

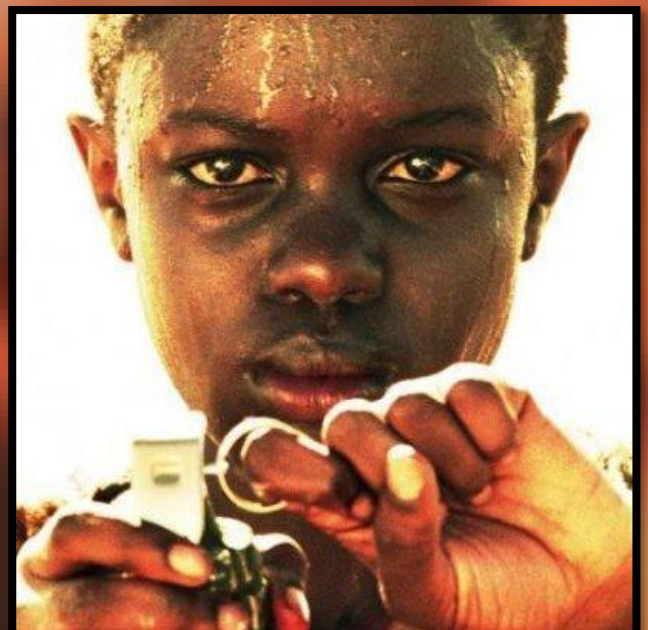
Thesis
Eva de Groot
930306-284-050

RECONCILIATION AND REINTEGRATION OF CHILD SOLDIERS IN NORTHERN UGANDA

BSc International development

Supervisor: Bram Jansen

*Chair group: Sociology of Development and
Change*



ABSTRACT

Child soldiering is still a major problem in many countries all over the world. Lots of research has been done about the reintegration of these children after they return from the army. During the reconciliation and reintegration processes of child soldiers different actors come to the fore, like international organisations, the government and the local communities, implementing their ideas in these programmes. This research focusses on the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and their abduction of children in Northern Uganda, of the Acholi community.

This research aims at enriching the knowledge about these different actors, their opinions about the reintegration and reconciliation process of child soldiers and the difficulties or clashes that occur between these actors.

The reconciliation and reintegration in the local communities is mainly focused on culture and tradition. This is an important factor to take into account while implementing a programme in this area. It is also important for the different actors to keep this in mind when they have to work together for the reintegration of child soldiers. Furthermore acceptance of the community and the communication between the different actors; community, children, family and other institutions, is an important aspect for a smooth reintegration of children in their community.

Keywords: child soldiers, northern Uganda, reconciliation, reintegration, rehabilitation, local, international.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the following chapter the problem statement, research questions and scientific and social relevance of this thesis will be explained.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

At a lot of places in this world child soldiers are being used to fight in wars. Children, girls as well as boys are deployed to fight in conflicts from the young age of only eight years. Lots of them are being forced, others join because of poverty or dreams about pride and glory (Honwana, 2006). The military use of children does exist for a long time, already in the bible and the Greek mythology there are examples of children who join a military conflict.

Nowadays child soldiers are still an important component in rebel and military forces in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Achvarina and Reich, 2006). More than 300.000 children in 41 countries over the world are participating in war or armed conflict (Human Rights Watch, 2001). In some cases the young people manage to escape the group that recruited them and return back to their place of origin, here the reconciliation and reintegration processes starts. This is the process that will be examined during this thesis. For child soldiers it is often hard to return back to their villages. Sometimes they are being held accountable for their crimes and the community first wants to have justice before accepting them back into the community. Also the traumatic stress reactions have to be taken into account, this can be a reason for former child soldiers to be less open to reconciliation and reintegration (Betancourt et al, 2008). Almost all of the children who participated in war experienced traumas, independent of their age or period of abduction (Derluyn et al, 2004). When they return these post-traumatic stress reactions can be encouraged, this can happen when they are blamed by the community for the crimes they committed (Derluyn et al, 2004).

This study will focus on child soldiers living in Northern Uganda that were abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The research will look at the reconciliation and reintegration of the child soldiers in the local community, the reconciliation of child soldiers in the international community and to the support of the international community with the reintegration. The reconciliation process of child soldiers is important to create an easier path for them to reintegrate in the community.

The international conception of justice and reconciliation of child soldiers differs from the local approaches towards the concept of reconciliation, also the approach of the local community and the international community towards reintegration differs. These actors working together in the field of a just ended conflict of a rebel army bring difficulties to the fore. Here the problem according to this concept comes to the fore.

Lacey (2005) captures the difficulties that come forward concerning reconciliation in combination with this specific case very well:

'The two very different systems - one based on Western notions of justice, the other on a deep African tradition of forgiveness - are clashing in their response to one of this continent's most bizarre and brutal guerrilla wars, a conflict that has raged for 18 years in the rugged terrain along Uganda's border with Sudan.' (Cited of Lacey, 2005).

What are the differences between the (local and international) actors that come forward during the reconciliation and reintegration process of child soldiers? And should we focus

on one of these actors or approaches during these processes? This are questions that can be asked according to this problem.

The problem statement of this thesis will therefore be:

In the reconciliation and reintegration process of child soldiers in Northern Uganda, a lot of different actors come to the fore. The local communities and non-governmental organisations among others. I will analyse what the most important aspects are of the reconciliation and reintegration of child soldiers. Furthermore I will examine if the different actors have other opinions about the reconciliation and reintegration process of child soldiers. And, if these different opinions exist, the possible difficulties and clashes between the actors will be examined.

THE CASE

This thesis will look at the Northern part of Uganda as case, the home of the Acholi people. This area is the starting point of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). They are infamous for the recruitment of thousands of children and turn them into soldiers. The army has killed and mutilated tens of thousands of people in North Uganda, around 90 percent of the soldiers are children (Derluyn et al, 2004).

The case of Northern Uganda is chosen because it is a great magnitude of child soldiers in a relatively small area. Due to this small area the local approaches that will be discussed in this thesis do not differ too much from each other. Because of the great scale of child soldiers, there are a lot of children who need good reconciliation and reintegration in their community once they escaped or are released. These two aspects, the small area combined with large quantity of child soldiers, make this case interesting and fitted to explore for this thesis.

In most cases these children had to use a lot of violence during their stay in the armed group, sometimes even against their own community or family. In these cases it is hard for them to return, they do not know if the community will include them again after what they did. When these children return the community itself faces difficult questions. Do we have to include these children in the community again after what they did? And how do we have to do this? And who makes these decisions?

The International Criminal Court (ICC) was in 2003 requested by the government of Uganda to prosecute the rebels of the LRA (Finnström, 2010). The combination of this international court and the reconciliation processes of the local communities caused tensions in the area. This aspect will be further explored during this thesis. When we look at the reintegration, the local communities focus on their traditions and cultures, while the international support is often more focussed on trauma care for example. In my thesis I want to address the considerations and decisions of the villagers about this subject of reintegration and reconciliation; alongside I want to discuss the manner the international community handles this issue and look at the differences and similarities between their processes of reconciliation and reintegration of child soldiers. The case of the LRA in Northern Uganda is further explained in chapter 3 of this thesis.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The problem statement and case shortly described above brings us to the following research questions;

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the difficulties in the reconciliation and reintegration of child soldiers in Northern Uganda through the intervention of different actors?

SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does the reconciliation and reintegration of child soldiers in Northern Uganda look like and what role does culture play?
2. How does international law influence the reconciliation process for child soldiers?
3. How does the international community support the reintegration process of the child soldiers and what is the response of the local community?

RELEVANCE OF THIS RESEARCH

SOCIAL RELEVANCE

This study is of social relevance. The study is about the reconciliation and reintegration of child soldiers, this is an important social aspect in many communities where child soldiers return home. As said, child soldiers are still around the world in large quantities so there are a lot of families who encounter the struggles that come along while performing these processes. The children have to develop their social ties in the community again. Most of the time they were away from their home for a long time and have seen and done things that can have a big impact on their life and their behaviour. With help from this study non-governmental organizations can understand these difficulties with integration better and try to adapt their reconciliation-programs on this, so that the ties between the children and the community can get stronger again.

Furthermore the children do sometimes have reasons why they do not want to go back to the community. This study can provide information about this reasons, which can result in a better understanding of the mind-set of these children. Which can lead to organizations that can provide help for these young soldiers who want to leave the army but are afraid, or do not want to go, back to their home.

This thesis subject fits well into the department sociology of development. When the reconciliation of child soldiers into the local groups and the international community is better understood, it will hopefully contribute to a better development of these communities when their children return from the wars.

SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

With help of this study there will be more understanding about the returning of child soldiers and the difficulties that go along with this. Also the differences between the reconciliation in the community and the international community will be discussed. This way information will be gained that can be used for further studies or projects where there is information needed about reconciliation of child soldiers. The information about the approach of the local communities and the international community towards reconciliation is not combined often. In this thesis hopefully a small part of this knowledge gap will be filled by comparing these two approaches.

In this thesis first the theoretical explanation and the case will be described in two separate chapters. Afterwards the three specific research questions will be analysed per chapter. Lastly, there will be a focus on the main research question in the conclusion, the previous analysed subjects are hereby taken into account.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the current chapter the theoretical framework will be explained, this is the basis around which the thesis is constructed. This thesis is about the reconciliation and reintegration of child soldiers in their place of origin as well as their reintegration in the international community. The difficulties that come to the fore when these actors interfere with each other on these two grounds, of reconciliation and reintegration, will be examined.

First of all, the concept of child soldiers will be explained. Afterwards the concepts reconciliation, reintegration, legal pluralism and actor-oriented approach will be made clear. Taking into account the difficulties that go along with conceptualizing certain subjects.

CHILD SOLDIER

The first important term used is child soldier. According to Child Soldiers International, the international agreed definition of child soldier is the following: *'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, spies or for sexual purposes.'* (Paris Principles on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, 2007).

Questions can be asked according to this definition. Among others we will analyse the concept of childhood mentioned here, also we will look at the distinction between child and adult soldiers and if this distinction is necessary.

We will start with an analysis of the child soldiers themselves, since when are they used in armed forces and why they are used in the first place?

Child soldiers are not a new phenomenon, throughout human history evidence is found of young people fighting on the battleground. Almost all armies in the ancient world used male children, the Spartans for example started training the male children from the age of seven and from this training these boys were soldiers (Eigen, 2009). From this moment the children were always used in (rebel) armies around the world, from the Ottoman Turkish Empire to a European Children's Crusade (Eigen, 2009). An example of less long ago is the Hitler Jugend during World War II (Kaplan, 2005). Also the Russians, Polish and Japanese recruited boy soldiers during this war. Until recently, as seen from the example of the World War II, the use of child soldiers was accepted in almost all societies (Eigen, 2009). As shown above, child soldiering existed throughout human history, this is one of the reasons why this practice is so difficult to end. The difference with the past is that nowadays the extent of children used is higher than before, due to several factors. When the social structures around children are falling apart due to conflicts or epidemics like AIDS, they are more easy to recruit. This has been the case in the past several years in many African countries. Furthermore the weapons have become lighter and more easy to use, even by children, this innovation also led to an increase in child soldiers (Kaplan, 2005).

In chapter 3 the case of the LRA will be discussed, in this chapter also the reasons of the LRA to choose child soldiers over adult soldiers will be examined

We will now take a critical look at the definition of 'child soldier'. We will look at the age definition mentioned there. When do you consider someone an adult and when still as a child?

This looks like a clear boundary, namely in a lot of countries you are seen as an adult from the age of eighteen. But this subject is not as straightforward as it seems. In different cultures childhood is not perceived in the same manner, Philippe Ariès (1996) states that

the concept of childhood is a modern invention. In the Middle Ages for example, children were perceived as mini-adults and were therefore not protected against the aspects of adult life, such as violence or war (Eisenträger, 2012). In the past, lots of countries used the strong men of their country, without looking at their age but instead looking at their physical appearance. For instance, the Acholi community, where the case of this thesis is about, do not look at the age but look at the physical maturity, social expectations and position within the family to judge if a person can already be considered an adult (Schmidt, 2007). They believe that you become an adult person when you are able to take advice from elders and can contribute to the household (Finnström, 2010). It is important to keep in mind during the further part of this thesis that the concept of childhood has been different during history and is still different in many countries.

