Rehabilitation of South Sudanese women ex-combatant refugees in Arua, Uganda: Narratives, Experiences, Intersections

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RESTY KYOMUKAMA

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Members of the Examining Committee:

Dr. Helen M. Hintjens

Dr. Katarzyna Elzbieta Grabska

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Inquiries:

International Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague
The Netherlands

t: +31 70 426 0460
e: info@iss.nl
w: www.iss.nl
fb: http://www.facebook.com/iss.nl
twitter: @issnl

Location:

Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX The Hague
The Netherlands

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List of Acronyms

CPA - Comprehensive Peace Agreement

DDR – Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

DRC – Danish Refugee Council

IOM - International Organization for Migration

NAS- National Salvation Front

NGO – Non-Government Organization

OPM – Office of Prime Minister

PTSD - Post-traumatic stress disorder

SAF – Sudanese Armed Forces

SPLA – South Sudanese Liberation Army

SPLA/IO - South Sudanese Liberation Army in Opposition

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNSCR - United Nations Security Council Resolution

WFP – World Food Program

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Abstract

This study brings forth the narratives of South Sudanese women about their lived experiences as ex-combatants living in Rhino camp Refugee settlement in Arua, Uganda. Ex-combatant, in this paper is defined as someone – in this case women – who have taken part in war, irrespective of their specific role (e.g. fighter, logistics, cook, 'wife' etc). Rhino camp is an open settlement, and the study examines how women ex-combatants are economically, socially and psychologically integrated and rehabilitated into the locality and within the South Sudanese refugee community. There is literature about refugee reintegration and repatriation. Ex-combatants have also been studied female and male, but there has been less attention in the literature about ex-combatant refugee women and much less on their experiences in a refugee setting. This study seeks to reveal the largely silenced intersectional experiences of this specific group of women, whose opinions and experiences have not been taken into account in wider scholarship of refugee rehabilitation. By visiting the settlement area, seeing how they live in an ethnographic-like manner, I seek to understand how these women themselves experience reintegration and rehabilitation in Uganda. Informal conversations and formal interviews were carried out with these women to apprehend their stories. Also, in focus were the lead institutions that play roles in the rehabilitation of these women, namely; the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) - the lead implementing partner organization of 'protection' under UNHCR and OPM in Rhino camp refugee settlement. In addition, secondary data was used especially documentation done on the subject by UNHCR, OPM and NGOs.

Relevance to Development Studies

Women serving in war is not something new although the field of soldiering has been commonly masculinized. However, women have always been the minority in mostly male army (Goldstein 2001). Women have been traced to have served also in famous wars as individuals or as organized groups where some have served as leaders. For instance, in the World War II, women are noted to have participated in the partisan forces of occupied countries and not only in logistics and health care but also as armed fighters (Grabska 2018: 2; Goldstein 2001).

In various parts of the world that have experienced war, women have been noted to have taken vital roles, for instance in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Eritrea, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, Namibia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, among others (Grabska 2018: 2). However, women have no incentive or lacked ample public space to share their experiences and take part in post-war rehabilitation because their needs get 'side-lined' (Maiden 2014: 156; MacKenzie 2009). There has been resistance to acknowledging women participation in war as soldiers but mainly as 'followers' "women associated with war" or 'helpers' putting them in domestic rather than public spheres (MacKenzie 2015:46; Goldstein 2001; Maiden 2014).

This research therefore contributes to the studies of women in war, especially giving a platform for refugee ex-combatant women to share their experiences of war and rehabilitation in a humanitarian setting - Rhino camp refugee settlement. It is very important that their lived experiences and their intersectional identities are studied to make awareness of their plight and how better they should be rehabilitated through hearing from their first-hand experiences.

Keywords Gender; Women; refugees; ex-combatants; South Sudan; war; experiences; rehabilitation.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This study explores narratives of soldiering and rehabilitation experiences of South Sudanese ex-combatant women living in Rhino camp refugee settlement in Northern Uganda. Through collecting and retelling their lived experiences, the aim is to bring out the stories of how these women joined armed groups, how and what influenced both their entry and exit. This research personifies voices of ex-combatants, telling their experiences of being female refugees who participated in war and analysing what these experiences mean in their present lives. The study is divided into five chapters.

In this chapter I provide the contextual background of the study, discussing women in war, South Sudanese refugees in Uganda, civil wars in South Sudan and combatant women in South Sudan. The chapter also includes a literature review, justification for the study and research questions and objectives.

1.1 Women serving in war, South Sudan

Various scholars like Deng (2005), Grabska (2014), Pinaud (2013), Goldstein (2001) among others and development practitioners have articulated about South Sudanese women combatants and non-combatants' experiences and their participation in war. Notably, the female battalion called Kateeba Banaat which was formed in 1986 by the SPLA and some other smaller groups like *Shatta* (hot red pepper) (Pinaud 2013: 154). Kateeba Banaat (The Girls' battalion) was intended to create a space for women in South Sudanese history and hence its separation from the SPLA (Pinaud 2013:154).

According to UNDDR (2006: 4), a combatant is any person who is a member of a national army or an irregular military organization. On the other hand, UNHCR's definition of combatant states that a combatant is;

> "a person who takes an active part in hostilities, who can kill, and who in turn is a lawful military target. s/he can be a member of the armed forces, other than medical personnel and chaplains, or of an organized group" (UNHCR 2006: 5).

The dictionary definition of the word combatant indicates a person or group/nation engaged in a war with another. The dictionary also gives synonyms to this word including; soldier, foe, attacker, battler, serviceman, warrior, contender, enemy (Vocabulary Dictionary 2019). This paper engages with the term combatant combining the above definitions but also adjusting the definition; to mean any person participating in an armed group regardless of their roles, be it support or fighting. Ex-combatant will mean a person who has formerly been a combatant and now is living a civilian life. This paper hence challenges the current definitions of combatant to include roles that do not engage with the gun or weapons.

As shall be elaborated further in the following sections, it should be noted that women's roles and relations to guns in war situations vary according to the force they are enrolled (Grabska 2018: 4). The figure below is used purposely to convey in pictorial

that women in Soutsh Sudan have participated in war. What is more visible is that in this photo, the women are holding guns, one in a combat uniform the two in regular clothes.

Figure 1: SPLA-IO female soldiers in Magwi County, Eastern Equatorial state -South Sudan

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2017)

Pinaud notes that majority of women in the SPLA even though not involved directly in fighting roles, all contributed to the war efforts even those outside the battalions, what he terms as "camp followers" (Pinaud 2013:163). Bubenzer and Stern (2011) define this as the supportive role of women. It should be noted that women have however served in various roles not only as followers. Moreover, some women join at leadership positions, for example recently, the SPLA-IO in its press release announced five members who had joined their leadership team and one of them is a woman (Sudan Tribune 2019).

1.2 Civil wars in Sudan and South Sudan

Wars in Sudan can be traced back to pre-colonial times, and anti-colonial uprisings. The first full civil war was around the time of independence, in 1955, escalated by the way the people of the southern periphery were left behind in development and were treated by the Northern Sudan counterparts as second-class citizens. This war came to an end with the peace agreement of 1972 in Addis Ababa (De Waal 2014: 351; Deng 2005). The second civil war started in 1983 between the Sudanese government in Khartoum and the then Southern Sudanese rebel group – the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) in the bid to fight the dominance and mis-governance of the Northern Sudan and the elites of the Southern Sudan (De Waal 2014: 351).

The desire of the Khartoum government to control the oil which had been just found was one of the reasons for this war (Grabska 2014). Grabska also notes the eruption of an 'inter-and-intra-ethic' nine years long fighting between the Dinka and the Nuer from 1991 to 2000 (2014: 29). After 22years, the civil war came to an end in 2005

with a signed peace agreement between the two parties under the auspice of the Republic of Kenya (Grabska 2014:1; De Waal 2014: 351). These are what have kept the Sudan in civil wars and wasted over 40yrs of its independence, making it the country that has had the longest civil war. When evaluating root causes of the recurrent internal wars and the mechanisms of a sustained 2005 Peace Agreement; Deng (2005) noted that the northern Sudanese elites perceive the civil war as a problem of the southern Sudanese while the southern Sudanese relate the cause of the continued civil wars to the differences in religion, ethnicity, structural marginalization and exclusion of the majority Sudanese in the peripherals.

During the structuring of the SPLA, the Equatorians did not get prominent roles in SPLA, and instead were treated as occupied territory by bringing Dinka populations into areas that were for the Equatorians. Equatoria, is the region in the southern part of South Sudan bordering Uganda, DR.Congo and Kenya. Equatoria is divided into the Eastern, Central and Western Equatoria with tribes like; Acholi, Pojulu, Madi, Kuku, Kakwa, Zande, Bali among others (Branch and Mampilly 2005).

