Rebuilding life after conflict;

A case study of female ex-combatant reintegration in South Sudan

Emma Bakker

6006280

Utrecht University

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Supervisor: Lauren Gould

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Abstract

This thesis assesses the reintegration needs of female ex-combatants in South Sudan. Although research has been conducted on the various roles women played in armed groups, the role they should entail in negotiation processes, or how female ex-combatants evaluate the implemented DDR programme, no research has been conducted on the specific reintegration needs female ex-combatants express that influence a successful reintegration process. This thesis provides insights into these perceived reintegration needs and furthermore provides a critical reflection on DDR programming in general and the needs assessment carried out prior to the DDR implementation phase in South Sudan.

Based on the theoretical framework of human needs satisfaction, this thesis aims to develop a further understanding of the perceived economic, social and political reintegration needs and whether there is a hierarchy present for these needs. The answers of 1692 female ex-combatants, 3730 male ex-combatants and 6508 community members from South Sudan that completed a survey between August and December 2020 were analysed. The results show that female ex-combatants prioritise their economic and social human needs, which indicates that a hierarchy of needs is present in accordance with the theoretical framework. This holds implications for their reintegration, as their economic and social needs should be prioritised for a successful reintegration.

This thesis furthermore presents a critical reflection of DDR programming, that used to neglect the gender aspect of reintegration. A discrepancy in policy and practice was found in South Sudan, as well as in other case studies where reintegration programmes do not reflect the actual needs of the ex-combatants. This thesis aims to provide new insights by assessing a needs assessments carried out to inform the upcoming DDR programme in South Sudan as this subject enjoys limited coverage in the academic debate. A critical reflection shows that although gender sensitivity is strived for, the tools used for the needs assessment reflect limited gender sensitivity. The quantitative nature of the tools is furthermore discussed and this thesis argues that additional qualitative research tools could provide additional in depth knowledge often required to analyse complicated societal processes.

Key words: Female ex-combatants, South Sudan, gender-sensitive DDR programming, human needs approach, reintegration

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Abbreviations

DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
IDDRS	Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SSDDRC	South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission
UN	United Nations
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

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1. Introduction

1.1 Empirical context

A vital challenge after the ending of a civil conflict entails the demilitarisation and demobilisation of combatants of armed groups (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018). These processes, however, are insufficient in themselves to bring about peace; they also introduce new challenges. Ex-combatants return to civilian life after leaving the armed groups, which poses various new obstacles. This situation results often in tensions between different population groups and leaves ex-combatants vulnerable due to stigma and lack of opportunities (Nilsson, 2005). Reintegration of these ex-combatants is therefore crucial in preventing them from re-joining armed groups and in order to ensure a sustainable transition into society (Leff, 2008). Reintegration is defined in this thesis as: *"*a societal process aiming at the *economic*, *political* and *social* [emphasis added] assimilation of ex-combatants into civil society" (Nilsson, 2005, p.4). These three aspects of reintegration processes assess reintegration from different angles and perspectives.

The literature on economic reintegration of ex-combatants is extensive and it used to enjoy the highest coverage in Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes (Özerdem, 2012). The so-called 'first wave' of DDR interventions mostly focused on short term improvements and solely offered ex-combatants modest benefits or a pension. However, this strategy proved ineffective and a longer term, more inclusive approach was called for (Edloe, 2007). The literature on economic reintegration indicates that social reintegration is influenced by the (lack of) economic opportunities for ex-combatants to earn a sustainable income (Subedi, 2014). A relationship between the tendency of demobilised combatants to re-join armed groups and the lack of economic opportunities has been found in various case studies (Thorsell, 2013). However, the effectiveness of economic reintegration efforts and programmes is often questioned (Miriyagalla, 2014). Various scholars examined the effectiveness of economic reintegration efforts, yielding disparate and opposing results. The article of Subedi (2014) assesses that cash packages as main reintegration strategy such as used in Nepal is highly ineffective and not improving the ex-combatant's economic situation. However, it does indicate that a reintegration programme focused on long term economic reintegration could have a positive effect. The article by Miriyagalla (2014) focuses on loans given to ex-combatants to improve their economic situation, yet here it is found as well that the majority of the respondents declare that this loan did not increase their economic position. It did improve the economic position of some respondents which could be seen as a small success (Miriyagalla, 2014). There is thus evidence that the economic reintegration of

ex-combatants is of importance for their overall integration, yet the exact measures to do so remain somehow unclear.

The social reintegration approach expresses criticism towards the fact that many programmes solely focus on ex-combatants individually by giving cash packages or job training (Leff, 2008). From this point of view, the receiving community is crucial as well in the reintegration process and this is often overlooked by policy makers and academics (Leff, 2008; Willems & Van Leeuwen, 2015). Within this approach to social reintegration, the assumption is that the social participation and acceptance of the local community is related to a minimal risk of ex-combatants re-joining armed groups (Kaplan & Nussio, 2018). Discrimination, stigmatisation and the absence of a supportive network are factors that could negatively impact the social reintegration of ex-combatants (Rodríguez López, Andreouli & Howarth, 2015).

Other scholars argue that social acceptance and economic opportunities solely are not enough to result in a successful reintegration (Porto, Parsons & Alden, 2007; Söderström, 2014). Political reintegration processes were often neglected or seen as of secondary importance (Avoine, 2021; Porto, Parsons & Alden, 2007). During conflict situations, armed groups often offer combatants the opportunity for political empowerment as alternative power structures are established. These opportunities are most likely to diminish after demobilisation efforts and when former combatants return to their communities (Nilsson, 2005). According to Nilsson (2005), it is crucial for ex-combatants to be able to influence decisions they are subjected to, a failure to do so could lead them to re-engage in violence. Hence, it is of importance that ex-combatants feel heard and are involved in decision-making practices, at national or at community level. This could improve trust among community members and eliminate the stigma of 'criminals' often associated with ex-combatants. Political participation of ex-combatants from this perspective could have a positive effect on peacebuilding efforts (Porto, Parsons & Alden, 2007). Some studies found that former combatants could give rise to positive leadership in their communities (Nilsson, 2005). However, this is rejected by other scholars who state that this could also have dangerous side effects as it undermines security and safety (Söderström, 2014). There is thus no clear consensus on what political reintegration processes are more useful in successfully reintegrating ex-combatants.

Ex-combatants are by no means a homogenous group. Even though many sources emphasise the fact that women often are active participants of armed groups in conflict areas (Barrios Sabogal & Richter, 2019; Henshaw, 2016; Tarnaala, 2016), a gender-based perspective within reintegration programmes of ex-combatants was lacking for decades

(Tarnaala, 2016). Over the past years more attention has been drawn to this gender aspect of reintegration processes, however it remains under-researched and under-theorised (Barrios Sabogal & Richter, 2019). Female ex-combatants may face differentiated economic, social and political reintegration issues and barriers. Furthermore, security issues and psychosocial issues are also likely to differ from male ex-combatants (Tarnaala, 2016), as they face stronger discrimination and stigmatisation when returned to society (Barrios Sabogal & Richter, 2019). Female ex-combatants furthermore might possess less work-related skills due to the strong patriarchal roles, which might result in different opportunities for economic reintegration (Bhandari, 2015). Although research has been conducted on the various roles women played in armed groups (Gjelsvik, 2010), the role they should entail in negotiation processes (Ortega & Maria, 2009), or how female ex-combatants evaluate the implemented DDR programme (Luna, 2019), no specific research has been conducted on the specific reintegration needs female ex-combatants express that influence a successful reintegration process.

