

Thesis

The amount of gender awareness in DDR policy and documents of former female child soldiers in the follow-up of the war in Sierra Leone: a critical content analysis



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Paula Leeftang s1348620

Dr. E. Aloyo

Dr. E. Dijkhoorn

Crisis and Security Management

Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs

Leiden University

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSUCS	Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization and Reintegration
IAWG	Inter-Agency Working Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDDRS	Integrated Disarmament, demobilization and Reintegration Standards
IRIN	IRIN News, nowadays called The New Humanitarian
NGO	Non-governmental organization
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
UN	United Nations
WAAFG	Women associated with armed forces and groups

ABSTRACT

After the war in Sierra Leone (1991-2002) research showed that the participation of former child soldiers in DDR programs needs to be tackled to a greater amount. In 2006 the UN called for better inclusion of girls in DDR programs. Although this effort, they are still marginalized. Reintegration programs must enact on the specific needs these former female child soldiers have. These specific needs are basic needs such as food and shelter. Other needs are help with reintegration, educational and medical support, (psychological) counseling, help with family reunion, economic opportunity, skills training and employment chances. When all genders are accounted for, this can be named as gender equality. For the ease of this thesis only females and males are taken into consideration. When girls are not considered as equal in the DDR policies, documents and guidelines and other organizations who helped with the reintegration process in Sierra Leone, the question arises how this is possible. Is there care for girls? How do organizations perceive girls, is there any awareness they discriminate? This led to the following research question: *Why do different NGOs and the UN have different degrees of gender awareness in their DDR documents in the war of Sierra Leone in 2000-2019?*

In order to get a thorough gender analysis of NGOs with respect to female child soldiers, qualitative content analysis with the concepts 'gender' 'gender awareness' and 'gender equality' is done within the timeframe of 2000-2019. To measure how the different NGOs and the UN perceive gender equality and awareness and the different needs of former female child soldiers, a gender awareness criteria scale is developed. In this research, a comparison is made of 18 texts of DDR policies, programs and training manuals of 3 NGOs and the UN.

1. INTRODUCTION



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

Sometimes a picture says more than a thousand words. Many people can recognize the image of the young boy with the AK-47 in figure 1 (BBC News, 2005). In armed conflict, this is the weapon of choice for child soldiers because it is ‘easy to use’. A picture much less known is one of a little girl holding firearms as seen in figure 2. One of the countries where military exploitation of children, both boys and girls, is common is Sierra Leone (Child Soldiers, 2018). In 1991 a civil war started between the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and lasted until 2002. During this war, children were forced to become soldiers (Drumbl, 2019). The government of Sierra Leone, together with institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) helped with the reintegration process of former child soldiers. The DDR, also called disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs have demobilized more than 6000 boys and girls in Sierra Leone of an estimated 48,000 child soldiers (National Committee for Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration, 2004: UNICEF, 2005, CFR, 2007). Social reintegration can facilitate those children who were affected by war to have a second chance in life. This can be achieved by ensuring their safety, the right of education and the support of family (Tonheim, 2017).

In 2006 the United Nations called for better inclusion of girls in DDR programs. Although this effort, they are still marginalized in the integrated DDR standards in the post-conflict reconstruction and reintegration process (United Nations, 2006). In an estimation of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers less than 50% of child soldiers have actual access to reintegration support (Paris Principles, 2007). But, due to the difficulty of data gathering in areas with child soldiers, a precise percentage of girls involved in a war or conflict cannot be

given (Paris Principles, 2007). Mostly huge numbers of girls are not profiting from reintegration programs. This is mainly due to the lack of funding DDR receives, or the government is willing to spend (Child soldiers international, 2014. P 2). According to the Paris Principles, which are about “the prevention of unlawful recruitment or use of children in armed conflict” the participation of girls in reintegration programs and specific needs, needs to be tackled to a much greater amount in the coming years (Paris Principles, 2007).

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

Help programs such as DDR were set up to help former child soldiers reintegrate into society, providing them with physical and mental health care (Betancourt, 2010). In Sierra Leone, UNICEF implemented the project “Girls left behind” due to the poor involvement of girls in DDR (UNICEF, 2003). Newer DDR programs try to include women and children but stigma still exists. How can DDR policy and programming change to address the needs of former female child soldiers? And are the NGOs and organizations aware of gender inequality when executing DDR programs? These questions lead to the final research question: *Why do different NGOs and the UN have different degrees of gender awareness in their DDR documents in the war of Sierra Leone in 2000-2019?*

Sub-questions that can help answer the research question are:

- What is gender awareness?
- How is gender awareness measured?
- Do DDR programs represent gender equality in the years 2000-2010?
- What are the stands on gender of the different NGOs and the UN participating or executing DDR programs?

Programs of DDR still miss a sufficient framework to recognize the different experiences everyone has in the DDR process. This includes men, women, boys and girls. Next to this, they must address the different roles of gender identities in violence. Both of these are crucial to get an understanding of gender equality. This way it can increase the effectiveness, and perhaps more importantly, the sustainability of DDR programs. Man, woman, boy or girl all have gender-specific needs. There is some thought about why DDR only focuses on men. They might not accept women because of gender-insensitive public information campaigns or with narrow eligibility criteria (Tonheim 2017). Nowadays there is a better focus on attempts to get gender

more integrated in the policies, guidelines and documents of DDR. A special focus is put on the needs of women who are associated with armed forces and groups (WAAFG). Reintegration programs must focus on encouraging and promoting gender equality as well as improving the lives of these girls directly (Tonheim, 2017).

According to IRIN (2013), as much as 40% of all child soldiers worldwide are girls. Nevertheless, a maximum of 15% is reached in the female child participation rate in programs of DDR worldwide. Due to this marginalization in DDR, a chance to inhibit physical, social and economic security is high (IRIN, 2013). Without the best help to get access to DDR programs these girls cannot get the same opportunities as boys, and this advances negative coping mechanism according to Woodbury (2011). Awareness around this challenging participation rate of female child soldiers has been raised and DDR is trying to integrate gender equality in their policy, programs, and guidelines. Even though in the last years effort has been made, there is still concern about the low participation rates. Subsequently, DDR programs still make gendered assumptions about the role former female child soldiers had in the war. DDR programs are aware of the problematic participation of female child soldiers and tried to incorporate gender provisions in DDR. Regardless of these efforts, worry still exists about the low partaking rates of former female child soldiers. Besides, female child soldiers often experience situations in which DDR make gendered assumptions about their role during the war (McKay and Carlson, 2004). With stigmas around their roles, DDR further enhances the process of gender discrimination which leads to less participation in help programs and less reintegration into society.

1.2 KNOWLEDGE GAP AND SOCIETAL AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Although there is extensive literature in academic work examining the case study of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone (Betancourt, Denov and Williamson) these do not all address girls in their samples, or the boy/girl rate is uneven. Besides, many of these women were not seen as former soldiers but categorized as ‘dependents’ and for that reason rejected from the needs and benefits combatants are given (Brett and Specht, 2004). Even though these ex-combatants have the right to attend social reintegration and rehabilitation programs, many former child soldiers end up without any support. Most studies conclude that former child soldiers have different experiences, especially between boys and girls (Tonheim, 2017). They say programs are inappropriate to reach the gender-specific needs of girls. These specific needs are at first basic

needs, such as food and shelter. Also, help with reintegration, educational and medical support, (psychological) counseling, help with family reunion, economic opportunity, skills training and employment chances. Thus, for the securitization of the economic and social reintegration and rehabilitation of former girl soldiers, more gender-specific knowledge is needed (Tonheim, 2017). To further specify this knowledge gap, I will rely on how the researched NGOs and the UN think about gender equality in their DDR programs and documents. Differences between time will be measured on the basis of a gender awareness scale.