As a last remark to the definition, Andvig (2006) states in his article that it is not so obvious that violence performed by children is more worrisome than if it is performed by adults. It is often brought in the media like a more worrisome problem because of the feelings of compassion that come along with the subject of child soldiers. The problem that comes to the fore with this statement is; do we even need to make a distinction between adult soldiers and child soldiers? This is an interesting opinion, not often mentioned but worth thinking about. In this thesis we will focus on child soldiers so this distinction between adult and child soldiers is made. But it is good to keep in mind that not only child soldiers encounter the problems mentioned in this thesis. And that child soldiers and adult soldiers in some cases do not differ that much from each other as people might think.

There are two different ways for children to join an armed group, voluntary or by force. In this thesis two definitions for this will be given. The definition 'enlistment' will be used when the children are voluntary joining the armed group, the term 'conscription' is used when the children were forced to join this group (Tiefenbrun, 2007). One has to keep in mind that the boundary between enlistment and conscription is often vague. There is a large grey area lying between these two definitions and therefore often the general term 'recruitment' will be used.

An example of the before mentioned grey area is the fact that sometimes poverty can be the reason for children to join an armed group, this can look voluntary but in this case they are often forced by their parents, instead of the armed group.

As said, children are not always forced to participate in these armed groups, sometimes they choose themselves to join. They can have different reasons for this enlistment, to escape the poverty they suffer from at home, they do it as a dream or to have the protection of a group during a war (Grétry, 2011. Tiefenbrun, 2007). In most cases children join the army themselves and are not forced to do so (Grétry, 2011). They are easy targets for recruitment, because children are easily influenced by propaganda (De Silva et al. 2001). In the case of the LRA almost all children are forced to join the army. Next to recruitment or conscription also the term abduction will be used. This shows the way that the children are taken away from their villages and this method is often used by the LRA.

In this thesis the definition of child soldier that is given above will be used to avoid confusion. Furthermore often the term recruitment or abducted will be used when talking about children who join an armed group.

RECONCILIATION

The concept of reconciliation is broad, and can be looked upon with different views. The international attitude towards justice differs from the local approaches towards this concept

(Baines, 2007). The different viewpoints towards reconciliation is the thread of this thesis. There will be looked at the different actors that come to the fore when we are talking about reconciliation, what their viewpoints about the topic are and how these actors work together in the reconciliation of child soldiers.

The definition of the concept reconciliation that will be used in this thesis will be from a model of Lederach (1997).

Reconciliation is a long-term process linking elements of mercy, truth, justice and peace.

The four linking elements mentioned in this definition will shortly be explained, together with the different views that exist towards these elements;

- Mercy is the softening of deserved suffering (Hestevold, 1985). Granting mercy is experienced different by different actors. Some cultures praise the one who shows mercy, while another person sees it as failing to show fairness towards the perpetrator.
- Truth; in many conflicted areas truth commissions are set up because it is believed that knowledge of the past will lead to acceptance, tolerance and reconciliation. Gibson (2004) led a research about this hypothesis in South Africa. He found that the link between truth and reconciliation differs between ethnical groups. Among black South Africans truth did not lead to reconciliation (neither to irreconciliation), for the other groups (white, coloured, Asian origin) it did. So in general this is a positive aspect in the reconciliation.
- Justice is an important element in the process of reconciliation. In the definition of Lederach it is a component of reconciliation, other authors see justice as a prerequisite of reconciliation. This is also a logical point of view; in the reconciliation process minority groups can get the feeling that, through dialogue, the majority group tries to maintain their dominance. Therefore justice is important as first step in the reconciliation process. Justice is achieved, when all the different groups concerned with the conflict feel that there is righteousness. In this thesis I hold on to the concept of Lederach because, in my opinion, all four elements are equally important to achieve reconciliation.
- The concept peace is in general used to refer to the ending of a violent conflict (Pankhurst, 1999) and when groups together find peace with the end and solution of the conflict. There is a wider range of meanings but this definition is suitable for this thesis.

The following quote of the article of Gawerc (2006) describes very well how different viewpoints about a subject can exist, the quote is about the debate concerning the concept justice: *"...given the power of social locations in shaping knowledge, this is often looked upon differently by different groups in conflict and it tends to be correlated with each groups' power position."*

This is not only the case with the concept justice, all the mentioned elements deal with these different viewpoints of different groups.

Now we will look at the content of the concept reconciliation. Hamber and Kelly (2004) reviewed different existing definitions of this. During their research they found some fundamental aspects that are involved in the reconciliation process. We see the different aspects of reconciliation of Lederach back in these different points about the content of reconciliation.

- 1) The whole society has to be involved in the development of a common vision of an interdependent society. This refers back to the element of peace in the definition of Lederach, when every person has peace with the ending of the conflict, they can again work together and develop a newly formed society.
- 2) The society has to acknowledge the past and provide mechanisms for justice, healing and restoration.
 - Such mechanisms are for instance apologies from the perpetrator towards the victim or compensation.
 - This involves learning from the past in a constructive way.
 This clearly shows the aspect of justice shown in the definition of Lederach.
- 3) Building positive relationships, accepting the commonalities and differences between one another.
- 4) Change from a violent culture to an open culture where every citizen is an active participant. In this aspect the elements mercy and peace come to the fore, these elements are necessary to create a society where everyone is accepted and listened to.
- 5) The social, economic and political structures are transformed. (Hamber & Kelly, 2006)

This are the different aspects and elements that are present when we are talking about the concept of reconciliation and what this concept contains.

Reconciliation has a lot to do with the culture and traditions of the area. In many communities in Africa they have ‘cleansing ceremonies’ to clean the people from their actions. These rituals go way back and have a lot of meaning for the community. For instance the ‘stepping on an egg’ ceremony to promote forgiveness in the community (Baines, 2007). These cultural aspect have a strong meaning in the community and cannot just be ignored by international agencies who want to help with the reconciliation of child soldiers. Also, the international approaches towards justice are often considered inappropriate according to the locals (Baines, 2007).

People of the international community, on the other hand, often think that these rituals leave people unpunished for their actions. As David Rosen (2007) states in his article: *“It is difficult how to perceive child soldiers as international community: “as innocent victims of political circumstance who should be protected and forgiven, or as moral agents who should be held responsible for their actions?”*

This is the difficult question the international law and community has to deal with, to what extent can you see these children as victims and at what point do they become responsible for what they did? This is a more legal and moral focussed question but in this thesis I will describe how the approaches of the international community differ from that of the local people and how these approaches are combined.

REINTEGRATION

Reintegration is a concept that on first hand looks easy to define, according to the Oxford Dictionaries (2015) the definition is: *it is to integrate again within a community to restore unity*. Looking at this definition of reintegration, one part is striking according to me. In the definition there is said ‘to restore unity’, I will contest this sentence. When I go in short to the case of this thesis, Northern Uganda, it is not clear if all the communities where the children are taken from were an unity. In my opinion this part of the sentence has to be modified into *‘to restore the social bands and accept and respect each member in the newly shaped community’*. This way the definition of reintegration does not automatically assume

that all communities where children are taken from are unities. Because of the war the communities and children are often changed and therefore the social bands and communities will be in a different situation than before they left. Furthermore, in my opinion reintegration is mostly about the acceptance of everyone involved and to live again together with each other and respect each other. In short, the definition of reintegration used in this thesis will be:

Reintegration is to integrate again within a community to restore the social bands as good as possible and accept and respect each member in the newly shaped community.

How this reintegration can be obtained by the community is a more difficult question. In an article of Corbin (2008) two important factors for successful reintegration are mentioned, first of all the reunification with the family and secondly, being included within the community again.

Betancourt et al. (2010) describes the factors that come along with this concept more extensive, they state, looking at different studies, that successful reintegration and rehabilitation depends on several factors including;

- The environment where the child has to return back to, the institutions to help with the reintegration and the acceptance of the family and the community
- Educational and training opportunities to help ex-child soldiers in being self-sufficient, this way they have a purpose in their life again and can build a new life in their community.
- The behaviour of the children, or young adults, themselves; if they are open towards the development workers and if they are willing to talk with them about their experiences for instance.

We will look at these three factors in the coming chapters when it comes to the reintegration of child soldiers. We will investigate if all of the three factors come to the fore in the local and international reintegration programmes we will look at.

LEGAL PLURALISM

Legal pluralism is a concept that is closely linked to the present-day rules of law of, mostly, former colonized countries. It stands for the fact that there are different rules of law that apply to different communities. It is a multiplicity of legal orders, which can exist on different levels, from local to global (Tamanaha, 2007)

Some different kinds of law that are based on the area they rule over are; the municipal, state, regional, national, transnational and international law. Next to these types of law other, less familiar, forms exist, for instance; customary law (the more traditional legal system), indigenous law or religious law (Tamanaha, 2007).

In former colonized African countries like Uganda, that was colonised by Great-Britain, the plurality of laws comes forward. These countries have a plural system of customary, religious and European law (Helium, 2000).

Next to law, there are also legal arrangements of norms and values. These rules are less formal, but embedded in each community.

One can bring the definition of legal pluralism back to reconciliation, every community and every organisation has different ideas about the best way of the reconciliation of child soldiers. Legal pluralism is a difficult aspect in this case because it has to be clear which rules apply to which group and groups on different levels have to consult with each other about the best solutions. Before starting a reconciliation or reintegration project in a certain area first the rules that apply to the community have to be examined and lots of consultation

has to be done about the best way to imply the programme in this certain community. One cannot blindly copy and paste each programme into each community or environment.

The difficulties of legal pluralism will come to the fore in this thesis in the form of the combining of the local and the international approach when looking at the reconciliation and reintegration process.

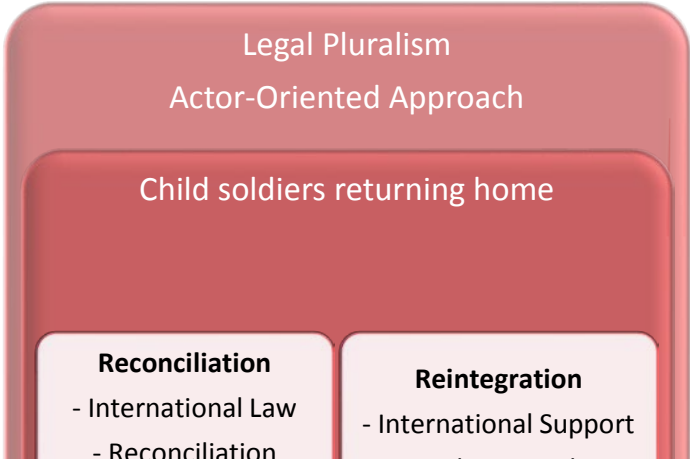
When building further upon the concept of legal pluralism, the concept of the actor-oriented approach comes forward. This concept is closely linked to legal pluralism because of the use of different actors. Norman Long, the researcher who developed the actor-oriented approach, focussed during his career on rural development and the theoretical and methodological issues that come to the fore concerning this subject. In his article 'Creating Space for Change' from 1984 he analysed that the sociology of development needed a new approach to be able to analyse the dynamic processes by which social groups and individuals interact with each other. He called his new theory the actor-oriented approach, this approach does focus on the social processes of people and how these processes shape the outcomes of development. As Long describes this himself, we have to focus on the following aspects:

“Look closely at the ways in which different individuals or social groups deal with changing circumstances and attempt to create space for themselves so that they might benefit from new factors entering their environments. The interactions and strategies that result have a feedback effect on the wider structure and thus influence the broader processes of change, often in unexpected ways” (Cited of Long 1984).