1.2 Rethinking the terminology of ex-combatant
In which manner the term 'ex-combatant' is defined is of influence on who is considered an ex-combatant, and thus who meets the requirements of being a DDR beneficiary. The United Nations (UN) Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) provided a glossary for organisations involved in DDR programmes, in which the definition of an ex-combatant was given: "A person who has assumed any of the responsibilities or carried out any of the activities mentioned in the definition of 'combatant', and has laid down or surrendered his/her arms with a view to entering a DDR process" (UN, 2006, p.7).

This terminology however neglects the fact that persons can be associated with an armed group in a non-combat manner. An ex-combatant thus qualifies as an ex-combatant when he/she carried weapons. DDR programmes strictly adhered to this qualification, requiring ex-combatants to hand in their arms in order to qualify as a beneficiary (Mackenzie, 2012). According to the literature, women in particular held traditional roles such as cooking (Tarnaala, 2016). This thus especially disadvantages female ex-combatants that entailed non-combat positions. This discrepancy was later recognised and adjusted, as stated by the UN Secretary-General in 2008: "This limited notion of who a combatant is poses a problem for all three phases of DDR programming. Although they do not satisfy most international legal or working definitions of "combatants" or "armed elements", women and children who supported the fighters (willingly or unwillingly) are also in need of demobilization,

rehabilitation, and reintegration assistance. Even when they have "joined" fighting forces, women and adolescent girls are often not recognized as combatants and are denied entry into these programmes" (UN Secretary-General, 2008, p.129).

The terminology of 'female ex-combatant' will be used in this thesis as an all-encompassing, inclusive terminology that incorporates both women who held combat positions as well as women who held non-combat positions. This inclusive terminology was also enhanced in the database used and therefore considered both categories of women eligible as participant for filling in the survey.

1.3 Background South Sudan

South Sudan is the world's youngest internationally recognised country, having seceded from Sudan in 2011. It is a land-locked country and it has a population of over 12 million. The majority of the South Sudanese population lives in rural areas with traditional tribal structures (Ellsberg, Ovince, Murphy, Blackwell, Reddy, Stennes, Hess & Contreras, 2020).

South Sudan has known multiple civil wars and violent outbreaks over the past decades and its economy, infrastructure and health care system are extremely fragile (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021). In 2013, a political dispute between the president Salva Kiir and his Deputy Riek Machar resulted in outbreaks of violence across the country. The conflict sparked strong ethnic tensions as armed groups were mostly organised along ethnic lines and targeted killings were carried out (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021). The situation was so drastic that the UN quickly adopted Resolution 2132 that required a serious increase in troops serving under United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) (Nyadera, 2018). The conflict continued with high levels of killings, abductions, sexual violence and forced (child) recruitment into armed groups. In 2015 a peace treaty was signed which led to a limited period of less violence (Githigaro, 2016).

However, this period without hostilities did not prevail, as both Kiir and Machar accused each other of violating the terms of the peace treaty. In 2016, violence increased again and outbreaks erupted throughout the nation. The government lost control and legitimacy over violence and the security levels decreased drastically (Nyadera, 2018). In 2018, a new peace agreement was signed and a cease fire was implemented. The situation in South Sudan is still fragile, with a faltering rule of law, lack of accountability, security forces violations, indiscriminate killings and the current COVID 19 situation (Human Rights Watch, 2021). DDR programmes are being implemented in order to reintegrate ex-combatants after years of conflict (Lamb & Stainer, 2018).

Women participated in various ways and entailed various roles during the multiple South Sudanese civil wars (SSDDRC, 2020). During the struggle for liberation, some studies indicate that female combatants accounted for an estimated 7% of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), although the exact numbers are lacking (HSBA, 2012). In 2012, the first lady stated South Sudan was ready to mobilise women to join the national army forces and called for women to join the front (Pinaud, 2013). During the South Sudanese civil wars, women actively participated in various roles as female combatants as well as serving as cooks, carriers and cleaners (SSDDRC, 2020). However, exact numbers to estimate the scope of female ex-combatants in South Sudan are lacking and are not mentioned in the reports of the South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission (SSDDRC). The SSDDRC (2020) does state that for the upcoming DDR programme, an estimated amount of 5000 female ex-combatants are intended to be included as beneficiary. A perception survey was completed by 1692 female ex-combatants conducted to inform this upcoming DDR programme (SSDDRC, 2020). However, these numbers are not likely to reflect the actual numbers as identifying female ex-combatants after conflict has proved difficult (Gilmartin, 2018).

South Sudan is a strongly patriarchal society with strict gender roles (JICA, 2017). Its gender relations are influenced by the social and economic hardships of being one of the world's least developed countries, as well as the prevalence of decades of conflict (Nyuon, 2021). Women are traditionally seen as possessions of men and are expected to take care of the children and household (Madut, 2020). This inferior position in society is likely to have an influence on the reintegration opportunities that female ex-combatants face after being demobilised. Female ex-combatants may have specific needs that are required to successfully reintegrate. However, the different economic, social and political reintegration needs of these female ex-combatants have not yet been researched.

1.4 Conclusion of the introduction

This thesis thus specifically focuses on the empirical complication of a lacking gender focus in assessing the specific needs expressed by female ex-combatants before the implementation of a DDR programme. It furthermore enhances an integrative approach towards reintegration by assessing the economic, social and political needs and therefore contributes to the gap in the literature where these aspects are often handled separately. This research focusses specifically on the case of South Sudan as it has a strong patriarchal structure and female combatants were employed during the conflicts, yet it could have implications for other

countries where reintegration of female ex-combatants is an issue. The main contribution of this thesis is furthermore to create awareness and an increased focus on female participation in conflict and peace. The theoretical and scientific contribution of this thesis will be discussed after presenting the theoretical framework in Chapter two.

This thesis aims to contribute to the existing empirical and theoretical literature by answering the following research question: *What are the perceived economic, social and political levels of human needs satisfaction that influence the reintegration processes of female ex-combatants in South Sudan, from August to December 2020?* The theoretical framework of human needs satisfaction will be explained in Chapter two.

The outline of this thesis is as follows: in Chapter two the theoretical framework will be discussed and the aimed theoretical contribution of this thesis will be debated. Chapter three discusses the methodology enhanced in this thesis and its ethical implications. In Chapter four, the findings on the economic, social and political human needs satisfaction will be presented. Chapter five will present a critical reflection on if and how DDR programmes reflect a gender perspective and it will provide an analysis of a needs assessment carried out by the SSDDRC. Chapter six presents the conclusions and Chapter seven will discuss the limitations of this thesis and its implications for further research.

2. Theoretical framework and research question

2.1 Female participation in conflict

To understand how and when female ex-combatants successfully reintegrate back into society, it is necessary to first understand what prevents them from re-joining armed groups. Certain theoretical stances consider female participation in conflict that explain if and why women are drawn into violent conflict.

Asal and Jadoon (2019) argue that female participation in war is dependent on both demand and supply factors. Here they argue that a high level of unemployment among the female population within a country and a high territorial control of armed groups lead to a higher prevalence of female combatants in conflict. Economic reasons are here thus seen as primary drivers for women to participate in conflict (Asal & Jadoon, 2019).

South Sudan has been in an economic crisis since the aftermath of the 2013 and 2016 violent outbursts, and it continues to struggle with high inflation, extreme poverty rates, and a highly vulnerable economy. Women and children are indeed the most affected by this economic situation (World Bank, 2020). This is thus consistent with the theoretical explanation of Asal and Jadoon (2019) where economic constraints increase female participation in war.

The article of Hensaw (2016) partly agrees with this argument and find economic reasons to be a driver for women to join an armed group as well. It is however stated that quantitative studies such as the research of Asal and Jadoon (2019) should be careful in drawing the conclusion that economic reasons are the main drivers as grievances are difficult to quantify and measure. She furthermore adds that ethnic or religious grievances are motivating women to participate in conflict as well. This indicates that women feel the urge to defend tradition or religion (Hansaw, 2016).

