs**

During informal discussions with agencies and community leaders, it appeared that, whereas the former child soldiers were mainly concerned with a warm welcome, celebrations and recreation facilities upon reunification, the adult XCs seemed more concerned about the extent they would be allowed to participate in family and community activities beyond the welcome ceremonies. This does not in any way imply that they were not happy to be received in the most glamorous way by their families and community upon reunification.

The perception that an adult XC would be involved in the affairs of the community therefore seemed to generate positive feelings upon reunification. Some elders that left long ago and joined the SPLA were assigned roles and responsibilities upon their return. They felt welcomed, included and accepted in the community. They participated in bringing peace across neighbouring communities. They were socially, politically and psychologically included in the community through the roles and responsibilities that had been assigned to them. These roles and responsibilities also seemed to build confidence and enthusiasm as explained by one informant:

*I was invited to join the local chiefs' Council to discuss issues affecting the community. This Council was formed to judge traditional matters such as rape, abduction and communal fights along the borders. We are formed to mediate on issues that bring peace to the community. This task was assigned to me when I returned back from the army (Abeer, 51yrs, Juba).*

However, some XCs felt isolated because they were not invited to participate in community affairs. It seemed to create resentment and may be indicative of some degree of stigmatization of some XCs.

*We are always facing isolation and abuses from some individuals who are living in a community. Selection to join the Council depends on who you know and if they do not like you, you are not selected. They always call us 'Anyagaat' meaning someone who snatches people's property by force. This name came into existence because of our association theretofore with the SPLA. (Biong', 47yrs, Juba)*

## **5.5. Economic Reintegration**

Findings indicate that establishing an economically sustainable reintegration programme for the XCs and former child soldiers is difficult, elusive but urgent. The researcher observed that there are gaps in the way certain opportunities are availed to both young and old XCs, which seems to hinder economic reintegration. For example, gaps exist in the provision of education, vocational training, Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALS) and income generating activities as discussed below.

### **5.5.1 Economic reintegration of former child soldiers**

The economic reintegration for former child soldiers is enhanced by the reinsertion package. The full 'reception package'<sup>12</sup> or reinsertion package is provided to the XCs and especially former child soldiers upon their arrival as a transitional package when they arrive home. The agencies supporting the DDR are really stretched because they have to play a great role in providing a large proportion of the reception packages. For example, NGOs sometimes help the former child soldiers with non-food items that include blankets, mosquito nets, sauce pans, cooking pots, spoons, jerry-cans, mats and buckets. Food items are provided for up to three months per person. This transitional package is only a token that helps XCs settle while more assistance is organized as explained below by one official:

*SSDDRC in collaboration with WFP provide XCs with food stuffs like oil, lentils, CSB, maize. These items are provided through SSDDRC who will go to where the children are reintegrated and distribute them. We used to give each XC one sack of maize, three gallons of oil, twenty five KGs of lentils and two XCs will share one sack of CSB (Info.1, Bentiu)*

<sup>12</sup> Reinsertion or reception package is a special assistance (usually called *transitional safety net*) to help ex-combatants cushion the effects of this shock and cover their basic material needs and those of their families such as food, clothes, healthcare, and education of children, shelter and agricultural tools (Isma 2004, p. 4).

The DDR programme is a nationally run government programme supported by the agencies who deliver different services. Although various activities and tasks are shared by different agencies with different specializations, the objectives remain identical as noted below:

*The policy we have here in the State is that works are shared by the partners. MoSD will do follow up and link the former child soldiers with reintegration opportunities. NGOs and CBOs will provide psychosocial activities and counseling. The social workers will make sure that all the children are going to schools. We also facilitate the process of reintegration and coordinate it and transfer of the some cases to other agencies (Info. 6, Juba)*

When social workers from the relevant agencies trace the child soldiers, they try to convince them to join the programmes. They also inform the child soldiers about the existing opportunities as well as follow up on those who have been placed in various programmes. One programme officer from an NGO, and one government officer had this to say:

*We trace them and we convince them to join our programmes and they get enrolled in ALP, where they are offered normal learning.....We don't have a direct role in the disarmament but we have a role to play during the reintegration of the former child soldiers when they are back in their communities; we help them enroll in the ALP classes or catch up classes" (NGO2, Unity State).*

*When a child is reunified with a family, the SSDDRC and partners are supposed to follow up, making sure that the children are going to school, have clothes to wear in school (school uniform), and try to assess the distance the child travels to attend school" (Info. 5, Unity State).*

During the fieldwork, it was noted that most of these services were not consistently provided. Some of the former child soldiers were assisted to join recreation clubs while others complained that they hardly received basic necessities as illustrated below:

*The SSDDRC and UNICEF provided us with services such as a haircut, shoes and shirts immediately after the demobilization (Dador, 15 yrs, Bentiu).*

*When we arrived home, I was enrolled in children's clubs where we used to play football and compete with other boys from different villages (Koang, 17yrs, Unity State).*

*I was given only one sack of maize at the time when I was demobilized from the army, reunified with my family and nothing more. This support assisted me a lot (Zony, 18 yrs, Unity State).*

One of the agencies, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières(VSF), supports a project that provides five goats to each of the XCs including former child soldiers. A government field officer and one of the staff members from VSF explained that the main objective of the project is to provide some rotating income to the returnees as part of economic empowerment. This is what each had to say:

*The other reception kit is the five goats' project that we are also providing in collaboration with VSF organization. The five goats are taken as the money that they used to receive in the army and it is given to them here at their reintegration site" (info. 6, Bentiu).*

*Each person is loaned five goats for a period of two years and after that the benefit will pass on to another person" (NGO 3, Unity State).*

The "goats' project" was conceptualized to be an effective economic activity to support the families of the XCs and the former child soldiers. In the project, a lot of discussions are going on among the former child soldiers and XCs regarding what the organizations are offering. However, the "goat project" was vehemently denied by some of the XCs. To these XCs, these are some of the broken promises that lead to frustrations and mistrust as the tone of the statement below portrays:

*For goats, the team came once and they took our photos and promised us that five goats will soon be made available to each of us but nothing arrived yet. I think they lied to us" (Mathot, 16 yrs, Bentiu).*

Because of the poverty within the communities, most of the former child soldiers seem to find life very difficult upon return and even finding food to eat is a problem. Some seem to compare

their new lives in the community with the lifestyles they led in the military as one informant stated:

*In the army I was in before the demobilization, I used to receive 300 SDGs as my salary. Now in Bentiu, I could not even get a small amount of money to buy soap for washing my clothes. It is only my single mother who is struggling by collecting firewood to sell that helps me (Dador, 15yrs, Bentiu)*

### **5.5.2. Economic reintegration of adult XCs**

Decades of war in SouthSudan have particularly made life difficult for both male and female XCs because they are supposed to provide for their families upon return, in addition to providing for their own needs. The adults are encouraged to join the various training programmes and learn skills that can help them get gainful employment. However, training takes time and employment is not easily available as noted from the informants. Nevertheless, returnees are taking advantage of the training opportunities as a way of liberating themselves economically as one informant observes:

*I have nothing to give to my family. Since I left them, they have been struggling to survive with the local garden that I have been cultivating when I was with them. They survive through maize, millet and other small vegetables. I have gone for two years without receiving money, I was enrolled here in this MTC centre to learn a new trade and maybe I will be in a position to help them with my carpentry once I graduate (Jada, 62 yrs, Juba)*

When the researcher interacted with the supervisor of the MTC training center, he explained the benefits of the training that the XCs are receiving. The institutions are often supported materially by NGOs. One NGO worker said:

*When the XCs graduate from the MTC, UNMIS have already agreed to use them for fixing doors, windows, metal roofing and maintenance work etc. (NGO 4, Bentiu).*

The assumption is often that the XCs who have completed their skills training will automatically be engaged in gainful activities and be able to support themselves financially. Some of the

informants praised the training programmes and were quite optimistic that the skills would eventually help them uplift their standards of living as explained by two respondents below:

*I am now being taught plumbing and I think I will find a good job in the near future (Abeer, 51 yrs, Juba).*

*I am being trained to make mats, cloths and other items that I will sell to support myself and the family. They have promised to help us with dress-making machines and this is good for my work because I can start on my own (Susan, 38 yrs, Juba).*

But many XCs also reported that jobs were hard to come by even after gaining some skills or the skills they had gained did not match the available work. Some of the XCs then have to rely heavily on their families and extended families for their daily livelihood including food. This is how some XCs put it:

*The only advantage they (family) have is that they are with my relatives at home, whatever will affect them, my brother will always support them especially by giving them a cow to milk for food” (Dut, 58 yrs, Juba).*

*I don't have any support that I can give them since I was demobilized in 2006 and put in a camp. I could not find anything to do since I am old and I spent most of my life in the liberation of the country” (Abeer, 51 yrs, Juba).*

Some seemed to blame the government for sending them to the communities and then to the training institutions without any further support. Further investigations indicated lack of motivation among the informants who had such complaints. The young instructors did not seem particularly well trained and prepared to handle adult learners who were still nursing emotional wounds from the war. One such informant lamented:

*The government demobilized us and we were pushed to DDR which has nothing to give us instead they also push us to this training. Such humiliation is what made us to escape from the Khartoum government and join the bush; it may not be farfetched that with this dissatisfaction, some of us may join the bush again (Arol, 67 yrs, Juba).*



Where financial support is promised, it seems that the system is inefficient and bureaucratic in effecting cash transfers. During a discussion in one FGD, XCs described how they were promised money during rehabilitation but they never received it although there have been frequent promises that they would be given.