Figure 2: A map of South Sudan's previous ten states, including the Equatorian region

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2017)

Branch and Mampilly (2005) add that because the Equatorians did not get prominent positions, this made them look at SPLA as a vehicle for Dinka domination. It was this domination that sparked war between the Dinka and the Nuer and the Dinka and other tribes of the Equatoria. Through time, several factions of armed groups emerged for example South Sudan National Liberation Movement (SSNLM), led by Victor Wanga which later integrated with the SPLA in two peace agreements in 2015 and 2016. Another faction was called the Arrow Boys led by Alfred Fatuyo which joined the SPLA-IO in 2015 and made Fatuyo commander in the SPLA-IO (UNMISS 2018).

1.3 Recurrent crises of South Sudanese refugees

This study uses the definition of refugee, as set down in Article 1A (2) of the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention, according to which a refugee is any person who;

> "Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (UNHCR Geneva 2010: 14).

Differentiating a refugee and an asylum seeker could be a little problematic as they both seek protection in another country. However, for a refugee to be registered as an asylum seeker, they must seek or apply for special protection from the host country with a well-grounded reason of fear of persecution (Watera et al 2017).

Throughout the various civil wars, the People of the South Sudan have been displaced to the neighbouring countries like Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, Zaire and Ethiopia and some did not repatriate but instead stayed in these countries of refuge (Grabska 2014). Uganda has a history of forced migration from and to its neighbouring countries of Rwanda, South Sudan, Kenya, DRC and Burundi. Uganda has hosted large numbers of Sudanese in the 1960s and 1980s. It is noted that almost all the Ugandans living in the west Nile have been refugees at some point or have hosted refugees (Kaiser 2006: 599). With a praised refugee policy, Uganda is hosting a total population of 1,239,912 refugees (UNHCR and OPM, 2019; UNHCR 2018a). South Sudanese refugees comprise 66% of the total refugee population and these mainly live in the West Nile subregion in the Northwest of the Country.

The recent South Sudanese refugee arrival to Uganda follows a war that broke out in 2013 between SPLA president Salva Kiir and vice president Riek Machar under SPLA-IO over the country's leadership (Nyadera 2018; UNMISS 2018). This latter group also split, creating a new armed group known as National Salvation Front (known as NAS).

1.4 Rhino camp refugee settlement

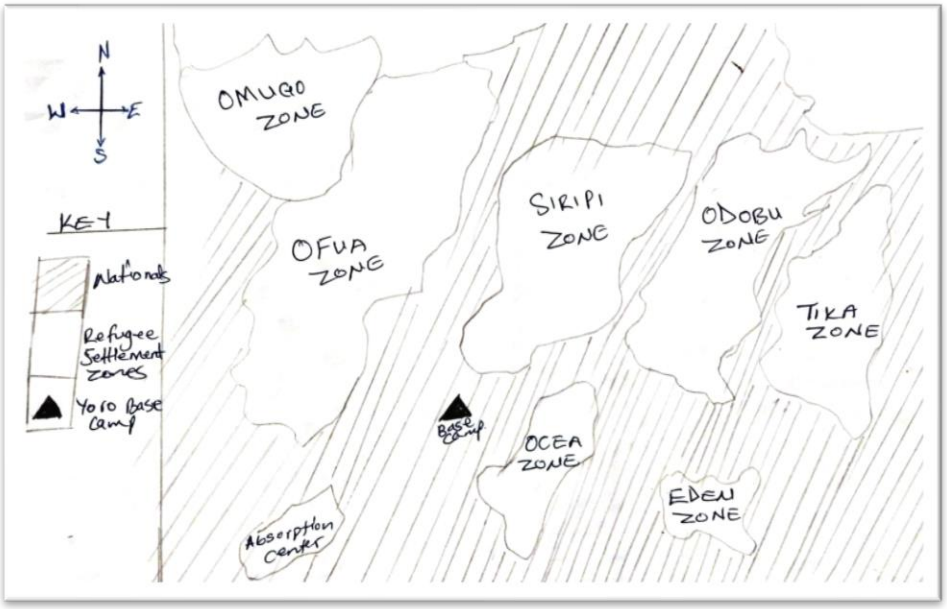
The location of this study is Rhino camp refugee settlement; one of the oldest settlements in Uganda, established in Arua district in 1980. Currently, with its base at Yoro, Rhino camp is divided into seven zones; Omugo, Ocea, Siripi, Ofua, Tika, Eden and Odobu (UNHCR 2018c). As of March 2019, the settlement hosts 102,577 refugees. Out of the total refugee population in Rhino Camp, 52760 (51.43%) are females. These include 7935(15%) ages 0-4yrs; 13781 (26%) 5-11yrs; 9600 (18%) 12-17yrs; 19800 (37.52%) 18-59yrs and 1644 (3%) aged 60yrs and over (UNHCR and OPM 2019[1]). Seventy-three of the overall total refugees in Rhino camp are registered as asylum seekers

(OPM 2019: 5)[2]. It is not known among these how many are women and how many are men.

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants envisaged that refugee operations and response would involve various stakeholders for proper protection of refugees and host communities (Danish Refugee Council and HERE-Geneva 2017). The primary responsibility however remains with the host state (UNHCR 2018b). In Uganda, the leading actors in refugee response are UNHCR and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), Uganda. UNHCR and OPM work hand in hand representing the international community and the host state respectively. UNHCR and OPM assign duties to other organizations as implementing partners. Implementing partners are I/NGOs and other institutions who are funded by UNHCR and approved by OPM to lead the various sectors in refugee protection.

As of the financial year 2018-2019, the implementing partners in Rhino camp refugee settlement include: the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) which is also the leading partner, for general protection. Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support; Medical Teams International (MTI) for general health and Windle International Uganda (WIU) for provision of primary, secondary and tertiary learning among others These are supplemented by self-funded organizations as operational partners.

Figure 3: A sketch map showing the seven zones of Rhino Camp



Source: Hand drawn by Kyomukama, R. (2019)

1.5 Justification for this study

Between March and August 2018, I worked as a program manager under IsraAID, an Israeli humanitarian NGO. I was based in Moyo District initiating a child protection program in Palorinya Refugee settlement. During my five months period of work there, I got personal encounters with people who have worked directly with female refugee

former combatants from South Sudan. Their encounters with them was on basis of being refugees. I found a very interesting subject to learn more about, especially how their past experienced shaped their lived experiences in the settlement.

I wanted to explore what being female ex-combatant refugees mean to them. From my experience as a woman raised in an andro-centric and patriarchal society, I met challenges of misconception that a woman is less in society and does certain roles but not the others. For example, society's perceptions do not include the expectation that women will be fighters in a war because they are associated with nurturing and vulnerability (MacKenzie 2015; Maiden 2014). "Combat is seen as the ultimate test of masculinity" and "agency being dominant in the discourse of wars" (Grabska 2014: 29). In the same way professions like Doctor, Lawyer, Pilot to mention but a few were masculinized. It is for such reasons that I felt the need to research about ex-combatant refugee women and highlight their agency, multiple identities and their experiences. Below is a visual representation of a woman soldier doing both roles socially described for women and wearing a combat uniform. The guns are aside, could be hers or not but in reference to this paper, it is to indicate that women may have various roles in armed groups beyond holding the gun.

Figure 4: An SPLA-IO soldier in Magwi county, Eastern Equatorial state -South Sudan

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2017)

1.6 Literature Review

1.6.1 Women, gender, wars and conflict

We have seen in the above section the involvement of South Sudanese women in wars and conflicts. This has not been any different in many parts of the world. Research indicates that women have been active participants and have historically contributed to liberation struggles of their nations in active combat, commanding, military training, spying, cooking and smuggling weapons among others (Mackenzie 2009; Hintjens and Zarkov 2014; Bubenzer and Stern 2011; Grabska 2014; Cohn 2013). Women have been taking part in wars around the world in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo, USA, Uganda, Rwanda, Guatemala, former Yugoslavia and Eritrea among many others, taking on various roles (Bennett et al. 1995; Grabska 2014; Prescott 2019).