Williams and Kaufman (2010) agree that drivers for women decide to engage as combatant are reasons such as defending the country or for fighting for a cause. Armed groups use selective incentives based on ethnic or religious grievances as a recruitment method. An specifically effective recruitment pattern according to Williams and Kaufman (2010) is the use of other women or particular women's organisations to increase female participation.

This incentive was in accordance with the article of Williams and Kaufman (2010) used for female recruitment during the first civil war in South Sudan (Pinaud, 2016). A girls battalion was created in order to recruit and train female combatants. However, Pinaud (2016)

states that ideological depth was lacking and concludes that this battalion did not have a large influence on the recruitment patterns of female combatants.

All the above considered approaches provide various plausible explanations for why women are drawn into conflict. What is at the foundation of female participation in conflict is that what women perceive to receive or gain (physically, mentally, spiritually) by joining an armed group. There are thus certain needs that are unsatisfied which led women to see joining an armed group as the best option to fulfil these needs. An important driver for reintegration programming is the aim to keep ex-combatants secure and satisfied (Jennings, 2017). These needs are thus a priority to be recognised and discussed in order for female ex-combatants to successfully reintegrate.

2.2 Human needs satisfaction

A theoretical stance that explored the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of certain needs is the human needs theory. The human needs theory was originally developed by Abraham Maslow in 1943, where he explored the human motivation based on a hierarchal pyramid of human needs. The essence of this theory entails that the basic needs at the bottom of the pyramid need to be satisfied before an individual becomes motivated to satisfy higher needs in the pyramid (Alderfer, 1969). The needs in ascending order from the bottom of the hierarchy entail: physiological needs, security needs, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualisation. This implies that a person first needs to fulfil its physiological needs, such as food and shelter, before prioritising its security needs. These needs arise as a result of deprivation and are said to motivate people when they are unsatisfied to find alternative ways. Furthermore, the motivation to fulfil such needs grows stronger the longer they are denied (Mcleod, 2020). Over the years this theory has been adapted, expanded and adjusted to various other scientific fields. For instance, it has been applied to explain economic consumption (Royo, 2007), to design a theoretical basis to measure quality of life (Hyde, Wiggins, Higgs & Blane, 2003) and to explore work performances (Andreassen, Hetland & Pallese, 2010).

The article of Christie (1997) considers the human needs theory specifically to peacebuilding processes and the structural opportunities for needs satisfaction. This article claims that in situations where these needs cannot be satisfied, individuals might search for other illegal ways to acquire needs satisfaction.

Christie (1997) states that security needs are constant and become more apparent when the environment is felt as a threat to safety. It is thus important that these security needs are met in order for individuals to feel safe and secure. Women in general face a high level of

security threats in South Sudan (Contreras-Urbina, Blackwell, Murphy & Ellsberg, 2019), so it is plausible that female ex-combatants in South Sudan face constraints towards their security human needs satisfaction.

Another need that Christie (1997) discusses is the human need for identity. This need comprises the need to identify with a group and the need for belonging. When not being accepted by society, or more specifically the local community, individuals may search for other groups that give the opportunity for human needs satisfaction. This could include their former armed group. The acceptance of the receiving community is crucial, as it is not only the ex-combatant that has an influence on its reintegration process (Leff, 2008; Willems & Van Leeuwen, 2015). As highlighted by Specht (2006), women especially join armed groups because often within this group their need satisfaction to be heard and seen is higher than in civilian life. While in the armed group this social need is often fulfilled, when leaving the group they often face additional stigma for having crossed the lines of femininity, further reducing their opportunities for identity human needs satisfaction. This is additionally emphasised by the article of Barrios Sabogal and Richter (2019) where is observed that female ex-combatants face stigmatisation after returning to their communities.

The article of Christie (1997) furthermore states that economic structures can systematically deprive need satisfaction for certain groups in society. Poverty and difficult living conditions can result in unmet needs for security, identity and social connection. Patriarchal barriers may lead to gender-specific violence or less economic opportunities which leaves women extra vulnerable (Christie, 1997). It is thus important for the reintegration process to look at the specific economic opportunities or difficulties female ex-combatants face, which are related to their social status and stigma.

Political oppression leads to barriers concerning self-determination and choice. In decision-making structures, decisions are made about the satisfaction of certain needs (Christie, 1997). In a strong patriarchal society with strict gender roles such as in South Sudan, few women in general are included in decision-making structures (Adeogun & Muthuki, 2018). For female ex-combatants, it is known that even if they played important roles during armed conflict, they are hardly given space during the negotiation process or to fulfil the negotiated political positions after conflict (Specht, 2006). Existing gender-exclusive barriers might thus be influencing the political human needs satisfaction of female ex-combatants in South Sudan.

The article of Christie (1997) furthermore states that while human needs are universal, access to the satisfaction of these human needs depend on the different kind of barriers

presented in a society to different groups. The human needs theory as indicated by Christie (1997) might thus prove a useful lens to examine the level of human needs satisfaction of female ex-combatants in South Sudan.

However, the human needs theory offered by Christie (1997) only focuses the human needs satisfaction of individuals that did not participate in conflict yet. No elaboration is given on individuals who already joined an armed group or participated in conflict situations such as ex-combatants, where constraints on human needs satisfaction during the reintegration process might impel them towards an armed group again. Therefore, this thesis intends to, on a small scale, add to this gap in the theoretical literature and explore the perceived levels of human needs satisfaction for female ex-combatants, a group that has already engaged in rebellion. This research will furthermore draw upon both the earlier hierarchical pyramid of Maslow combined with the expanded theoretical framework of Christie (1997) specifically focused on peacebuilding processes. This will allow for a conclusion on how female ex-combatants perceive their levels of human needs satisfaction being satisfied, divided into social, economic and political levels, as well as to analyse if there is given certain priority to one or multiple of these needs. Therefore, for the following research question an answer will be sought: *What are the perceived economic, social and political levels of human needs satisfaction that influence the reintegration processes of female ex-combatants in South Sudan, from August to December 2020?*

Four sub-questions, based on the theoretical framework, were composed in order to unpack the research question and to assist in answering the research question.

1. Do female ex-combatants perceive their economic human needs, consisting of the needs for material and non-material economic resources, are being satisfied in South Sudan, from August to December 2020?

2. Do female ex-combatants perceive their personal security needs, defined as the freedom from human-caused physical and mental violence and (other) crime property, are being satisfied in South Sudan, from August to December 2020?

3. Do female ex-combatants perceive their identity needs, consisting of acceptance of the community and the need for belonging, are being satisfied in South Sudan, from August to December 2020?

4. Do female ex-combatants perceive their political human needs, consisting of matters concerned with political representation, exercise of choice and self-determination, are being satisfied in South Sudan, from August to December 2020?

3. Methodology

3.1 Methodological design

This research provides an answer to the following research puzzle: *What are the perceived economic, social and political levels of human needs satisfaction that influence the reintegration processes of female ex-combatants in South Sudan, from August to December 2020?* The concept of reintegration in this thesis is defined as: *"a societal process aiming at the economic, political and social [emphasis added] assimilation of ex-combatants into civil society"* (Nilsson, 2005, p.4). Primary data was gathered by an inter-institutional cooperation between the SSDDRC, UNDP, UNMISS, Unicef and Transition International between August and December 2020. The needs assessment conducted by this cooperation is meant to establish a starting point that relies on reliable and contextual information that will provide the foundation of the DDR programme. The data gathered from South Sudanese ex-combatants was obtained prior to their participation in the DDR programme, which corresponds to the research's target group, as this thesis wants to inform the perceived reintegration needs prior to a DDR programme. This data comprises surveys with closed and limited open questions considering the reintegration processes of ex-combatants in South Sudan.