*We were promised to be paid money for community reintegration where we may construct houses and start small businesses, but nothing happens (FGDs, Juba and Bentiu).*

The adult XCs, especially the males seemed to view their reintegration problems as related to money. As mentioned earlier, they seemed to feel pressured by the economic demands from their families yet they did not have immediate gainful employment. In addition, they seem to hold the perceptions that the skills training take too long. Informal discussions with older XCs therefore brought out bottled up frustrations from lack of work and idleness. In one FGD, the following sentiments were expressed:

*SSDDRC has promised us that money will be made available for us to have Income Generating Activities (IGA) once we were reintegrated, but it never happened. Five goats were promised to us but this has not happened yet. SSDDRC have also promised us that schools will be opened and education made available to us, mostly boarding schools but these things never happen. Programmes like recreational activities are not there and there is no agency that supports us on this (FGD 2, Juba)*

### **5.5.3. Education, training and employment for XCs and former child soldiers**

The policy documents as noted earlier are very clear on the role education and training should play in giving the adult XCs and former child soldiers the necessary skills to make them economically productive. The government, in collaboration with the NGOs and other agencies, has allocated resources for the establishment of formal schools and training centres. The NGOs in particular seem to have taken the issue of education and vocational training very seriously as one official explained:

*NGOs and CBOs will provide the psychosocial and counseling services. They will then work with social workers to make sure that all children are going to school (Info. 6, Unity State).*

Observations in the field indicated that there are those children who are not attending school at all while others have dropped out of school all together. Some of these are children of XCs while others are former child soldiers. One XC claimed:

*Our children are suffering and we cannot support them due to the current situation. My children are not going to school because I cannot pay their school fees and they live in the community like dogs who have no one to care for them. Our children are suffering while the children of other people are living comfortably while we have liberated the country together and we were in the front line while they are only at the management level. SSDDRC have promised us the money but none has come so far (Dut, 45yrs, Juba).*

Some of the former child soldiers also claimed that the government did not pay their school fees and their parents were too poor to pay the fees as illustrated below:

*When we arrived here, no one from SSDDRC has taken us to school, and no one has ever visited us except the time when we were reunified with our guardians ... We are always required to pay examination fees which is five Pounds, printing of the assignment paper is one Pound, school fees is thirty Pounds, and another thirty Pounds for school uniform and every time we are required to pay ten pounds at the beginning of the term (Dador, 18yrs, Unity State)*

With few employment opportunities, majority of the families find it hard to raise the money required to pay school fees. Single parents, especially females, are the most affected. One aid worker said that former child soldiers from poor families were promised that fees would be paid for them as stated below:

*What we have as SSDDRC is that we have talked to UNICEF. XCs should be given money for school fees, uniforms and exercise books. These are children that need support because they are basically orphaned having lost both parents and are now reunified with the extended family (NGO 1, Unity State)*

Findings showed that the school management uses corporal punishment as a tool for disciplining children and the parents reinforce the practice at home. One of the teachers had this to say:

*Even now in the classes, they don't easily understand their teachers, which lead to misunderstanding. When misunderstanding occurs, we invite the parents to have a serious meeting with us. If the same mistake happens again, we suspend him and we see if he can transform. So far, we have suspended one of the XCs and another is under supervision, his teacher is waiting to see if he will commit another mistake again (Riak, 28yrs, Unity State).*

FGDs were conducted in both study sites and there was similarity of information, attitudes and conceptions. During one of the FGDs, many former child soldiers expressed frustration with their teachers and the learning environment as stated below:

*There are some teachers who do not just like your personality and they develop hatred towards you but they don't tell you what they do not like about you. Sometimes, when they teach, they use you as negative examples and abuses and you end up isolated and feeling lonely. Sometimes when you see him coming you just walk out and let him teach and then when he is done you come back to the class (FGD 2, Unity State).*

Despite limited resources and competing priorities, children in South Sudan are being assisted by the government and the agencies to attend school. The government and the implementing agencies are also supporting training centres. These centres offer courses such as carpentry, plumbing, dressmaking, construction and other useful trades. As already observed, there are many XCs, especially the older ones, who have enrolled in these centres and are happy with the training. One informant observed:

*This training will help me in different ways. I will start my own workshop and make carpentry things and people will buy them and my life will continue. I will make beds, stools and chairs and people will buy them and I will get money (Hor, 37, Juba).*

But some XCs do not seem to believe that the government or the aid agencies are doing much to help them get employment. These sentiments were expressed during FGDs:

*We are now in a dilemma, we don't know if we are civilians or soldiers because we don't fit in either of them. We were abandoned and no one is looking at our case. SSDDRC is not doing anything at all. They have recently demobilized us and they have thrown us in our homes without support (FGD 4, Juba).*

*SSDDRC has promised us that money will be made available for us to have Income Generating Activities (IGA) but it is yet to happen (FGD 2, Juba).*

Employment is perhaps a more sensitive issue compared to education and training because of the level of poverty in SouthSudan and the sheer lack of employment opportunities especially for the adult XCs as later discussed. One elderlyXC said:

*I don't have any support that I can give to them since I was demobilized in 2006 and put in a camp. I could not find anything to do since I am old and I spent most of my life in the liberation struggle (John, 38yrs, Juba).*

The high expectations among the XCs, coupled with feelings of unmet needs unfortunately seem to have created mistrust among the intended beneficiaries. Observations on the ground and casual discussions with aid agencies indicated that some of the NGOs seem frustrated and sometimes overwhelmed. It was also noted that some organizations may also be spreading themselves too thin given their limited resources.

## **5.6. Oppression of Female XCs in SouthSudan**

As observed in Chapter One, women bore the brunt of the war in SouthSudan. Many were abducted, raped, tortured and/or enslaved for decades. During the war, many women were forced to work for the soldiers without compensation. They also continued to raise children in the barracks. Those who did not join the war were most likely displaced and had to move from across many geographical areas because of insecurity.

It was observed on the ground that female XCs do not seem to receive any special consideration in the DDR programme. They have to compete with their male counterparts in accessing the available opportunities under the programme. Although the DDR programme has references to support for female XCs, this was not observed to be the case on the ground.

### 5.6.1. Sexual exploitation and emotional abuse of female XCs

Female XCs who participated in the study were living in Juba, having moved from different parts of the country in search of any opportunities to support themselves and their families. During the interviews, they described how they were overworked and abused by the males during the war as two respondents noted below:

*In the army, some soldiers were raping women and sometimes your boss will call you at night and he will demand sex and no one can ask him. It is a humiliation indeed. When you refused, they beat you and we had no place where we could report this (Mary, 26yrs, Juba)*

*We were overworked, abused and exploited, stigmatized, stressed and forgotten in the army ....They treated us as subordinates to the men and gave us odd jobs to do; exploited and treated us like sexual slaves. (Mary, 30 yrs, Juba)*

Another female XC observed that:

*In the army, women are misused. We used to cook, clean, wash and sometimes I used to help in giving medicine to the ill soldiers. Such activities are normal, but what is not good is the 'forced sex' with drunkard soldiers who will always want to force themselves on you.(Susan, 36 yrs, Juba).*

The structures in the military seem to have allowed sexual exploitation of women to thrive. The strict adherence to the established chain of command encouraged senior military officers to take advantage of women in the barracks. One female XC described what normally would happen.

*We had our small compound within the barracks but we moved together, it is only beds that were different. Even some of the women gave birth in the army with different fathers. Most of these women were wives to the deceased and they were invited in the army to replace the names of their husbands who were killed in the struggle. But then some soldiers thought they could have sex with them randomly (Tabitha, 27 yrs, Juba).*

Incidences of rape were covered up or the cases were handled quietly within the ranks often to the disadvantage of the victims. A lot of women who suffered these humiliating acts are still

carrying the scars even after demobilization. Some of them may not have had a chance to share their terrible experiences with anybody to ease the pain as they sadly explained during the interviews. One of the female XCs vividly described the events in the army thus:

*A lot of things happened while in the army. Things that are not good, things that portray a bad image, there was a lot of forced prostitution within the army and women were beaten upon refusing the proposal of the soldiers. Rape was frequent and some ladies were earmarked by some male soldiers for sex and there were no reporting channels within the barracks (Mary, 30 yrs, Juba).*

It was distressing to note that sexual exploitation of women and gender based violence are still taking place, even as demobilization and reintegration continues. Some of the women who have been part of the DDR programme as female XCs indicated that some soldiers still expect them to fulfill their sexual needs. These women live in fear and their daily lives in the communities have been disrupted as noted below:

*Most of these men who used to demand sex in the barracks still think that we are prostitutes; they sometimes stop us on the road and start asking us if we can visit them in their homes. When you refuse, they abuse you and humiliate you (Tabitha, 27 yrs, Juba).*

It was clear that the women affected did not want to raise the matter with the local police because it probably would have jeopardized their personal security. They said they did not trust the police because they are also known to have raped women even in the cells. Although the current SSDDRC policy addresses the issues of security for all, the actual situation on the ground is different. The protection of female XCs is particularly lax. They have merely been demobilized and treated like their male colleagues. No female XC who was interviewed talked about any form of referral to centres where women who have been raped could receive care and support within the area of study.