The actor-oriented approach is an approach that is based on flows of information and coalitions between key actors. (Matsaert et al, 2005) Therefore first the key actors and their links and flows of information have to be identified afterwards the coalitions between the important actors can be made and information can be exchanged. There is also critique on this actor-oriented approach, according to them this approach relies too strong on the rationality of the individual or groups. Nevertheless will I use the actor-oriented approach during this thesis. My opinion is that this concept reflects the final purposes of the reconciliation and reintegration programs, which I try to further develop by doing this research. The importance of the actor-oriented approach is widely accepted by the people who work in the development area. It is a good concept to keep in mind during the further part of this thesis, the social processes of the different actors that will be mentioned and how these actors each deal differently with the circumstances is an important subject in this thesis.

OVERVIEW

To give an overview of the used concepts and to clarify the upcoming part of the thesis, hereby an illustration of the concepts and how they have overlap with each other.



CHAPTER 3: NORTHERN UGANDA AND THE LRA

In the current chapter first the history about the case of this thesis will be described; what is the Lord's Resistance Army, where do they fight against, what are their motivations to keep fighting and in which areas are they operating?

Afterwards the case of the child soldiers of the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda will be described in three stages, the recruitment (enlistment or conscription), the life in the army and the return home. Also the difficulties in the process of returning home will be described from the point of view of the child soldiers. This is important to understand their mind-set and the decisions they have to make when returning home. With their decision to return home the reconciliation and reintegration process starts.

HISTORY

The area this thesis looks at is Northern Uganda, a part of Africa where the Lord's resistance army (LRA) of Joseph Kony has its roots and left a major impact on the daily lives of the local communities. The civil war in Northern Uganda is going on from 1986, since 2006 this part is free of rebel raids of the LRA. Northern Uganda (Acholi-land) is a small and uncrowded area, around 4% of the population of Uganda lives in this area (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999).

In 1986 Yoweri Museveni led a coup to seize the power over Northern Uganda, this was followed by killings and massacres against people of the North. Due to this coup a division was created between the North and the South of Uganda. This led to the emerge of rebellions against the government in Northern Uganda. First the group, which later became the LRA, was led by Alice Lakwena, as one of these rebellious movements against President Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Movement (NRM).

It was called the "Holy Spirit Movement" by that time. The group gained popularity because of the resentment towards the government of Uganda. After the HSM was defeated, first Alice's father and afterwards Joseph Kony took over the lead, and in 1988 he gave the group the name that is still present today: the Lord's Resistance Army.

In the beginning of his leadership, Kony claimed that the mission of the LRA was to overthrow the Ugandan government, help the Acholi and to rule Uganda based on the Ten Commandments (WarChild, 2015). But soon after the take-over he gained less and less support of the Acholi because of his brutality, this was the moment he started to raid homes for food and medicines and abduct children to turn them into child soldiers (Blattman, 2007). The numbers about how many children have been abducted differ a lot, some say that during the past 20 years 30.000 children have been abducted by the LRA (HRW, 2007), others say that more than 60.000 young Ugandan people have been abducted (Blattman, 2007). Because of this abductions the Acholi people were organising themselves against Kony.



FIGURE 1 ACHOLILAND BBC ONLINE

The year 1990 is considered as a turning point in the strategy of the LRA. Sudan began to supply them with weapons and equipment and they set up their base in Sudan. Secondly, the Acholi people were organising themselves against Kony, so he was not only fighting against the government but against the whole population. The LRA turned at this point from fighting for the Acholi against the Ugandan government towards fighting for Sudan against Uganda, including the Acholi population.

The Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) tries to stop the LRA by operations like 'Lightning Thunder' to attack the LRA (Sage, 2011), despite the fact that they are trying to stop the LRA, they are not clean, according to the stories about abduction and torturing by the UPDF themselves.

Not only the children are affected by the LRA but all the people who live in the area. The LRA attacks the Acholi population where they claim they are fighting for, this is an interesting contradiction. Why would they fight something they are fighting for? Olsen (2007) wrote an interesting article "*Violence against civilians in civil wars*" about the motivations behind this contradiction. We will shortly mention the most important reasons why the LRA is fighting their own people.

The fact that the Acholi population at a certain moment decided to see peace as more important than winning back power for the Acholi is the most important reason for the LRA to attack their own people (Olsen, 2007). The LRA feels they cannot longer trust the civilians, they felt betrayed by their own ethnic group. Therefore they started looting because the population did not give resources voluntarily to the rebels. Also they use violence to control the local communities and to abduct children. The killings of the LRA are used as a form of population control, they use it as a warning (to not collaborate with the UPDF) or to paralyse them (Olsen, 2007). The attacks towards the community are mainly used to scare the population and make them aware of the fact that they have to collaborate with the LRA. So not only children are affected by the actions of the LRA, lots of civilians live in constant fear for the LRA.

Next to the fear, a big part of the Acholi population is displaced due to the LRA, they had to leave their homes and most of their belongings because of the civil-war. According to Dunn (2004) around 2002 more than half of the local Acholi population has lived in displacement camps due to the attacks of the LRA. In a survey of 2585 interviewees of northern Uganda 31 percent said that one or more of their children were recruited by the LRA, furthermore 23% said their children were mutilated and 45% had witnessed the killing of a family member (Pham et al. 2007). 1.7 Million people in Northern Uganda have been displaced due to the war, with the end of the war the difficulty of rebuilding devastated communities starts. (The Resolve, 2010). These displacement camps were set up by the Government of Uganda in 1999, these camps may sound voluntarily but are the opposite. The civilians that did not want to go to the camps were beaten or shot. In the camps diseases could spread easily due to the bad hygienic conditions, also the camps could not protect the people from attack of the LRA (Wegner, 2012). These camps did not feel as a safe place for the population, Wegner (2012) even states that the Government of Uganda could be charged for crimes against humanity, due to the conditions in these displacement camps.

The civilians are suppressed by the LRA with the use of violence and looting. They are in fear that their children are abducted and they often have to live in displacement camps due to the attacks. The consequence of all these factors is that the social bonds in the communities are changing.

In Appendix I the history of the LRA is displayed in an timeline as clarification.

MOTIVATION

There are a lot of questions according to the motivations of the LRA to continue its war. The goal of the nowadays LRA is unclear, it looks like their only goal is survival and they have no specific political goals. Dunn (2004) and Vinci (2007) both examined some of the theories that try to explain the causes of this ongoing conflict.

Vinci (2007) describes the motivations of the LRA for continuing the war by starting with instrumental goals but nowadays these are replaced by existential goals. He states that a factor of this change is the fact that the LRA has created an autonomous political community instead of fighting for the wider society.

Underneath the examinations done by Vinci (2007) and Dunn (2004) will be provided, the motivations and goals of the LRA they found with the theories they provide in their articles will be combined. The motivations of the LRA are divided the same way as Vinci (2007) divides them; into instrumental motivations and existential motivations.

- Instrumental goals; this are motivations that have the intention of an end, that they are fighting for a certain cause or goal. As Vinci (2007) states: *'...instrumental motivations for a conflict are exactly those that the Western way of warfare assumes: an armed group forms in order to attain a goal, such as the overthrow of a state, it then fights battles in order to bring about this goal, when it has achieved that goal, it stops fighting.'* (cited of Vinci, 2007).
 - o Political motivation
According to Dunn (2004) one of the motivations for the war is that the conflict is the result of the complaints of the Acholi and other groups in Northern Uganda against their government. Vinci (2007) states that it can be assumed that the initial concern of the LRA was to bring political change in Uganda, but that these motivations have become less important over time. The contemporary LRA lacks any political motivations according to him.
 - o Economic motivation
It is possible that the conflict is a profit-making conflict for those who are involved (Vinci, 2007). Dunn (2004) states that a 'political economy of conflict' has emerged, lots of actors are benefiting economically from the war and therefore have no interest in bringing this conflict to an end. But although there is certain financial gain because of this conflict, economical motivation is not the likely to be the dominant motivation within this conflict (Jackson, 2002).
 - o Sudanese influence
This conflict is a sideway of the rivalry between the Sudanese government and Uganda. According to this theory, Kony and his child soldiers are hired by Sudan to destabilise Uganda. In 1993 the LRA was weak and negotiating for peace, but at this point the Sudanese government showed up. The war between Sudan and Uganda was fiercely, the Sudanese government began supporting the LRA in 1994 by providing supplies and weapons (Blattman, 2007). Before this action Museveni (the president of Uganda) already supported a Sudanese rebel force to destabilise Sudan. Now Sudan was doing the same trick towards Uganda (Blattman, 2007). The relationship between

the government of Sudan and the LRA can best be described as an alliance, two actors with different interests formed a mutually beneficial relationship (Vinci, 2007). In 2002 the support of the Sudanese government towards the LRA ended because of an agreement between the Ugandan and Sudanese governments. In this agreement Sudan allowed the Ugandan military to conduct operations against the LRA on their territory.

- The second type of goals Vinci describes are existential goals; these are motivations that are not concerned with returning towards a normal society. To cite Vinci (2007) once again: *“Existential motivations are not concerned with carrying out a set goal and then returning to normal life in society. (...) groups that are existentially motivated continue to fight in order to affirm a way of life and therefore see the indefinite continuance of war as necessary.”*
 - Safety
For the high commanders of the LRA one of the motivations to continue fighting is the fact that they are safe when they keep living in the army. They see the LRA as only way of survival because they are afraid of what will happen to them when they surrender themselves (Vinci, 2007).
 - Basis of life
Many men do not know a different life than their life in the LRA anymore, they build their life in the bush, sometimes they have wives and children because of the LRA. Furthermore they have access to food and resources, and the higher commanders have power they want to hold. It is impossible for them to maintain these resources when they leave the army (Vinci, 2007).
 - ‘Madman’
Kony is a ‘madman’, he has no ultimate goal and is only engaging in violence for his own good, this is a strongly believed theory (Dunn, 2004).
 - No government influence
The army and the government have no interest in defeating the LRA, they exploit the conflict for political purposes or they do not consider the conflict a major concern (Dunn, 2004).

YOUNG CHILDREN

As already mentioned, the LRA abducts great amounts of children, in comparison with most other rebel armies. They have a core of only 200 adult members and up to 25.000 abducted children (Kaplan, 2005), although the numbers about this vary. There are several explanations about why the LRA uses these large amounts of children instead of using adult soldiers. A distinction between these reasons can be made between four different categories.

- 1) Supply of children
As widely known, in many poor African countries the largest part of the population exist of young people, due to a demographic shift. This causes a relatively large supply of children (Blattman, 2007).
- 2) Functional value
From African rebel commanders stories about the functionality of child soldiers are heard. They say that children are more fearless and willing to fight (ILO, 2003). This can be due to the fact that children have an underdeveloped sense of death and the

inability to assess risks. It is also said that supply of light weaponry increased the use in child soldiers (Machel, 1996).

3) Costs of recruitment

Children are inexpensive recruits because they require little material, furthermore they are easier to bond to the group (Blattman, 2007).

4) Easier to retain

This last argument is a very important one, especially in the case of the LRA, children are more easily indoctrinated. This is a technique often used by the LRA to convince the children from killing or other violent crimes. Children are not full moral personalities yet and therefore do not make decisions in the same way as adults (Gutiérrez, 2006).

LIFE OF CHILD SOLDIERS

In the previous section the general history of the LRA and his leader, Joseph Kony are described, furthermore the motivations to keep fighting and to use child soldiers are mentioned. To continue we will look at the more personal level, the one of the child soldiers themselves. This will be divided into the recruitment, the life in the LRA and their return home and the decisions that come along with this. The intention of this part of the thesis is mainly to give an idea of the environment these child soldiers have lived in, so that their decisions and mind-set is more clear. To clarify the information and to make this less distant, each of the subjects will have the story of a child soldier with it as an example.

RECRUITMENT

This part will begin at the start of the army-time for child soldiers; the moment that they join the military group.

When we look at the case of the LRA, the facts about enlistment and conscription mentioned in the theoretical framework, are different, here almost none of the children join voluntary, most children are recruited by force (Schmidt, 2007). Therefore we mostly speak about abduction in this case. They are abducted from school, their houses or straight from the streets. During the past 20 years of the civil war between the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) and the LRA, the LRA abducted around 30.000 children of Northern Uganda to fight in their army or to serve as sex slaves. From 2003 till 2007 the number of abducted children is even increased (HRW, 2007). But the numbers about this are vague, some say that it is estimated that over 60.000 youth have been abducted by the LRA (Pham et al, 2007).