This predominantly quantitative method has been chosen in order to capture the thoughts of a representative sample and to be able to draw conclusions that reflect the reality for the population. However, during the process of data analysis I started to question whether this was the right method to measure reintegration needs. Therefore a final sub-question was added considering the measurement of reintegration processes: *Are the methods used to measure reintegration needs for female ex-combatants by the DDR Commission adequate?*

Therefore the aim of this thesis is twofold: first, to use the data to analyse the levels of human needs satisfaction for female ex-combatants to fill the gap of a lacking gender approach to these needs is lacking, and second, to critically examine how this is measured by prominent organisations in the DDR field. This fifth sub-question will be addressed in Chapter five.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

In total, 1692 female ex-combatants, 3730 male ex-combatants and 6508 community members completed the survey, from 79 different counties in South Sudan. The data was gathered by international and national consultants over a period of five months. A combination of purposive, snowball and random sampling was applied to identify the

respondents. The research team received a two-day training considering the different tools, the appropriate use of ICT enhanced data collection, reporting training as well as research ethics and gender- and child-responsive data collection. The survey was created and stored on SurveyCTO, a mobile data collection platform. After the data collection phase, the data was quality controlled by research coordinators.

I was granted access to the data gathered and transferred the answers from separate word files into one comprehensive database. Due to the limited time frame and the time consuming practice of creating an overarching database, this thesis solely provides the percentages of female ex-combatants that answered a certain question. No statistical analyses were carried out to discover correlations between certain questions, which will be discussed as a limitation and implication for future research in Chapter seven.

During the data analysis phase, the database was transferred to STATA. This data was then generated into comprehensive tables, and the exact numbers were converted to percentages so that conclusions could be drawn at a later stage. Three types of survey questions were created for the survey; closed, semi-closed and open questions. For the closed questions, respondents could choose the between the following options; 'yes, no, don't know/somehow'. For the semi-closed questions respondents could choose between multiple pre-existing categories, with the option to choose 'other'. If the respondent chose the option 'other', she/he could give an elaborated explanation. Multiple answers could be selected for the semi-closed questions. As the percentages reflect how many times this specific answer was chosen, the percentages of all categories together are over 100%. Both the answers of male and female ex-combatants and community members were analysed for the closed and semi-closed questions. This allowed for comparisons when differences were discovered. For the open questions, the answers of 200 female ex-combatants were analysed using the online programme Airtable. Here categories were created on the base of the answers so patterns could be observed. Interesting quotes were gathered in a separate Word file to nuance the closed questions.

The sub-questions were based on the theoretical framework of Christie (1997). In appendix I, a glossary consisting of the key analytical definitions is presented that were used as foundation for the sub-questions. The sub-questions were then operationalised into indicators. In appendix II an overview is given of the sub-questions, its indicators and the survey questions that were based on these indicators. The fifth sub-question will be discussed in Chapter five.

3.3 Ontological and epistemological approach

Ontology is concerned with what motivates people to act (Demmers, 2016). The ontological nature of the research question takes a individualistic approach towards ontology and indicates that individuals have agency to structure society. The perceptions of female ex-combatants are taken as starting point of this analysis. The research question aims to explore how female ex-combatants perceive their level of human needs satisfaction, which indicates a focus on individual agency.

Epistemology refers to ideas of how we can know the world (Demmers, 2016). The research question follows an understanding, interpretative epistemology. This implies that individuals are not seen as self-contained units, but as capable of directing themselves while being historical forms of meaning (Demmers, 2016). The research question is aimed at understanding of how female ex-combatants perceive their needs while being situated in a historical and cultural structures that might pose barriers to their needs satisfaction.

3.4 Opportunities and limitations

Using an already gathered database has created several opportunities as well as limitations. It provided the opportunity for this thesis to analyse a rather large sample of over 11.000 respondents. This would not be feasible without the permission granted from the SSDDRC to use the dataset. Further, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, I would not be able to physically conduct research in South Sudan. As a result of hiring local consultants and researchers, it was possible to gather these responses to the survey. Moreover, the local consultants speaking the local languages and knowing the culture ensured a higher validity of the survey. South Sudanese researchers have been involved in the research design, formulation of questions and data collection phase. To ensure the right analysis of the data as well, I presented my results to a native South Sudanese researcher. As a result, the entire design and data collection process has been designed to be as culturally sensitive as possible. These all posed clear advantages for this thesis.

However, using a pre-existing dataset posed some limitations as well. As the data collection phase was already completed when I was granted access to the dataset, I had no influence on how the research strategy and survey questions were designed. Therefore, in Chapter five, the research design and tools are given a critical reflection.

Furthermore, I have never been to South Sudan and I therefore have limited knowledge of the context. This poses a clear limitation to this research and methodology. However, as mentioned before, South Sudanese researchers were involved in all phases of this

research and advice was asked when interpreting the answers of female ex-combatants to understand the embedded context.

3.5 Ethical implications

Ethical principles were considered during the data gathering period. The survey questions were first controlled by the SSDDRC in order to avoid controversial or inappropriate word use. The preferred location of the participants was respected in order to secure the safety and security. Especially the preferred location of female participants was given consideration. Before participation, an informed consent form was signed at all times and the researchers made certain that the participants were aware of the voluntary nature of the research. Consent was asked from both the parents and the respondent itself for those under 18. Anonymity and confidentiality were prioritised, and personal information was password-protected and only accessible to the researchers. The data used for this thesis had already been anonymised, and no names or other personal information is available to the researcher. Hereby the complete confidentiality of the respondents is guaranteed.

A further ethical complication is the my ethical responsibility to illustrate and report the reality of the female ex-combatants that participated in this research. As previously stated, South Sudanese researchers were involved in the research design, formulation of questions, data collection and analysis phase to ensure cultural sensitivity. Furthermore, in order to oblige to this ethical responsibility, it was decided to include a critical reflection chapter. Here is debated if the research approach used was the correct approach to measure reintegration needs and if a gender-based perspective is reflected in the survey questions.

4. Findings perceived level of human needs satisfaction

This chapter will present the findings of the perceived level of economic, social and political human needs satisfaction. Security and identity human needs are categorised together as social human needs, as they both entail social processes and correspond to the terminology of the empirical debate on economic, social and political reintegration processes.

The findings will be presented for female ex-combatants, and will be compared to male ex-combatants and/or community members when it provides valuable insights into differences between the respondent groups. Disaggregation for age will be used when it manifests differences in answers. Quotes will be presented when provided by the female ex-combatants, in order to bring nuance and perspective to the quantitative numbers.

4.1 Reasons for joining armed groups

Poverty and unemployment (49%) were one of the primary motivators for female ex-combatants to join the armed groups. These reasons have been less indicated by male ex-combatants (30%), which supports the statement of Christie (1997) that fewer economic opportunities for women in societies with patriarchal barriers leave women peculiarly vulnerable. The economic motivators that drew female ex-combatants towards armed groups are elaborated on by two respondents:

"I tried to find a job, I couldn't get one and that is why I entered an armed group"-Female ex-combatant, 40+, Western Equatoria

"To get money for schooling of my children" –Female ex-combatant, 24-40, Lakes

Perceived discrimination (48%), besides economic motivations, was furthermore named as a reason for female ex-combatants to join an armed group. This feeling of discrimination is expressed by a respondent from Ruweng Area.

"I was discriminated against and I belonged nowhere"- Female ex-combatant, 24-40, Ruweng Area

45% of the female ex-combatants perceive these issues unsolved, due to the fact that they still have no job (59%) and the remaining inequality (58%). This implies that almost half of the female ex-combatants perceive that their unmet human needs, that led them to join an armed group, are still unsatisfied after being demobilised.