#### **5.6.2. Women's role in the family**

In the face of adversity, human beings tend to fall back on someone whom they are sure will not fail them. The voices from the fields of South Sudan exemplify this fact all too well. It was noted during the fieldwork that, in the midst of poverty, the family remained the source of hope for the

young and old. Even more amazing is the critical roles mothers seemed to play in providing the material needs of the family as well as the emotional strength the family requires, just to live one day at a time. Field observations showed that female XCs are playing critical roles within family units and communities. They are eager to move on and rebuild the destroyed social shrines.

Two young men who had taken part in the war returned to their families only to find their fathers dead and their mothers taking care of many siblings. The young men had no employable skills although they were planning to acquire some skills. They described the support they received from their mothers as follows:

*We survive from the support provided by my mother which she gets through brewing alcohol and she is the one who supports me a lot. With her support, I feel happy” (Hoth, 20 yrs, Unity State).*

*I lost my father during the struggle and my mum is the one who provides me with things that are needed in school. She used to provide me with money for uniform, shoes and clothes. She used to brew alcohol and that is how she provided for our survival (Zony, 18 yrs, Unity State)*

The women of SouthSudan, whether XCs or not, are determined to help their children enroll in schools according to informal discussions with community leaders. Those interviewed said they raised the required funds through any odd jobs that could help them get money to meet the daily needs of their families. For example, brewing and selling of alcohol is mentioned by several as one activity that the women engaged in to raise money for the family. It is important to note that, even as reintegration continues, women in SouthSudan continue to do what it takes to cater for the needs of their families especially because of the limited resources, including lack of food and security.

### **5.7. Attitudes towards XCs**

The type of lives that the XCs have lived in the barracks and the atrocities they have witnessed in the military continue to impact negatively on their current lives in the communities. During a discussion in an FGD, some former child soldiers admitted to some of the negative activities they were involved in:

*We didn't have food and we were fighting the enemy. What we used to do was that we raid villages, take goats, cows and chickens. We are also branded criminals because we used to fight hard when we were in the army. We don't spare our enemies and we kill them on the spot without consulting or forgiving them. We are given names like orphans and they think all the child soldiers who joined the army were orphans, they did not know that we were forcefully recruited and were fighting for their liberation (FGD 2).*

Some community members do not want to associate with XCs and former child soldiers because of the negative activities that they involved themselves in during the war. This stigmatizes the XCs especially the former child soldiers. One community member stated the following:

*They were recruited while they were young. Their minds are wild and they have a lot of stress and this makes a big difference compared to other children in the community or schools who have not joined the army" (Tekjiek, 33yrs, Unity State).*

During a discussion in an FGD, some former child soldiers said that the community sometimes did not understand the kind of life they had lived during the war and that is why they have a negative attitude towards them. This is how it was stated:

*In school, most of the students when they see a drunkard soldier, they will start abusing him while looking at us because they know that we were once part of that system. We feel bad. When we are abused, we keep quiet and we know that these people are ignorant of what we were fighting for (FGD 5).*

It was noted that some teachers in schools are aware of the effects of war on XCs and especially former child soldiers. One teacher said that they try to encourage the children to lead normal lives:

*We all know that these children are former child soldiers; this makes us to approach them in a different way. We give them special guidance and counseling and we make them understand the difference between military life and civilian life(Simon, 28yrs, Unity State).*



The XCs are frustrated by the stigma that they experience in their communities. It seems to demoralize them. According to a group discussion the researcher held with some of the XCs, the insults and isolation are common even among the children. This is what was reported:

*We are always facing isolation and abuse from some individuals who are living in the community. They always call us 'Anyagaat' meaning someone who snatches people's property by force. This name came into existence because of our association therebefore with the SPLA (FGD 1)*

### **5.8. Coping Mechanisms among XCs**

Some among the XCs seem to have gotten used to the isolation and have devised ways of coping with the various problems that they face during reintegration. Observations and interactions with XCs confirmed that some of them quietly suffer frustration. As theory indicates, such individuals are likely to be reintegrated faster; but this is how some XCs summed it:

*Sometimes we laugh it off and we don't mind what they are telling us. We know that being in the army was not our making but something forced us into it. But some of us initially tried to fight back because when it is too much, you cannot bear it anymore (FGD 2).*

Some XCs also try to rationalize their involvement in the war perhaps as part of the coping mechanism. Again, observations and informal discussions with XCs revealed that XCs are actually proud of their role in liberating South Sudan. One XC respondent said:

*The war we fought led to the signing of the CPA; we really suffered in the bush. By then, there were no roads, no food, no shelter, and there was no education, even now we are not educated not because we don't want to learn but because we were not given a chance to learn, instead we choose to liberate our country (Jada, 38yrs Juba).*

Missing out on education and the suffering the XCs went through during the war are not seen here as a big price to pay for freedom. But then again, freedom itself is often not free. Nevertheless, these voices are implying that, despite their resilience and the current coping mechanisms, recognition of those who fought, died or were maimed by war must be accorded to them perpetually.

## 5.9. The Role of Support Groups among XCs

The researcher noted the existence of strong bonds among some of the XCs in the communities. However there was little recognition of their existence or will by the agencies to assist them achieve some positive goals in a coordinated manner. Forming associations is not a new idea for the XCs because they had formed the associations while in the military. Some of the XCs had this to say:

*When we were in the army, we were moving together as a team and now we still maintain that association. We feel comfortable and better when we move together, and we miss each other when some of us are not there (FGD 2).*

Some of the XCs still see the need to maintain some form of groups that can keep them close to each other within their communities. Some XCs had this to say:

*We still associate because we were the same people who were in the army and we found that is something that connects us. We got used to ourselves and it is very hard to live without seeing one another. We are currently living in groups and learning in the same school and we still have a group.(FGD 1).*

Some of the teachers recognized that XCs still maintain strong group identities even after demobilization and enrollment in learning centres. Two teachers had similar observations about the XCs and former child soldiers. The two teachers observed:

*They associate to each other very well, they talk to me [teacher] openly and they don't feel shy when communicating important issues that affect their lives (Simon, 30 years, Unity State).*

*Even in school, when one of the XCs has done something wrong, they are always addressed collectively and this is because of the strong associations they have formed. ...when one of them has done wrong, we used to call them politely and address the problem.(Tekjiek, 28yrs Unity State).*

According to one informant, the strong group identity among XCs sometimes operates negatively too. The XCs might find it difficult to mix with others. One teacher said:

*The XCs do not accept to mix with other children and they still maintain their original group. The only person they could include in their group may be one of the former child soldiers with whom they have come into contact (Simon, 30yrs Unity State).*

The level of stigmatization implied by these voices is of concern, especially because education is meant to empower people. This is even more critical because, in the last voice, the teacher is actually talking about children already traumatized by war.

## **CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

### **6.0. Overview**

This chapter presents an analytical discussion of the findings of the study. The presentation first discusses issues related to the application of official reintegration policies with regard to social and political reintegration, economic reintegration and the psychosocial issues of PTSD and stigma. The rest of the chapter presents the challenges faced in the reintegration process, especially in the delivery of services by the government and the implementing agencies. Finally, the chapter examines the coping mechanisms, the lessons learned and the way forward.

### **6.1. Social, Economic, Political and Psychosocial Reintegration**

The reintegration of XCs is a multi-faceted process that requires a variety of approaches and the collective efforts of all stakeholders. In South Sudan, these approaches and efforts are focused on the social, political, economic and psychological dimensions of the reintegration process as detailed in the CPA (2005) and the DDR documents (MYDDRP, 2008; SSDDRC 2008). The government of South Sudan is implementing the CPA and DDR programme in collaboration with a myriad of organizations that include: the UN, NGOs, donors, churches and other specialized international organizations and structures (MYDDRP, 2008)

The model applied in South Sudan attempts to socially reintegrate the XCs into their families first. After that, the XCs are taken to schools or offered other training options. Socialization of the XCs takes place through interactions with family members, peers, friends and the community at large. The socialization process is further enhanced through activities such as sports, religious and cultural events and even economic activities that take place within the communities, as earlier discussed in the first three chapters of this thesis (ILO, 2007; Alexander, 2006; & Grzywacz, *et al*, 2000)

According to the findings of this study, the XCs are welcomed into the family with much pomp and dance. At the point of reunification, cultural rites are performed by village elders and traditional healers. This seems to bring an initial sense of reconciliation and acceptance. The significance of XCs being accepted into their families has been noted by other researchers in post-conflict situations. For example, Betancourt and Williams (2008) claim that reintegration is most likely to succeed in the context of community and family support. Similarly

Bronfenbrenner (1977) views the home as the microsystem or the immediate setting in the process of socialization. It is within the family environment that the person starts to interact with others. It is important to consider the exosystem during the reintegration process because it could be that events and happenings that are often hardly obvious negatively influence the process. Of critical importance is a technical understanding of these issues by the partners and key institutions of the society (NGOs, donors, CBOs, media, agencies of government, civil society, employment agencies, service providers, informal social networks (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; p 515).