Such a gap in the literature is scientifically and socially relevant to examine. Child soldiers is still a living concept and common around the world, especially in Africa. Children and all those who were involved in war will have, according to the found literature, sustaining physically and emotionally effects during and after the war has ended. With analyzing why different NGOs and the UN are distinctive in their gender awareness and equality in the past and newer DDR policy and documents this can help for future policies and documents. This can set up a new sustainable, and most important, gender-sensitive framework on which organizations can rely at prospective DDR programs. In this thesis, these gaps in the literature can be filled with stating a coherent overview of the researched NGOs and the UN.

1.3 READING GUIDE

To find an answer to the research question and address the current gaps, a qualitative study will be undertaken and built upon initial empirical research by means of documentation reviewing and (historical) content analysis. In this research, a comparison will be made of DDR policies, programs and training manuals. In particular, the NGOs and UN who are involved with DDR practices. In the coming chapters, a broad overview is given about the used literature. Chapter two presents the theoretical and conceptual framework, starting with a short overview of the war in Sierra Leone, the international standards of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, connecting it to both former boy and girl soldiers. The chapter then continues with the definition of Child Soldier, DDR and gender equality. Chapter three presents an overview of the research design, the methodological reflections and information on the analytic process. In chapter four a deepening into the concepts of gender equality and awareness is given with the use of the gender scale. The analysis is done on the policy and documents the NGOs and the UN used in their DDR programs. Furthermore, in this chapter the

answers to the research question and sub-questions are stated. At last, in the conclusion and discussion a short summary with the final remarks are stated.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this theoretical and conceptual framework an introduction will be given on the war in Sierra Leone from 1991-2002, and especially about the children used as child soldiers. A short overview with the incorporation of child soldiers, reintegration of former child soldiers and the ongoing consequences will be given. This thesis is guided by the current knowledge of concepts used in this research. By means, DDR, gender equality and awareness, and child soldiers.

2.1 SIERRA LEONA WAR

Zack-Williams (2001) examines in his paper that wars start in different ways. In a statement entitled “What are we fighting for” a leader of Revolutionary United Front (RUF) said:

We are [...] fighting for democratic empowerment to enable us to reclaim our sense of ourselves as enterprising and industrious Africans [...] contributing to world peace and stability through advancement in agriculture, architecture, medicine, science and technology, industry, free trade and commerce. (RUF, 1995:20-35)

RUF called themselves a ‘political movement’ which promotes liberation and democracy (Denov, 2010: 792). The message was meant for those who have become alienated and felt the need for an alternative. Not only grown men felt attracted, the message also reached the ears of children. The RUF tried to include a broad aspect of people of Sierra Leone. From unemployed workers to students and all those in between who were ready to stand up against the rulers of the country for the last 23 years (Zack-Williams, 2001: 75). Due to the lack of education for foster children in Sierra Leone, many young people roamed the street. Alienated and without money child labor was not uncommon. Not only foster children were familiar with work at an early age. In poor Sierra Leonean families children also had to work. An UNICEF Report stated: “... children may have their first taste of labor as early as age six, if only out of the family’s economic necessity”. (UNICEF, 1989, pp: 40)

Street children were recruited as child soldiers (Zack-Williams: 77). Not all child soldiers have been recruited, some have volunteered to join the armed forces. Motivation to join differed from the loss of parents or other family members to the destruction of their environment. (Zack-Williams: 78). Ashby (2002) calls these young children as having an 'active role' in their participation. They didn't have viable options for the future.

Denov (2010) examines that children, once involved in RUF, had to endure extreme circumstances. The roles they had to take depended on their age and strength. Failure of their duty meant punishment in the form of physical and sexual assaults. Denov (2010) describes the children as both victims and participants. Children were sometimes forced to do harmful things. If they didn't obey commands they were threatened to be killed or got drugged (Betancourt, 2010: 1). The only thing on their mind was the need for survival.

After the war, the children had to live with the consequences of their involvement in the conflict. They had both active and passive roles in the horrible acts of violence. This resulted in grief, guilt and shame for their actions (Denov, 2010: 796). Rebel groups made sure the bond the young children they abducted had with their families became destroyed. Many abductees were forced to assault their loved ones (Denov, 2010: 797).

Betancourt (2008) examined the process in which (child) soldiers go back to society when the war ends. When former child soldiers came back into the community, they were seen with horror due to the assault they had committed during the war. In a study by Betancourt et al. in 2008, in Sierra Leone, the response of the community was mostly fear towards the ex-child combatants although campaigns in the villages tried to retain this. Community acceptance can play a big role in adjustment for the children although this not fully offset the traumas the children have experienced. Children who were associated with fighting forces have higher psychosocial problems. These problems are for instance aggression, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress (Blattman & Annan, 2008). Boothby (2006) appoints several factors that influence children later in life, an important one being the involvement with violence and war and the duration in which the child lives with this situation. These may cause problems with adjustment into society.

2.2 AID PROGRAMS

The government of Sierra Leone, with the help of the World Bank and other international institutions and NGOs, helped with the reintegration process. More than 6,000 boys and girls were demobilized by the National Center for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (National Committee for Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration, 2004; UNICEF, 2005). The DDR has three objectives: demobilization, disarmament and reintegration. The United Nations also used its peacekeeping force and set up aid programs in many developmental activities (Shepler, 2006: 200). Betancourt (2010) contradicts this by examining that in Sierra Leone help in the form of social and mental health care is limited. This can deliver consequences for children that enter adulthood. Despite the actions of DDR and transnational educational programs, only a few children returned to school. Lack of education can also affect the well-being of children. Learning skills can help children to get a better chance in finding a job and prevent re-recruitment as soldier (Betancourt et al., 2010: 6).

DDR has mostly been led by operations and missions of UN peacekeeping. Nowadays, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also involved. NGOs are autonomous in their activities and policies but often receive money from the government (Douma et. al. 2008a). Next to this, the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) arose when several organizations stressed the need for a more important and greater role of non-governmental organizations during the execution of DDR. The integrated DDR standards declared that NGOs normally have professional expertise in areas that are related to child soldiers, and so they can be of significant help. Therefore, NGOs must work together with the UN throughout the whole process and execution of DDR programs (UN, 2006).

Commonly, DDR processes are focused on adult male ex-combatants and therefore put less attention to specific needs of all others involved: female combatants, support workers, abductees and the wives and dependents of combatants. In the former DDR programs, the needs of former child soldiers are not even mentioned. This limited definition of who can be qualified as a combatant has generally been excused due to budget constraints. This means they had less attention for the needs of all others who were associated with armed forces. Because of this, DDR activities are not only less efficient, but also risk emphasizing existing gender inequalities (Specht, 2003).

Several reasons can be stated why DDR programs are less helpful for women and girls. At first, some DDR programs are not aimed at women. This is due to the fact that the rationale behind

DDR programs is to (among other things) disarm combatants and with this increase security by “keeping them off the street” (Specht, 2003). Because female combatants are mostly not seen as a threat, they are inadequately targeted by DDR programs. Secondly, funds of DDR programs are scarce, and therefore the programs tend to narrow their definition of an ex-combatant. Only those females who have carried or used a weapon are usually targeted. But even if these women used weapons, it is still hard to prove they were active combatants. Third, even when there are funds or willingness to support women who joined armed forces, they can sometimes be hard to find. These women tend to quickly disappear when the fight is over (Arthy, 2003). Next to this, women who, by force, became the wife of soldiers, do not wait for help to arrive in the form of DDR or development assistance programs because they want to break out right away. Therefore, they do not receive DDR benefits such as social reintegration assistance, and physical, material or psychosocial help (Mckay and Mazurana, 2004). Another reason is that women do not want others to know they are identified as a former female combatant. This out of fear of stigma. Bennet, Bexley and Warnock (1995) summarize this by stating that pursuing female soldiers is a problem when these do not want to be seen as combatants. After the war is over, these women face struggles in acceptance of their community. They keep their former identity secret and do not present themselves to receive the aid they are entitled to.