4.2 Economic human needs

Economic reintegration is defined in this thesis as "ex-combatants' capacity to earn a livelihood through legitimate means" (Willems & Van Leeuwen, 2015, p.321). Examining the economic human needs that are linked to the ability to earn a livelihood thus provides further insights into how female ex-combatants can be best economically reintegrated. This sub-chapter will address employment and income, the level of skill and access to education as factors that influence the perceived level of economic human needs satisfaction.

61% of the female ex-combatants live below the poverty rate (0-1.9 USD a day). The difficult living conditions are expressed by one of the female ex-combatants:

"Flooding is making our lives difficult, and also lack of shelter and the lack of food for my children [..] I have no one to help me take care of them I am so vulnerable and desperate for help." – Female ex-combatant, 24-40, Jonglei

57% of female ex-combatants state that they do not have the same job as before joining armed groups. This is primarily due to the loss of assets (37%) and the fact that they have no funds to restart (31%). Most female ex-combatants (85%) state that they did not receive any skills training after their demobilisation. However, the majority (62%) of respondents that did receive these trainings, are using this skill to earn money. When asked why they are not using their skills it is mostly devoted to the lack of opportunities (78%). Here important potential for successful economic reintegration efforts can be found, as skills trainings are deemed an effective tool when provided. The specific skill that is taught should be determined by the community's context, as there must be opportunities to put this skill to use.

Most female ex-combatants did not obtain new skills while being in the armed groups (67%), when they did acquire those, they mostly obtained skills in cooking (55%), security provision (45%) and management (21%). This is partly in line with the literature that state that female ex-combatants typically take on gender-stereotypical roles such as cooking in armed groups (Tarnaala, 2016). However, the results of this analysis furthermore indicate that female ex-combatants also fulfil non-traditional tasks such as security provision. This is clearly and succinctly demonstrated by a female ex-combatant who did not encompass a traditional role while fighting in the armed group.

"I now know how to repair and use the guns"-Female ex-combatant, 24-40, Warrap

Female ex-combatants mostly name the lack of access to money (80%), the lack of skills and opportunities (62%) and the insecurity (42%) as main obstacles for ex-combatants

to start a small business. A female ex-combatant from Lakes elaborates on the extra responsibility of women that complicates starting a small business.

"As a woman, I can't travel very far because I take care of the children."- Female ex-combatant, 24-40, Lakes

Solely 37% of the female ex-combatants has access to education, which is the lowest compared to male ex-combatants (40%), female (49%) and male (50%) community members. Especially female ex-combatants under 18 (27%) indicate having access to education less often. This is mostly due the absence of a school (44%) and education being too expensive (24%).

4.3 Social human needs
Social reintegration in this thesis is defined as "a process whereby a person who has acquired the status of a combatant during a war returns to civilian life and is recognised by others as a member of the society" (IGI Global, 2020, p.1). This is specified in level of security and identity human needs satisfaction, as the perceived level of fulfilment of these needs influence the level of social reintegration.

A slight majority of female ex-combatants (58%) feel safe. Especially female ex-combatants under 18 less often indicate to feel safe (36%), in comparison to male ex-combatants (65%) and female community members (83%) of the same age. This implies that particularly the youngest generation of female ex-combatants have unmet security needs. This feeling of unsafety is illustrated by a female ex-combatant under 18, as displayed below.

"I am not feeling safe because in case the army groups that are still in the bush return, they might still look for me." –Female ex-combatant, under 18, Western Equatoria

This suggests that DDR programmes must take an age-sensitive approach to security needs. Child soldiers are especially prone to the recruitment of armed groups as they have a strong need for belonging. Children between 12 and 18 are often developing their personal identity and have an increased need for belonging (World Vision International, 2021). Especially female child soldiers are forcibly recruited and face increased sexual abuse and violence (Betancourt, Borisova, De la Soudiere & Williamson, 2011), which might explain the low level of security human needs satisfaction for female ex-combatants under 18.

To assess the perceived level of identity human need satisfaction, female ex-combatants were asked if they felt well integrated into their community of return, which was confirmed by 59%. Respondents who did not feel well integrated into the community

mentioned discrimination (64%) and the feeling that they were feared by the community (48%). When asked if there are specific social reintegration challenges for female ex-combatants, the same answers were given, along with having less economic skills (41%). The quote below from a female ex-combatant exemplifies the connectivity between social and economic human needs.

"Many community members don't like girls associated with armed groups. Also they are lacking money to support their education, which leads to early marriage. Some girls they are pregnant and are not married." – Female ex-combatant, 40+, Lakes

The majority of female ex-combatants (57%) state that the conflict has mentally affected them, mostly in the form of nightmares (49%), depression (38%) and feelings of isolation (36%). This while only 9% has access to mental health services.

4.4 Political human needs

For political reintegration this thesis makes use of the definition: "Generating ex-combatants' confidence in the democratic process as the most appropriate way of achieving change, and enhancing their faith in community mechanisms for resolving conflicts" (Willems & Van Leeuwen, 2015, p.321). Survey questions were used for the analysis of this subchapter considering trust in government and participation in decision-making structures.

54% of the female ex-combatants indicates to trust the local government, which is the lowest for the respondent group under 18 (43%). Female community members under 18 on the contrary express the highest level of trust (87%). This indicates that the difference of this age category can be attributed to being an ex-combatant, rather than the overarching category of 'woman' that both groups entail. The female ex-combatants that do not trust the local government, express that this is mostly due to corruption (56%), nepotism (51%) and the feeling that they are not listened to/involved (41%).

40% of the female ex-combatants state that they participate in community level decision making processes. 50% of the male ex-combatants, 46% of the female community members and 49% of the male community members indicate the same. Female ex-combatants thus participate less often in decision-making processes. Only 27% of the female ex-combatants indicate that there are ex-combatant led initiatives or ex-combatant leaders contributing to building trust and reconciliation. Two female ex-combatants explain why these initiatives are lacking in their community.

"Somehow they could contribute, but the community fears them." –Female ex-combatant, under 18, Western Equatoria

"They tried but are lacking transportation to most of the villages" –Female ex-combatant, 40+, Lakes

4.5 Interconnection between human needs

Some of the results indicate that there might be an interconnection between certain human needs. As mentioned before, female ex-combatants perceive the issues that led them to join an armed group mostly unsolved due to unemployment and the remaining inequality. Literature indicates that gender inequality increases the unemployment level of women, and unemployment conserves gender inequality due to a more vulnerable economic position (Reichelt, Makovi & Sargsyan, 2021). This intersection between economic and social human needs is found as well in other reintegration case studies (Willems & Van Leeuwen, 2015) that demonstrate that reintegration is an integrative process that includes both economic and social components. So in this case study of an underlying connection between unmet economic and social human needs could be present in accordance to the literature, which requires further research.

Female ex-combatants indicated that lack of security influenced their chance of starting a successful small business. This demonstrates that a lack of security human needs satisfaction affects economic human needs satisfaction, implying an intersection between these two human needs. This connection is exemplified by a quote of a female ex-combatant from Ruweng Area.

"The security is very bad and road is very important for doing business" –Female ex-combatant, 40+, Ruweng Area

4.6 Primary human need

When discussing the recommendations female ex-combatants give in order to ensure a successful reintegration, they exclusively name economic measures. These include: financial support for businesses (78%), material support for businesses (64%), business training (55%) and vocational training (52%). This need for financial support is illustrated by a response from a female ex-combatant from Lakes.

"We need to be helped, if the government chooses to give to us money, we can think of what business we can do. Or if we can get a plough it is also good"-Female ex-combatant, 18-24, Lakes

This implies that female ex-combatants prioritise economic support at the moment. This is in congruence with the human needs pyramid of Maslow that implies that a person first prioritises physiological needs, such as food and shelter, which can be obtained through employment. This physiological need is expressed by a female ex-combatant from the Pibor area.