Some of the XCs and former child soldiers were not welcomed heartily and they communicated their disappointment during the interviews. The former child soldiers seemed particularly disappointed if no ceremonies were held to welcome them. Halberstadt *et al*, (1995) and Annan *et al*, (2006) have noted that family acceptance is especially critical in the reintegration of former child soldiers and the cultural rites mean a great deal to them as a sign of acceptance. Another difference noted was between males and female XCs. Male XCs seemed to emphasize the importance of the welcoming ceremonies compared to female XCs. The communities seemed to put more emphasis in the ceremonies if the XC was a male.

With regard to economic reintegration, findings indicate that the XCs are not offered much financial support at the point of demobilization. They are only given short term support in form of food ration for three months. The food rations are supposed to cater for five people including the extended family. A basic kit of non-food items is also provided together with a one-time cash handout amounting to 860 Sudanese pounds for transport home as noted in Chapter Five. Some of the XCs including former child soldiers said that they did not receive the full package as promised. The former child soldiers particularly voiced their disappointment with some of the basic items that they were promised but never received including cloths, full food ration, haircuts, etc.

Instead of cash handouts, the reintegration model in South Sudan emphasizes education and acquisition of skills as the key strategies of achieving economic reintegration. The assumption is that the XCs will automatically find gainful employment soon after completing training. Those who missed out on school are given an option to join the ALP or learn a variety of trades in other training institutions (MoEST, 2008). With regard to skills training, the agencies are supporting

the government's efforts in establishing and equipping a variety of training centres. In addition, XCs are encouraged to start IGAs, especially in groups, in order to take advantage of economies of scale and division of labour (SSDDRC, 2008).

However, observations in the field showed gaps in the implementation of policy. The DDR programme has built high expectations among the XCs and former child soldiers. But a significant proportion of the people who were supposed to benefit from this programme through education, training and employment perhaps feel that their expectations have not effectively been met. Most XCs and former child soldiers have access to few basic amenities and their capacity to access gainful employment is limited.

There is emphasis on the involvement of the XCs in the community affairs as a strategy of integrating them politically. Some XCs have been encouraged to take up roles and responsibilities and even given opportunities to make certain decisions in the community. This builds the self-esteem of those who get involved in such activities. It gives them a feeling of personal power; they are also able to influence sociopolitical events at the local level. In particular, some XCs have been involved in peace building efforts within their communities as some informants stated in the findings. Some XCs however indicated that there was favouritism in deciding who gets involved in community affairs.

Ideally, the reintegration process should involve the XCs beyond their immediate family setting and into the community. Bronfenbrenner (1979) observes that the setting that shapes the socialization process of an individual includes the externalities such as the community, school, place of work, etc.

According to Moroz (2005), post-traumatic stress persists long after the person experiences a harrowing event. The kinds of lives that the XCs have lived in the barracks and the atrocities they have participated in or witnessed in the frontlines have a negative psychological impact on their psyches. Findings indicated that this is the case with XCs in South Sudan. The XCs who were interviewed admitted to having taken part in violent crimes. Sometimes the community members shun the XCs because of their past crimes and this creates frustration among the XCs. The literature on the subject describes how these psychological effects manifest themselves on the person in forms of frustration, anger and isolation from the community. Such persons are

likely to resort to drugs (Bisson, Churchill & Wessely; 2009). It was noted in the findings that some of the XCs, especially the male adults keep to themselves and avoid interacting with community members.

The teachers also reported that some of the former child soldiers avoid interacting with other children in school and tend to keep to their groups. They noted that the teachers tend to address and handle these former child soldiers collectively, especially when one of them has done something wrong. Treating these children as a group compounds the problem and isolates them further. The teachers' attitudes therefore negatively impact on children's reintegration as well as the learning processes. The school system should address these issues through various channels such as training, policy, etc.

The findings of this study also showed that the XCs are subjected to varying degrees of stigma by the communities. Social stigma is the disapproval of particular individuals or groups who are perceived to act differently. Such people do not share the same norms, values and beliefs with the rest of the community (Goffman, 1990). According to the findings, some community members distance themselves from former soldiers because they associate them with the atrocities of war. The mistrust, fear and rejection that some community members exhibit towards former soldiers result in feelings of stigma and discrimination among the XCs. This rejection is often a source of frustration for the XCs and hinders the reintegration effort. Other researchers have come to a similar conclusion (Heatherton, Kleck, Hebl & Hull; 2000).

In South Sudan, there is a consortium of organizations that provide counseling and rehabilitation support to XCs and former child soldiers who are suffering from different kinds of psychological conditions. Counseling is often done in group settings (UNICEF, 2008). For example, the organizations help individuals who are suffering from PTSD and social stigma. Other interventions are also used, including recreational activities, social inclusion, economic activities and political participation. These support systems are helping a good proportion of XCs recover from stress and trauma despite the fact that the demand sometimes overwhelms the staff (UNESCO, 2007).

The former child soldiers are especially vulnerable to PTSD. The psycho-social model that the consortium of organizations is using to address PTSD and stigma among former child soldiers

was developed by UNICEF (2008). The model emphasizes behaviour modification through the development of positive interpersonal relationships during the reintegration process. For example, the strategy supports the idea of youth centers, children's clubs and participation in sports to foster positive interpersonal relationships, self-confidence and leadership. The model prefers group therapy as opposed to individualized therapy.

## **6.2. Challenges to Reintegration**

Establishing a sustainable reintegration programme for the XCs in their communities is no doubt a difficult process. The agencies involved in the implementation of the DDR programme seem to put a lot of effort, resources and time, in order to achieve the set objectives. Despite some notable successes, majority of XCs have all sorts of complaints and regrets regarding unfulfilled promises and lack of follow up by the programme staff as indicated in the findings.

Such complaints may be exaggerated at times given the harsh reality on the ground but some of the gaps observed by the researcher were obvious. The way certain opportunities are availed seems to hinder the reintegration process. For example, gaps definitely exist in the provision of education, vocational training, employment opportunities, options in IGAs and provision of other basic amenities as findings clearly indicate.

### **6.2.1. Implementations of policies**

The researcher noted in the findings that there was variance in the way some of the implementing agencies are interpreting the policy guidelines yet CPA (2005) is quite clear that policies should be implemented fairly for the benefit of all XCs and former child soldiers. The number of agencies involved in the implementation process perhaps makes standardization difficult. It also calls for a mechanism of providing oversight to the process. The government is the only authority that can authoritatively provide such an oversight but lack of capacity and overstretched budgets sometimes makes such provisions untenable.

However, there are clever ways of achieving a standardized system of implementing the reintegration guidelines as laid down by the policy makers in the CPA and the DDR programmes. The policy guidelines are clear that the programme aims at family reunification of the XCs, provision of enabling care systems in the community and access to basic services, including schooling, health, work and other services (MYDDRP, 2008). This requires forging a tripartite system that includes the government, implementing agencies and the community. It also



requires a reporting mechanism so that it is clearly known who is doing what and where. Finally, the competitive nature of some agencies and the desire to associate success with their work needs to be toned down. According to ILO (2007), the ultimate goal of the reintegration process is to help the people of the Republic of South Sudan achieve peace and socio-economic development.

### **6.2.2. Lack of debriefing**

Findings indicated that the XCs have high hopes and expectations at the point of release. However, frustration seems to set in as they start settling down in the communities. Perhaps the high hopes and expectations at the point of release are due to poor debriefing. According to the findings, XCs are informed about the DDR by their commanders during the parades. The time taken to brief them is perhaps too short implying that they are not properly informed about the DDR programme, especially the level of support that they will receive from the agencies and the authorities upon their release from the army. This situation calls for more effective mechanisms of creating awareness and debriefing among XCs and former child soldiers before reunification.

The demobilizing agencies also need to pass the correct information to the XCs and their senior officers when they go to the barracks for documentation. The officials claim that these procedures are followed but perhaps not in a serious and professional way. The information should correctly describe what the XCs would expect to find at home and in the communities once they are demobilized, including the available psychosocial support. They should also discuss issues relating to the type of services that are provided on the ground. This would help reduce the XCs' expectations once they return to their communities.

According to Pugel (2006), open discussions with XCs and former child soldiers at the point of release have helped them settle much faster in countries like Liberia, which have also gone through much conflict. Pugel (2008) suggests a stringent DDR programme that continually trains and empowers the XCs. Findings from studies on the DDR programme in Liberia have shown greater success in social, political and psychosocial reintegration of XCs and child soldiers.

### **6.2.3. Means of livelihood for adult XCs**

According to SSDDRC (2008) the guidelines on livelihood support under the DDR programme in South Sudan are clearly defined. On the other hand, Muchomba & Sharp (2007) have used livelihoods based analysis to show the dire need for food, water and other basic necessities in South Sudan. The great need for food and other necessities in South Sudan despite the clear DDR

guideline was supported by most respondents. Many XCs emphasized that life had been very difficult upon return and even finding food to feed their families daily was not guaranteed.

The high incidence of starvation, especially among children, is borne out by the researcher's observations on the ground, yet food is the most basic item for a human being. There may be a degree of dependency that the adult XCs have developed over the years but again, starvation of populations in South Sudan has been a common problem in the past. In previous occasions, it was the media that brought out the issue to the attention of the world through grim pictures on TV screens. This was after thousands of people starved to death. In the current global order, it may be unwise to ignore the voices on the ground or wait for the media to highlight what seems so basic, if not obvious.