2.3 MAIN CONCEPTS

The most important concepts of the research must be defined, and the domain must be determined. The used concepts in this research are *child soldier*, *DDR*, *gender*, *gender-sensitive* and *gender equality*.

In the literature several different definitions can be found, but in this research the definition of UNICEF will be considered best-fitting for the definition of a child soldier: “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 [...]”. (UNICEF, 2007, p.7).

A child soldier can thus be a girl or boy who has been used to fight but this is not always the case.

DDR stands for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The United Nations Peace operations hold the following definition: “DDR [...] lays the groundwork for safeguarding and

sustaining the communities to which these individuals return, while building capacity for long-term peace, security and development.” (UN Peacekeeping, 2019)

In order to get a thorough gender analysis of NGOs with respect to female child soldiers, the concepts ‘gender’ ‘gender awareness’ and ‘gender equality’ needs to be analyzed. When an NGO or the UN is aware of these concepts, ‘gender mainstreaming’ arises. Gender mainstreaming, or gender-sensitive is not only the fighting of gender discrimination but also involves the process in which women elaborate and define the DDR program. This can be done when female staff is hired and put their focus to the needs of former female child soldiers, such as shelter and psychosocial help (EIGE, 2019).

In this thesis, the definition of ‘gender’ is given of the one used in 2006 of the Integrated DDR standards IAWG. A shortened version is stated in which the essence is given, however, the full quote can be found in the appendix.

“The social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women, men, girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/time- specific and changeable.” (IDDRS, 2006)

Next, gender equality is another important concept in this research. In this research, the definition used in DDR programs is taken. This is the definition made by the United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women:

“The equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, while recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women’s issue, but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.” (UN, 2019, p. 1).

In order to get the DDR process more gender-sensitive, and thus aware of gender equality NGOs should take several things into consideration. One main important requirement of DDR documents, guidelines and policies is the participation of former female child soldiers in their

programs. All women who joined the army or played any other role during war, must be identified and targeted to a greater amount. Reintegration programs must enact and appropriately put their attention on the specific needs the former female child soldiers have, regardless whether they engaged in armed conflict and provide them with suitable assistance. These specific needs are basic needs such as food and shelter. Other needs are help with reintegration, educational and medical support, (psychological) counseling, help with family reunion, economic opportunity, skills training and employment chances (UN, 2019). Women played different roles in in armed conflict, these different roles comprise women combatants, support workers, and dependents (IDDRS, 2013). NGOs must target all these women, thus also girls, with assistance after the armed conflict. Next to this, the DDR assistance must be eligible for all the traced and reached women and this must be done in a gender-sensitive way, in which potential gender differences are contemplated. At last, each combatant, whether they are male or female (and boys and girls), have different social, economic and psychological needs. Responding to these needs must be tackled in the right way (IDDRS, 2013).

With defining these most used concepts the question arise how the researched NGOs and the UN used these in their documents. Is there any difference in the background of the NGOs and the UN and in their staff in their extent of gender awareness? Besides, when these former female child soldiers are not mentioned to a high degree, what is the reason? Can the abovementioned ‘stigma’ the former female child soldiers have to handle be one of the reasons why they won’t get accounted for enough in the DDR policies, programs and guidelines? By analyzing this a couple of hypotheses came up.

(1) Organizations with >50% female staff are more gender-aware (and therefore address the specific needs, mentioned above, of girls in their policies) more than an organization with less female staff.

(2) Former female child soldiers are not given adequate consideration in DDR programs (and therefore their specific needs, mentioned above, are not well addressed) due to the attached stigma around their position because the organizations doing DDR are not well informed about this stigma or position.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this paper a qualitative case study approach will be held, this is the best way to conduct this research. Toshkov (2016) describes a case study as ‘the intensive study of a single case’. In this case study, a focus is put on the situation in Sierra Leone. Crowe (2011) observes that a case study is suitable to get a thorough analysis of an event. This way an ultimate understanding of the complex issue of former female child soldiers can be generated. The focus will be only on Sierra Leone to get a full understanding of the situation there. The case study will be about the NGOs and organizations who held DDR practices for the former (female child) soldiers in Sierra Leone.

3.1 DATA COLLECTION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research uses a comparative study of the texts of documents of organizations that have closely worked together with DDR in the follow-up of the war in Sierra Leone. In total 4 organizations and 18 texts. These will be stated later. The collection of these documents is reached through online searching for the policy documents, program guidance documents and training manual documents of DDR. Not all documents could be found with an even spreading over the time period despite extensive research. Therefore, for the analysis, the most suitable ones are selected. In the appendix, the list of used documents can be found. These are put through a critical (historical) content analysis.

The reason why in this research is chosen for the UN and the NGOs is that, at first, as aforementioned, the UN called for better inclusion of girls in DDR programs (UN, 2006). The collaboration between the UN Peacekeeping missions and security council resolutions and other organizations is most important to mention. Furthermore, many of the researched documents depend on or refer to the Paris Principles, which the UN has written in 2007. Furthermore, in the Paris Principles 2007 is stated that these Principles should be used alongside the IDDRS modules on children, youth and gender comprehensive guide (The Paris Principles, 2007: 6). Because all NGOs work together with the UN, I take the UN as an important actor to include in this thesis. Next to this, the most important organizations who work together with DDR and can be stated an important actor and donor in (post)-conflict situations entangling child soldiers are used. For instance, Child Soldiers International (formerly called the Coalition Stop the Use

of Child Soldiers) was founded by six international NGOs who all execute DDR programs (CSUCS, 2001). This organization therefore can be taken as a significant and broad organization. Besides this, another reason to use these organizations is due to the accessibility of information on their websites. This includes non-governmental organizations and the United Nations. The ones I used are: United Nations (this includes UN Security Council Resolutions, DDR program design, Integrated DDR Standards and The Paris Principles), Child Soldiers International and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The used documents (policy documents, program guidance documents and training documents) are official and technical. The key objective of this research is to assess in which way DDR programs and other organizations address gender equality in their documents.

3.2 TIMEFRAME

The timeframe used in this research is 2000-2019. This timeframe is chosen because in 1999 already little demobilization of ex-combatants took place in Sierra Leone. In January 2000 statistics have shown that approximately 1700 of an estimated 5000 child soldiers had entered disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs (CSUCS, 2001). DDR reports were just established about Sierra Leone a few years; thus, this can show the progress documents have made in the addressing of gender equality in the following years. Besides, with this timeframe, a reliable answer can be given to the research question. Documents of the above-called organizations will be analyzed over this timeline. The most important and significant parts were examined and read and re-read through a couple of times.

3.3 CONTENT ANALYSIS

Erlingson and Brysiewics state content analysis as: “Content analysis is to systematically transform a large amount of text into a highly organized and concise summary of key results” (2017). With a qualitative analysis of the data, categories or themes can be processed and content can be transcribed to meanings. With re-reading the data a more general understanding can be reached. What should be in mind is the personal influence on the analysis. Previous opinions and personal beliefs must not steer the analysis process or influence the understanding of the data. Content analysis is a process of reflection, data must be revised to reveal

relationships and connections (Erlingson and Brysiewics, 2017). Content analysis is thus useful in the understanding of a big amount of data and allows analysis over phenomena over time. With a content analysis of the used documents, a categorizing can be made on how DDR programs and other documents address the needs of former female child soldiers. The categorizing is made by reflecting on how the documents address former female child soldiers and how they address their particular needs. Next to this, the way how the NGOs and the UN are gender-aware and assess gender discrimination has been looked at. The concepts described in the conceptual framework above in chapter 2.3 paired with the content analysis will analyze the following subjects, namely: gender awareness and gender equality.