In the early wars, some women had to disguise in men's clothes in order to join battle field because it was difficult for women to join military. An example is that of a French woman fighter -Jeanne d'Arc who had to wear men's clothes for her to join the military. Despite of the miraculous victory she led as commander at the battle of Orleans, Jeanne d'Arc was convicted and burned in May 1431, before her 20th birthday, for having disguised in men's clothes – the only way she could join the military (Sjoberg 2010: 53-54). With time, women's roles as fighters were more accepted and since the establishment of UNSCR 1325 in 2000, there has been a great progress on recognising women's efforts in peace and conflict (Prescott 2019). However, literature indicates that "they(women) are still largely excluded from peace processes and leadership in public life more generally, particularly in relation to questions of security, war and peace" (Davis 2019: 96). The tendency is for women to be assumed to play supporting roles to their male counterparts and not entertain their voices on their agency of direct war participation and that of their other supportive roles (Maiden 2014). Moreover, at the end of the conflict, women who gain some positions of power or any gains during the conflict, often loose it at the end of the conflict (Grabska 2014:19).

It is due to such gendered aspects that at the end of war, male fighters are disarmed because of their identity as men who are bound to possess and use guns (Cohn 2013) while women are regarded as nurturers (Moolakkattu 2006; Maiden 2014). Literature also notes that war and conflict may cause rapid social change either intensifying gender inequality or making it better in some cases both during and after the war, hence challenging the gender relations in diverse ways (Ollek 2007; Goldstein 2001; Grabska 2014). Grabska (2014:19) identifies an example where "in Guatemala, former Yugoslavia and Eritrea, women were involved as combatants and became primary bread winners in exile" which signifies challenging of gendered roles as result of conflict. On the other hand, scholars indicate that there remain difficulties in gender relations as gender hierarchies can be further reinforced through conflict (Hintjens and Žarkov 2014). For example, in patriarchal societies, even during war, women and girls are usually assigned socially constructed support roles like cooking, collecting water among others (Annan et al 2011; McKay 2005).

It is due to such socially assigned roles that debates arise around distinguishing between a soldier and a combatant (Mackenzie 2009). In such debates, claims are made that combatants are those who carry a gun and soldiers are generally anyone in the army group regardless of their role (Ollek 2007). It is from such debates that I agree that "the most important changes that must take place include expanding the definition of "combatant" to include those who are not armed and removing the label of "dependent" from female ex-combatants" (Maiden 2014: v).

1.6.2 Debates around DDR and post-war rehabilitation

For former soldiers to transition to civilian life; Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs were initiated. However, various literature has shown DDR failure due to its focus on men excluding women and children (Annan et al 2011; MacKenzie 2009; van Gog 2008). DDR programs typically take place within the country of the ex-combatants and by their government's participation in the process. For refugee ex-combatants, disarmament should take place at border entry or at refugee status registration as per the international law of keeping of the civilian character (UNHCR 2004). However, for those without tangible arms, for instance those who were assigned socially supportive roles are bound to be left out, some women in this case (Annan et al 2011; McKay 2005). Therefore, they cope on their own.

DDR hence does not happen for the refugees as they are on a foreign land, in a humanitarian setting. However, screening and then internment of ex-combatants is done. The arrangement of interning asylum seekers however, has had a backlash as it makes ex-combatants see themselves as a distinct group which makes their rehabilitation hampered, causing them to a never-ending need for economic and special benefits throughout (Schuaer, Elbert and Martz 2010: 186) and keeps them away from family and social networks.

1.6.3 The Humanitarian and Civilian Character of Asylum

UNHCR emphasizes the need to keep the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum to ensure that there would not be any danger for the refugees, hosting states, local hosting communities and humanitarian workers. This is also to ensure inter-state relations, regional stability and the safety of durable solutions of voluntary repatriation in due course. Therefore, in the bid to ensure the above mentioned there should be disarmament at entry for those refugees bearing 'weapons', identify, separate and intern them away from the larger refugee population as per the international law (UNHCR 2004).

The state of being a refugee is not permanent, however, it is not known what duration one might be a refugee. Some people have been refugees for all their lives. Globally, exiled refugees stay an average of 4 years. However, some can stay for more than 30 years (Devictor and Do 2016). In Uganda, it was marked by the World Bank and UNHCR that Sudanese (and now South Sudanese) have stayed an average of 11 years in Uganda (World Bank, OPM and UNHCR 2016: 60). This is to indicate that these refugees are not on short stay but rather could stay longer. It varies but also it should be

noted that for such a duration, acceptance and rehabilitation support make a great impact on the refugees' and more so ex-combatants' experiences. In the next section, the paper explains questions and objectives that this research is attempting to answer and fulfil.

1.7 Research objectives and question

The main objective of this research is to analyse the economic, social and psychological experiences of South Sudanese ex-combatant women in Rhino camp refugee settlement. This research exposes the silenced agency, participation, victimization and struggles of their service in armed groups and the experiences of rehabilitation in a refugee setting. The paper gives a voice to the stories of these women to be heard on the academic and other spheres.

1.7.1 Main question

- What are the economic, social and psychological experiences and narratives of ex-combatant South Sudanese women living in Rhino camp refugee settlement?

1.7.2 Sub questions

- What are the narratives of women ex-combatants associated with their entry, service and exit from armed groups?
- What influences a refugee woman to identify herself, declare or not, as a former combatant? What are the possible differences between those women who choose to identify themselves, and those who do not?
- How have ex-combatant Sudanese women experienced their economic and social daily lives in Rhino camp refugee settlement?
- What are the psychosocial experiences of ex-combatant Sudanese women in war and in the refugee settlement?

1.8 Chapter Outline

Following are chapters two to five. Chapter two discusses the methodology and theoretical framework used to collect and analyse data respectively. Chapter three discusses the findings relating to the narratives of women's entry, service and exit from the armed groups. The chapter further discusses what influences women ex-combatants to declare or not to declare their status and what results into these decisions. Using the theoretical framework, the chapter analyses the findings related to women's economic and social experiences. Chapter four expounds on the psychosocial experiences of women ex-combatants in one section and in another, their exit from armed groups and plans beyond Rhino camp refugee settlement are discussed. Chapter five draws a conclusion, touching upon discussions in the prior four chapters.

Chapter 2: Methodological strategies and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first discusses the methodological strategies, indicating how data was collected and obtained. The second discusses the theoretical framework to analyse both the primary and secondary data collected.

2.2 Methodology

In this section, I bring forth the techniques, challenges and means through which data was collected. These are based on the research objectives and what reality in the field was during data collection. Therefore, it is a combination of the research plans but also the responses to the decisions made in the field.

2.2.1 Ethical considerations in data collection

I applied and obtained approval from the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in Kampala to conduct research with ex-combatant women in Rhino camp refugee settlement. I described to the settlement commandant and the protection personnel at the offices of OPM at Yoro basecamp about my target group of respondents; women who took part in war, regardless of their roles and positions in the armed group.

OPM gave me contacts of leaders from the seven zones in Rhino camp refugee settlement. I further explained also to these zone leaders in the same manner in order to identify the categories of respondents I was interested in meeting. Whenever I met with the women who are referred to me, I made sure to take another consent from them telling them that it is not obligatory that because they are identified by their leaders, that they were supposed to do the interviews. So, this was to give them full ability to either accept or refuse to take part. Whoever accepted, I went ahead to explain the reasons for this research and asked consent to record their voices and identity details.

2.2.2 Collection and sources of data

Data collection was done mainly through qualitative in-depth interviews, non-participant observation and document review. There were sixteen women ex-combatant participants, Two staff members of the OPM – one at Kampala headquarters another at Ocea reception centre in Rhino Camp, Three leaders from different zones and One legal staff of DRC - the current main implementing partner organization of UNHCR in this settlement. Interviews were semi-structured in nature and some started as informal but later as I noticed that the conversation could add value to this research, I asked the informant to allow me take notes and record the conversation. Secondary data was also utilised, notably reports and policy documents by UNHCR, OPM and NGOs.

2.2.3 An ethnographic orientation in data collection

An ethnographic research orientation was employed to understand the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants in various manners the way participants do understand them (Cerwonka and Malkki 2008). For analytical reasons, I undertook non-participant observation at the homes of the informants. This helped me to understand the participants' environments and social spheres as their "natural setting" (Cerwonka and Malkki 2008; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Observation was also made at two boarder entry points where refugees come into Uganda to understand their entry points and the dynamics around it.

An ethnographic research orientation has allowed the use of qualitative interviewing through hearing life histories and making observation which are rich ways to get detailed data (Staples 2015; Flick 2009). In ethnography, people's actions and accounts are studied in everyday contexts and data can be attained from a range of sources (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). An example from the field indicates that "the best way of gathering information was not through questioning but rather through conversation" (Grabska 2014: 15). It is to this regard, that I took non formal conversations important too to supplement the interviews, notably the informal conversations with one refugee leader, security personnel (border police) at Oraba and a community leader at Saliamusala boarder points in Koboko district.