The story of Richard

Richard was shortly abducted by the LRA in 2001. To Cheney (2005) he told his abduction story, shortly displayed here. *"One of the rebels looked at me and said, 'This boy, should we take him or we leave him?' They said, 'Let's go with him', and took me. (...) At first I was beaten because I was walking slowly. They wanted me to direct them where there are more children so they were moving with me so they get more children."* Richard was mainly used as an informer, he was not trained as a soldier so he had to do many small activities like getting water or making fire. After some time he managed to escape together with a friend and came home to his grandfather. (Cheney, 2005). This example shows how easy the soldiers take

children away from their homes or schools, the case of Richard is an example of how most of the children are abducted by the LRA.

LIFE IN THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY

When the children are recruited, they start their life in the army, these experiences differ for each person. Some children stay in the army for a long time and are trained as a soldier in Sudan. Others only stay for a short period and are mainly used as carrier of goods or informer. The experiences the children get in the army are nevertheless horrible, they are often forced to kill relatives or to torture people and other children who are abducted. Girls often become sex-slaves or wives of one of the commanders, this destroys their self-respect and acceptance within their families at home (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999). Every child that served the LRA has a different story and it is too easy to generalise this, but one can assume that the experiences in the army are horrible and that the children often are becoming exhausted, tortured (mentally and physically) and live a life separated of normal society.

Most children that are abducted come from small rural villages in the Gulu and Kitgum areas (shown in the picture at the beginning of this chapter) and are part of the Acholi ethnic group (Brooks, 1998). The short time stays are often around one or two months, while the long captivities can go up till several years. The children who are captives for a long time mostly are being trained in Sudan and then return back to Uganda to fight or are given to commanders to be their wives.

Because each story of each child soldier is different, underneath three stories of different children will be given, the first one of William, a young child who was mainly used to carry supplies. Afterwards the story of Charles, who was trained as a soldier in Sudan and had to fight in the battlefield, and lastly of Sarah, a girl who was given as wife to one of the commanders. The stories are chosen because they all show a different aspect of the daily lives of the child soldiers. These vignettes hopefully provide a clearer overview about the subject and environment of these children.

The story of William

Brooks interviewed together with her colleague Yodon Thondon twenty-eight children while they were in Uganda, the youngest child they interviewed was William, ten years old by that time (Brooks, 1998). What often comes to the fore in the stories of the child soldiers are the long times they have to walk without resting, often carrying heavy supplies, we see this also in the story of William. He told the two interviewers about the daily proceedings during his time in the army: *"They beat us, then they made me carry some radios and carry the commander's gun. It was heavy and at first I was afraid it would shoot off in my arms, but it was not filled with ammunition. We joined a big group and we walked very far, and my feet were very swollen. If you said that you were hurting they would say. "Shall we give this young boy a rest?" But by a "rest" they meant they would kill you, so that if you did not wish to die you had to say you did not need a rest."* (Cited of Brooks, 1998).

The story of Charles

Charles was fifteen when Brooks (1998) interviewed him, he was trained as a soldier in Sudan and had to go back to Uganda afterwards. Here he had to abduct children and attack trading centres. In his story he tells that he and the other children had to run towards the frontline and where not allowed to take cover. *"The order of the Holy Spirit was not to take cover. You must have no fear, and stand up as you run into fire. This was because they said you would be protected by the Holy Spirit if you stood tall and had no fear. But if you took cover,*

the Holy Spirit would be angry and you would be shot dead by all the bullets.” (Cited of Brooks, 1998).

The story of Sarah

In the case of the LRA girls are not only used in the army for sexual purposes but also to engage in fighting at the frontline (Uppard, 2003), as we have read about in the story above. Because this aspect of the daily live in the army is already mentioned above, this story of Sarah mainly focusses on the daily life of girls in particular, in a lot of cases these girls are sexually abused or, as happened with Sarah, given as wife to a commander of the LRA. *“...I was given to a man called Otim, There were five women given to one man. The man I was given to was very rude to me: he thought I wanted to leave him and escape. He beat me many times with sticks. He thought I wanted to escape. Now I’m going to be a mother soon. I don’t want to be a mother at this age. But it happened and I must accept this.”* (Cited of Brooks, 1998). At the time the interview was taken, Sarah was seventeen and, as said, pregnant of a commander of the LRA.

These three stories of different child soldiers show the differences that exist within the daily life in the rebel army. It is important to understand that children perceive these daily proceedings each in a different way and that there is not a common mind-set of child soldiers.

RETURN HOME

Many of the child soldiers of the LRA that returned back have escaped, they are rarely released by the LRA itself, only when for instance there is not enough food. The escape is full of risks, when children attempt to escape but fail, they are often killed by the commanders or by the other children, to show them what will happen when they try the same. They are being watched by soldiers most of the time so it is very hard to escape. Nevertheless eighty-four percent of the children eventually escaped in the short moment they are unsupervised, for instance during a battle (Blattman & Annan, 2010).

The choice to escape brings along some difficulties, they have to choose the right moment and think it through to not get caught by a commander, and they have to take the attitude of their family when they come home into consideration. Often the children had to kill community or even family members during their time in the army, the community is therefore often not very willing to take them back again in the community. Girls often return with children who are born in the army, this can be an extra incentive not to escape to home. These girls often encounter anger from the community because of these babies and their unknown father.

As seen above, it is a big consideration for children to escape the army, most of them risk their lives to escape and believe that their family or community will accept and help them when they return back. In the next chapter this return will be examined from the point of view form the local and the international community, then we can see how they handle this situation and if they indeed accept these children when they return from war.

The above given history and stories are written down so that the context of this immense conflict is made a bit more clear. The stories are given so that the viewpoint of the child soldiers themselves is also taken in mind while further reading this thesis. In the coming

chapters the reconciliation and reintegration will be explained from a local and international point of view.

CHAPTER 4: THE VILLAGE OF ORIGIN

When child soldiers return back to their community after they got out of the army, a lot has changed. First of all, the children are changed themselves through their violent experiences in the armed group. As told in the previous chapter, they often had to perform cruelties towards members of their own community or even their friends or family, this has most probably a lasting impact on their development towards adulthood and their further lives. Furthermore the community is often changed because of the war; community members are killed or recruited and the social structures have become different and more difficult because of this.

The research question that will be focussed on in this chapter is:

How does the reconciliation and reintegration of child soldiers in Northern Uganda look like and what role does culture play?

RECONCILIATION

In all parts of the world the reconciliation and peace process has other standards, traditions and rituals. Also most of the Acholi community members have special traditions around their reconciliation process and the creation of peace.

A striking characteristic in their traditional reconciliation process is the fact that they focus on repair and the restoration of relationships, instead of retribution (Enomoto, 2011). The aspect of giving forgiveness is important in the culture of the Acholi community, they try to solve crimes and problems through granting forgiveness and not through punishment. The victim's clan can forgive if the offender deeply regrets its actions and compensation for the actions is paid. This traditional justice has no punishment in it, only compensation for the actions. The aim of this cultural aspect of the Acholi community is not to punish but to restore the relationships between the offender and the victim (and their clans) (Enomoto, 2011).

One of the reconciliation systems of the community is called *Mato Oput*, this process is used to resolve disputes and help with reconciliation through consensus building (Murithi, 2002). It is a traditional process mostly applied in case of murder. It is used often in the Acholi community to reconcile child soldiers from their violent actions during their time in the rebel army. Not only the child soldiers are participating in this process, even the leaders and commanders of the LRA are reconciled through this process. Lots of the Acholi people state that it does not matter how horrible and violent their actions during their time in the LRA have been, they still can be reconciled through *Mato Oput*.

Mato oput means 'drinking the bitter root', in the process every one of the community is allowed to share their view according to the topic, the process consists generally out of five stages which will be mentioned shortly below.

1. The culprit does acknowledge his or her responsibility for what is done; the evidence of the public and the investigation done by the Council of Elders will be presented afterwards.
2. The culprit has to show genuinely deep regret for the actions.
3. Forgiveness will be asked from the victims, they are encouraged to show mercy to the culprit and grant forgiveness if it is clear that the offender deeply regrets his or her actions.

4. If forgiveness is granted, the culprit and his or her clan, will pay the compensation to the victims.
5. The end of the process consists of the reconciliation of (the representatives of) the victims and the culprits, this reconciliation is done through the *Mato Oput*; the drinking of the bitter root of the Oput tree. (Murithi, 2002; Brock-Utne, 2001)

The type of ritual that is applied does depend on the kind of crime committed. The *Mato Oput* ritual described above is generally applied in cases of murder or other big crimes, other reconciliation rituals are applied in case of smaller crimes.

Most of the Acholi leaders focus strongly on the voice of the whole community, everyone in the clan has a voice. This constitutes a well-developed collective identity within the community. Everyone can show his view and is heard by the council, this can make the process lengthy. The process gives the offender as well as the victim and their clans the possibility to speak, which makes the process of forgiveness easier, because of this cooperative approach the accused is more likely to admit his or her responsibility (Brock-Utne, 2001). The practice of the Acholi is justice-through-reconciliation, by forgiving via rituals and ceremonies, as *Mato Oput*, both parties find peace (Branch, 2007). Instead of the often Western approach of justice-through-punishment or prosecution. Most of the Acholi have used reconciliation processes like *Mato Oput* for generations and see it as a valuable tradition within their community.

In each part of the world the way of looking at reconciliation and the understanding or use of this concept is different. It is important that this is understood before Western organisations are engaging in the reconciliation process of the Acholi communities. We will come back to this discussion later on in this thesis.

There are also some negative aspects in this traditional approach of reconciliation. Because of the great importance of justice-through-reconciliation, the Acholi people are often forgiving in public, but in private they still have some desire for punishment towards the perpetrator (Finnegan, 2010). This can cause hidden feelings of resentment within the community. Furthermore is it, despite all the effort very hard to let the perpetrators confess their actions, they have the fear for reprisal by the LRA when they confess (Roach, 2013). Partly due to this negative aspects, not every Acholi member has the same ideas about the *Mato Oput* ritual and the prosecution of the leader of the LRA. According to the rules of the *Mato Oput* everyone can be reconciled through this process, how horrible the actions may be. But this idea has his adversaries and limitations.

The first limitation is that too many people are killed during the war. The *Mato Oput* ritual is usually done case-by-case so each murder is investigated and the clans of the victim and the perpetrator perform the ritual. The case of the LRA is too big to perform the ritual this way. Subsequently, the aspect of compensation is even more complicated. During the ritual the responsible clan gives compensation to the clan of the victims, in this case the compensation of the LRA leaders would such high amounts that it is impossible to pay.

Furthermore, each specific crime has his own ritual in the culture of the Acholi. *Mato Oput* is only performed in case of murder, so each crime requires an unique reconciliation process. In the case of the LRA murder was only one of the many crimes committed, others are mutilation, abduction and rape for instance. According to the culture of the Acholi each of the different crimes should be addressed with another ritual. In this case that is almost impossible due to the many persons who committed multiple different crimes. There exists local law to address different crimes, but they do not extend the massive crimes of the LRA. (Baines, 2007).

Another interesting question in this case is; is it possible for Acholi leaders and chiefs to lead an independent and neutral traditional justice system? (Baines, 2007). They encountered many crimes committed by the LRA and this makes it a hard task for them to keep independent and neutral during the leading of the reconciliation rituals. Furthermore aspects as corruption can play a role in this case.