3.4 GENDER SCALE

To measure how the different NGOs and the UN perceive gender equality and awareness and the different needs of former female child soldiers, a criteria scale is developed. This scale is based and derived on the organization “Down to Zero”. This is a joint effort of several cooperations under the leadership of Terre des Hommes Netherlands. They aspire to eradicate commercial sexual exploitation of children in 10 countries. They have made a criteria scale to measure how gender aware programs worldwide are (Down to Zero platform, 2019). In this research, the gender scale is converted and supplemented in such a way that the gender awareness of NGOs and the UN can be measured.

It is divided into four categories: gender unaware (blind), gender neutral, gender aware, and gender active (transformative). In which the first category accounts for zero points, the second category one point, the third category two points and the last category three points. The different documents of the NGOs and the UN belong to a category if they meet the requirements. These requirements, next to the extensive gender scale explanation can be found in the appendix 2. In here each category is operationalized. If the document ‘ticks off’ at least three out of four statements in the category, they belong to this category. The used documents are classified within the gender scale. Differences in time are analyzed, and at last, organizations are ranked against each other to reflect differences. The used data can be found in appendix 3.

Table 1. Gender awareness categories scale

Gender unaware	Gender neutral	Gender aware	Gender active
Organization does not specifically name former female child soldiers (thus only women/men or young boys). Thus, gender is not mentioned in the program documents. Sees the role as child soldier only filled by being a boy. The programs are mostly targeted at boys. The program does not address gender inequality or discrimination.	Makes no differentiation between girls and boys but just equalizes them as 'child soldiers'. Organization does identify differences between the rights of men and women. Vague if girls are accounted for in the DDR programs. Gender is mentioned but outcomes do not explicitly target gender equality.	Organization specifically appoints the individual and special needs for former female child soldiers. Is active in their programming and documents to specify how to address former female child soldiers. However, by addressing practical gender issues and needs gender relations or social positions of girls are not improved.	Organization specifies the different roles girls and boys can have during armed conflict. In the program the challenges concerning the specific needs of former female child soldiers are tackled. The objective of the program is to encounter gender equality, violence based on gender, gender roles and stereotypes.

3.5 VALIDITY

It is important to address the validity and reliability of this qualitative research study. As Collier (2001) describes it: reliability is the way you measure. It is consistent and repeatable. Everyone can redo it. Validity is reflecting on what you want to measure. In this research, only existing data will be examined with content analysis. The used data can all be found in the reference list and appendices. This way someone can repeat the same analysis that is done in this thesis.

3.6 LIMITATIONS

In this research, no new empirical data can be collected due to the distance to the case respondents and the lack of knowledge of the language. There is an inability to access more resources for the timeframe of this paper. With more time and resources this paper could have conducted interviews with children who are former child soldiers. This is already done several times, but the latest follow-up was in 2010. With more in-depth research I would have been able to gather much more concise and detailed updated data. Not many studies have examined

the particular needs of female former child soldiers and to what extent gender equality is framed in the policies, programs and guidance manuals of DDR. This research is not broad enough on the specific longitudinal influence of violence exposure or reintegration process of DDR. Furthermore, in this research no viewpoints of former child soldiers of Sierra Leone are integrated, who have received any reintegration help or from the position of the people who run DDR programs. This is because this research is only focused on the international level, and not on the individual experiences of former female child soldiers. These experiences do not fall into the framework of this research. In this thesis, an analyzation is done and inferred on exclusively what is described in the researched documents. Besides, even though best attempts are made to get a thorough analysis on the selected documents of the organizations, with an equal spreading over the 19-year time period, the findings cannot be taken as a norm for the organizations. Another thing that must be stated, a choice had to be made on how many NGOs would be researched. This thesis is not broad enough to study all NGOs involved in DDR practices.

In the coming chapter, the staff of the NGOs and the UN are stated.

4. STAFF ORGANIZATIONS

In order to get a thorough gender analysis of NGOs with respect to female child soldiers, the concepts 'gender' 'gender awareness' and 'gender equality' are analyzed in the conceptual framework. When an NGO is aware of these concepts, 'gender mainstreaming' arises. As said before, DDR used to be conducted by the UN and their peacekeeping missions. Nowadays, NGOs are concerned as well with the DDR processes. To come back to the hypotheses, research is done about the staff of the UN and the NGOs.

At first, a look is given at the staff of the researched organizations. These are, stated again: United Nations (this includes UN Security Council Resolutions, DDR program design, IDDRS and The Paris Principles), Child Soldiers International and ICRC. The used documents (policy documents, program guidance documents and training documents) are official and technical. Unfortunately, not all data could be found, this means: only data from one year or no real extensive list of staff is written out.

4.1 UN – DDR

At the UN, in which DDR/UNDDR/IDDRS, and The Paris Principles are part of, the only data of UNDRR was found from the year 2013, in which the director and chief are both males. At the DDR, 2014 Peacake negotiating parties must be represented by women. A minimum figure of 30% (Peacake, 2014, p. 9).

At the UN, data is easy to find. They have several data charts, but unfortunately, it can only go back to 2006. In December of that year, they have 953 male staff officers and 26 females throughout every mission. The female-male relationship is 2,73%. In January 2019 this relationship has risen to 12,7%. With growth in the male staff of 80,8% and female staff growth of 865,4%. The number of female workers has thus obviously risen with a great part, but the question arises if the gender awareness has also risen? The United Nations state: “Woman can and must play a leading role in political participation, conflict resolution and the transition from conflict to peace” (UN Peacekeeping 2019). Next to this statement, they also state about the importance of female peacekeepers. Females can act as a role model in the local environment. They can inspire women and girls in the mostly male-dominated community to establish their own rights and participate in peace processes. In the peacekeeping missions the number of civilians working is that in 2017, women constitute 22% of the 16507 civilians working. The UN has as focus on involving more women in uniformed positions. Gender parity amongst UN staff is one of the key challenges and priority for the UN Secretary-General. At the headquarters of the UN in 2012, 48% of staff were women. However, in peacekeeping operations and special missions, these figures are more difficult to achieve. Women make up only about 29% of international and 17% of national staff. Over the last years, these statistics have not really changed (UN Peacekeeping 2019). The Department of Peacekeeping operations declared the need to deploy more women. But, getting more women is the responsibility of the individual countries that contribute police and troops.

4.2 UNICEF

UNICEF has taken measures to advance gender equality, a key focus has been to gather staffing and expertise (UNICEF, 2019). With setting priorities and defining strategies quality guidance can be developed to support all children. UNICEF has regional gender advisors who are

responsible for the quality of gender programs in country offices. This resulted in a sharpened focus on gender across all global and national levels of UNICEF's gender programming. Due to a global shortage of professionals of gender and development, UNICEF suffers a great challenge to find qualified personnel. They are not alone, many organizations have problems in implementing professionals with both knowledge of gender and technical skills to design quality gender programs (UNICEF, 2019). Regarding the gender parity among staff and management, UNICEF has been making good progress. Statistics of 2017 state that around 50% of the deputy executive directors were female and next to this, six out of seven regional directors were female as well (UNICEF, 2019). With the support of the Foundation of Bill and Melinda Gates "GenderPro", UNICEF is strengthening the capacity of staff across the organization to "promote gender-equitable development and raises the bar for gender staffing in the development and humanitarian fields at large" (UNICEF, 2019).