During the last two weeks of research, purposive sampling was made where I would ask for a mix of different armed groups so that I could cover for instance not only SPLA/IO but also SPLA or NAS and vice versa. In some zones of the settlement, there were more SPLA ex-combatants while in others there were more SPLA/IOs, therefore it was important that I make a purposive selection to include all the voices. Selection of participants was based on access to them and their willingness to take part in the research. Some were referred by their community leaders, while others were identified to me in a snowballing fashion, where one interviewee told me about another person they were in the army with.

Figure 5: A photo showing some residences in Ofua zone, Rhino Camp

Taken by Kyomukama, R. August (2019)

2.2.4 Data Analysis

The data collected was all transcribed and manually coded. This helped to group the data into themes and sections which helped in identification of powerful and relevant quotes and choosing which narratives and experiences to cite for different themes. The themes were derived from the collected data, the research objective and the research questions. After transcribing every interview separately, I looked through the data and started writing the themes on different pieces of papers. Thereafter, I printed all the transcribed interviews and cut the printed data into pieces that match the themes I wrote on the pieces of papers. So, for every matching data, I passed it to its designated theme. For data that made connections, raised questions or needed cross analysis, I made notes to keep truck. Details of participants will follow in the later sections. The choices made throughout the processes align with my positionality as discussed in the following section.

2.2.5 Dilemmas of positionality and reflexivity

Stating one's positionality means to acknowledge that knowledge production is shaped by the circumstances and environment in which the knowledge is created (Rose 1997). Therefore, this applies to my state as a researcher, female, student of social justice perspectives with a focus on gender and human rights. I have knowledge on Uganda refugee settlements structures, connections in some agencies but an outsider in the west Nile region and new to the Arua District. These identities and positions of power or powerlessness that I held shaped my understanding throughout data collection, analysis and writing.

I stepped into Rhino Camp refugee settlement and Arua district for the first time, purposely for this research. I had been connected by a staff of OPM from Kampala to the OPM commandant of Rhino Camp refugee settlement. Although I was a foreign person in the settlement, it felt familiar due to my previous experience of working in Palorinya refugee settlement. I knew the bureaucracies and structures of who to reach out to, for what. Other than knowing the nuances of the refugee response in a settlement like Rhino camp, everyone looked at me as a non-resident and they nicknamed me the "girl doing research". I introduced myself as a student doing research and being 'student' could have placed me to being young hence a 'girl'. As it is in Uganda, students are in literal meaning called "children of school" regardless if you are at University or primary school. I came to know that I was referred to as the "girl doing research" when some people were reporting to me of other people who were looking for me at the basecamp of the settlement.

My "multiple self" showing my tribe, nationality, gender, academic status, among others was displayed differently to the different participants (Rose 1997). For the refugees, from whom the main data was collected, I was a total foreigner, I held various positions as a female Ugandan, researcher, not from within the host community but also a person who was coming with OPM vehicles and personnel and community leaders something that could have influenced the power dynamics I had with these women.

Therefore, it could influence their acceptance to do the interviews or not. Some confessed to me that without OPM personnel they would never trust me with their information, while others totally refused to speak with me because I was with OPM personnel and some thought I was a staff of OPM and I would trick them into sending them back.

For the other respondents, for example the person who connected me to a staff of OPM at the registration desk referred me to someone and said, "speak with that one, you speak the same language"- (Another OPM staff in a casual referral conversation on 8th August 2019). This means my tribe, from western Uganda also had a role to this regard, leading me to a specific interviewee. One OPM respondent was known to me as the previous head of a refugee settlement when I was an aid worker there. That prior affiliation and now me coming as a researcher could also have influenced our interactions and interview.

It is also worth noting that the women ex-combatants were asked to consent or withhold their names and identities in case they wanted to remain anonymous. Only one woman out of the sixteen women participants preferred to remain anonymous. All the rest consented to my using their true names and identities in this research. There were three women who turned down my request for participating in the research, out of the three, I personally met one who just decide that she did not want to take part. The other two were asked by their leaders. We made appointments for the interviews but later they changed their minds and preferred to not take part saying, they are not safe if OPM is involved despite clarifying that this is an individual's academic research. On the other hand, all the sixteen women who accepted were giving reference that they did so because OPM and their leaders were involved and that is how I managed to build rapport with them in such a short time. This was an indication of the influence of gate keepers, both ways.

Due to the free will and consent of those who participated for the use of their identity, I respected their opinion and that of the one individual who preferred to remain anonymous hence being called respondent 15 in my records. Some had already taken care of their anonymity at entry to Uganda. For example, upon asking if I can write her name or not, one told me: "I had a different name in the army and here as a refugee also a different name" (Lukwang, ex-combatant woman in an interview on 8th August 2019).

2.2.6 Challenges in the field

I had challenges with accommodation, but thanks to the connections I had made during my previous work, I later got accommodation in Arua town. As for accommodation in the camp, I was hosted by a friend I had met in Gulu in 2016, and later by the team leader of DRC who was connected to me by the settlement commandant who introduced me to her as his friend. The other challenge was that of transportation in such a huge settlement. OPM was a great support, providing vehicles that dropped me in the villages and later picked me up and brought me back to basecamp. Sometimes, I hired *boda-bodas* (taxi motorcycles). In the last week of the research, I provided only fuel for a motorcycle that was offered to help me. The rider, who was also my mediator with the

refugee community took me around the settlement. There are times, some organizations could give me rides whenever they found me heading to their direction.

Language barrier was an issue. In the camps, they use three languages; Arabic, Kakwa and Dinka. Therefore, I had to use translators. The challenge with translation is that it sometimes takes away the natural setting of the conversation and it also alters information. In some cases, I had to ask the translators to speak in first person so that I get the exact phrases, words and sentences used by the informants without being paraphrased. However, it was short lived as paraphrasing was easier for the translators than to speak in the "I" as if they are the women ex-combatants speaking. Translators were mainly the local leaders of these zones and villages in the settlements, which on one hand was helpful that I could easily access translators but on the other hand problematic because they were the gate keepers and yet the translators. In addition, they were all men and in leadership positions which all create power dynamics that would influence how and what could be said by these women.

I was able to minimise the gap created by interpretation by reading the non-verbal ques if the respondent showed for example a confused face, I would want to reformat the question, or if shows discomfort I would ask if there was any need to change something. Recording audios was also helpful in making crosschecks of the translations with a person other than the translator on specific parts of the interview which would not tell much about the respondent. In the next section I will explain the theoretical framework of this study and the interplay of the methodological choices.

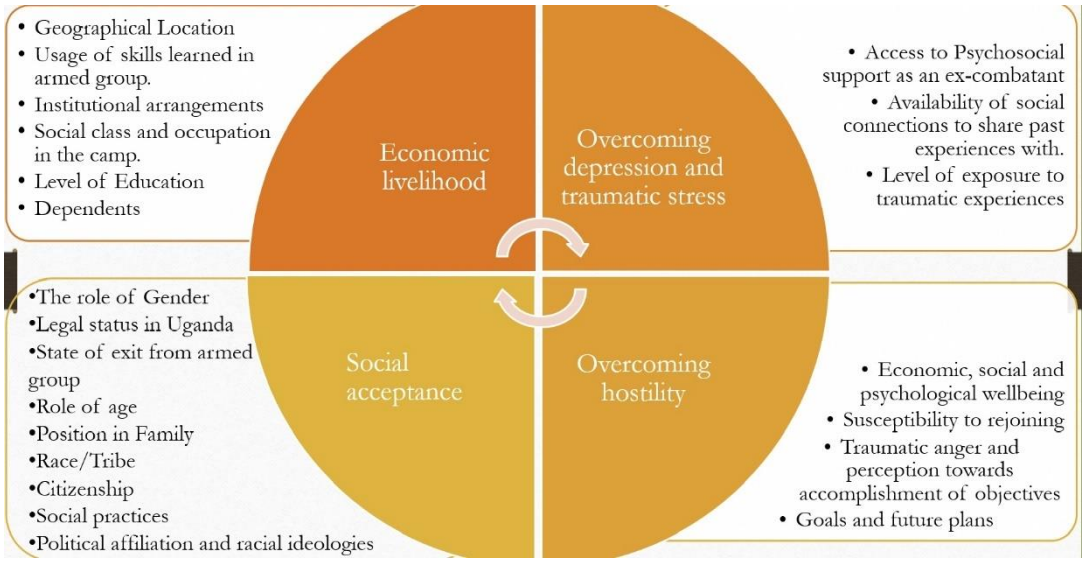
2.3 A holistic theoretical framework: Intersectionality and the four domains of reintegration

In general, because men are assumed to be a potential threat to security, and to be 'securitised' subjects, they receive more attention in both funding and programming from post-conflict actors (MacKenzie 2009). Despite that women are not "passive bystanders" and contribute as much as their male counterparts (Grabska 2014: 20; Pinaud 2013), their roles, experiences and agency played in conflicts often end up being ignored (Ollek 2007; Maiden 2014). Planning of development has not taken into account the experiences and agency of women in war and how differently conflict affects them, hence such planning has made these women 'invisible' (Moolakkattu 2006: 141). It is for such reasons that feminists like Weber (2006) have petitioned in their literature the need for visibility of women in conflicts and its aftermath.