"We want to have food, mats for sitting, beds. We have nothing"-Female ex-combatant, 40+, Pibor Area

5. Critical reflection

As stated in the methodology chapter, obtaining permission to use a pre-existing dataset provided numerous benefits for this thesis. It did, however, present some difficulties and disadvantages as well. The researcher noticed some flaws and ambiguities in the research design, research method and tools and the reflection of a gender sensitive approach in the survey questions. Therefore this chapter provides a reflection of gender sensitivity in DDR programmes in general and in South Sudan, and how the lacking of needs assessments leads to a discrepancy between policy and practice. It aims to add to a gap in the literature by critically discussing the tools used for the needs assessment carried out in South Sudan, as this does not enjoy coverage in the academic debate.

The aim of this thesis is therefore twofold, and furthermore seeks an answer to the sub-question: *Are the methods used to measure reintegration needs for female ex-combatants by the DDR Commission adequate?*

5.1 Gender sensitivity in DDR programmes

DDR programmes in general made a large shift from minimalised, economic based programmes to integrative, maximalist interventions. Where DDR programmes were first focused on the individual ex-combatant, the 'next generation' DDR programmes included communities as well, in order to enhance a broader approach (Idris, 2016). However, the role of female combatants was often still neglected and diminished and women were excluded from the peacebuilding processes at all stages (Branco, 2017).

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 1325 in 2000, in which it expresses commitment to gender mainstreaming. This implied that all planned actions, legislations, policies and programmes should incorporate the needs of both men and women (Schroeder, 2005). This was based on the observation that peacebuilding programmes are more effective when they enhance a gender sensitive approach; as war affects men and women differently (United Nations Secretary General, 2002). This was the first resolution that specifically called for a gender approach within DDR programmes and peacebuilding efforts. This gender perspective is needed as it can help restructure unequal gender relations and poses opportunities for increased emancipation for women after war (Abeln, 2018).

However, literature indicates that this gender sensitive approach is not always adhered to. Even though improvements have been made over the past decades, criticism is expressed by multiple studies. Weber (2020) describes that the lack of a gender sensitive strategy led to serious problems for female ex-combatants as they were left with mental health problems,

challenges for employment and the lack of strong relationships. Often DDR programmes enhance stereotypes or undesired gender roles by for instance only offering soap-making trainings to female ex-combatants and agricultural trainings to male ex-combatants (Branco, 2017). The programmes furthermore often rely on the narrative of female ex-combatants as victims, where they were forcefully abducted or solely having the role as domestic worker or cook. These stories are in fact part of the reality, but by solely focussing on this narrative the agency of women is diminished as they often join voluntarily (Mazurana, Krystalli, Baaré, 2018). So while gender sensitivity is strived for in DDR programmes, criticism is still expressed towards various biases.

5.2 Lack of contextual needs assessments

The reintegration aspect of DDR programmes is often the weakest part as it often fails to meet its targets. This can be ascribed to the fact that the success of reintegration depends on contextual factors connected to the country of implementation, which is often overlooked in DDR programmes (Idris, 2016). A gender sensitive approach is thus also critical as demonstrated in Chapter 5.1. Critics thus argue for a careful needs assessment, based on the contextual situation, before implementing the reintegration programme (Branco, 2017; Idris, 2016; Jennings, 2017; Munive, 2013).

The results of a case study examined by Jennings (2017) focusing on Liberia, indicate that the lack of a contextual analysis prior to the implementation of a DDR programme left ex-combatants unsatisfied. Although vocational training was provided, ex-combatants faced minimal employment opportunities to put their newly acquired skills to use (Jennings, 2017). Furthermore, three years of schooling were offered as a reintegration measure. However, it was overlooked that many ex-combatants could not afford to attend school and thus had to miss classes. Missing multiple classes resulted in a financial penalty or the expulsion of the programme (Jennings, 2017). Here a clear discrepancy between the actual needs and the programme implemented can be observed. This discrepancy was found as well in Nigeria where the needs of private sector employers were not assessed in order to design workshops (Ebiede, Langer & Tosun, 2020) and in Sudan where agricultural equipment of a certain brand was delivered, that no mechanic in the area was specialised to repair when it broke down (Zena, 2013).

So, there is criticism expressed towards the lack of contextual needs assessments carried out before implementing a DDR programme. However, literature assessing these assessments when they are in fact carried out, such as in South Sudan, is lacking as well. This

might provide valuable data considering the accuracy to measure needs by the used tools and whether gender sensitivity is adhered to in these tools. As a needs assessment provides the foundation for a DDR programme, it is crucial to see if these are adequately designed. This thesis therefore adds, to a small extent, knowledge to this gap by examining the tools used for the needs assessment carried out in South Sudan and whether these reflect gender sensitivity. This could lay the foundation for future research to assess the methods used to carry out a needs assessment in other contexts.

5.3 Research design needs assessment SSDDRC

The overall research design of the needs assessment carried out by the SSDDRC is assessed in this sub chapter. The SSDDRC envisions its political reintegration approach as follows: "Political reintegration shall thus focus more on the individual level to restore XCs [ex-combatants] decision-making power within a given community in relation to his/her citizen status within that community. However, it shall also focus on the group level, seeking to deepen and aid in transforming the armed groups or organisations from illegal armed entities into legitimate political parties or civilian units operating within the legal parameters of the state" (SSDDRC, 2020, p.22). The SSDDRC states that political reintegration processes are and will be included in DDR programmes in order to induce ex-combatants to exchange violence for dialogue and how this will result in the increased trust and legitimacy of the state (SSDDRC, 2020).

Literature on reintegration processes frequently state that political reintegration is often neglected or seen as of secondary importance in DDR programmes (Avoine, 2021; Porto, Parsons & Alden, 2007). The tools created to assess the reintegration needs of ex-combatants, in compliance with the literature, show that political reintegration has a lesser focus for the SSDDRC. An overview of survey questions that are posed to the consulted ex-combatants is provided in table 1 below.

Survey questions political reintegration
1a Do you trust local government?
1b If no, why not?
2 Do you participate in community level decision making processes?
3a Are there any ex-combatant led initiatives or ex-combatant leaders contributing to building trust and reconciliation?
3b If yes/somehow, please explain

Table 1 Survey questions political reintegration

There are fewer questions for this sub topic, and solely one open question is included. There are thus limited questions asked to discover the political reintegration needs that have to inform the political reintegration approach, which indicates a lesser focus on the political reintegration of (female) ex-combatants. This while literature indicates that it is crucial for an individual to be able to influence decisions they are subjected to (Nilsson, 2005) and that political involvement of ex-combatants could have a positive effect on peacebuilding efforts (Porto, Parsons & Alden, 2007).

Furthermore, the DDRC states that DDR interventions used to lack a systematic approach and large sample results so that a nationwide DDR programme could be implemented, and adjusted its approach (UNDP, 2009). This resulted in quantitative baseline and evaluation studies. This quantitative approach is also reflected in the database gathered by the SSDDRC used for this thesis. The database is rather large and therefore a quantitative analysis is used. However, this holds several implications. As Blumer (1956, p.684) argues "The analysis of relationships between variables creates a static view of social life that is independent of people's lives". By using solely using quantitative measurements, social processes are handled as frozen realities, while in fact they are dynamic and constantly reshaped by interaction. The question that arrives is, can complicated social processes such as feeling of security be measured by quantitative methods? A shift from quantitative questions regarding reintegration to more qualitative, socially-oriented tools would be required for certain aspects. DDR programmes in general focused primarily on terms of economic reintegration, using output indicators such as levels of employment or participation rates in training courses or vocational training (Bowd & Özerdem, 2013). Yet if you want to measure social needs or political needs, other research methods such as open surveys, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) or interviews would be better suited. A mixed method between a large sample quantitative survey to be able to generalise the results, and in-depth interviews with ex-combatants to understand intertwined social processes could yield both reliable and contextual data.