4.3 CHILD SOLDIERS INTERNATIONAL

In comparison with the UN and UNICEF, Child Soldiers International's staff is much smaller. At Child Soldiers International, there is a special tab on their website about their staff. This organization was founded in 1998 and incorporated in 2002. Only the situation of the staff in 2016 can be found: since 2011 Isabelle Guitard (director) is leading the activities towards the realization of the strategic aims. Underneath her, are six women and one man (Child Soldiers 2019). Child Soldiers International was formerly called "The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers", advocates for more adoptions of not only national or regional but also international standards to prohibit the recruitment of any child. This must be recognized and enforced by all governments and countries (CSUCS, 2001). This coalition was established by six international NGOs and has multiple involved representatives all over the world (CSUCS, 2001).

4.4 INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

On the website of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) the only data found is that it is governed by an Assembly, an Assembly council and a Directorate (ICRC staff, 2019). Peter Maurer is the President since 2012, assisted by vice-president Gilles Carbonnier. Both are guys (ICRC, 2019). The ICRC state that it "is of prime importance to never lose sight of gender equality" (ICRC, 2014, pp. 34). Next to this, they are busy with having more gender and human

rights advisors deployed in missions. This can be reached if these costs are calculated as part of the total cost of a mission. Greater gender expertise depends on Member States contributions to missions (ICRC, 2014).

In the coming chapter, a gender analysis of DDR with respect to female child soldiers is stated.

5. NGO AND UN GENDER EQUALITY AND AWARENESS ANALYSIS

To analyze in this chapter how the used documents of the NGOs and UN perceive gender awareness and equality about former female child soldiers, the organizations are named one by one and important parts are quoted. The points will be appointed concerning the gender scale and made visible through several charts and tables. The findings will be compared at the end. The 18 documents that are analyzed are measures against the gender scale (see table 1). With the use of content analysis to understand how the needs of former female child soldiers are presented, no real proof is shown that documents or NGO's are 'gender unaware'. Most documents fall into the category 'gender aware'. This can suggest, or mean positive results in the gender awareness of these NGOs and the UN. In this analysis the findings per organization and over time will be illustrated with some examples that represent the texts. Furthermore, the provided findings will also show how child soldiers are referenced by the organizations.

With analyzing, the documents were marked and put in the following categories: *gender unaware*, *gender neutral*, *gender aware* and *gender active*.

Out of 18 documents analyzed eight (44%) wrote about the specific needs of former child soldiers while only eight (44%) mentioned girls' special needs independent of boys. Three documents of ICRC took the definition of 'child soldier' very broad and didn't acknowledge the different roles girl can play during and after the war.

For each organization (ICRC, UNICEF, CSUCS, UN), a few documents are analyzed. In the results shown underneath, the differences can be seen between and within each organization over time. Their rank on the gender scale is given. For the readability of this thesis, in appendix 3 all used documents can be found.

5.1 ICRC

The ICRC over time made some progress on the gender scale. But, when compared to the other organizations and documents, it has the lowest place on the gender scale, because it has only one document falling in the category 'gender active'. The researched documents are from the years 2004, 2011, 2014 and 2017. What must be stated is they have made an improvement within their documents over time in 2014. This is the only document in which the multiple roles all child soldiers can have are stated. The documents that failed to be categorized as gender aware are in 2004, 2011 and 2017. In these documents, the ICRC failed to mention about the different roles and identities former female child soldiers can have. They instead, describe them in 2011 as "less visible, but equally vulnerable populations" (ICRC, 2011, p. 14). The ICRC define their definition of girls based on the Paris Principles and they only mention girls relating to these principles. 'Child soldier' was not gender specified and it was unclear if boys, as well as girls, were included in their usage of 'child'. In my opinion, findings of the staff of the organization are important. If there is little to be found about the staff and the outlook of the organization of the future in implementing gender equality, this can lower the expectations of gender awareness of the organization.

2004: In this document there is stated that the needs of children are different than those of women and men. Children need aid that is consistent with their needs, but these specific needs are not stated. The only state 'protecting child victims of armed conflict' (ICRC, 2004, p. 2). They take 'child soldier' as very broad and don't make any distinction between boys and girls. The word 'girl' is only mentioned 6 times in the whole document. By accounting for three statements in the category of 'gender neutral' this resulted in stating it as **gender neutral**.

2011: In this document, they state that children have specific needs, but no differences are made between boys and girls. Only further in the document, they talk about a gendered approach with specific needs for young women. Girls or former female child soldiers are not mentioned. In this document, again three statements are visible of the category **gender neutral**.

2014: In this document they reflect that conflicts have different effects on women, men, boys and girls and recognize that girls have different roles during the war. They state that the special needs of not only women but also girls must be addressed, but don't elaborate on or specify this. They infer on gender inequality, but former female child soldiers are, unfortunately, not mentioned. By recognizing the different roles of girls during and after the war, this document can be accounted as **gender active**.

2017: In this document boys and girls are separately included who are associated with armed forces or groups. Further in the document, boys and girls are mentioned together as ‘child soldier’. They take the definition of ‘child soldier’ thus broad and don’t specify the different roles boys and girls had during and after the war. They state that the needs of child soldiers must be given attention, but they don’t state these needs. This resulted in the category **gender neutral**.

5.2 UNICEF

In documents of UNICEF, gender was included to a higher degree. The documents rank, together with ICRC on the last place of the total number of points given to their documents. The document of 2017 was ‘gender aware’. In 2017 they state differences between boys and girl soldiers, while in 2005 ‘child soldiers’ was taken as one broad term. Although girl child soldiers are acknowledged, UNICEF recognizes in the document of 2005 about failure of DDR programs to attract female combatants but they reflect on to “provide for the specific needs and capacities of girl soldiers” (UNICEF, 2003, p. 52). These examples show that implementing gender equality within UNICEF’s programs is recognized and paid attention to.

2003: In this document both boys and girls are mentioned as child soldiers. They state that girls during the war are mostly used for sexual purposes but also state the needs for better disarmament for girls. Specific needs of child soldiers are mentioned, but not elaborated on. By stating the different needs and roles of former female child soldiers this document is accounted as **gender aware**.

2005: This document is about the lessons learned in Sierra Leone. There are adult and child programs of DDR. It has a specific chapter “girls and the DDR process”. In the chapter “children’s eligibility in demobilization’, children are globally named thus not specific stated for girls or boys. They do state about the difference in adult and child programs. In the chapter about the girls, they acknowledge the failure of DDR programs to attract female combatants. Apparently, camp atmosphere was controlled by and run for men. There was insufficient attention to the need for separate and gender-specific services for girls. There was restricted NGO capacity to create separate structures for girls. The agency addressed the flaws in the program. They learned lessons, but do not acknowledge ways to achieve this gender equality and to assess their different needs. This resulted in accounting this document as **gender neutral**.

2017: In this document they mainstream gender and address critical gender issues. But they acknowledge that they still suffer challenges. They are busy to achieve gender equality for every

child. They, however, don't mention how they achieve this during DDR processes but want to improve the quality of the lives of girls. This resulted in stating this document as **gender active**.

5.3 CSUCS/CHILD SOLDIERS INTERNATIONAL

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, established in 1998, main campaign is to prevent children from being recruited and protect them in armed conflict. Although most of the documents is about the prevention of recruitment of child soldiers, CSUCS ranks as second highest on the gender scale. Two documents analyzed are gender active. And the other ones are gender neutral. There is a consistency in the recognition of the specialized needs of former female child soldiers. To take as an example, the document of 2008 state about “the needs of girl soldiers must be seen within broader contexts of entrenched and complex gender discrimination and inequalities” (CSUCS, 2008, p. 29). The document that fell into the category of gender active actively designed practical guidance on how to achieve gender equality and ensure that this, together with the specialized needs of former female child soldiers is reached. What also can be seen is, as stated in 2008, is the “wealth of knowledge” they reached (CSUCS, 2008, p. 27). From here, the gender awareness of UNICEF ranked higher. Differences between this organization and for example ICRC, is they do acknowledge the Paris Principles of 2007, but do not only depend on them and can see room for improvement.