As such, to analytically understand the experiences of women ex-combatant refugees, this paper employs the four domains of reintegration for ex-combatants by Annan et al. (2011) which encompasses economic, social, Psychosocial aspects and overcoming of hostilities for ex-combatant rehabilitation. This is fused with an intersectional approach which allows for an analysis that highlights the implications of the interconnectedness of identity attributes like gender, age, race, sex, geographical location among others. This combination makes it a holistic framework capable of analysing and describing the lived experiences of refugee ex-combatant women through their told stories.

Looking through literature and the collected data from the field, I decided to combine a broader feminist peace framework, notions of intersectionality with the interlinked Annan et al. (2011: 880 – 882)'s 'four domain model' needed to ensure rehabilitation of ex-combatants, as illustrated in Figure 6 below;

Figure 6: A diagrammatic representation of the four domains for ex-combatant rehabilitation with an Intersectional approach



Source: By Kyomukama. R, (2019) inspired by the Four domain model reintegration of ex-combatants (Annan et al 2011) and the intersectional approach (Crenshaw 1989; Davis 2008)

The term intersectionality was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), intercepting the notion of women facing vulnerability or privileges in a similar manner. Crenshaw coined the term to indicate the interconnectedness of gender, race and other social relations of identity. According to Davis (2008: 68),

> "Intersectionality refers to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power".

Analysing these women's intersectionality will include looking at their gender relations in a patriarchal society, as well as being ex-combatants in a civilian community, the role of their race in a civil war and being refugees among other intersectional identities (Maiden 2014).

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodological strategies in which, details on data collection, choice of data methods and methodology, data analysis and positionality have been discussed. The chapter also elaborated on the theoretical framework employed for analysing the experiences of ex-combatant refugee women. In the next chapters, the

findings are discussed using the described holistic framework. Looking at the intersecting dynamics of gender, citizenship, rural settlement and tribe among others. As noted by Audre Lorde "There is no such a thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives" (Lorde 2012: 138)

Chapter 3: Experiences and Narratives

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three main sections; 1. (3.2) which gives an overview of the profiles of the main research participants, reasons for entry to armed groups and the roles they partook; 2. (3.3) and 3. (3.4) which discuss two of the four domains of integration; economic livelihood and social acceptance respectively, blending them all with the way these women's multiple identities and characteristics of the environment they live influence their social and economic realities in a geographical space like Rhino camp refugee settlement. Findings are from 16 women ex-combatants, ethnographic observations and 7 interviews held with representatives of communities and two key institutions. These findings do not necessarily represent all women in Rhino camp. Women are not a uniform group but individuals whose identities, opinions and experiences are shaped by factors including their age, economic class, race, tribe, physical ability among others (Cohn 2013: 2). It represents the narratives as discussed by those interviewed, observations at their homes and communities. Their multiple identities for instance include being women, refugees, age, tribe and ex-combatants, etcetera. However, their experiences are shaped but not reducible to these multiple factors (Cohn 2013).

3.2 Profiles of the main participants: ex-combatant women

Among the sixteen women who participated in this research; three were in their early sixties, while the thirteen were between 20-40 years of age. Four served under SPLA/IO, nine served SPLA and one served both in the SPLA/IO and the NAS - National Salvation Front. These women served in armed groups for a period range of six months to twenty-five years. Their entry into Uganda was between 2013 and 2018 indicating that, indicating that they were driven out from South Sudan by the recent war that broke out in 2013, two years after South Sudan's independence. However, five women reported this as their second entry to Uganda as refugees, noting that they have been to Uganda in the 1990s and early 2000s. Their entry points into Uganda include; Nimule – Amuru district at the Nimule border point; Yumbe district at Mijare; Moyo district through Kajo Keji and Koboko district at the Oraba and Saliamusala border points.

The roles and activities that women partook during the conflict include cooking, cleaning, washing for fellow soldiers and commanders, bush hunting for both animals for food and for the enemy and watching their group's prisoners. Some women noted that they involved in looting of property and food to support the armed group as a whole. The women exercised these roles in different capacities, some as leaders and others as followers. Two out of the sixteen women mentioned to have been leaders of their groups. For the leaders, it involved distribution of drugs, guns, bullets and food among the group members. They also took responsibility to identify who was strong and healthy for a fight and who to leave behind due to sickness or other reasons. Telling her roles and what her day looked like in SPLA/IO and NAS, Kiden narrated that:

> "When I wake up in the morning we have to go for patrols in the surrounding there and then after we come back, assuming this is the barracks. In other time, we go and stay to distant places for security purpose; in case you happen to see maybe government coming to attack you then maybe we shoot a bullet up then I will take position showing out. In the side of NAS, for them as being women, we could be watching the imprisoned ones. In case of a soldier who might have done wrong (the offenders) are brought to us and we look after those people" (Kiden, 30yrs old, ex-combatant refugee woman, in an interview on 8th August 2019).

When I interviewed one of the women and she told me that she was a prison warden, I thought I should cut the interview short as she was not in the category of "my target group". I therefore did not take the interview very far but opted to end it with a few questions out of curiosity and I nevertheless kept her data. However, when I got three more women mentioning that prison watching was one of their roles, it got me more curious. When I had an informal discussion with a leader in another zone, he told me a story of some of the Equatorian women who got military training to defend their states under one of an Equatorian commander but under SPLA. He narrated:

> "Most of the prison wardens who are here, the thing started like this, there is a soldier called Ladu Gore who up to now is in government serving in SPLA. In South Sudan, most of the soldiers of high ranks have soldiers who belong to them. Now Ladu Gore was not having any soldiers, so he decided to mobilize his own soldiers from the Equatorian, currently it's called Yei state, and they were taken to Kenyi to be trained. Kenyi is a *Payam* (county) under Yei. But after, the government realized that there were soldiers who were being trained there, then they came in asking whose soldiers they are. Then they got to know that the soldiers are for Ladu Gore, so the government came in with so many ammunitions. So, the soldiers integrated with the government especially the women were taken for prison wardens. They had trained for three months as soldiers. Men were taken as soldiers and women as wardens. The other women are still in South Sudan, but others are here in Uganda" (Bidal Cons Block 3, leader – Ocea and Help desk worker, in an informal conversation which later turned into a formal interview with his consent, on 20 August 2019).

There were four women among the sixteen who worked as prison wardens. When the prison that these women worked was broke into by the rebels, they were accused that it was their plan to free the SPLA/IO war prisoners, their fellow Equatorians. One of them narrated how she had to find refuge in the refuge settlement:

> "We were instructed that if a prisoner wanted to run away, you shoot him/her to death. The rebels came and broke into the prison and took the prisoners and the government thought we coordinated with the rebels and therefore all of us the wardens ran away" (Lucia, 40yrs old, ex-combatant refugee woman, in an interview on 12th August 2019).

While those four had joined through organised groups and at will, one joined without her will but through abduction and another joined through enticement for better education opportunities. Charity, a single mother of two joined on promise for education opportunities abroad. She had been in Uganda as a refugee when she was young and attained junior high school with the support of UNHCR in the refugee settlements

in Uganda in 2002. Upon repatriation to South Sudan in 2007, the government announced that they were registering students for further education outside South Sudan in Ethiopia and Eritrea. As a young woman at 21 years, Charity thought she had gotten the opportunity to further her education,

> "Only to realize afterwards that they were taking us for soldier training at Nimule. We did not know what we were going to do but we only realized after reaching the field…There was no way to go out of that place, there was no money to leave that place it was isolated and far. So, we kept on doing the training. After the nine months we were dispersed to different places within South Sudan. But because it was also work, I decided to stay" (Charity, 31 years old, ex-combatant woman, in an interview on 7th Aug 2019).

Charity and her colleagues trained and worked under SPLA in communication signals where charity specialised in transmission and radio operating, a skill that needed some education level to be trained at. For the rest of the ten women, it was their decision giving reasons like desire to fulfil a mission of liberation from enslavement by the superior tribes, revenge the death of their dear one and to fight for the land that was taken from them. This will be elaborated further in the sections that follow.