Another pattern that became apparent during the data analysis is how the large database unintentionally erases individual stories and answers. For the database used in this thesis, respondents had the opportunity to choose the option 'other', and elaborate on their answer. Nonetheless, the results show that only a small percentage of respondents, approximately zero to four percent, do so for each question. Their answers are then coded into larger categories in order to be added as an answer to the already created answer options. This will lead to important stories and contextual information being categorised under one large

category. If it is a divergent answer, it will even 'disappear' due to the fact that it becomes such a small percentage in comparison to the large sample size. Due to this, important stories will be missed and omitted. So, the open questions in this quantitative research design can provide additional answer options, however they are not capable of providing the rich, contextual answers that can be yielded from qualitative tools.

5.4 Gender approach SSDDRC

The SSDDRC stated in 2015 that they successfully incorporated a gender approach in their policies and DDR processes after years of unawareness of gender sensitive programming (Abeln, 2018). DDR efforts in South Sudan indicate to reflect the intention of the SSDDRC to enhance a gender sensitive perspective. By using the lessons learned from other DDR programmes, the SSDDRC implemented business, literacy and agricultural skills training for women (Abeln, 2018). These were accompanied with childcare facilities as previous DDR efforts proved that women were often restricted to attend such courses due to childcare responsibilities (Alam, Dufour-Genneson & Turkington, 2015).

DDR programmes in South Sudan furthermore focused on Gender Based Violence (GBV). Exact numbers of the severity of GBV in South Sudan are lacking, however they are believed to be high (Ali, 2011). Female ex-combatants specifically indicate to have experienced GBV during their time in armed groups, as many were abducted and kept as 'bush wives' (Specht, 2006). To support these female ex-combatants, the SSDDRC implemented health centres facilitating psychosocial support (Albeln, 2018).

So overall, a gender approach within the implementation of DDR programmes in South Sudan seems to be enhanced. However, critics point out that discrepancies can be found between the intended gender sensitive policy documents and the limited impact of these DDR programmes (Been, 2020). Further criticism is expressed towards the fact that no needs assessment was carried out to inform the former DDR programmes in South Sudan (Albeln, 2018; Stone, 2011). The baseline database used for this thesis intended to fill this gap and is used as a needs assessment. Even though the SSDDRC emphasises the fact that they employ a gender sensitive approach, this is not reflected in the tools designed for this needs assessment. Answers are indeed compared between male and female respondents, just as between ex-combatants and community members, but no specific questions are asked to female ex-combatants. The results of this research indicate that female ex-combatants might require additional specific questions in order to examine their needs. These might include the need for a separate shelter, sanitation facilities and reproductive health services (Idris, 2016). Further,

as the findings of this thesis imply, different societal processes could influence these needs, such as how gender inequality influences their possibilities for employment, how traditional gender roles influence the opinion on female participation in politics or on how insecurity influences the possibility to start a business.

The SSDDRC clearly facilitates a gender perspective during the implementation phase. However, this approach is mostly lacking during the needs assessment, even though it is crucial to do so. DDR programmes can be implemented, however if the needs assessment to inform these programmes are not adequately capturing the needs of female ex-combatants, they will not yield the expected successful reintegration. Gender sensitive design of the tools and questions asked is therefore necessary in order to get insight into the specific needs of female ex-combatants and in order to design a successful DDR programme.

5.5 Reflection of chapter

This chapter shows that the case of South Sudan can be seen in the broader context of DDR programming in general. The SSDDRC used to overlook the gender aspect of reintegration (Albeln, 2018), as did DDR programming in general (Branco, 2017). Over time, attention was raised towards gender sensitivity in DDR programming (Schroeder, 2005), which was reflected by the SSDDRC that implemented gender-based projects such as childcare facilities (Alam, Dufour-Genneson & Turkington, 2015). However, similar to what other case studies such as in Nigeria (Ebiede, Langer & Tosun, 2020) and in Liberia (Jennings, 2017) indicate, a discrepancy between policy and practice was found where reintegration programmes do not reflect the actual needs of the ex-combatants. A call for contextual needs assessments is expressed by studies (Branco, 2017; Idris, 2016; Jennings, 2017; Munive, 2013) prior to implementing reintegration programmes. Studies assessing these contextual needs assessments are lacking, and therefore this thesis aimed to fill this gap by analysing the needs assessment carried out by the SSDDRC in South Sudan.

6. Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was twofold. First, it examined the perceived economic, social and political human needs satisfaction of female ex-combatants in South Sudan. Second, it debated DDR programming in general and this thesis examined the manner in which these human needs were measured in the needs assessment carried out in South Sudan. In this chapter, a summary of the findings connected to both the empirical literature and theoretical framework of human needs satisfaction will be given.

6.1 Human needs satisfaction

This thesis has shown that a slight majority of female ex-combatants perceived their human need for security being met. Female ex-combatants under 18 feel the least safe, with significant differences compared to the same age group of male ex-combatants and female community members. Empirical literature indicates that children under 18 have a strong human need for security and belonging (World Vision International, 2021). This implies that an age-sensitive approach to security human needs satisfaction is required in order to keep the youngest generation of female ex-combatants to be drawn back to the known structures of armed groups.

Social and economic drivers were mostly named by female ex-combatants that led them to join an armed group. Solely social and economic challenges were furthermore named as specific social reintegration challenges for female ex-combatants. The results of this research thus underline the argument of the empirical literature (Subedi, 2014) where is stated that social reintegration is influenced by the (lack of) economic opportunities for ex-combatants to earn a sustainable income. This research adds to that argument by stating that it is furthermore seen as a specific reintegration challenge for female ex-combatants, so that a gender perspective to this intersection of needs is needed.

No political needs were expressed as reason for joining armed groups, for not feeling well integrated, as specific social reintegration challenge nor given as recommendation to ensure a successful reintegration by female ex-combatants. The fact that female ex-combatants solely focus on economic and social human needs appears to contradict part of the empirical literature (Porto, Parsons & Alden, 2007; Söderström, 2014) which suggests that political human needs should be deemed as important as social and economic human needs. This importance was thus not reflected by the answers of the respondents of this research.

The theoretical framework might offer an explanation for this discrepancy. The pyramid of Maslow implies that there is a hierarchical order in which persons prioritise their

human needs satisfaction. This hierarchical order, with physiological needs such as food and shelter having the highest priority, seems to be supported by the results of this research. Economic aid is solely named when asked for recommendations to successfully reintegrate. This indicates that female ex-combatants indeed prioritise physiological needs first, that can be satisfied through economic means such as employment and money. It seems that political human needs for female ex-combatants are in the top area of the needs pyramid, and are not prioritised until the more pressing human needs are satisfied. However, this could also be influenced by the role of women in the South Sudanese society, as they already have limited political agency (Adeogun & Muthuki, 2018).

The theoretical framework of Christie (1997) considering human needs satisfaction solely focused on persons that have not yet participated in a conflict situation. This thesis adds knowledge to this theoretical stance by examining reintegration processes through the human needs satisfaction lens of female ex-combatants, a population group that has already participated in conflict situations through joining an armed group. In this thesis, some hierarchy in human needs satisfaction is found for female ex-combatants, which adds to the theoretical framework of Christie (1997) that did not include the hierarchy of needs as explained by Maslow (1949). This is a valuable contribution to the theoretical framework of Christie (1997).