2001: In this document, girls are acknowledged as child soldiers. The “full psychological impact on children of participation in armed conflict, ... is only beginning to be understood” (CSUCS, 2001, p. 13). Quotes of girls are given and therefore their existence during the war is recognized. They state “special attention needs to be paid in programs to the experience and needs of girls, who have often been overlooked in assistance programs and disadvantages by traditional patriarchal social values” (CSUCS, 2001, p. 14). In the chapter about Sierra Leone is stated that training projects for young girls who had been abducted, as a step toward addressing the needs of such children. So, the needs of these girls are addressed, but they are not really specified. Next to this, other roles of girls during or after wartime are not mentioned. This resulted in stating this document as **gender neutral**.

2008: In this global report they state about the DDR programs that had been executed with the help of NGOs and other peacekeeping organizations. These experiences led to more knowledge about the existence and role of girls and boys in armed conflicts. Next to this, they learned about

the needs of the children when they got back to their home and community. They state that, while the Paris Principles declares a lot on how to get the most successful DDR operations for children, in practice this has not been applied yet. In the report, great recognition is given to the girl soldiers. And about the several roles they have played before, during and after the war “the need to take into account the special needs and vulnerabilities of girls affected by armed conflict, including girls involved in fighting forces” (CSUCS, 2008, p. 28). They also state that “it is recognized that returning girl soldiers have multiple needs” and: “the needs of girl soldiers must be seen within broader contexts of entrenched and complex gender discrimination and inequalities” (CSUCS, 2008, p. 29). Awareness about context-specific characteristics of gender discrimination has to be matched by programs that help these girls. The documents states about specific needs of former female child soldiers and how to handle this in the future. This resulted in accounting this document as **gender active**.

2012: This document states about the number of children who are protected by state. They examine that to fully end the use of child soldiers, it requires great investment. The report contains analysis, policies and practices providing examples. States and NGOs use the included 10-point checklist about practical measures to end the use of child soldiers. The main points of this report are effective strategies to protect children against involvement in armed conflicts, next to the attention what needs to be paid to stop states of using child soldiers. In their definition of child soldier, both boys and girls below 18 years are referred to and they state that “there are many factors which can make girls and boys vulnerable to involvement in armed conflicts” (CSUCS, 2012, p. 12). By not really elaborating on these needs, the document is accounted for as **gender neutral**.

2018: This document is mostly about the prevention of the recruitment of child soldiers. Next to this, they are in development of raising community awareness to help stem child recruitment. In the annual report they state, in on the chapters about Congo, about the practical guide they wrote in 2017 about how communities can help young girls with returning home safely to their communities. Furthermore, they acknowledge that former programs have failed in reaching girls and the accompanying stigma. The expertise of Child Soldiers International ensures that assistance is “suited to girls’ specific needs, does not reinforce stigma, and promotes gender equality” (CSUCS, 2017, p. 19). Besides, they will ensure that they offer a listening ear to the needs the former female child soldiers have. Although it is of importance they mention and recognize these needs, they don’t state how exactly they are going to do this (during DDR practices) which resulted it in stating it as **gender active**.

5.4 UN

For the UN, a rising line is easily detected. They consistently met with the categorical criteria of 'gender aware' and made references for the incorporating gender-specific needs of former female child soldiers. The 2012 document was especially practical, providing a guidance to address key gender issues.

2000: Resolution 1325 calls for the “different needs of female and male ex-combatants ...and the needs of their dependants” (UN Resolution 1325, 2000, p. 7). In this resolution a framework with 8 objectives are stated to promote gender justice and equality. Although women are mentioned, they do not specifically name the former female child soldiers. Further in the document they state about gender equality and non-discrimination. This gender equality meaning the equitable treatment for men, women, girls and boys. Furthermore, the different needs of both former boy and girl soldiers are mentioned. They state that it was not always easy to engage gender issues in the programs of DDR, but acknowledge that gender awareness is one of the main points and key challenges to make DDR results sustainable. They state “Encourages all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants” (UN Resolution 1325, 2000, p. 12). By not stating how they want to achieve gender equality and improving the positions of former female child soldiers, this document is accounted as **gender aware**.

2007: This document is about the Paris principles. In here the specific principles are children and specific situations of girls are mentioned in the table on contents. They mention both girls and boys who have had roles during the war and who were associated with armed forces and armed groups. The principles are based on lessons drawn from global experience and are based on the previous version 'Cape Town Principles'. They state that “any solution should address the needs of all children affected by armed conflict” (Paris Principles, 2007, p. 5). In this statement both boy and girl included. They recognize that these practices cannot be applied in all contexts, but can offer a framework to work with gender equality. They recognize the fact that girls are rarely provided with assistance, for a range of reasons but don't go further into how they plan to prevent this. Throughout the document they are rather broad in the word 'child'. They do state “girls should be included in the design of the program as well as in monitoring and evaluation of programs to ensure interventions are relevant and effective” (Paris Principles, 2007, p. 6). They state about the vulnerability of girls and only one time they specifically

mention the stigma of girls. Lastly, they state that the needs of former female child soldiers must be handled with expertise and take into account the accompanying stigma. By not mentioning the specific needs of former female child soldiers the document is accounted for as **gender aware**.

2008: In this document a recognition of the different roles women and girls played during and after the war are stated. They mention their role but do not stress the way to encounter the special needs of former female child soldiers. **Gender aware**

2012: In this document they acknowledge that in former DDR documents there is a lack of a sustainable and effective framework for understanding and addressing the different needs of female and male ex-combatants. The distinctive needs of adults are mentioned. Further, they put a focus on women's and girls' special needs. In the document is a practical guidance to address key gender issues and stating that they are busy to make the DDR program gender-responsive. Lastly, the document recognizes the specific needs of not only the men and women, but also those of boys and girls. This resulted in stating the document as **gender active**.

2018: This document states about the children and youth that were not included explicitly in DDR initiatives. They recognize that armed groups took advantage of young children, but were not aware of the different ways they did. This had resulted to the exclusion of girls. Like approaches to releasing children from armed groups, the body of practice around reintegrating children after the association has been influenced by adult DDR programs, but also tailored to the particular needs of children. Child reintegration, as defined by the Paris Principles, is "the process through which children transition into civil society and enter meaningful roles and identities as civilians who are accepted by their families and communities in a context of local and national reconciliation" (Paris Principles, 2007, p. 7). This document examined the dimension of gender of child involvement in armed groups in conflicts. In the case studies, efforts were made to engage girls. They acknowledged that despite these efforts, girls who were involved in armed groups still remain an elusive population. Furthermore, they state that much more attention is needed to better understand the experiences and needs of girls and women in these contexts and to address this enduring knowledge gap. So, they recognize these challenges, however, they still not explicitly state the needs of former female child soldiers or the roles they had during and after the war and therefore the conclusion is made to account this document as **gender aware**.

5.5 DDR

The researched DDR documents are the guideline of IDDRS and the operational guideline on DDR for women. These are really helpful to use as a tool. Although the guidelines are responsive for adults, specific needs about the former female child soldiers are not mentioned.