3.3 Economic livelihoods

According to Annan et al. (2011), experiences of war affect the success of reintegration for ex-combatants and weakens their economic and social stability muscles. More-so, there is limited support for livelihoods in the refugee settlements in Uganda (Kaiser 2006; Ahimbisibwe 2018). Although the country has a welcoming policy for refugees, the institutional arrangements are lacking with already existing difficulties for the country to provide services to also her own population (Ahimbisibwe 2018). In addition, the districts in northern Uganda hosting refugees were economically cut off from the rest of the country by civil wars in 1980 and 90s (Kaiser 2006). Therefore, the physical location hosting refugees is just economically recovering. Accessing jobs in the settlements is close to impossible among the refugees in the settlement (Kaiser 2006).

3.3.1 Identification, Income prospects and skills set

Schooling increases one's ability to acquire a job, however when combatants spend time at war, they miss out on schooling especially if they joined at a young age or were not able to accomplish school while in the bush (Willems and Van Leeuwen 2015). For example, one participant, when asked her age of entry into the armed group, she said "I don't remember (the age) but I remember I had not started to see my menstruation periods" (Dudu ex-combatant woman in an interview on 22nd August 2019). Indicating that she had joined as a young girl and therefore did not manage to attain education. More so, South Sudan has a very low overall adult literacy rate of 27%. The literacy gap between male and female is also big at 35% and 19% respectively (Country economy 2019). This symbolises and justifies the small number of women who had attained education. Only two out of the sixteen women had gone through schooling. One of whom

had completed her junior high school education in Uganda while she was a refugee in the 1990s. Without being educated, ex-combatant women are positioned with minimal possibilities of employment.

Rehabilitation for ex-combatants involves identifying their skills and capital accumulated during war which may be relevant to civilian labour markets (Annan et al. 2011). For these women, there are no ways to lift their skills set if unidentified. For example, Ruba had learned to make bricks, so while in the settlement she made bricks to earn some money. However, refugees could not afford them and yet she was not identified as an ex-combatant whose skills could be promoted as a process of rehabilitation.

> "Refugees cannot buy them but if NGOs know that I make bricks, they should buy here instead of brining from outside the settlement when building PSN (Person with Special Needs) shelters. So, I stopped because no market, they(bricks) are there for a long time now" (Ruba 35yrs old, ex-combatant woman, in interview2 on 21st August 2019)

Figure 7: Ruba's bricks displayed for sale at her home

Taken by Kyomukama. R, August (2019)

However, some skills gained in conflict do not help in civilian life, such as shooting (Annan et al. 2011). When non-combatant counterparts accumulate otherwise relevant experiences, through for instance education, the livelihoods of ex-combatants may suffer. Research in Burundi showed that ex-combatants have difficulties in acquiring a stable income (Willems and Van Leeuwen 2015). In Rhino camp, some ex-combatants have no other skills that they can use to attain income and want to make vegetable stalls for a business. However, it requires them a start-up capital. In addition, ex-combatants have perceived fear to make movements further than the settlements which limits their economic freedom. As noted by one of them:

> "Life has become very hard, there is no capital to start a business. We get only food here. And It is very hard now for me to move for example to do business, I cannot buy stuff from Nimule or Kampala because I fear to be seen. And I fear going back

now to South Sudan, yet we have nothing here" (Charity, 31 years old, ex-combatant woman, in interview2 on 21st Aug 2019).

The geographical location of these women also tells a lot about their everyday life, being refugees living in a rural settlement. Not all refugees are in camps or settlements, unless if they are economically unable to live independently. There is a hierarchy in refugee settlement among south Sudanese in Uganda depending on social and income status. For example, refugees with stable economic status and social connection settle in towns (Braak and Kenyi 2018; Ahimbisibwe 2018). Those who live in institutionalised refugee settlements are the ones without such privileges. The connectedness of these characteristics also increases their vulnerability. Worse still, non-agricultural income-generating opportunities are very rare in the settlements. Yet there are difficulties in agricultural produce. The ex-combatant women I spoke with complained about rocky land where they cannot get enough agricultural produce:

> "we have nothing here. For example, in Omugo here, the place is very rocky, and digging is difficult" (Charity, 31 years old, ex-combatant woman, in an interview on 7th Aug 2019).

Gender and gender perceptions play a big role in ex-combatant identification. For example, during an interview with the implementing partner's representative about what makes one to be identified as an ex-combatant and her encounters with ex-combatants during her work, she said they are identified through leaders and added:

> "one may say he was under one of the sectors of an armed group and things went wrong and that is why they are looking for me, well as with women identification happened when SGBV happens" – (Ajok, DRC-Legal person in an interview on 26th August 2019).

It is from such categorization that women's experiences of war are reduced to a single experience of SGBV, that they are not found in big numbers as participants of war but rather victims. This brings injustice to women as they are robbed of a public space to share their experiences and contributions (Weber 2006; Maiden 2014). One of the participants regretted:

> "The biggest challenge, UNHCR does not want to hear anything called ex-combatants and we are looked at only as refugees. When we are here, we normally close our mouth. We do not mention anything about being ex-combatants" (Poni, ex-combatant woman, in an interview on 12th August 2019)

3.3.2 Food rations by WFP

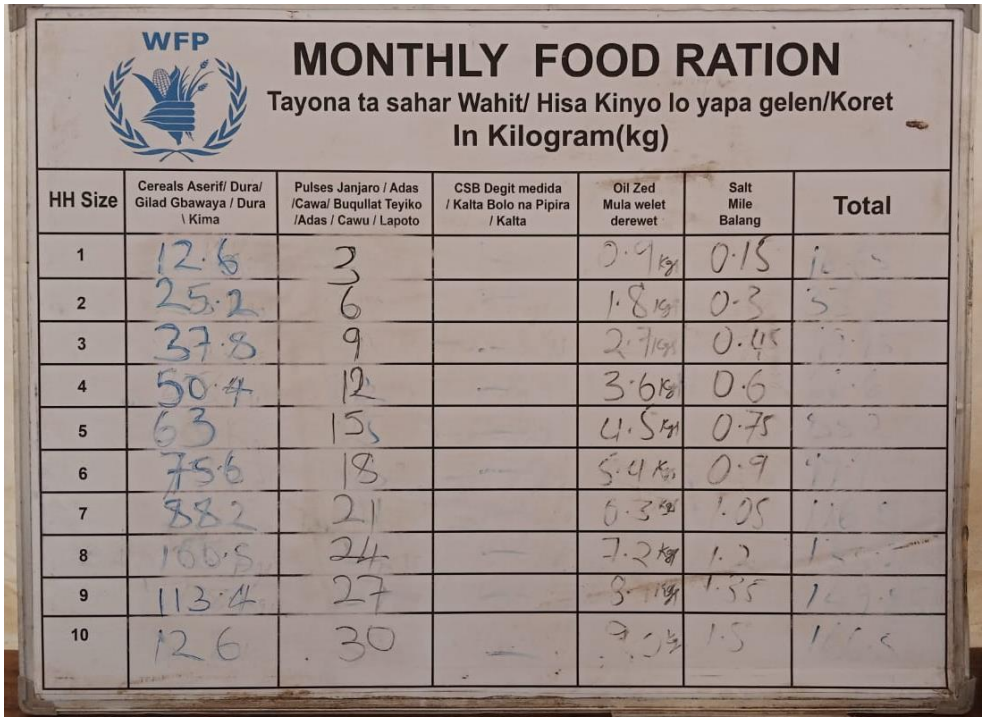
All the sixteen women said they get food from the World Food Program (WFP). In this regard, every family gets food or cash depending on their family size. Refugees in the settlement depend on their food rations provided by the world food program to survive throughout the month until the next month's food distribution day. A meal card presented to WFP food distribution centers by the refugees is issued by OPM and UNHCR. The punch in the numbers 1-16 indicates the family size. For example the card below is for a family size of four people.

Figure 8: An example of a Refugee Food Ration Card at Rhino Camp

Taken by Kyomukama. R, 20th August 2019, at the WFP food distribution center.

Each family individual is assigned a monthly quantity of food items as shown in the photo below. For each family individual, they get a monthly share of 12.6kgs of cereals, 3kgs of pulses (legume), 0.9 kg of cooking oil and 0.15 kgs of salt. In case a family of an individual prefers cash, they get a monthly amount of 30,000/- UGX (7.5 €) instead of the food items. These are multiplied by the number of people (in this case four) in the house hold as indicated by the punch hole in the card above.