What also important is to keep in mind is that these local justice mechanisms, like *Mato Oput*, are not representative for all the Acholi people. For instance, many young people have little knowledge about the rituals because traditional education was not taught during the conflict. So often for the younger generation it is less important to perform this ritual than for the elders. Also, women are not involved in the process of decision-making, their needs and interests are therefore probably not reflected in the traditional rituals. (Baines, 2007)

When we look back at the theoretical framework, the definition of reconciliation that we would use during this thesis was '*reconciliation is a long-term process linking elements of mercy, truth, justice and peace*' (Lederach, 1997). The question that comes to the fore looking at this definition is; does the traditional Acholi method of reconciliation meet these aspects? The *Mato Oput* process is a lengthy process because everyone of the clan can spill his or her opinion about the subject. But is the process long and multidimensional enough to link the elements of mercy, truth, justice and peace together to accomplish reconciliation?

This question is hard to answer according to the fact that the definition used is a Western definition to look at the concept of reconciliation. Nevertheless, this is the definition chosen to use in this thesis, therefore the four elements in the definition of Lederach (mercy, truth, justice and peace) will shortly be debated and they will be linked to the most used reconciliation process of the Acholi.

First of all the element mercy. In the *Mato Oput* process mercy is given by the victim or the victim's clan when the compensation is paid and when it is clear that the culprit deeply regrets his actions.

Secondly the truth, during the *Mato Oput* all the opinions are being heard. Furthermore the speaking of the truth is highly valued. Most Acholi members use this cooperative approach to be more open towards the perpetrator, so he is more likely to admit his actions.

Third, justice; as said before, in the Acholi community they use in general a process of justice-through-reconciliation and not justice-through-punishment. This statement makes clear that they see this whole reconciliation process as a manner to achieve justice and that this element is the higher good within their process.

Lastly the element of peace. The last step in the *Mato Oput* is a sign of renewed peace within the community or clans. Drinking together from the bitter root is a symbol for accepting each other again and that they are able to live together in peace.

All in one, the reconciliation process rooted in the culture of the Acholi community is very close to the definition of Lederach. Although there are some negative aspects in this reconciliation process, it includes all the elements necessary for a good reconciliation. It is important for the international community to understand the importance of culture and traditions in these communities before engaging in the reconciliation and reintegration process.

Despite the limitations and adversaries towards the reconciliation process of the Acholi, they are in general able to forgive instead of punish the perpetrators. Is this specific for the Acholi population? Maybe due to their emphasis on collective identity? Or is this power of granting forgiveness also possible for other places? A few factors are important when granting forgiveness to someone; it has to be initiated by the victim, it is only a sustainable option to forgive when it is chosen freely. Also there must be support, socially and cultural, for the process of forgiveness. Lastly, some people state that it is almost impossible to reach

complete closure about a case, whatever the approach of justice is (Finnegan, 2010). There are a lot of limitations to the approach of justice but cases as Northern Uganda prove that, despite the struggles they encounter, it is possible to encourage forgiveness through social mechanisms as collective identity.

REINTEGRATION

The psychosocial reintegration within the community is a fundamental aspect for former child soldiers and the peacebuilding in the community (Shanahan, 2008). In the culture of the Acholi they have traditional methods for the reintegration of people as well as they have it for the reconciliation of people. This reintegration process is often used for Formerly Abducted Persons (FAPs), so often men and women who were abducted (in this case by the LRA) as a child and now have returned back to their community.

Lots of the returned child soldiers have a hard time when they have returned home to their community. Not only because of what they experienced during the time they were away, but foremost because of the way their community look at them. Therefore a good reintegration process is of major importance to let these children feel like home again. Especially formerly-abducted child soldiers who are female are a difficult group when it comes to reintegration in the community, even more when they returned with children born during their abduction (Shanahan, 2008). When the girls return back with children, these children will often be seen as illegitimate and as 'rebel child' (Ndossi, 2010; McKay, 2004a). In most Acholi communities, when a woman is married, she also marries the wider social group of her husband, the children that are born do belong to the community of the husband. Because their own community does not accept their children, these women often lack a sense of belonging and identity (Ndossi, 2010). It is difficult to restore the relationships within the community in this case, because they, and their child(ren) have to be acknowledged as members by the community again. Furthermore picking up a normal life is difficult because according the traditions of the Acholi a man should not be asked to take care over another man's children. So it is difficult to find a husband in their community, and if they find one they often have to leave their children behind (Bailey, 2009). In this case they often let their children stay at their parents' house or another close family member.

Now we will examine the reintegration process. For most of the Acholi members this is seen as a process of forgiveness and reintegration within their community. Underneath a method to achieve this within the community is described.

The people who have returned back to their community are lined up. One after the other has to stuck their right feet into a cracked egg. This egg symbolizes the innocent life. In the tradition of the Acholi the dabbling into this egg shows that they are restoring themselves, are becoming innocent again. Afterwards the former child soldiers have to brush against a tree, which does clean them symbolically. Lastly, by stepping over a pole they are forgiven and welcomed back into the community. (Lacey, 2005) It is striking to see that these traditions are still often performed in this community and that after such a method the whole community considers them as reintegrated. But this is not always the case, there are also difficulties that go along with this process. For some people the process feels superficial because the community members will still look with grudge towards them.

"We go through the ceremony and we are told we have been forgiven. But the truth is people can never forget what we have done. People still call me a killer, and few of my peers will even talk to me." - Jacqueline Auma, 14 (IRIN, 2005).

When we look at this confession of Jacqueline the question raises if this manner of reintegration heals all the wounds that emerged during the war in the community. There are several possible reasons why the community still looks with resentment towards them, even after the cleansing ceremony. It can be hard for the victims to forget the actions of these abducted people, also the lack of compensation paid by these people can be a struggle for them. These compensation is often not paid because there is no clear image about who is guilty for what actions and murders for instance.

CONCLUSION

Up to now this chapter has shown some aspects and important examples about how the Acholi community handles the reintegration and reconciliation of child soldiers when they return back to their village. As seen from the two methods of reintegration and reconciliation within the Acholi community, the traditions and cultures shown are of major importance for these communities. For each kind action there are different methods to clean these people of their actions, forgive them and include them in the community again. But these traditions are not perfect, they oversee the psychological aspect of the impact of a war. They do not focus on the trauma the war could have caused for instance. Also some of these processes can cause friction; the victim can cause hidden feelings because of the importance of justice-through-reconciliation.

Nevertheless the importance of traditions is necessary to take in mind while considering to intervene in the reintegration and reconciliation process. These traditions are not generalizable for all the reintegration and reconciliation process in conflict areas. In each area and in each community the cultures and traditions are different, therefore it is difficult to generalise this aspect of the reintegration and reconciliation process. Nevertheless, in almost all communities traditions and culture are of paramount importance. It is important that the reconciliation processes of communities are taken into account when implementing new ideas.

CHAPTER 5: INTERNATIONAL LAW

In the current chapter the reconciliation process of child soldiers in combination with the international community will be described. One has to keep in mind that this is rather a case of law than a case of reconciliation.

Reconciliation is an important step in the reintegration of child soldiers. When they are reconciled with the community the reintegration process can begin. The reconciliation process can have different pathways, or they come home and are reconciled by their own community but it can also be the case that the international community participates in the reconciliation or justification process, this will be analysed in this chapter.

Reconciliation is often important for the local people, the community or village. The international way of reconciliation is often more juridical and focussed on fairness and prosecution. This is a tough issue when we look at the crimes of child soldiers, for instance, the guidelines for the reconciliation and justification of child soldiers are difficult. Grossman (2007) describes this difficulty in the international law community underneath:

“International law provides no explicit guidelines for whether or at what age child soldiers should be prosecuted for grave violations of international human rights law such as genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.” (Cited of Grossman, 2007).

When people start talking about this subject of justification of the crimes of child soldiers there are often questions raised and it is an issue of discussion. Some of these questions are

- Is it fair to see child soldiers as ‘protected civilians’ or ‘non-combatants’ while they have committed international crimes?
- Can you hold a child responsible for his criminal acts? And what is the role of recruitment in this case?
- From what age is someone responsible for his or her actions?
- Do we need to protect these children to give them a proper way of reintegration without first having to go through trial?

The specific research question that will be analysed in the current chapter is:

How does international law influence the reconciliation process for child soldiers?

Hereby we will again look at the reconciliation and justification process of the child soldiers. Because of the extent of the crimes and numbers of child soldiers in Northern Uganda there have been a lot of interventions from the international community in the reconciliation process.

As said, this current chapter will provide information according to the approach of the international community towards child soldiers and their community in the light of international law. First of all, an overview will be provided of international law concerning child soldiers, here the rules according to child soldiers and the prosecution process will be made clear. Secondly the case about the civil war in Sierra Leone and their Special Court will be described, this is one of the best known cases when it comes to the prosecution of rebel armies using child soldiers and displays the different point of views of different actors. At the end of the chapter we will return back to our original case of Northern Uganda and reflect international law on this case. The intervening international community will be analysed in combination with the local law and reconciliation processes.

INTERNATIONAL LAW CONCERNING CHILD SOLDIERS

There are certain international laws concerning the prosecution of child soldiers. Underneath the different kinds of subjects about the use and prosecution of child soldiers are described and the most important laws per subject that go along with them.

- States rules towards child soldiers
 - o Article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): “States parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of fifteen years into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, States Parties shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest.” (United Nations Human Rights, 1990).
 - o Article 22.2 of The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child: “States parties to the present Charter shall take all necessary measures to ensure that no child shall take a direct part in hostilities and refrain in particular, from recruiting any child.” Whereby we take into account article 1: “For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.” (Kaime, 2009).

In other words, states have to protect children from becoming child soldiers, they are retained from recruiting children under the age of fifteen at least. The ages do differ between the fifteen and eighteen years.

- The duty of the state to prosecute persons who committed crimes
 - o If a state fails to prosecute a child soldier or LRA commander who committed violation of the international law, the state itself could be in violation of international law even if the actions of these person where against their own state (Grossman, 2007).
 - o If a person commits international crimes, a state can be required to prosecute the culprit under international treaty and customary law even if the crimes are against the citizens of the country itself (Grossman, 2007).
- Minimal age of criminal responsibility
 - o There is no consensus in the statutes of international tribunals about the minimum age of responsibility for international humanitarian crimes, it often differs somewhere between fifteen and eighteen. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states that children under fifteen should not be prosecuted for their international humanitarian crimes in armed conflict.
- Guidelines for children undergoing prosecution
 - o Children who are prosecuted is by the international law under special protection. Article 3 of the CRC states: “In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.” (United Nations Human Rights, 1990).

As we have seen above, special international rules apply to child soldiers. The international treaty and customary law have established that there exists an age below which states should not hold children responsible for their criminal acts. Furthermore, states are

prohibited to recruit and use children under fifteen in armed forces, so they should not be held legally accountable for serious violations of international humanitarian law (Grossman, 2007). When children between fifteen and eighteen are prosecuted there are certain rules in trial to protect these children, as we will see in the case of Sierra Leone described below.

As Grossman (2007) writes in her article: *“the hundreds of thousands of children under age eighteen participating in armed conflicts around the globe should be treated primarily as victims, not perpetrators, of human right violations and that international law may support this conclusion.”* We see this in the international law, were they try to protect the child soldiers from prosecution. The local communities concerning this subject often share this opinion and see the child soldiers more as victim than as perpetrators. We have seen this in the previous chapter about the local approaches. The local community often tries to reintegrate with the children and give them a change of a normal life.

According to Grossman (2007) this is for the international community the best way to perceive child soldiers, she states that *“the world community should choose rehabilitation and reintegration over criminal prosecution because of children’s unique psychological and moral development.”* (Cited of Grossman, 2007)

THE CASE OF SIERRA LEONE

The possible prosecution of children for crimes against humanity and war crimes presents a difficult moral dilemma (United Nations, 2000)

The most important question with the case of the war crimes committed by child soldiers is; should the children who have murdered or raped be treated as criminals?

To start I will refer to the case in Sierra Leone after the civil war, this is one of the best known cases where the issue of prosecuting child soldiers comes to the fore. At the end of the civil war in Sierra Leone, around 2001, a Special Court was established to judge the people who had the greatest responsibility for war crimes. First of all they prosecuted the leaders and their companions of the conflicting parties. Afterwards the more difficult subject came to the fore, the prosecution of the children themselves. Both the United Nations, Sierra Leone and international humanitarian groups were present in the discussion about this subject (Rosen, 2007). Underneath I will describe the opinion about this subject of each of these groups.