2013: This document is about the guideline of IDDRS. In this operational guide, specific chapters are written about women, gender and DDR. In their guide, gender awareness and gender equality are present. They have increased their consideration in the special needs of male and female ex-combatants. The guideline is gender responsive for adults, but not much is written about children and especially former female child soldiers. **Gender neutral.**

2014: In this operational guideline on DDR for women, it aims guidelines to respond to the needs of women. They state, that “while the focus of the guideline is on women, much of its content is also relevant to girls engaging in DDR processes and should be read in conjunction with the AU operational guideline on DDR for children” (Peaceau, 2014, p. 6). Even though this is great to mention, in practice, this is much harder to achieve. They state that, even when women are accounted for in DDR practices and guidelines, most of the time the support given to them is inadequate. This can be helped when the special needs of women and girls are addressed in the whole document. Next to this, stigma attached to these women must be accounted for. So they mention young mothers and their needs, but there is no real recognition for the existence of former female child soldiers in this document. **Gender neutral.**

5.6 OVER TIME

In the table underneath findings of documents are reflected over time. In four time periods, namely: 2000-2004, 2005-2009, 2010-2014 and 2015-2019. There are four documents in the first time period and four in the second time period. In the third period are six documents and as last, four documents in the fourth period. Although there is no even distribution of documents over the chosen time periods, rankings and trends can still be inferred.

Table 2. Results documents analysis and points

	Number of doc.	Gender unaware	Gender neutral	Gender aware	Gender active	Points
2000-2004	4	0	2	2	0	6
2005-2009	4	0	1	2	1	8
2010-2014	6	0	4	0	2	10
2015-2019	4	0	1	1	2	9

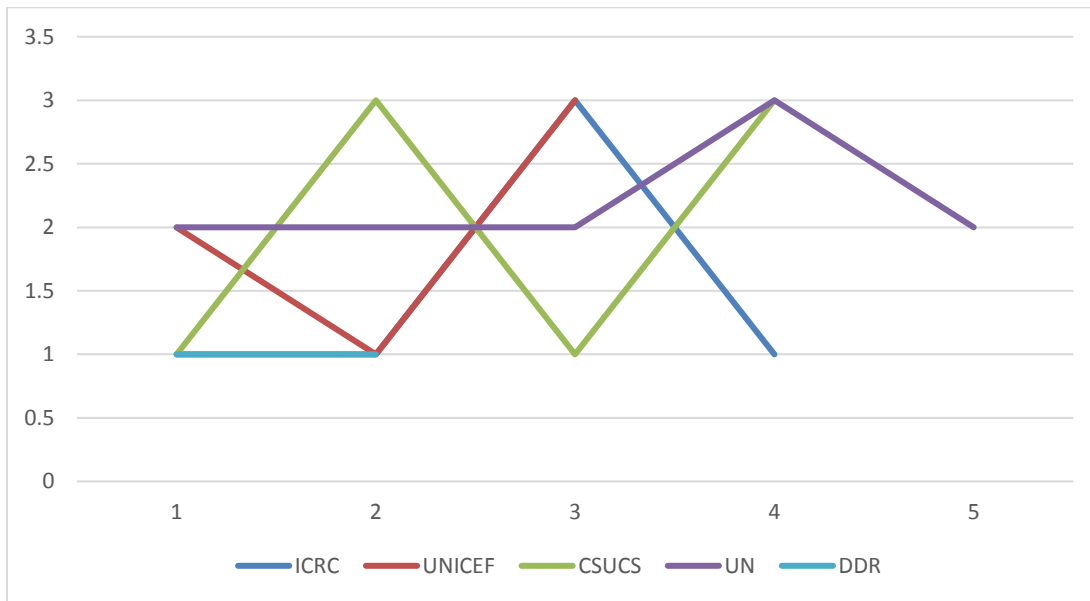
To read the table, an example is stated of the second row: In 2000-2004, a total of four documents was used. Zero documents fell into the category ‘gender unaware’. Two in ‘gender neutral’, two in ‘gender aware’ and zero in ‘gender active’. The total points accounted for the researched documents in this timeframe is 6. Due to the inability to find an even spread of documents along the time periods, no real significance can be stated of the difference in points. The last time period, 2015-2019 does have most documents falling in the category ‘gender active’.

Table 3. Average points per document

Average points per document	
ICRC	1,5
UNICEF	2
CSUCS	2
UN	1,8
DDR	1

In the table above, the average points per document per organization are stated. The UN for example has scored 9 points with a total of 5 documents which resulted in an average of 1.8 points. Meanwhile, UNICEF scored an average of 2 points with only 3 researched documents.

Chart 1 Trends organizations over time



In the chart above, a trend in documents along the gender criteria scale can be seen. The third time period analyzed two documents more than the other time periods and can therefore be stated as biased. Only the purple line (the UN) and the red line (UNICEF) have a rising line. Furthermore, while searching for the most appropriate documents for this research, something interesting came up. In later years, the focus of some NGOs (CSUCS/Child Soldiers International) changed from the reintegration of child soldiers to the prevention of child soldier recruitment. Documents about the prevention of child recruitment are not in the scope of this research question and thesis. However, this can partly explain the less documents found on gender equality for former child soldiers in this period of time. But this is not a justification of the lack of gender awareness in the documents. While some of the researched documents depend on the Paris Principles of 2007 definition of ‘child soldier’, Child Soldiers International expanded this definition to a more broad and advanced perception of child soldiers. The Paris Principles came out in 2007, which can help explain the impact this has done on the shifts of documents ranking higher on the gender criteria scale over time and reflecting more gender equality in their documents. Taken as a whole, it can be stated that there is a rising line of the researched documents along the scale towards classified as ‘gender active’. However, this rise can not be named as linear, because of the lack of consistency in finding documents which had gender inclusion and awareness. The under-representation of former female child soldiers in DDR programs, policies and guidelines remains a big problem.

This analysis finds the UN and Child Soldiers International to be most advancing and persistent in including gender equality and awareness in their documents. Three out of four documents showed the competence to apply a gender active lens to. It can be stated that, with this recognition, no future documents will fall below 'gender aware'. UNICEF on the other hand draws lessons from earlier documents and therefore acknowledges key challenges they put attention to in newer documents.

What can be stated as interesting, only one document had the ability to fully give a direct answer on the reason of gender discrimination in DDR programs. CSUCS (Child Soldiers International) stated in their report in 2001: "special attention needs to be paid in such programs to the experience and needs of girl, who have often been overlooked in assistance programs and disadvantaged by traditional patriarchal social values" (CSUCS, 2001, p. 14). This emphasizes on the essence of the problem. Many NGOs only acknowledge the tight funding of executing DDR programs and lack of framework to address the different needs of former female child soldiers and lack of information about the stigma of these girls.

To recall the research question: *Why do different NGOs and the UN have different degrees of gender awareness in their DDR documents in the war of Sierra Leone in 2000-2019?* Unfortunately, a precise answer to this research question was unable to be reached for this timeframe. Several points that were of importance in this timeframe is the upcoming of the Paris Principles in 2007, since then many documents of ICRC depended on their definition of child soldier and recognized the role of girls during and after the war. Another important document was the upcoming of the practical guidance frameworks of DDR, together with the Integrated DDR Standards. This helped as a practical tool for many documents. The gender awareness has also risen due to the recognition of former mistakes, especially in the documents of UNICEF. The gender awareness was measured with the help of the criteria scale that is set up. All programs and documents of the researched NGOs and the UN mentioned gender, but gender equality didn't always come up.

In the researched documents, most state and acknowledge the existence and roles of girls in armed conflicts. This awareness is lacking in the documents of Child Soldiers International, partly due because their vision is mostly about stopping the recruitment of child soldiers and not explicitly their needs during DDR practices. Next to this, gender awareness in documents dropped in the third time period (2010-2014). This is unexplainable because of the tools that

came up in these years to help guide the NGOs and UN to be more gender-responsive. When NGOs and the UN fail to include gender awareness in their documents, it limits their scope to end gender discrimination for former female child soldiers. Another finding is that documents don't always mention the stigma attached to former female child soldiers. Only CSUCS, the UN and DDR documents mentioned this stigma. This can be lack of information. Although organizations claim to advocate for and mainstream the rights of girls, documents fall below the highest standards. Hypothesis 2 is accepted: only three organizations mention the stigma and are therefore aware of the attached stigma to former female child soldiers. They acknowledge the lack of information for not giving these children adequate consideration in their DDR programs.