According to the findings, most complaints by XCs about livelihood needs relate to food, water, education, training, jobs and land. One is tempted to conclude that perhaps the needs are overwhelmingly greater than the available resources. On the other hand, the efforts and resources could be so thinly spread as to have little significance on the ground. If this is the case, the available resources need to be carefully prioritized and more efficiently managed. The fact that the poverty levels are extremely high only complicates issues and perhaps makes the suggestion even more implausible.

Lack of land to settle displaced communities, grow food and graze their livestock was also found to be a sensitive issue. Land is a factor of production without which people cannot prosper if it is not available. Many rural communities in South Sudan rely on subsistence farming for food security. They therefore need land to cultivate crops for household use as well as a place to put up their dwellings (HRW, 2005). Village chiefs and community elders are sometimes charged with the responsibility of allocating land to returnees but they are unable to meet the demand as more XCs return.

The issue of land for resettlement may be addressed partially if the government worked more closely with the community elders, NGOs and other government institutions to ensure that XCs have access to community land on their return (HRW, 2005). Failure to provide land to XCs may alienate them from their communities. Therefore, the issue of land is crucial for the effective reintegration of the XCs. Nevertheless, Government intervention is urgently needed in order to

formulate a national land policy that will ensure fair distribution of land. In many African countries, unfair distribution of land has caused millions of deaths.

Many adult XCs also seemed particularly frustrated by the inability to find jobs. They often seemed to compare the lives in the communities and the lives they led while in the military. The fact that they were assured of some regular salary and food in the army but now they have to fetch for themselves made them angry and likely recruits for illegal militias as expounded in the findings. Because men are traditionally viewed as the providers for the family, lack of gainful employment is often a source of anger, low esteem, sense of hopelessness and even deviate behaviour like stealing (Robertson, 2006). The implementing agencies need to be sensitive to these issues and the different needs among the existing categories of XCs.

Nevertheless, the feeling of unmet needs among the many adult XCs and a consortium of agencies who might consider their work as unappreciated is likely to create a situation of “them and us”. This is not a healthy scenario for the successful implementation of the DDR programme. It creates suspicion and mistrust between the beneficiaries and the implementers.

#### **6.2.4. Cost of education for XCs and former child soldiers**

According to the findings the cost of education is too high for many of the former child soldiers in South Sudan. During the interviews, they said that their parents could hardly afford to pay the school fees for them and many were seeking help from the government and aid agencies with little success. The policy documents and existing research are clear on how education should be managed as part of the reintegration process (CPA, 2005; World Bank, 2002). However, the implementation on the ground leaves a lot to be desired according to the findings. Deng (2006) also found similar results and argues that education may end up being accessible only to the rich because of high fees and few schools.

Even with the support from NGOs and donors, the government of South Sudan has to take the lead in the management of education. Education is a fundamental human right that affects a relatively vulnerable group; the South Sudanese children. The XCs and former child soldiers also attend the same schools like other children. Failure to educate the current cohort of children, including XCs and former child soldiers, means that the country will lack human capital in the future. The government ought to recognize that education of the masses is really the backbone of

the socioeconomic and political development of SouthSudan. It frees the masses from the shackles of poverty, disease and ignorance. Arora (2003) and Brophy (2003) have argued that education can actually be manipulated by the powerful groups to keep the majority of the people poor even in rich countries.

Education meant for the masses cannot possibly be left to the forces of supply and demand. Were it the case then, SouthSudan would be creating a class society where a small group of rich and educated elites rule over a large poor and illiterate population. Such an oppressive system would be disastrous to peace and stability, as has happened elsewhere in Africa (Deng, 2003; Nyerere, 1968). The minimum that can perhaps be done in the short run is to create a safety net for the most vulnerable, including the orphans.

During decades of conflict in SouthSudan, many children did not have access to education. The XCs and former child soldiers missed out on school. It soon became clear to the policy makers that there were large numbers of children of varying ages who needed to be enrolled in school. The MoEST was restructured so that it could deal with this problem and especially help XCs and former child soldiers enroll in schools and training institutions (MoEST, 2008). But frustrations abound. Those who took part in the war argue that they forfeited going to school to liberate the country and now the government has not reciprocated by offering the XCs and former child soldiers with affordable education. Lessons from Sierra Leone, a country that has also been at war, show the importance of education in the reintegration process. Educational interventions are being weaved into the education system to assist XCs reintegrate and become economically independent (USAID, 2002). It is important that the education system takes into consideration the special needs of XCs and former child soldiers in South Sudan.

#### **6.2.5. Corporal punishment as it affects former child soldiers**

According to the findings of the study, corporal punishment is a common practice used by school managements to discipline children and reinforced by parents at home. Former child soldiers who were interviewed said that they were often beaten by teachers as a way of disciplining them. The teachers, on the other hand, said that former child soldiers are not disciplined because of the life they led during the war. Perhaps teachers rationalize the use of corporal punishment because they are probably dealing with children hardened by conflict but the truth is that the practice is inhuman and a violation of children's rights (CRC, 1989). According to McCord (1991),

corporal punishment cannot be justified on the basis of discipline in schools because it is a violation of Child Rights.

In any case, the former child soldiers are already traumatized by years of conflict and may be receiving counseling under the DDR programme (UNICEF, 2008). Subjecting them to more violence defeats the objectives of the programme ((MYDDRP, 2008). Further, corporal punishment adds to the likelihood of the children dropping out of school (Thomas, 2009). The practice therefore contradicts the universal goal of achieving education for all while being a violation of children's rights. It therefore ought to be abolished as has happened in many countries ([www.africanchildforum.org](http://www.africanchildforum.org)).

The issue of corporal punishment in schools and home perhaps goes beyond the need to discipline children. First and foremost, it is most likely a cultural issue strongly embedded in the African society. Examples exist elsewhere in Africa (Clacherty, Donald, & Clacherty; 2005). Although punishment of children in Africa may be a cultural issue, it tends to be kept largely as a secret. It probably requires much more research in order to understand and mitigate against it.

Secondly, the fact that teachers seem to focus on the mistakes committed by children rather than striving to transform their lives positively indicates a gap in their training and philosophy (UNESCO, 2007). Any training programme for teachers who handle children should incorporate all aspects of Child Rights including child abuse.

It is possible to address corporal punishment through creating awareness on the principles of CRC as well as the dangers of child abuse. This ought to be done at the family and community levels. Such awareness should also be mainstreamed in all teacher training programmes as well as the primary school curriculum. At another level, the widespread existence of the practice is an early indication of the need for the legislation of a comprehensive law on children that makes schooling mandatory and child abuse at home or school punishable by law.

#### **6.2.6. Trauma, stigma and counseling**

There is no doubt that the agencies are expending incredible efforts and resources to provide psychosocial support to adult XCs as well as former child soldiers (UNICEF, 2008). However, because of the overwhelming need for these services, the model that is used does not emphasize individual counseling. Whereas individual counseling might be expensive and time consuming, it

is more effective since issues of trauma and stigma often vary from person to person. Hence the current approach is not effectively meeting the psychosocial needs of a rather venerable group.

Betancourt *et al*, (2008) have suggested that former child soldiers would benefit most when individual counseling is provided at the point of reunification and thereafter, follow up psychosocial support should be provided in group settings as a long term measure. Individual counseling would particularly help those most affected by PTSD while counseling in group settings would foster social skills and build self-confidence among the former child soldiers as part of their resocialization and reintegration.

Findings also indicated that people continue to be subjected to trauma and stigma (even) during the reintegration process. The poor conditions under which the majority of the people live and lack of effective legal structures amplify the problem. This is important because the psychosocial issues of trauma and stigma tend also to be legal and human rights issues (Heatherton, Kleck, Hebl & Hull (2000). For example, rape is a criminal act that should be reported to the police and addressed by the courts. At the same time, women who are raped should immediately be referred to psychosocial services where they are counseled and educated on their rights. This calls for a two pronged referral system; counseling services and the police.

It is also possible that traumatized and stigmatized individuals are being discriminated against when accessing opportunities such as employment, education, loans, etc. This relationship is probably difficult to decipher from the current results and would require much more investigation. Nevertheless, cases of people who have been denied access to resources and opportunities because they do not fit the social norms abound in many societies. That is precisely why there is affirmative action for women, children, minorities, people with physical disabilities and those who suffer from certain kinds of medical conditions (CRC, 1989; CEDAW, 1981; MYDDRP, 2008). It is therefore important that implementing agencies ensure that traumatized and stigmatized individuals are also equally accessing opportunities and resources.

#### **6.2.7. Insecurity and peace building efforts**

Insecurity is still a serious problem and the country is still experiencing a great deal of violence (*Daily Nation, May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2011*). Bringing a sense of peace and stability will take time if past experience is anything to go by. As reported in Chapter Four, the researcher had to reorganize

sampling sites because of insecurity during this study. The reports that reached the researcher indicated that certain areas within the study site were tense, with militias ambushing cars at the time. In Africa and elsewhere, countries that have been liberated from colonial rule and oppression through armed struggle continue to experience violence even after independence. The example of the Republic of South Africa quickly comes to mind.