- The United Nations took the middle position by giving the court the right to judge children between the ages of 15 and 18, but not those younger than 15 years of age, when they committed war crimes (Rosen, 2007; Ramgoolie, 2001).
- Sierra Leone, the government as well as the citizens of Sierra Leone who had suffered because of these child soldiers, feel that the crimes committed by the child soldiers should be judged by the Special Court. They felt that putting these children on trial for their crimes is their way to feel justified (Rosen, 2007).
- The International Humanitarian Groups, these are groups like UNICEF, Human Rights Watch and Save the Children. All these groups were against the prosecution of child soldiers. Their position is that they are protecting the children by not punishing them for the war crimes they committed but to protect them by taking care of them and try to reunited them in a peaceful way with their family. These organizations are also anxious that their rehabilitation programs will come in danger when the children are prosecuted before (Ramgoolie, 2001).

Taking these opinions into account, the final agreement was that the Special Court would treat the children between 15 and 18 years as juvenile offender, and that they take into account 'his or her young age and the desirability of promoting his or her rehabilitation, reintegration into and assumption of a constructive role in society' (United Nations, 2000).

THE CASE OF NORTHERN UGANDA

In 2000 Uganda adopted a law that grants amnesty to rebels of the LRA who surrender themselves. The government of Uganda declared the amnesty in respect of *'any Ugandan who has at any time since the day of the 26th of January, 1986 engaged in or is engaging in any war or rebellion against the government of the Republic of Uganda.'* (Cited of Finnegan and Flew, 2008). Although the news of this amnesty act reached the rebels slowly, thanks to this offer, already 14.000 rebels surrendered.

In 2004 the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague announced that they would investigate the case of the LRA, requested by the government of Uganda (Baines, 2007). Immediately after this announcement some leaders of the Acholi population asked the ICC to stop this investigation. They said that they would deal with the LRA by using local mechanisms to gain peace. The LRA does not want to engage in peace talks when they are viewed as criminals and when there is a change that they are prosecuted. Therefore the Acholi leaders feared that the ICC would undermine their efforts in creating peace (Baines, 2007). Due to the intervening of the ICC in this case in Northern Uganda, the LRA is probably less open for peace negotiations again.

The reconciliation of the LRA leaders, but also, to a certain extent, of the child soldiers, is important in re-establishing the moral and social rules. These are often partly disappeared during war time. When, after war, everyone starts with a clean slate, the communities can build their social norms and values again and are able to accept everyone back in the community. So the reconciliation, also of the leaders of the LRA, will make the reintegration probably easier.

Now we will focus on one specific case, about a child soldier who has been prosecuted by the International Criminal Court.

Not so long ago, in the beginning of the year 2015, a special case drew the attention of the public. Dominic Ongwen, one of the commanders of the LRA was brought before the court. The speciality of this case is the fact that Ongwen was recruited as child soldier himself in 1990 at the age of 14. Ongwen was a good soldier in the army, he was clever and not afraid for performing violent actions. Because of these characteristics he grew in the army and became one of the commanders of the LRA. One of his most notorious actions is the massacre in Makombo (Congo), he led a group who killed at least 345 people.

Looking at what is previous said about the amnesty law, this case may look easy to solve. The speciality of this case is the fact that Ongwen due to his crimes against humanity is covered by the international law. The international law is superior to the national law, when someone is covered by international law, the national laws do not matter in this case. Therefore no amnesty could be granted for Ongwen. And this is the reason he had to appear for the ICC in The Hague to be prosecuted.

Gould (2015), who was in Uganda for her PhD research during this period gauged the opinions of the civilians in Northern Uganda. She writes that the opinions of the local community about the case of Ongwen are mixed. Lots of civilians she interviewed, from war victims till religious leaders, recognise that Ongwen is brainwashed by the LRA and that he is a perpetrator as well as a victim of the actions of the LRA. Some said also amnesty should

be granted towards him. More than Ongwen the civilians blame the government of Uganda for failing to protect their children from abductions of the LRA. What comes forward in these interviews is that most people want to have peace more than justice. Rather than prosecution they would like to see Ongwen promote to leave the LRA. They do not agree with the intervention of the ICC and rather wanted to prosecute him in their own way, and wanted the ICC to listen to their opinion about this case.

Furthermore, many civilians in Northern Uganda have critique towards the ICC. Mainly because only the LRA is investigated and not the Uganda army itself. Many say that both these parties are responsible for the war crimes in the country and that it is unfair that only one side is prosecuted. (Gould, 2015; Vermeulen, 2015)

These three aspects; the perpetrator or victim issue of Dominic Ongwen, the need for peace instead of justice and the prosecution of only one responsible group make this a controversial case (Gould, 2015).

The ICC does not have a good reputation in the Acholi ethnic group anymore. First of all because they try to prosecute LRA leaders, which makes them less open for peace negotiations because they are seen as perpetrators. Secondly because the ICC only prosecutes the LRA and not the Ugandan army itself. The next reason is that the Acholi wants peace instead of justice and lastly because they often see LRA child soldiers and even leaders as victims of the war. Partly due to this different reasons against the ICC, most members of the Acholi community want to reconcile these people themselves and do not want the ICC to intervene with their processes and decisions.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we looked at the specific research question; how does international law influence the reconciliation and justification process for child soldiers?

We have seen in the chapter that there are a lot of rules for the justification of child soldiers and that they are, in general, well protected by these rules.

In the first section of the chapter, the existing international law about child soldiers and child soldiering, the rules according to child soldiers were shown, these rules came clearly to the fore in the case of Sierra Leone. The cases of Sierra Leone and Uganda shown above were given as example of how these rules are implemented in real cases and explain and show the problems that come to the fore when it comes to the combination of international law and child soldiers.

Northern Uganda was of another kind, here amnesty was granted for rebels who surrendered and only the ones who committed crimes against humanity had to go to the International Criminal Court where prosecuted. As was told by the story of Dominic Ongwen. In this case also the aversion of the local community against the International Criminal Court is shown. They have different reasons why they do not want the ICC to interfere with their processes of reconciliation.

- They want to have peace negotiations with the LRA and this is not possible when the LRA leaders feel threatened by court.
- Most of the Acholi want peace rather than justice and therefore they do not want the ICC to prosecute all the people involved.
- The Acholi often see the people involved as victims and not as perpetrators.
- Only the LRA is prosecuted by the ICC and the Ugandan army is free, while they have also been an important negative aspect in this civil war.

Child soldiers are protected by the international law by a lot of different rules to protect them from prosecution and to help them restart their lives. Authors like Grossman (2007) showed that it is the best to perceive child soldiers as victims of human right violations and not as perpetrators. It is the best to choose for reintegration instead of prosecution of the children. This aspect of reintegration of child soldiers, done by international organisations, will be discussed on the coming chapter.

All in all it can be said that, the extreme cases set aside, child soldiers are well protected by the international law. We have also seen that international intervention is not always positive and that the different opinions of the local communities have to be taken into account before intervening in the prosecution or reconciliation processes.

CHAPTER 6: INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

'...the adjustment from highly militarized environments to civilian life can be extremely difficult, particularly for those who have lost or are rejected by their families or in societies where social infrastructure has been shattered by years of war.'
(Cited of Breen, 2007)

This chapter is about the international support for child soldiers, with international support we mean, in this case, the help that the children receive when they return from war. Like help with their trauma, education or reintegration into their community.

There are two different views according to child soldiers and their reintegration, one group says that it is a lost generation and that they cannot heal from their psychological wounds anymore. The other group states that the young people can adjust to their life in the community when they return from war (Annan et al, 2009). This chapter will provide an overview of the most used international reintegration programs in Uganda for child soldiers, and how these programs intervene with the local customs and traditions. The specific research question that will be looked at during this chapter will be:

How does the international community support the reintegration process of the child soldiers and what is the response of the local community?

Not only the local community but also the Western organisations care a lot for child soldiers, therefore they have set up a lot of different programs to reintegrate them with their family or community. Four of the most important or well-known will be mentioned in this chapter, together with their goal, their intervention with the local community and how their program worked out. The government of Uganda set up guidelines for international actors in northern Uganda, these guidelines are manifested in the Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP), this provides *'a framework against which all development actors, the government, and non-government organisations are expected to align their interventions in northern Uganda.'* (Government of Uganda, 2007). When it comes to peace building and reconciliation the objective of the PRDP is to improve access to information and counselling and to increase the use of conflict-resolution mechanisms.

The programs that will be examined in this chapter are chosen because of their important role in northern Uganda and the differences that exist between one another. Underneath, the focus points while examining the project and a short summary of the programmes will be given;

- NUREP (Northern Ugandan Rehabilitation Programme)
 - o The NUREP is a project funded by the European Commission of 20 million Euros. Their objective is to help people of Northern Uganda to respond to (post-)conflict situations and strengthen their self-reliance.
 - o While examining this project the focus will be on the fact if there exists European or Western influence in the project and if this affected the involvement of the local community.
- IRC (International Rescue Committee)
 - o The IRC is a large international organisation, they focus on conflict and post-conflict countries and try to rebuild the countries and communities.
 - o The IRC focus on a lot of different countries, there will be examined if this affects their involvement with the local community and practices.

- WVI (World Vision International)
 - o World Vision is a religious organisation that helps reconstruct districts, they want to empower communities to take charge of their own development.
 - o The main focus while looking at the WVI will be if religion affects the involvement of the local community and the people who are participating in the program.
- GUSCO (Gulu Support the Children Organisation)
 - o GUSCO is a local Ugandan organisation that provides psychological and social support, education, advocacy and peacebuilding.
 - o The last program that will be studied is chosen because of the local nature, we will focus on if there are differences between this local program and the international programmes. One has to keep in mind that this programme is not the same as the local Acholi approaches to reintegration, they use the Acholi traditions as a base for their approach but set the reintegration process up from the centre.

In the further part of this chapter each of the programmes described will be examined separately while taking into account the focus points given above. Also the three main factors for reintegration provided in the theoretical framework will be examined. These three factors, according to Betancourt et al (2008) are:

- The environment of the child, the institutions as well as the acceptance of the family and community.
- Educational and training opportunities.
- The behaviour of the children, or young adults, themselves.

Lastly a conclusion will be given taking the different programmes into account.

NUREP

The Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Programme, from now called the NUREP is an initiative funded by the European Union to support the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan in Northern Uganda of the Ugandan government (Cardno, 2015). The NUREP was a project in Northern Uganda from 2006 till 2010, during this time it focused on five areas;

- Support conflict resolution and peace-building, support the psychosocial rehabilitation of trauma-affected ex-combatants and victims.
- Supporting human rights.
- Support displaced people in finding coping mechanisms
- Increasing livelihood opportunities
- Supporting local governments. (European Commission, 2011)

To examine this project we will mainly look at the first objective, the peace-building and support of ex-combatants and victims. The NUREP programme has supported the reintegration and rehabilitation processes of child soldiers through different activities. They had income generating project, vocational training and they supported primary schools where some former child soldiers were enrolled (Bainomugisha, 2010).

NUREP encouraged the participation of district institutions in the planning and designing of programme activities and were seeking guidance from the district. During the beginning stage of the programme the NUREP organised a planning workshop for the entire Acholi region. This brought together all the different actors concerned with the planning process of the district. This proved to be very useful for the participation of local government

institutions in the planning process, the different actors could exchange their ideas, also activities that cover more than one region could be discussed. (Lee & Özerdem, 2015). Also, especially focussed on the young population, NUREP supported community based organisations to support young people. They were supported to attend peacebuilding activities to rebuild the lost hope in the whole Acholi community (Simon, 2009).

As we can see from the above given information, the NUREP focus clearly on the involvement of the local community in their reintegration programmes. This is also one of their main objectives, to encourage the Acholi community to become self-sustained again and to rebuild the peace and hope in the community.

Now we will examine the three factors of Betancourt et al (2008) when we look at this programme.