There is no real answer as to why most of the documents of the NGOs and the UN were gender neutral, because the authors of the documents were not interviewed. The efforts of these organizations, the documents and guidelines included, are necessary for the awareness of the different needs of former female child soldiers. When awareness is brought and children-specific documents are written, a final reflection on gender inclusion can be stated. Most information about staff and outlooks on gender equality was found on the websites of the UN and UNICEF, this can be mostly due to the size of the organizations. While the staff of the UN and UNICEF was available online, only UNICEF scored higher on the gender awareness scale. Hypothesis 1 is therefore not accepted. Organizations with more than 50% female staff are not more gender-aware, and therefore address the specific needs of former female child soldiers, than organizations with less female staff.

6. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Over the timeframe of 2000-2019 the meaning of gender equality has changed in the viewpoints of the researched NGOs and the UN. Research showed the lack of involvement of girls in DDR programs and this put a heightened focus on gender inclusion. This increased attention for gender has resulted in awareness at NGOs and the UN that integrating women in DDR programs is of great importance. Historically only governments conducted DDR programs, but this didn't result in involving more gender equality in their DDR practices. However, non-governmental organization (NGOs) can fill in knowledge gaps and be a significant help. Nowadays they are paying attention to the different needs of former female child soldiers. However, researched showed that in practice not all NGOs and Un involved the needs of former female child soldiers in their DDR documents. This had led to the formulation of the central research question: *Why do different NGOs and the UN have different degrees of gender awareness in their DDR documents in the war of Sierra Leone in 2000-2019?*

With regard to the main research question, the case study of the follow-up after the war in Sierra Leone of 1991-2002 was chosen. To answer this thesis, a few sub-questions are answered. In order to get a thorough gender analysis of NGOs with respect to female child soldiers, qualitative content analysis with the concepts 'gender' 'gender awareness' and 'gender equality' is done in the timeframe of 2000-2019. To measure how the different NGOs and the UN perceive gender equality and awareness and the different needs of former female child soldiers, a gender awareness criteria scale is developed. In this research, a comparison is made of 18 texts of DDR policies, programs and training manuals of 3 NGOs, the UN and guidelines of DDR. The analysis showed that over time, the gender awareness of the documents of the NGOs and the UN has risen. But, due to the lack of a framework to address the different needs the former female child soldiers had not all documents could be stated as 'gender aware' or 'gender active'. Non-governmental organizations are more involved in conflict situations and the aftermath. In the analysis chapter a few conclusions are stated. The UN and NGOs have tried to put a focus on gender and be more gender aware in their documents. Nonetheless, researched showed that the NGOs mostly put their focus on the needs of the broad concept 'child soldier'. Due to the different roles these children had during and after the war, these needs are different and therefore cannot be stated the same. Another conclusion that came up after the analysis is that the UN and the NGOs became aware of the need to include not only former male but also former female soldiers throughout the execution of DDR programs and guidelines.

This is already progress towards gender equality. Unfortunately, female ex-combatants and former female child soldiers cannot be taken as one and the same. However, the NGOs and the UN are trying to improve the DDR programs with this gender-perspective and better adapt it to the specific needs of these former female child soldiers. Another important statement is the acknowledging of the NGOs and the UN about the existence of stigma. Women and girls can face stigma when war is over and they return to their home and communities. DDR programs often overlook this fact and therefore do not take these needs of women into account. Documents that accounted for stigma have also shown a greater awareness on gender equality. Only three out of five organizations mentioned this stigma and acknowledges the former lack of information to implement this in their DDR practices. These documents were found in Child Soldiers International, the UN and DDR. From this research it can be concluded that UNICEF and Child Soldiers International addressed gender and gender equality the most in their documents. They put an emphasis on the need to address all needs of the child soldiers, thus not only the boys but also the former female child soldiers.

Despite extensive research on this area and best attempts to get a thorough analysis on the selected documents of the NGOs and the UN, finding cannot be taken as a norm. A choice had to be made on how many NGOs would be researched. This thesis is not broad enough to study all NGOs involved in DDR practices. Next to this, not all wanted data was publicly available or representative for this thesis. Finally, DDR programs and NGOs are still not entirely equipped with dealing with gender equality but this thesis showed the growing awareness and wealth of knowledge they have reached in the last decades.

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APPENDIX 1 – Full quote ‘gender’

“The social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women, men, girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/time-specific and changeable. Gender is part of the broader sociocultural context. Other important criteria for sociocultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviours of both women and men (femininity and masculinity). The concept of gender is vital, because, when it is applied to social analysis, it reveals how women’s subordination (or men’s domination) is socially constructed. As such, the subordination can be changed or ended. It is not biologically predetermined, nor is it fixed forever. As with any group, interactions among armed forces and groups, members’ roles and responsibilities within the group, and interactions between members of armed forces/groups and policy and decision makers are all heavily influenced by prevailing gender roles and gender relations in society. In fact, gender roles significantly affect the behaviour of individuals even when they are in a sex-segregated environment, such as an all-male cadre.” (IDDRS, 2006)

APPENDIX 2 – Gender scale criteria

Gender unaware (blind):

- Organization sees no differences between men, women, boys and girls.
- Organization does not specifically name former female child soldiers (thus only women/men or young boys).
- Gender is not mentioned in the program documents.
- Sees the role as child soldier only filled by being a boy.
- The programs are mostly targeted at boys.
- The program does not address gender inequality or discrimination, are thus ‘blind’ for gender issues.

Gender neutral:

- Makes no differentiation between girls and boys but just equalizes them as ‘child soldiers’.
- Organization identifies differences between men and women.
- Vague if girls are accounted for in the DDR programs.
- Gender is mentioned in the program.
- Outcomes of the program do not explicitly target gender equality.

Gender aware (responsive):

- Organization specifically appoints the individual and special needs for former female child soldiers.
- Is active in their programming and documents to specify how to address former female child soldiers.
- Address practical gender issues and needs throughout the whole document.
- Gender relations or social positions of girls are not improved.

Gender active (transformative):

- Organization specifies the different roles girls and boys can have during armed conflict.
- In the program the challenges concerning the specific needs of former female child soldiers are tackled.
- The objective of the program is to encounter gender equality, gender-based violence, gender roles and stereotypes.
- Organization seeks to improve the social positions of former female child soldiers.

Operationalization

Documents of one of the NGOs or the UN can fall in one of these above stated categories. This depends on several factors. Per NGO, several documents of data are used. These all, are, in some way or less, have to do with former female child soldiers and their special needs. Because not all documents fall in a different time period, an average is taken of the documents per NGO/UN organization. To belong in one category, a document must at least 'tick' off 3 out of 4 statements.

APPENDIX 3 – Used data

ICRC (International Committee of the Red cross)

- (2017) Children associated with armed forces or armed groups.
- (2014) Women & War – women & armed conflicts and the issue of sexual violence.
- (2011) Children affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence.
- (2004) Children in War

UNICEF

- (2017) Gender equality – annual results report 2017
- (2005). The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children associated with the fighting forces: Lessons learned in Sierra Leone.
- (2003 with CSUCS) Guide to the optional protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict

CSUCS (Child soldiers international)

- (2017/18) Annual report 2017-18
- (2012) Louder than words: an agenda for action to end state use of child soldiers
- (2008) Child soldiers global report
- (2001) Child soldiers global report

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DDR

- (2014) Peaceau African Union Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration capacity program. Operational guideline on DDR for women.

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