Figure 9: A board used at the food distribution center of WFP at Rhino camp, indicating the amount of food to be given to each family size



Taken by Kyomukama. R, on 20th August 2019 at the WFP food distribution center

However, all the women participants showed concern that these items can barely last for a month. All the sixteen women have children, ranging from two to seven children per woman. Three women had recovered their children from other camps after arrival because they ran straight on from schools without their parents. Therefore, they were not registered in the same zone for food and they did not know the process on what to do to pass their children's food ration cards to their current zones:

> "We do not get much, unless if I had a place to plant okra and other vegetables. Right now, my clothes are finished, even those of my children. My ration is family size two, but we are four and it cannot even complete a month unless if I had some casual work" (Sitima, 30yrs old. ex-combatant woman, in an interview on 7th Aug 2019).

Figure 10: An example of vegetable stalls, business in the settlement

Taken by Kyomukama. R, August 2019

In a nutshell, this section has put together the economic experiences of women ex-combatants in Rhino camp refugee settlement; identifying the limited opportunities due to limited movements and low level of education, rural living, the limited drive for organizations to identify women as ex-combatants but SGBV survivors which robs their experiences of war in general but focuses on a single event. All these intersect and impact these women on different levels. The next section discusses the social aspects of ex-combatants in the settlement.

3.4 Social experiences and acceptance

In the previous section we have seen the economic experiences of ex-combatants in their different identities; as women - who are identified for support on a specific event; mothers with children to feed; as ex-combatants whose movements and dynamics differ from the other refugees, etcetera. However, these experiences limit their economic growth, and hence their exclusion from society.

3.4.1 Refugee ex-combatant women in closet, choice or circumstances?

Withdrawal from combat can happen before the war is finished. For example, in cases where combatants decide to withdraw from war, escape to take refuge in another country and live a civilian life, they may become refugees or IDPs. As these ex-combatants cross the borders, they are supposed to be disarmed and follow screening, as discussed earlier. However, if they have no guns at entry, they are not given attention, and this has been the case for women. This study found that none of the sixteen women was purposely screened to identify them as ex-combatants. Moreover, when asked if they have ever gone through a screening for being potential ex-combatants, either at entry or registration, all the sixteen never had any of such questions:

> "Since I came to Uganda, there is no single partner who came to ask about this particular subject" (Nyakoine 40 years old, ex-combatant woman in an interview on 8th August 2019).

> "we were not asked such questions, so we were registered and brought to villages like here. So, unless someone like you come to us and ask us that is maybe when we tell out what we were doing in our country" (Roda, 24 years old, ex-combatant woman, in an interview on 8th August 2019).

On the other hand, these women feel that if they were known to be ex-combatants, they would send them back to South Sudan. They said it would put them into jeopardy of deportation to South Sudan or be killed by their enemies among the refugee community, who they say some could be spying on them and their enemies back home in South Sudan. However, they do tell their village leaders and some to zone leaders about their war experiences and when they have security concerns.

The question here is, why are men able to declare their status and be recognized by OPM and other agencies in the operation? In an interview with Byaruhanga, the National emergency coordinator, OPM, refuted allegations of deportation and rather emphasized the *non-refoulement principle* that is fully embraced by Uganda. In this Principle, no refugee or asylum seeker should be forced to return to the countries they are subjected to persecution. Byaruhanga added that some ex-combatants declare and report what they were doing, their ranks and they denounce – a process that he says passes them into the status of "persons of concern" who need extra support. In cases where these who come with ammunitions;

> "they are disarmed by the Uganda peoples defence forces and all their military fatigue is taken up, again the government of Uganda does not take away these arms for its self, it initiates diplomatic talks and bilateral discussions in which such arms are handled over to the respective governments. I remember we had a case of M23 rebels from DR Congo who came and surrendered, even though they were armed, they were disarmed and placed separately, then rehabilitated and integrated" (Byaruhanga, National emergency coordinator in an interview on 10th September 2019).

On my visit to the borders at Oraba and Saliamusala, there was no such thing as screening and yet the numbers were not as big. In a talk to the leader at the three-country (Uganda, Congo and South Sudan) border, the community leader said, "It is very hard

to do screening at entry because people are many and confused" (James, medical personnel, IOM and secretary Local Council 1 Saliamusala, in an informal conversation on 27th August 2019). In reference to the report by UNHCR indicating only two women ex-combatants out of a total of 400 ex-combatants, I asked the National emergency coordinator why there are much more men declared as ex-combatants than women. In response he said;

> "It is because women always play roles which not necessarily require them to participate as active combatants and even when they cross, they don't declare. The major reason as to why people choose to declare is personal security especially with the fact that many of them may suspect their persecutors to have followed them or even some of the people who may have been hurt by their actions while fighting may wish to revenge on them in the settlement. The reason why they may not declare it is the same reason why they may declare, they may think if they declare they may be taken back to their country for justice however here in Uganda the principle of *non-refoulement* is in full practice. Ex-combatant cases are always handled between the government of Uganda and specific UN agencies particularly UNHCR" – (Byaruhanga, National emergency coordinator in an interview on 10th September 2019).

In this regard, the social acceptance for these women, their informed choice to keep anonymous or not depend on the gap that is evident between what the policies state and what is in practice. Due to power dynamics that keep these women on a low spectrum of information, they keep in fear and this fear robs their economic and social freedom.

3.4.2 Identity, ideologies and recruitment

Wood and Thomas (2017) found that the increased prevalence of female fighters especially in non-Islamic states, is accounted to the presence of the Marxist-oriented leftist ideology. It is also noted that in civil conflicts, there are gendered recruitments for armed groups to reach a wider network of the women, women's willingness to participate in various roles (Wood and Thomas 2017). There has been a record of identity in militarization, ranging from gender identity to ethnicity identity (Doan and Portillo 2017; Jok 1999). Reasons for these women to join armed groups vary and these include; the bid to protect their rights against land grabbing, rape, lootings, murder and killing of their husbands during conflict. These have been connected to their identity and ethnicity where different ethnic groups especially from the equatorial feel unrecognized and oppressed. Some women had personal reasons, passion and an 'obligation' towards the country to join the armed groups.

The most common issue mentioned by the respondents was land grabbing by government officials which forced many to join the SPLA/IO to eliminate the vice. In this research, land grabbing has been mainly mentioned by women who had lost their brothers and husbands, making it a gendered aspect that women who do not have male supporters in the family, they lose their land. Land grabbing is not new in South Sudan, writers have identified the lack of functionality in south Sudan's land administration. Some land problems are as a result of displacement and return; however, the government officials have been identified for land grabbing from the masses, especially those

without connection to power (Pantuliano 2009). Kiden inherited a plot of land from her late brother. However, the plot was forcefully taken and this is how she narrates:

> "The Dinkas who are in the national army decided to grab my plot, that is why I became annoyed and it made me join SPLA/IO. I became annoyed after the Dinkas government grabbed my plot…I managed to go to the government and the government decided to say if anyone is making a follow up of the plot meaning there shall be bloodshed. That is now how it came to my mind that if it comes to bloodshed it is better for me to go to the bush and I can come back and recover my plot" (Kiden, 31years old, ex-combatant woman in an interview on 19th August 2019).

Some women served both SPLA and SPLA/IO. To keep track of the reasons for serving in the recent conflict, it was therefore interesting to understand why some who had crossed from SPLA to other armed groups had done so – seemingly, a change in ideologies. When asked why she deserted SPLA for SPLA/IO joining the recent conflict, Modo sighed with sadness on her face and said:

> "In the SPLA, my arm was broken because of denying having sex with the generals of SPLA. Therefore, to revenge, I had to join SPLA/IO…I was trying to compare with the initial SPLA, but it was not as it was. Those days we used to prepare the food and they go. But these ones wanted to do both, to eat the food you have prepared and eat you as well" (Modo, 63years old, ex-combatant woman in an interview on 12th August 2019).

Among the sixteen women participants, one was from the Dinka tribe, one from the Nuer tribe and 14 are from the Equatorian tribes. The Equatorian tribes are considered to be oppressed in South Sudan (Branch and Mampilly 2005). Nine women are widows (three of whom lost their husbands at war), and six left their husbands in South Sudan with no knowledge of their whereabouts and one stays with her husband in the camp. It was mentioned that the Dinka soldiers used to grab land from women who had no male companions, say brothers or husbands. Therefore, being a woman and from a tribe that is not in power was an issue, but also being a widow made it difficult for these women.