- The environment is an important aspect for the development programme of the NUREP, they involve the local community and families. Especially the fact that the communities and child soldiers had to attend peacebuilding activities has helped with the acceptance. Furthermore they encouraged the local institutions to participate in the planning of the programme activities, this way the local institutions did not feel neglected due to the NUREP. The participation of the local civilians and institutions as the NUREP is doing is, according to Betancourt (2008) an effective way in the reconciliation process.
- Helping the community and ex-child soldiers to become self-sustained is one of the most important goals of the NUREP, therefore they supported primary schools for the children and started planning workshops with the whole community.
- The last factor, the behaviour of the children themselves is more difficult to examine. From the articles it came forward that the community and the children were willing to participate in this programme, mainly because of the focus from the NUREP on the involvement of the community and the help in letting them become self-sustainable again.

IRC

The International Rescue Committee helps in the rebuilding of lives that are shattered by conflict. In special they focus on the well-being of children and women. It is an old and large organisation, they provide health care, education and economic help in 40 countries and they are founded in 1933.

The youth programmes of the IRC are implemented in over 20 countries, these programmes include the rehabilitation and community reintegration of former child soldiers. They have set up several programs in Uganda, to empower women, aid farmers, help with peacebuilding in communities and help with the reintegration of child soldiers. The site of the IRC states about child soldiers: *“When found, the children are usually in a state of shock, severely traumatized and in need of immediate medical and psychological attention.”* (IRC, 2015). It is interesting to compare this with the opinion of the Acholi about child soldiers who return back. From their traditional methods of reintegration it looks like the Acholi are not taking the mental issues into account while reintegrating the child soldiers in their community.

The IRC works together with local NGOs, the district government and local communities. What is notably to see is that the work of the IRC includes working together with communities to promote the culturally appropriate cleansing rituals. They are listening to

the needs and traditions of the community. After the children are reunited with their family, the community-workers keep visiting them (MacMullin & Loughry, 2004).

What is worth mentioning is that the IRC is involved in several studies concerning the issue of what is the best way to reintegrate child soldiers. This is notably because it shows that they are not only following their own beliefs concerning the right way to reintegrate these children, but that they also are interested in researching other ways to do so. With the help of these researches they are able to implement new ideas into their programmes. In Sierra Leone, where child soldiers are also a big issue, they started a program where, with the help of video cameras, messages are recorded and sent between girl child soldiers and their family. These girls are often afraid that their family does not accept them when they return to their community, via this new method the IRC combats these fears. This program can also be used for boys who fear to go home because of their actions in the army (Hill & Langholtz, 2003).

According to a study of McKay and Mazurana (2004b), who mainly focussed on the position of girls in fighting forces, the IRC shows an effective example of working in interdisciplinary ways with child health programs, human rights groups, local women and peacebuilding networks to improve the situation of girls when it comes to reintegration in their community.

Finally, we take a look again at the most important factors of the reintegration process in comparison with the programme of the IRC.

- According to the environment of the child, the IRC is focussing on the needs of the community and takes their traditions into account when it comes to the reintegration process of the children, this helps with the acceptance. Also they are working with local NGO's to adapt the reintegration process more on wishes the local community.
- The IRC set up education programmes and mainly focusses on the empowerment of women in this case to let them become self-sustained.
- The behaviour of the children themselves is taken into account, for instance in the mentioned example of the video communication for girls who fear to go home. In this example it is clear that the mind-set of the children is taken into account when developing these programmes.

WVI

World Vision International has set up a Children of War Rehabilitation Center in Gulu (district in Uganda), here they provide child soldiers with; HIV and AIDS education, food, medical treatment, psychosocial counselling, vocational training and spiritual nurture. At the same time the centre provides the possibility of a good reunion of child soldiers with their families. From 1995 till 2012 they have helped 14.000 children with the rehabilitation into their own community. (Templeton & Esaku, 2012).

World Vision is a Christian organization and this is shown in the reintegration process they perform, with aspects as healing by forgiveness; seeking refuge by God and penance of sins. They start with a morning prayer and afterwards the children in the centre attend group counselling and individual counselling. One of the aims of World Vision is to instill the Christian values in the children before they are reintegrated. (Akello et al, 2006)

According to Akello et al (2006) the duration of the stay of the children depends on the demand on the facilities. For instance in 2005 children spent sometimes over a year in the Rehabilitation Centre, few children were rescued and when they would reintegrate soon the centre would not have a business anymore. When there were a lot of children that had to reintegrate, the duration was maximum three weeks. This is of course not the way it is supposed to go, the aim of World Vision is to provide a short-term stay in the centre.

When the children are brought back to their family, by two or three counsellors, the community often insist on a traditional cleansing ritual, this part of reintegration is neglected by the World Vision itself. Often the counsellors only stay for one hour and afterwards the child is left with his or her family or community. Sometimes counsellors visit the children after their reintegration but this is not often the case. (Akello et al, 2006).

The collaboration with the local community is often difficult for World Vision. The communities are often unwilling to reintegrate the children back in their community because they refuse the idea that the children are not accountable for their crimes. Furthermore, the centre is sometimes far away from where the community lives, this way having contact with them is difficult.

The World Vision programme has limited success in the reintegration of child soldiers in Northern Uganda. The main reason for this is that the Christian ideals of forgiveness, repentance and trauma are not shared by the community and by the child soldiers themselves. As a result the communities distrust the children and reject or discriminate them (Akello et al, 2006). Also, as said, the centre is often placed far away from the community which makes it harder to communicate with them about their ideas about the reintegration. These centres are often this far away out of safety reasons.

A research worth mentioning about the approach of World Vision is the one of MacMullin and Loughry (2004), they research groups of ex-child soldiers, each group attended another reintegration programme. In this research were, among others, World Vision and the IRC programme included. A significant result about the World Vision programme was found; all the groups of formerly abducted children were more anxious and depressed, less confident and less socially than the children who never were abducted. Except from the group that followed the World Vision programme, these children had the same level of confidence as the non-abducted group. Unfortunately the reason behind this outcome stays unclear.

To finish we will look at the three important factors for the reintegration of children in their community.

- World Vision international focus very much on their own thoughts about reintegration and want to transfer their thoughts about the Christian religion towards the ex-child soldiers. These aspects show that the environment of the child is not very well taken into account in the programme of World Vision. They do not often involve the community in their decisions and thoughts. This is for instance the case with the cleansing rituals. World Vision does not pay attention to these rituals, which are of great importance for the local community. When these rituals are not performed, the acceptance of the children is more difficult because the community is less willing to reintegrate the children.
- Because the World Vision programme is mainly focussed on the short-term stay of children, their focus is not on the education of the children. Nevertheless they do get AIDS and HIV education and vocational training during their time in the centre.

- Due to the Christian believes that the centre is trying to spread, the children are not always willing to participate in the programmes. But what is striking is that the children participating in these centres had a high level of confidence in comparison with children in other programmes, unfortunately the reason behind this is not researched yet.

GUSCO

GUSCO (the Gulu Support the Children Organization) is a local NGO that is facilitated by Save the Children. Their rehabilitation and reintegration processes are based on traditional Acholi ways as we have seen in Chapter 4, Village of Origin. Together with World Vision they have been the most important organisations for the reintegration process of ex-child soldiers in Northern Uganda. While World Vision focusses on the short-stay of around 3-6 weeks, GUSCO focusses more on providing long-term support. They focus on two principles in the centre:

- 1) Children are not perceived as victims, but as survivors.
- 2) Most children will go through a healing process.

GUSCO allows children to participate in the decision-making, they focus on a community-based approach based on local traditions. Furthermore they provide psychosocial support to help children re-establish their self-esteem. GUSCO believes that follow-up work must be strengthened to be able to provide the child soldiers with better support during their reintegration process (Omona & Matheson, 1998).

The environment of the child soldier is important in the process of reintegration, the institutional and the psychosocial part are both of major influence when we look at the reintegration. GUSCO therefore tries to work with the existing institutions in the area it operates instead of building new structures, they influence the existing institutions in how they can better assist in the integration of these children.

Snodgrass & Obika (2011) undertook an empirical study in 2007 to explore the role of GUSCO in the reintegration of former child soldiers in their communities, some of the findings of this study will be presented below.

- A weakness often found at counselling centres is that the family and community is not educated about the need of the child, support is often focusses on the child. GUSCO set up an Advocacy, Information and Research Team to educate the family and community about the needs of these children and by involving them they target the stigmatization around child soldiers. The counselling of whole families is important to rebuild the relationships.
- GUSCO support the children with basic education, this is central in the development of not only the child but of the whole community. They pay special attention on the female children, they are supported in starting a small-scale business to generate income and support their families.
- Communities play an important role in the reintegration, GUSCO therefore attaches importance to the leaders of the community, through them the community as a whole can easier reconcile with the child soldiers.

- To involve the community even more, GUSCO supports the cleansing practices, like *Mato Oput*, and pays for the ceremony, this way they involve the traditional leaders and the community and show that they take their opinion serious.

Of course the GUSCO comes across difficulties, but the positive aspects are that they are working very well together with the community and stretch the importance of the family and community. The focus on this could be due to the fact that it is a local organisation, who knows the importance of traditional cleansing and the difficulties that come along with the acceptance of child soldiers within the community.

Also with this last programme we will look at the three important factors for reintegration according to Betancourt et al.

- Due to the fact the GUSCO is a local organisation, they focus strongly on the environment of the children. They try to work with existing institutions and help them in better assisting them with the integration of children. The involvement of the communities plays a major role in the programmes of GUSCO, the family and community are educated about the needs of the children, GUSCO supports the cleansing practices and attaches importance to the community leaders. With all these aspects the acceptance of child soldiers within their family and community will be easier.
- Basic education is provided by GUSCO, with special attention for girls, they are supported in starting a small-scale business to become self-sustained.
- Because of the fact that GUSCO is local and has strong ties with the community, the children are willing to participate in the programmes, even more because they are invited to participate in the decision-making and they can give their opinion about attending a cleansing ritual before reintegrating in the community.

CONCLUSION

This chapter took a closer look at the question '*How does the international community support the reintegration process of the child soldiers and what is the response of the local community?*'. As we have seen during this chapter, the international community is concerned with child soldiers and their return back to their community.

To start, we will focus on the first part of the question; how does the international community support the reintegration process of child soldiers? The international community is concerned with the well-being of child soldiers and has therefore set up some different programmes to help them with the reintegration, some of these are set up by governments (NUREP) others are non-governmental organizations, like World Vision International. The programmes that are set up differ from each other in time, short or long stay, and purposes, like trauma counselling, education or making the children self-sustainable.

A point to note is that there are big differences between the different programmes we discussed in this chapter, especially according their collaboration with the families or communities of the ex-child soldiers. This way we come to the second part of the question; what is the response of the local community towards the international support programmes?

- The NUREP encouraged the participation of local institutions and community based organizations. The objective of the NUREP is to encourage the Acholi community to

become self-sustainable to rebuild peace, therefore they focus strongly on the Acholi community and invite them to think together about new ideas for the area. It is positive to see that this programme does not only focus on the child soldiers but on the community as a whole, and that the whole community has to be involved in the peace-building and the rebuilding of the community.

- The IRC takes the traditions of the communities into account when it comes to the reintegration process. Due to the use of these cleansing rituals the children are more easily reintegrated in the community.
- The above mentioned programmes are positive according to the collaboration with the families, about World Vision a less positive story came to the fore. Their Christian ideals are not shared by the community and the children. Both these actors are therefore less willing to attend the programme that is set up for them. A result is even that the community distrusts and rejects children that have participated and have picked up some of the Christian values, this last is one of the aims of the World Vision.
- GUSCO is the only local organization, this one is chosen to show the differences (if there are any,) between the approach of an international and a local NGO. It is clear to see that the GUSCO focus strongly on the role of the community; the children are allowed to participate in decision-making, they work with existing institutions to help with the reintegration, the community is educated about the needs of the child and they support cleansing practices. All these aspects make the GUSCO a good example when it comes to collaborate with the local community in the reintegration of child soldiers.