Peace is a fragile commodity in the entire Horn of Africa. Fighting in neighbouring countries has been going on for decades. The region has therefore been a fertile ground for arms dealers and smugglers. The proliferation of all sorts of arms has encouraged crime and wanton violence to flourish. Some governments in the region are unable to provide security to their people. To help communities protect themselves, the authorities have given guns to civilians. It is common even in the neighbouring countries to see men from nomadic communities carrying AK47 rifles on their shoulders as they graze their cattle. Easy access to arms has created a dreadful cycle of violence and crime, where the same guns are turned against the general population.

The problem of insecurity is hard to crack. Even more critical is the effect insecurity has had on the peace process and socio-economic development of SouthSudan (CPA, 2005). Further, the menace frustrates the efforts being made in the reintegration process. The findings indicated that XCs who are frustrated in the communities are likely to go back to the bush and take up arms. Such individuals are also likely to turn the same guns against the communities as has happened in some other post-conflict countries such as Liberia (Harsch, 2005). There is need to develop concrete steps on how the authorities will handle the issue of insecurity. A legal framework and aggressive peace campaigns are preferable to force. It is critical that SouthSudan avoids the route, which other African countries took, and ended up with some of the highest crime rates in the world. Insecurity is an issue that definitely falls outside the mandate of the implementing agencies; yet their work is completely hampered if it gets out of hand. It is definitely a challenge to the the reintegration efforts.

Peace building efforts are being emphasized at the local level through reconciliation and conflict resolution. The involvement of XCs in peace building efforts in their communities is worthy noting. It is a strategy that seems to reconcile individuals as well as build self confidence among the XCs. Many reported a feeling of being included and accepted as they participated in bringing peace across neighbouring communities. Using them as mentors and “big brothers” of younger

and less experienced XCs will boost the peace building efforts even more. Lastly, the country as whole might have to consider having a “Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC)” as a way of achieving national healing. It might be a long shot in the present circumstances but it gives the victims and the perpetrators a chance to “confess, reconcile and forgive”. The use of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in the Republic of South Africa proved successful in bringing peace and reconciliation to a country that was at war for many years.

#### **6.2.8. Lack of an appropriate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system.**

Monitoring is a regular follow up on the implementation of a project, programme or policy. It involves the routine gathering of information to assess progress and identify implementation constraints. It also involves giving feedback about the progress of the project, programme or policy to the donors, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Evaluation is a more rigorous process involving a systematic and objective assessment of the results achieved by a project, programme or policy. Such an assessment should establish the relevance, effectiveness, outcome and impact, as well as the sustainability of the project or programme (Mugenda, 2008). The need for transparency and accountability in programme work, calls for the application of elaborate M&E systems.

The need for oversight in the interpretation of policy guidelines on reintegration was alluded to above under the section on policy concerns. Similarly, the implementation of the CPA (2005) and the DDR programme should ideally be done within a comprehensive M&E framework. According to MYDDRP (2008), an M&E framework was supposed to have been developed to guide the DDR programme. The guidelines describe how the M&E framework would provide the necessary oversight and ensures that the policies and activities are implemented in a standardized manner. The M&E framework was to be applied in assessing the achievements of the programme in terms of outcomes and impact. Reporting of the evaluation results was to be done at regular intervals. Analysis of the M&E data would then allow the implementing agencies to make corrections to their strategies and processes so that the intended results are achieved over time.

The M&E framework as recommended by MYDDRP (2008) was never developed. Although the need for M&E cannot be overemphasized, the resources and time required to put such a system in place are enormous. The data gathering and analyzes efforts required by such an M&E system



needs a team of professionals working full time and with powerful equipment and tools. But the resulting database would provide useful information regarding constraints and concerns in the implementation process. However, when resources are scarce, many organizations do not allocate much to M&E, despite the need for such data. In fact many agencies involved in community development work in the region hardly operate under any known M&E systems (Hancock, 1989). This does not augur well for programme work in the region.

The findings showed that many XCs are not followed up by social workers. In fact a management information system (MIS) was supposed to be put in place to address the need to register and monitor the target group beneficiaries and programme implementation progress and effectiveness. According to MYDDRP (2008), the MIS would have information on XCs' profiles, area of resettlement and a menu of reintegration options. Unfortunately no centralized MIS was developed for the reintegration programme. Each agency relies on its own systems, which more often than not depends on the resources available to each agency to develop and maintain an MIS. Lack of a centralized MIS implies that no accurate data exists on XCs and child soldiers who have been reintegrated under the DDR programme. Although each agency may have some information on XCs who are within their mandate, a comprehensive data base at the national level is not available to gauge the success of the DDR programme in South Sudan. There is therefore an urgent need to craft some form of MIS and a follow up mechanism, however rudimentary.

#### **6.2.9. Empowerment of women**

The findings of this study indicated that women do most of the work at the household level. They take care of the family, including looking for food, cooking, cultivating and even paying school fees for the children. Many households are currently headed by women. The findings also indicated that women have borne the brunt of the war in South Sudan. They were directly involved in the conflict alongside the men. They carry with them the trauma of torture, rape and years of back breaking work in the barracks and the battle front.

It appears that women have continued to experience sexual harassment and discrimination in the communities even after the signing of the CPA (2005). One woman informant narrated how sexual harassment of women continues in the communities even by XCs. She stated that women fear reporting such cases to the police because it probably would jeopardize their security.

The reintegration policy does not seem to have given special consideration to female XCs. Women in conflict situations are often subjected to various forms of gender based violence (GBV). In any society, the key drivers of GBV include civil uprising, hostilities, cultural norms, need for control and abject poverty. In times of conflict, women are subjected to violence and rape. Traditional societies especially in Africa also promote marginalization and maltreatment of women because they consider them inferior to men. Further, power relations in some cultures unfortunately ensure that women remain subordinate to men (Penelope Harvey & Peter Gow, 1994).

Female XCs in South Sudan have been subjected to GBV just like women in other post-conflict countries in Africa (Harsch, 2005). The fact that even after signing the peace agreement female XCs and women in general continue to be subjected to GBV in South Sudan implies that the problem also needs to be seriously addressed from the men's side. Although MYDDRP (2008) briefly discusses the promotion of gender and empowerment of female XCs, the reintegration programme should work with males in changing cultural norms that are oppressive to women. The government, aid workers, schools and other organizations working in the reintegration programme should actually target men with interventions that help them change their attitudes towards women as well as eliminate the existing traditions and norms that perpetuate GBV and discrimination against women.

At the international level, the UN finally found it fit to establish a special UN agency to provide special support to women. The United Nations Women Organisation became operational in January 2011 with the main goal of empowering women of the world achieve their social, political and economic rights ([http://www.unwomen.org/focus-areas/show=Violence against Women](http://www.unwomen.org/focus-areas/show=Violence%20against%20Women)). It now remains to be seen how much effort and resources the new agency will expend in the total liberation of women in post-conflict South Sudan.

But there is still a dire need to formulate a comprehensive programme of empowering women in South Sudan without relying too much on organizations and foreign governments. The women of South Sudan seem to have taken the first initiative; many head their households and provide for their families, both socially and economically. However, they have been left out of the decision-making machinery even after the signing of the CPA. Despite their contribution during the

conflict, women hardly seem to play any significant role in the current set up of the interim government. Any empowerment efforts in SouthSudan must take cognizance of the need to involve women in the decision making process.

#### **6.2.10. Special and vulnerable groups**

The implementation of the DDR programme has already been faulted for not giving special attention to women. The attention given to other vulnerable groups is also wanting. It is observed that the majority of those who participated in the war in SouthSudan were young people. A significant proportion of these people suffered serious injuries from gunfire and exploding bombs. The loss of limbs among humans caused by anti-personnel mines in countries such as Angola has been globally highlighted (<http://www.munfw.org/archive/50th/4th2.htm>). A landmine is usually a weight-triggered explosive device, which is intended to literally tear a person to shreds. The atrocities committed in SouthSudan included the use of such mines; seriously injuring many people.

During the war, soldiers who suffered debilitating injuries in the frontlines had to be taken as far as Lokichoggio in Kenya or Kampala, Uganda. This was because the country lacked rehabilitation facilities. There are still many people who need specialized treatment on a continuous basis. Such people ought to be identified during the reintegration process and accorded the necessary rehabilitation.

### **6.3. Coping Mechanisms**

According to Redman and Kinzig (2003) some people have a natural capacity to withstand stress under difficult conditions. They develop their own ways of problem solving despite the distressful experiences that they face. These coping mechanisms include the capacity for the individual to learn and adapt to new situations that involve increased organizational skills. Marsten (2009) further argues that people who are going through hardships usually establish ways of dealing with the pain and suffering caused by the conditions they find themselves in. Such people use coping mechanisms as a behavioural tool to offset or overcome their suffering, adversity or hurt, without correcting or eliminating the underlying causes (Bernard, 1995).

It was obvious from the findings of the study that XCs have devised ways of dealing with their adversities even where outside support is not provided. It is important for policy makers and

implementing agencies to understand the nature of such coping mechanisms. The discussion below focuses on the coping mechanisms found among XCs and former child soldiers.