6.2 Critical reflection

Another explanation for the lack of consistent and rich information considering the political human needs of female ex-combatants is the lack of focus of these needs in the research design. As presented in Table 1, few questions were asked on the topic of political reintegration needs. This is in line with the literature (Avoine, 2021; Porto, Parsons & Alden, 2007) that state that DDR programmes lacked a focus on political reintegration processes. This research concludes that while questions regarding this aspect are now included, they are limited and somehow shallow as open questions are lacking.

This thesis furthermore placed the case of DDR in South Sudan in the broader context of DDR programming in general. It found that while gender sensitivity is strived for, a discrepancy between policy and practice is often the reality where there is often a misalignment between DDR programmes and the reintegration needs of ex-combatants. This thesis analysed the needs assessment carried out by the SSDDRC as there is a lack of literature focusing on these assessments. It has shown that the tools used to collect the database for a needs assessment, gathered by the SSDDRC, do not fully reflect a gender

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sensitive approach. There were no survey questions included that solely focused on unravelling the specific needs of female ex-combatants and no interviews were held in order to acquire in-depth knowledge of the underlying processes. Comparing the answers of male and female ex-combatants and community members yielded some insightful information, but specific gender-based questions would provide this additional information on for instance, female participation in politics, needs for shelter and sanitation facilities and the influence of gender inequality on employment prospects.

This thesis furthermore critically analysed the quantitative research design enhanced for the database used by the SSDDRC to establish a needs assessment. By using a quantitative research design, the SSDDRC indicates that societal processes are a frozen reality that can be measured by quantitative, static questions. This while societal processes are dynamic and multi-dimensional. This thesis demonstrates that in-depth knowledge of the connection between these human needs might be missed due to this approach. Additional in-depth interviews and/or FGDs could better capture the nature of these processes.

7. Discussion

7.1 Limitations

This thesis has been an exploration of both the level of human needs satisfaction of female ex-combatants in South Sudan, and of DDR programming and the research design and needs assessment carried out by the SSDDRC. This study has some potential limitations.

First, this thesis was based on an externally gathered database that used a quantitative research design. This might have influenced the results of this thesis as some important nuances might have been missed. Therefore it was decided to add a critical analysis chapter that reflected on the methods used, in order to provide transparency and a critical note. By analysing the levels of human needs satisfaction this thesis aimed to create a foundation from which future research might further explore gender-based reintegration processes by using differentiated research tools.

Second, due to limited access and the limited timeframe, the critical reflection of this thesis solely focused on the database gathered by the SSDDRC in 2020. Therefore, these findings cannot be generalised towards all DDR programmes and/or all needs assessments carried out. However, as this subject enjoys limited coverage in the academic debate, it could lay a foundation for future studies. It might spark a debate on other DDR programmes and/or needs assessments considering different locations, contexts and cultures on a gender sensitive approach and on which research design to enhance.

7.2 Implications for further research

Despite its limitations, this thesis yielded some valuable results that might have implications for future research. The transition from conflict to peace is inherently complex and it is especially difficult for women in war-torn, traditional societies. Therefore, awareness of the exact needs, opportunities and barriers of female ex-combatants is needed and an increased platform for them to express their concerns and recommendations are of importance.

The results of this thesis indicate that for certain questions a connection can be found between social and economic human needs. Female ex-combatants indicated, for instance, that having no work-related skills is an social reintegration challenge specifically for female ex-combatants. For this thesis, it was not feasible to further research this connection as questions regarding this intersection were not asked from the respondents during the data collection phase. Therefore, future research could focus on this intersection and explore the connectivity between social and economic human needs for female ex-combatants. This might provide valuable information on how these influence, amplify or diminish each other as this might have implication on the successfulness of reintegration efforts.

The results of this thesis indicated that there is a hierarchy in human needs satisfaction for female ex-combatants according to the pyramid of Maslow. Future research could focus on this perceived hierarchy and provide more detailed knowledge of the processes underlying this hierarchy. As society, conflict and peace are dynamic concepts, the hierarchy of human needs satisfaction might vary across location, time frame and context.

As stated in the Chapter five, future research could use a different research strategy to research the level of human needs satisfaction of female ex-combatants. Interviews or FGDs with female ex-combatants might provide valuable information considering reintegration processes. Moreover, research is an important tool to amplify the voice of these female ex-combatants and create awareness for (post) conflict situations.

Lastly, the results of this thesis indicate that female ex-combatants do not prioritise their political human needs. However, it remains questionable if the limited survey questions regarding political reintegration might have distorted this finding. Future research could examine the political human needs satisfaction with more extensive questions, in order to fully discover the priority given by female ex-combatants.

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Glossary of key analytical definitions
Economic human needs: Needs for well-being that must be satisfied for adequate human growth and development to occur. Including access to material and nonmaterial economic resources and education (Christie, 1997, 323).
Security human needs: A need for freedom from human-caused physical and mental violence and (other) crime property (Gasper & Gómez, 2015, 102)[1] Fear and the concomitant need for security may be apparent not only in overt violence but also in preparations for violence (Christie, 1997, 318).
Identity human needs: The need for acceptance and the need for belonging (Christie, 1997, 320).
Political human needs: Matters concerned with political representation, exercise of choice and self-determination (Christie, 1997, 324) .

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[1] I added the definition from other human needs theory authors (Gasper & Gómez, 2015) because Christie (1997) does not provide a clear analytical definition that can be used to operationalize the concept into indicators and sub-questions.

Appendix II. Operationalisation sub-questions, indicators and survey questions

Sub-question	Indicator	Survey questions to answer sub-question
What are the perceived economic, social and political levels of human needs satisfaction that influence the reintegration processes of female ex-combatants in South Sudan, from August to December 2020?		
1. Do female ex-combatants perceive their economic human needs, consisting of the needs for material and non-material economic resources and education, are being satisfied in South Sudan, from August to December 2020?	Perceived level of skills	Did you obtain any skills while in the armed group? -If yes which skills?
		Did you receive any skills training since you left the armed group? -Are you using this skill to make money? -If no, why are you not using the skill?
	Perceived obstacles for businesses	What are the main obstacles for people who left armed groups to start and run a successful business?
	Employment and income	What was job/source of livelihood before you joined the armed group? -Are you still doing this? -If not why not?
		Income
	Access to education	Level of education completed
		Do you have access education? - If not why not?
2. Do female ex-combatants perceive their personal security needs, defined as the freedom from human-caused physical and	Feeling of safety	1. Do you feel safe -if yes why? -if no why not?
	Perpetrators safety	2.Who are causing security problems in your community?

mental violence and (other) crime property, are being satisfied in South Sudan, from August to December 2020?	Reasons joining armed groups	3. What were the reasons for you to join armed groups? -Do you think that these issues have been solved? -If not or partly, please explain what remains the issue?
	Mental health	3. Do you feel the conflict has mentally affected you?
		4. If yes, do you have psychological problems because of that? -Which psychological problems?
3. Do female ex-combatants perceive their identity needs, consisting of acceptance of the community and the need for belonging, are being satisfied in South Sudan, from August to December 2020?	Acceptance community	1. Do you feel well integrated in the community? -if no why not?
		2. Are there any specific social reintegration challenges for girls and/or women who were in the armed groups before? -if yes in which way?
	Support system	5. Who supported you most since you left the group?
4. Do female ex-combatants perceive their political human needs, consisting of matters concerned with political representation, exercise of choice and self-determination, are being satisfied in South Sudan, from August to December 2020?	Trust in government	Do you trust the local government? -if no, why not?
	Participation in decision-making structures	Do you participate in community level decision making processes?
		Are there any XC-led initiatives or XC leaders contributing to building trust and reconciliation? -if yes or somehow, please explain?