Over all, the international community and the local community manage to work together in the reintegration of child soldiers. Some programmes focus more on this point than others. What we can see from the above mentioned programmes is that it is important how close the programme-developers are connected with the community. World Vision is for example not much connected with the community due to other believes, GUSCO on the other hand is a local NGO and they know the local customs, this makes the collaboration, as seen, a lot easier.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter an answer will be provided of the main research question, the analysed subject of the specific research questions are hereby taken into account. The main research question of this thesis was;

What are the difficulties in the reconciliation and reintegration of child soldiers in Northern Uganda through the intervention of different actors?

To discuss this question we looked in this thesis at the local approaches towards reconciliation and reintegration, the international law concerning the reconciliation and justification of child soldiers and the international programmes to support child soldiers in their reintegration process and the differences between one another. First in short a recap per specific research question will be given, afterwards the main results and an analysis on the main research question will be provided.

- How does the reconciliation and reintegration of child soldiers in Northern Uganda look like and what role does culture play?

For the village of origin we looked at the Acholi community living in Northern Uganda because the majority of the children who are abducted by the LRA from Uganda belong to this community. When we looked at the reintegration and reconciliation it came to the fore that tradition and culture are important aspects in these processes. The Acholi put emphasis on granting forgiveness instead of punishing. Although there are a lot of limitations towards this approach, the Acholi in Northern Uganda prove that it is possible to encourage forgiveness through social mechanisms and to have peace with this solution. Everywhere in the world there are different traditions and cultures but despite these differences it is always an important aspect to take into consideration before implementing a reintegration or reconciliation programme in a community.

- How does international law influence the reconciliation process for child soldiers?

For the international community a lot of problems come to the fore according to the reconciliation, or more justification in this case, of child soldiers. There are some rules according to child soldier prosecution, especially to protect them from what they did in the army. In Northern Uganda amnesty was granted for child soldiers when they surrendered. Only when they had to go to the International Criminal Court they were prosecuted, like the case with Dominic Ongwen. When it comes to the combination of international law and child soldiers one can say that, except from the extreme cases who have to go to the International Criminal Court, child soldiers are well protected by the international law. The case of Ongwen was controversial. In this case the participation of the ICC in the reconciliation process was not appreciated by the majority of the Acholi community. This had different reasons, he was seen as a perpetrator as well as a victim by the local community and therefore the did not necessarily want him prosecuted. Furthermore the Acholi nowadays strives for peace more than justice, so they would rather see Ongwen, and other former LRA leaders, helping other children escape the army and promote this. Lastly, lots of civilians think it is unfair to prosecute only the LRA, in their opinion the LRA as well as the Ugandan militia are responsible for the war crimes, so both these parties have to be prosecuted by the ICC. Furthermore, the ICC is in the way of the Acholi leaders. They are negotiating about peace with the LRA, but when the LRA leaders feel they are seen as perpetrators, they do not want to continue with this negotiations anymore. This chapter has shown us the different

rules of law that exist around child soldiers and the different opinions and viewpoints that come to the fore when prosecuting someone from the international point of view.

- How does the international community support the reintegration process of the child soldiers and what is the response of the local community?

The last specific research question was about the international community and their ways to support the reintegration process of child soldiers. There are different programmes set up to help with the reintegration, they differ in purposes and time that the children will stay there. What was found is that there are large differences between the programmes and their collaboration with the families and communities. Overall this collaboration goes well but some programmes focus too much on different goals (World Vision) and therefore it is more difficult for the children who attended these programmes to reintegrate. What came forward is that it is important how close the programme-developers are with the community they are implementing the programme in. World Vision had a long distance relationship with the community and therefore they could not easily empathize with these people, this makes it harder to see what is important for them and to recognize this. On the other hand, the GUSCO programme was a local NGO, this means that the people who worked here and developed the programme are more connected with the local people and understand their feelings and concerns. This was clearly an advantage when we look at how the reintegration of child soldiers went.

Now that the chapters are shortly recaptured we will focus on the main research question. Hereby we will look at the difficulties in the reconciliation and reintegration of child soldiers through the intervention of different actors in the case of Northern Uganda. During the writing of this thesis four important outcomes for the main research question came to the fore; religion, tradition, community acceptance and understanding. These three points will be explained underneath.

- Tradition

The traditions around the reconciliation and reintegration processes are of major importance for the Acholi community, therefore they have to be taken into account and integrated in the programmes that are developed for the child soldiers that return back. Not only for the Acholi community, but everywhere in the world traditions are of major influence of the habits and daily lives of people, therefore they always have to be taken into account before implementing new programmes in a community. When the programme-developers show understanding and respect for traditions, the communities are most of the time more willing to participate in the programmes that are set up for them because they feel accepted and listened to. This is shown in the reintegration programmes of the IRC and GUSCO, where they took great care in listening and implementing the local customs in their programmes, here the local community and the former child soldiers were willing to participate. The actor-oriented approach comes to the fore, the social processes of people, in this case the traditional reconciliation and reintegration approaches, shape the development of the community. When these processes are respected and performed the development and reintegration of the children will go more easily. When they are not taken in mind chances are that the children are not accepted by the community or that the reintegration will be more difficult.

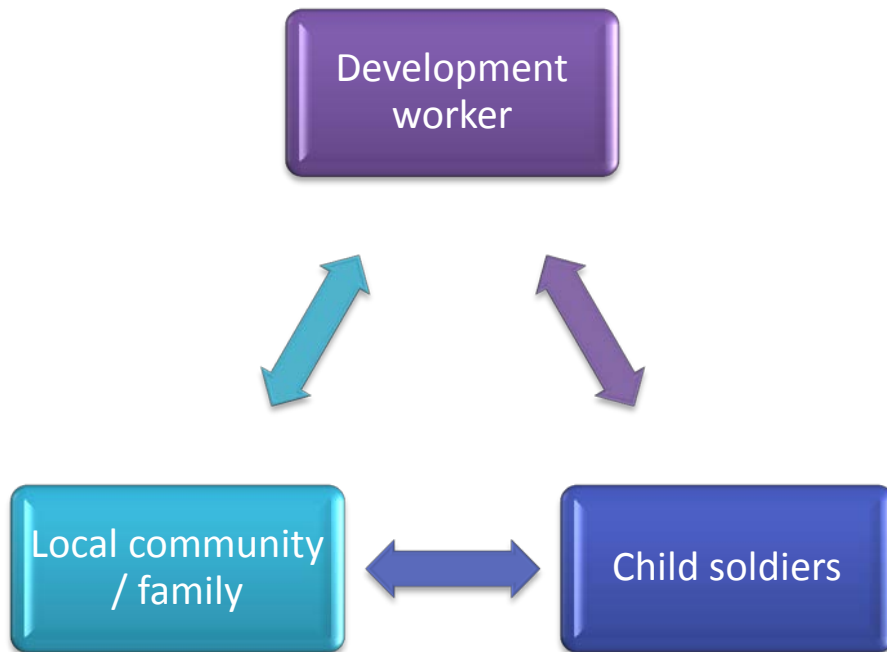
- Religion

Religion is also an important topic as we have seen in the chapter about international support for reintegration, World Vision International tries to implement their ideas and believes about the Christian religion in the child soldiers that just escaped from the army. When these children reunite with their family or community, they have different norms and values, which the community often does not approve. Their community does not like the fact that they are changed and the acceptance of the children therefore takes longer or does not happen at all. It is important to not implement our own ideas into people you are willing to help but try to understand their way of thinking and their beliefs and work together with this instead of against.

- Communication

The third outcome of this thesis is the importance of communication, which leads to more community acceptance and a smoother reintegration, this is partly what we have seen at the first outcome as well. It is important that the community accepts the children of course, but also the international programme-developers. When the community does not accept the programme-developers to interfere with their daily lives and habits, the reintegration process is not possible, because the development workers have nothing to work with in that case. Therefore these development workers have to talk with them and gain trust from the community. Hereby it is smart to start with the leaders of the communities, when they are convinced of the good intension of the development workers, they can more easily convince the entire community. Through this acceptance the reintegration of the children will go way smoother.

Communication is important for the acceptance of the children in the community and also for the fact that the community understands the needs of the children when they return. The project of the IRC is a good example of good communication between development workers and the local community. They first send video messages between the girl child soldiers and their families to see if reconciliation between them was possible and so they could understand each other and their problems. The reconciliation process is slower this way and more understanding of both sides is created. This programme went very well and now they want to implement this project also with boy soldiers who want to return back. As the example shows, not only communication between the development workers and the local community is important, but it is triangular, between the development worker, the local community and the child soldiers. As shown in the image below.



The communication between all these three actors is important for a good reconciliation and reintegration of child soldiers. The communication between the development worker and the children is important for the understanding of the opinions of the children about returning home and to understand their traumas and experiences. It is also smart to ask the children about how they see their reintegration process and what kind of help or traditional methods they want to have involved in the process. Between child soldiers and the local community the communication about how they can return back and if they are accepted when they return back must be discussed, as done with the video messages in the project of the IRC. And finally between the local community or families and the development workers the needs for the child soldiers and the possibilities and needs for reintegrating them in the community have to be discussed. The traditions they want to integrate in the reintegration process for instance.

When we look at the reconciliation in particular, we also see the importance of communication. The international law, in the case of Uganda the International Criminal Court, has to communicate with the local community before intervening in the reconciliation process. In this case the intervention of the ICC was not appreciated by the majority of the local community. This was partly due to the communication. The ICC did not take in mind the opinions of the Acholi community. The opinions of these local groups have to be investigated before an international group can intervene in the prosecution and reconciliation processes of a country.

- Connected with local community

The fourth and final conclusion towards the main research question is that it is important how close the development programme is connected with the local community, the importance of this comes back in both the above mentioned conclusions but is important to point out. When an organisation is close with the local community it is helping, they understand more of the needs and feelings of these people. This was clearly seen in the differences between the approach of GUSCO and World Vision International when they were reintegrating the children in their communities. From looking at these two cases one can state that how closer an organisation is with the people it is helping, the more easily and

smoother the programme can be implemented. Of course the two conclusions mentioned above, understanding of tradition and culture and a good communication between the different actors are of major influence in this case.

For a good reconciliation and reintegration in the community it is important that the development workers who want to implement the programmes understand the traditions and cultures in the community they are working with. Furthermore the communication between the different actors is important to understand the needs and expectations of each other. Lastly, it is important that the interfering development workers feel connected with the people they are helping and understand their point of view.

DISCUSSION

As the end of this thesis I will discuss the research and the outcomes of this thesis and take a look at the possibilities for further research.

As a first remark on this thesis I want to refer to the opinion that Andvig (2006) provides in his article, in this thesis mentioned on page 11. He raises the question if we have to make a distinction between adult soldiers and child soldiers. In this thesis this distinction is made, the focus was clearly on the child soldiers. The outcomes could have been different if I had chosen to not make this distinction. Therefore my opinion is that it is an interesting subject for further research to look at the differences between child and adult soldiers in their reconciliation and reintegration, if there are any. It could be the case that there are no differences between child soldiers and adults soldiers when it comes to their reintegration and reconciliation, this would make the opinion of Andvig stronger.

This thesis focussed on one area, Acholi-land in Northern Uganda. This generates not enough information and research to provide a conclusion about other parts in the world. Everywhere in the world child soldiers are fighting for armed groups. Places differ from each other in traditions, religions and environment and therefore view the world in a different way and respond different on certain actions. It is therefore not possible to generalise the conclusions of this thesis to other parts of the world.

A recent development in a different part of the world are the child soldiers trained by ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) nowadays, this shows that it still is a present-day subject. Further research can be done in different parts of the world about the reintegration of child soldiers. This way the differences between the people involved can be investigated, this can be important information for development workers who have to work with these child soldiers.

Furthermore more research can be done about the differences between local non-governmental organisations and international NGO's. In this thesis only one local organisation, GUSCO is analysed. This is could be analysed broader, with more organisations. Because one of the conclusions of this thesis is that the connection with the local people is very important for organisations, it would be interesting to see if this is also the case if you investigate more organisations. It would also be interesting to see if this is the same in other parts of the world.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I