### **6.3.1. Family unit**

The family remains the most important unit in addressing people's needs. Mothers were identified by many informants as the providers of social and economic support in the family. This is no surprise given that many households are headed by women. It appears that the absence of men because of war obligated women to take the lead in providing leadership in the family. This is documented elsewhere in history. For example, when most American men left their families to fight in World War II, women in America looked after their children and worked in factories ([http://womenshistory.about.com/od/warwii/a/women\\_at\\_home.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/warwii/a/women_at_home.htm)).

What might need further investigations is how mothers in South Sudan manage to provide for their families despite the abject poverty that afflicts the communities. Informants reported that some of the mothers resort to all kinds of activities to obtain money including cultivating subsistence crops, brewing alcohol, etc. This indicates the entrepreneurial prowess that mothers have acquired in order to survive in a competitive environment. Empowerment programmes aimed at supporting women should identify such potential and build on it for greater success.

Placing orphans with the extended families did not seem popular with informants despite the strength already noted in the family unit. One informant expressed frustration because his step mother could not pay fees for him. It appears this is often a risk where the care giver or guardian is not the biological parent. Perhaps the competition for scarce resources within the family moderates the mother's caring instincts. Studies conducted in Sierra Leone showed that former child soldiers who were placed with extended families received little support in terms of food, clothing and educational materials compared to biological children (Alexander, 2006).

### **6.3.2. Kinship bonds**

The system of kinship is very established among the communities of South Sudan; a quality that MYDDRP (2008) acknowledges in formulating the reintegration programme. In South Sudan, children are brought up closely and any woman or man is considered a parent to a neighbour's child. Relatives are free to seek help and to help each other. The extended family therefore has the obligation to help returning XCs and former child soldiers. In this study, informants expressed the joy of being received by the extended family upon reunification. They vividly

described the ceremonies that were performed when they returned to their communities. The elders and members of the extended families slaughtered animals for them and invoked their ancestors for forgiveness. Those who did not receive such reception from their extended families expressed deep disappointment.

Where the kinship bonds are strong, it is easy to mobilize communities in a positive direction. For example, the reintegration process requires the participation of community members. Similarly, the socioeconomic transformation of South Sudan will be achieved much faster if communities are mobilized in productive socio-economic activities. It is also important to note the positive role played by kith and kin in reconciliation and conflict resolution. The strong kinship bonds should accelerate reunification and reconciliation efforts if well utilized. This is a community strength that the decision makers and implementing agencies can utilize to achieve the objectives of the DDR programme.

### **6.3.3. Support groups**

The findings of this study indicated that XCs operated in organized groups during the war. Upon reunification, some of them continued to operate in groups or associations. Some XCs explained that they had formed groups during the conflict and that XCs continued to operate in groups even during reintegration. Harsch (2006) claims that one of the strategies of helping people who have gone through a common experience such as war is to encourage them to form support groups, organizations or associations. In October 2004, for example, support groups comprising female XCs from several countries in Africa's Great Lakes region met in Rwanda to share experiences. During the conference, they demanded that the DDR Commissions in post-conflict countries in the region urgently address the specific needs of female XCs. The XCs associations provide support for the members and help them influence policy to their advantage. Findings from this study indicated that these groups also operate businesses and other IGAs as intact entities. When any of the members is going through problems he or she readily seeks help and counsel from others. This help is sought without inhibition because the XCs said they trust each other as members of the association (Harsch, 2006).

However, there is a danger of the XCs interacting only with members of such groups. Findings also indicated that XCs who have formed associations tend to exclude other members of the community on the basis that they were not XCs. In schools, some teachers reported that some

former child soldiers also form informal groups where they only associate with other former child soldiers. Those who are implementing the DDR need to know how to take advantage of the strong group identity among the XCs but mitigate its negative effects. Grouping can actually be a barrier to the reintegration of XCs and former child soldiers.

#### **6.3.4. Education and training**

Some of the XCs interviewed said they were enthusiastic and optimistic about the education and training that they were receiving. They hoped to use the skills that they were gaining to earn a living after completing their training. Research in other post-conflict countries also shows that many XCs who have been involved in conflict for long rarely have an opportunity to go to school during the conflict. Once peace is achieved, such people hunger for education or any form of training in an attempt to turn their lives around (USAID, 2002; Pugel, 2006). They put a great deal of effort in informal education or in learning new skills with the expectations that the fruits of their labour will liberate them from years of suffering. Education and skills training are therefore powerful coping mechanisms and as demonstrated by the findings of this study, there are certainly good examples in the South Sudanese situation.

It is important to emphasize that, for education to be a permanently successful coping mechanism, employment opportunities must exist for those who have completed education or vocational training. In this study, some XCs expressed frustration for lack of employment after completing their training programmes. Hence the success of education as a permanent coping mechanism rests on the premise that the XCs are given employment opportunities as well.

For former child soldiers, it is also important that there are enough schools, the cost of education is affordable and corporal punishment is eliminated from the education system. Findings also indicate that, because of existing high levels of poverty, former child soldiers should be provided with financial and material support. Psychosocial services should also be available to them. If these issues are addressed effectively, then education should really be a positive experience and an effective coping mechanism in the reintegration of former child soldiers in South Sudan.

The findings of this study agree to a certain extent with those of Røed (2009) who found that in general, Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups (CAAFG) do not get specific attention in Malakal, a region in South Sudan. This is despite the existence of both international

and national policy documents that address them. Røed found that former child soldiers were labeled and stigmatized by the society and some suffered from trauma. Røed also found that they struggled to get money to pay school fees and buy basic necessities.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

### **7.0. Overview**

This study examined the challenges facing the reintegration of XCs in post-conflict South Sudan. Data for the study were collected and analyzed using qualitative approaches. The main data collection techniques were in-depth interviews, FGDs and observations. Key documents related to the reintegration process in South Sudan were studied as part of the literature review.

Findings on the social, economic, political and psychosocial dimensions of the reintegration process indicated that there are various challenges facing the reintegration of XCs and former child soldiers in South Sudan. These issues were found to be somewhat interrelated. The implementation of the CPA and the DDR programme therefore requires joint efforts that include: the South Sudanese government, agencies, and local communities and families. There should also be efforts to incorporate other structures into the reintegration process, including schools, training institutions, religious and social functions and organizations, etc.

To achieve the objective of reintegrating XCs into the communities, a standardized approach to the interpretation and implementation of the policy guidelines also needs to be devised. Follow-up mechanisms cannot be over-emphasized. This chapter presents the recommendations and conclusions of the study based on the findings and analyses.

### **7.1. Strengthen Demobilization, Reunification and Reintegration**

The DDR should be considered as a continuous process. Although reintegration is the third phase of the DDR programme, its success is related to how well disarmament and demobilization are first carried out. In particular, the XCs and child soldiers should ideally be well debriefed and counselled during demobilization, and before reunification with their families and communities. Debriefing and counseling should start as they prepare to leave the barracks so that they are aware of what to expect in the outside world.

The findings noted that various weaknesses exist at the point of demobilization and through the reintegration process. Some of the ways the reintegration process could be strengthened, based on the findings and analyses, are discussed below.



### **7.1.1. Accessing correct information**

SSDDRC needs to pass the correct information to the XCs and their senior officers when they go to the barracks for documentation. The information should correctly describe what the XCs would expect to find at home and in the communities once they are demobilized. They should also discuss issues relating to the type of services that are provided on the ground. This would help reduce the XCs' expectations once they returned to the communities.

Lack of awareness and proper debriefing procedures prior to demobilization seems to create high hopes and expectations among XCs. When the expectations of the XCs are not met, they feel frustrated. Awareness creation should also be given enough time so that the XCs are fully informed about the reintegration process as well as their obligations and responsibilities.

### **7.1.2. Interim care centres**

Interim care centres were established in several states by various agencies especially to cater for XCs and former child soldiers who are sick or in need of special care before they join their communities. Those who are placed in such centres are given care and orientation for a maximum period of one week. However, such centres are few and widely scattered because of lack of support. The kind of care currently provided is also limited. SSDDRC and other partners assisting with the DDR process in South Sudan should support the establishment of more integrated interim care centers for XCs and former child soldiers.

Examples of interim care centres with “good practice” exist elsewhere in post-conflict African Countries (International Child and Youth Care Network, 2002). Within interim care centres, medical screening should be provided and more in-depths diagnosis and treatment of particular diseases carried out. Transiting of the XCs and child soldiers from military to civilian life should also begin from here. They should be provided with more training and workshops on how to interact with the rest of the community members.

Former child soldiers should also be treated normally during the period that they spend at the integrated interim care centers. This helps to avoid raising their expectations, which cannot be met later. In particular, the social workers should spend enough time with the children so that enough psychosocial care and support is provided to them at the initial stages of the reintegration. The social workers should also draw up plans of what the children in particular

will be doing once they are in their communities. This should also help the social workers establish the children's needs.

### **7.1.3. Transparency and accountability in service delivery**

The services that are available for XCs and former child soldiers during demobilization and reunification should be offered by a joint taskforce that comprises of the various stakeholders. To avoid mistrust, a committee should be formed to carry out the distribution of the three months food rations that are provided to the XCs and former child soldiers. Some of the former child soldiers interviewed reported that they did not receive the full package including cloths, food, etc. Such incidents may lead the XCs and former child soldiers to return to the barracks where they are at least provided with food and other items. When there is transparency in the provision of available services, the XCs and former child soldiers get encouraged to stay in the programme.

Agreements between funding agencies and the implementing agencies on the ground need to be strengthened but kept flexible. This will mean that opportunities that become available to the XCs once they are in their communities can be offered to them. Such opportunities include: income generating activities, literacy classes, vocational trainings and other useful skills that would help them economically.

### **7.1.4. Strengthen follow-up**

According to the MYDDRP (2008) policy, the XCs and the former child soldiers who have been reintegrated are supposed to be followed up in their communities. The follow-up should aim at assessing the needs of the XCs and linking them to the available reintegration opportunities. The policy also requires agencies to go further and try to establish whether the XCs and former child soldiers have any disputes with family members.

Findings have already indicated that there is a lack of proper follow up of XCs and former child soldiers. Follow up is actually a huge and massive task given the number of XCs and former child soldiers who are in the reintegration programme. It requires a great deal of inputs and support from the collaborating partners. It also requires teams of well dedicated social workers who have extensive experience in documenting cases and solving and supporting XCs and former child soldiers.

### **7.1.5. The psychosocial services**

Psychosocial programmes are very important to the XCs and former child soldiers. They help them deal with stress and establish normal relationships with other members of the family and the community in general. The SSDDRC, together with UNICEF and other partners in the DDR process, should make sure that psychosocial services are available to all XCs and former child soldiers. Findings also indicated that, since sports are used as a strategy of reintegrating XCs and former child soldiers, sports equipment should be made available to them.

With particular reference to former child soldiers, provision of psychosocial services should be done with the support of the Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), appointed by the CBOs in the community. The organization should have a focal center where the former child soldiers can meet with counselors on a daily basis to discuss issues affecting them. Counselors should be well trained to handle the children's psychosocial issues and have direct access to the children even those in schools.

UNICEF has the mandate to support children but the level of funding the organization provides to CBOs is currently not enough to meet cost of providing counseling to former child soldiers. UNICEF should give CBOs/NGOs enough money to cover longer timeframes so that the agencies can function more effectively in their reintegration efforts. Social workers would then be able to focus more on former child soldiers within families that are living below the poverty level. Children in such families suffer a high risk of returning to the barracks.

### **7.2. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)**

M&E is an essential part of programme design and implementation as already discussed in a previous chapter. Findings showed that there is a lack of an M&E system for the DDR programme. Many agencies also lack the capacity to carry out M&E activities that would provide the much needed information for the reintegration programme.

The SSDDRC should form M&E committees that comprise SSDDRC, UNICEF, UNDP, CBOs and other stakeholders. These committees should carry out M&E activities to determine the direction the DDR is taking currently. According to IDDRS (2006):

M&E is far more than periodic assessment of performances. Particularly with complex processes like DDR, with its diversity of activities and multitude of partners, M&E plays an important role in ensuring constant quality control of activities and processes, and it also provides a mechanism

for periodic evaluations of performance in order to adapt strategies and deal with the problems and bottlenecks that inevitably arise (p. 3).

Monitoring and evaluation is important because it would help track a complex range of outcomes and outputs in different components of the DDR mission. It would also help in assessing how each component contributes in achieving the goal of improved stability and security (IDDRS, 2006). Lack of a comprehensive M&E system for the DDR programme has to a certain extent led to some degree of repetitiveness and overlap in the implementation of the DDR programme. Overlap in project implementation leads to wastage of the scarce resources available.

### **7.3. Conclusion and Way Forward.**

This study is a serious attempt to understand the reintegration process in SouthSudan, identify the challenges and document the lessons learned. Therefore, the study touches on socially and politically sensitive issues that are critical to the future of SouthSudan. The results of the study should therefore help in closing conspicuous gaps in the implementation of both the CPA and the DDR programmes. It is hoped that the study findings will support the process of national healing, self-determination and economic reconstruction of the young state of SouthSudan, albeit in small ways. The key lesson learned in this research is that the issues and challenges faced in the reintegration process are closely interrelated. Indeed, the issues encompassed in the implementation of the DDR programme should be considered interrelated. However, such interrelationships are not linear in nature. Instead, they define a web of reciprocal causations, where causes become effects and vice-versa.

For example, the absence of men in the family probably obligated mothers to take up the roles of the household heads. They provide the livelihood needed in the family and continue caring for the children. The same mothers may be going through trauma because of war and are at the same time, discriminated and stigmatized by the community. Similarly, children may drop out of school because they have been traumatized by war, have been subjected to corporal punishment at school or are orphans who are have been subjected to abuse.

When some programme managers are faced with interrelated issues, they tend to look for solutions that address such issues in singular. This is probably due to the fact that agencies address development issues based on their specializations. For example, agencies specializing in

education will implement education projects. Those specialized in health matters focus exclusively on health. In addition, agencies hardly come together to compare notes.

A more effective way forward for the agencies implementing the DDR programme in SouthSudan is to apply a multi-faceted approach to problem solving. Such a system calls for the identification and analyses of the existing inter-relationships and linkages among the thematic areas of the programme. The second phase of the approach would be the interpretation of such relationships relative to the objectives of the programme. The final product would be a conceptual representation of the programme, accompanied by an M&E system that provides regular checks and balances. The current limitation to this approach is perhaps the lack of a single oversight body that looks at the SouthSudan programme in totally.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix 1: The interview guide – 1: Adult Ex-combatants

**Purpose:** is to find out how the ex-combatants are being received and reintegrated socially, economically, politically and psychologically by the community of return. (At least how they themselves experience it!)

Name of Informant \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Sex \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many dependent do you have?
2. How many years have you been in the army and date of demobilization?
3. Tell me about your experiences that you have encountered in the army?
4. Can you describe the process you were received by your community, friends, upon your demobilization?
5. Tell me how are you supporting your family economically or financially?
6. What programmes (vocational training) are you participating in or have participated in?
7. Can you describe how the training you got in the vocational training have helped you in your life?
8. How did the training you gain help you in supporting your family?
9. What programmes are there that has helped you integrated into community?
10. Can you describe how the community of elders include you in the community forums or discussions/ does your contribution matters to them?
11. How did you access the information about the vocational trainings or adult education?



## Appendix 2: The interview Guide – 2: School teachers and headmasters

**Purpose:** is to find out the behaviour of the XCs in the school environment and how teachers react positively or negatively toward that and teachers attitude toward the XCs.

Name of school \_\_\_\_\_

Name of informant \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

Years in service \_\_\_\_\_

Education level \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many XCs are in this school?
2. What do you know about the situation of the XCs in general?
3. To what extent do you find yourself competent to teach XCs and prepare them for civilians' life?
4. How do you interact with them compared to other students?
5. How do you react when you noticed any bad behavior exhibited by the XC?
6. How are their performances (XCs) in the class in comparison with the other students?
7. How do XCs interact with other students or learners?
8. What arrangements are there for XC believed to be traumatized or stressed by army life?
9. What relations does the school have with families of the XCs?

### **Appendix 3: Interview guide – 3: Government officials and NGOs and UN officers**

**Purpose:** is to find out how the NGOs, government institutions and UN implement the reintegration policies that support the XCs in their communities of returns.

Name of the organization \_\_\_\_\_

Area of operation \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the informant \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

1. Can you describe about the reintegration process of the XC in Unity State?
2. What does the policy say about the reintegration of the XCs?
3. What do you think are the gaps in implementing the reintegration strategies/policies?
4. What roles do you play as an actor supporting reintegration of the XCs?
5. In your opinion, what approaches do you think would facilitate the reintegration of the XCs?
6. Are there any special programmes for the XC? If yes, how do XC benefit from them?

### **Appendix 4: The Interview Guide – 4: Children Associated with Armed Forces/Child Soldiers**

**Purpose:** is to find out the process of reintegration through the perception of the CAAF/Child soldiers' point from the CAAF/Child soldier's point of view

Name of school \_\_\_\_\_

Name of pupil \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you have a family who stay with you? Or do you stay with your mother, father, sister, brother, or any than your immediate family member? If yes, How can you describe the way they treat you?
2. What happened when you were demobilized from the army? And who did the demobilization?

3. How many years were you in the army?
4. Were you informed about the demobilization before the demobilization?
5. Did you go to school before joining the military?
6. Do you like school/ if yes, how? if no why not?
7. How did your family receive you when you returned from the army? And how is your interaction with the other children in family? ('Interaction' I will simplify it in Nuer).
8. Are there any programmes that you are involved in? What are they and how do they help you?
9. Are there things you miss here, things that you use to have when you were in the army?
10. How do you live together with the other school/community members?

## **Appendix 5: Interview guide – 5: Focus group discussion (CAAF/Child soldiers)**

**Purpose:** this tries to explore how XCs are working over their stress if any in the community environment.

1. What do you all want from school?
2. What is important in learning a subject (s) in school?
3. Do you think it is important to work as a team when there is class work given?
4. What happen when there is a very hard subject that you cannot do the home work alone?
5. How is your relationship towards your teachers and other students?
6. How are your friends treating you when you interact with them?
7. What other games are you involve in or planning to participate in?
8. Do you still have your distinct group as a former CAAF/Child soldiers?
9. Are there some people in the community who still call you with names related to your army background? If yes, how do you respond to them?
10. How are organizations and institutions supporting you economically, socially and psychologically?