3.4.3 The Story of Dudu

Dudu is a woman ex-combatant, with great passion of her job. She speaks with energies, walks with greatness and when asked a question she responds like she expected the question unless if the question was about her age now or at a certain point in time of her stories. Dudu did not know her right age, but she says as a girl, she grew up hearing stories of the Anyanya I war. According to my observation and connection to her stories, she could be in her late fifties or early sixties. Dudu is an Equatorian, served SPLA during the struggle for South Sudan's independence against the Arabs in Northern Sudan. Dudu could not remember the year she joined, but she said in 1992, she was fully involved and fighting in this war. In Dudu's story, it is obvious that even the family one comes from or the birth position can greatly influence one's life. A research about Equatorian refugees noted that it was the responsibility of the customary authorities to support the liberation war, failure of which, the customary leaders would be humiliated

among their masses (Braak and Kenyi 2018), it was from such a factor that Dudu had to join as she narrates:

> "I joined SPLA through a mass mobilization when each family had to bring at least one member of the family. My father was a chief, and therefore he was expected to be exemplary by sending in family members to fight in the independence struggle. I was the oldest child and I had very small brothers. People forced the chief to send in my two brothers, but they were very young. I sympathized with them, so I chose to join instead of them. I wanted to relieve my little brothers from joining the army when they were so young and even if I died, they would keep in the family. As a first born, that is how I chose to use my place and joined SPLA. By the time I joined, I had not even started menstrual periods.

How being Equatorian, refusing to serve SPLA/IO- an Equatorian dominated army and instead choosing to keep in SPLA- a Dinka dominated army caused trouble for Dudu. The interplay of her identity as a woman, Equatorian, Soldier and choice of Political ideologies. Dudu narrates:

> "In the recent conflict that started in 2013, I was still serving SPLA although some of my Equatorian colleagues had joined SPLA/IO. When the war escalated in 2015, I decided to cross to Uganda. I made a stop at Yei where I slept before crossing the border. At 2am that night, people shouted forcing me to open the door. I did not open so they broke into the house and they turned out to be soldiers of SPLA/IO who followed me up trying to make me join them. I refused to join them, and they abducted me, took all my money and then took me to the forest where they had the intention of killing me but their commander told them he would want to kill me by himself. So, they had to take me to their camp. They moved me to a place called Biligo where I found that they had also other abductees. All that time I was blind folded but upon reaching their detach camp, they opened my eyes and that is when I realised these were the same soldiers whom I had served with in Malakai under SPLA but had now they joined SPLA/IO. The SPLA/IO called me a traitor for serving SPLA yet I am not Dinka but an Equatorian and they wanted me to be part of their struggle against the Dinkas" (Dudu ex-combatant woman, in two interviews 13th and 22nd August)

For two years, under abduction, Dudu stayed with SPLA/IO washing clothes for the soldiers. It was one day in 2017 escaped and came to Arua, where she was taken to Mvepi refugee settlement.

> "The place where we had camped known as kaya was near the Uganda border so I just ran away and crossed the border as I knew that no one would shoot at me because the soldiers knew it is illegal to shoot a person across the border above all, the Uganda soldiers would fight back"- (Dudu ex-combatant woman, in two interviews 13th and 22nd August)

Dudu's family thought she had died, but after seven days at Mvepi refugee settlement, they got connection and that her family was in Rhino camp refugee settlement. She therefore came to join her family. However, having been registered at Mvepi refugee settlement and does not know the procedure of transferring her name to Rhino camp refugee settlement, Dudu does not get her food ration in Rhino camp and yet she finds

Mvepi refugee settlement very far to fetch her monthly food from the WFP distribution center.

3.4.4 The gun and gender relations

Women have had a range of experiences both in positions of vulnerability but also in positions of power. Their flexibility and adaptation to the changing environment around them shows that women are not just as weak as they are usually portrayed. This portrayal buries their agency, voice and efforts in experiences of war. Agency should not be understood in oppositional pairs or binary view of for instance liberated Vs. Oppressed, but rather the ability for one to under look the obstacles of custom, tradition and societal norms that they are facing to achieve their autonomy in the face of power (Begikhani et al. 2018). Women shared their experiences of decision making to take up guns to fight back at injustices made to them, escaping abduction, leading their team among others.

From recruitment, training to army activities, women did not note major differences in the way they were treated vis a vis their male counterparts. They mention that there was no discrimination. However, some women mentioned sexual harassment by their male counterparts especially to women who did not have partners within the armed group. This indirectly forced them to have a partner to avoid many from harassing them. Some of these women had joined after being widowed. When I asked what would happen if one did not wish to have any partner in the armed group, Isho explained;

> "In the bush, the female soldiers who do not have husbands, they get problems with male soldiers. So, for you to be in peace and avoid being raped, you get one person who when the other male soldiers want to force you, that male soldier will say, this one is now mine. It happened one time, someone did not want to accept any soldier and one soldier fought with her and that soldier almost wanted to kill her" (Isho, 27years old ex-combatant woman in an interview on 9th August 2019).

To some, the gun was the gender and power equaliser between them and their harassers. They felt the gun had given them opportunity to defend themselves from looting of their properties, land grabbing and sexual harassment. One convincingly explained;

> "If you don't handle the gun, you will see that everything of yours is going away clean. If you have the gun, people will fear your plot of land but if you do not have a gun, you lose. During the recent rebellion, no one would force to rape me. Because you are a man and I am a woman. You have a gun, I have a gun. You are fighting rebels and I am fighting rebels, what is the difference now. We are one. So, we are all equal. We are equal now, but before joining SPLA/IO, those people having a gun would torture you. They feel you are down, those people are up" (Poni, ex-combatant woman, in an interview on 12th August 2019).

There were a few differences noted in the assignment of duties, for instance, women used not to do night duty patrols and some women felt favored about this. On the other hand, it was women who did the washing for all soldiers, cleaning, and cooking. In some groups, women were also not allowed at the battle frontline. This had followed an incident where women who were taken to war and witnessed the death of their fellows became devastated and lost the fight, as told by Sitima:

"They cried a lot and lost morale to fight, so they lost the battle and so they do not allow women to go to battle front now" – (Sitima, 30years old, ex-combatant woman, in an interview on 7th August 2019).

In the settlement, there were no discrimination between treatment of men and women refugees. All the respondents noted that as refugees, there is no such thing as better treatment for men or for women. However, it was noted that female ex-soldiers are not in the picture of identification and recognition of their efforts and experiences of war after the bush. Aid workers and security personnel perceive men to have taken part in an armed conflict but not a woman. There is also a behaviour of normalizing the state of not having female voices post war which erases women from their own experiences and involvements.

3.4.5 The story of Ruba

I met Ruba through a zone leader who invited her to meet me at his place. Ruba came well dressed in a Kitenge (African fabric) dress and we sat under a tree near the leader's hut. I tried greeting Ruba in English, with smiles she responded, "English ma fi" meaning "no English". We laughed as I too responded *Arabic ma fi*. I was happy to understand that sentence, hence realized that South Sudanese Arabic is close to the Ugandan Nubian Language which I understand a bit. We started the interview with the help of the zone leader's help in translation of English – Kakwa with a mix of Arabic. Ruba is 35years old, living with her seven children in Rhino camp refugee settlement since April 2018. Reba's story highlights the different identities that she lives and experiences life:

> "My husband was killed in September 2016 during the war and I joined SPLA/IO to revenge the death of my husband against SPLA and to defend our (Kakwa) land. I did not want the Nuer and the Dinkas to take our land. As a Kakwa from the equatorial region, initially I did not mind the difference in tribes but when they captured and killed my husband, I wanted to fight the mistreatment and revenge my husband's death.
>
> I went on a military training for six months and my group got divided into different troops after the training and were posted in different places. I was posted at the barracks where I was patrolling and making attacks whenever there was battle and search for food in the villages" (Ruba 35 years old, ex-combatant woman in two different interviews on 8th and 21st August).

Listening to Ruba's story, I could see the identity of her being Kakwa putting her in a position which she says did not benefit from the governing system, then at only 32years old, Ruba was already a widow with six children to take care of. My second interaction with her was at her house, we had no way to make appointments this time due to network problems and luckily, we found her home. She is a jolly lady, welcomed us and gave us locally made stool chairs. As we talked, she was breastfeeding her seventh child. Ruba tells her experience as a challenging one also in the camp;

> "In South Sudan, I could hunt animals to have a meal, unlike here in Uganda. There, I used to rear goats which I could sell to get some money, but now I have to rely on my ration card with the food from WFP. There are no ways to earn

> money, I plant vegetables, but all end up being for consumption due to lack of manpower being the only adult taking care of seven children. And besides, the rocky land in Omugo does not yield much" (Ruba 35 years old, ex-combatant woman in two different interviews on 8th and 21st August)

Looking at Ruba's experiences as only a refugee might leave out many of her other experiences of the refugee settlement and that while she was back in South Sudan. Using an intersectional lens, it shows the vulnerabilities of Ruba being a mother of seven, widow, with war trauma as a participant and observer, and living in an area of land that cannot yield enough vegetables to support her big family.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the economic and social experiences of ex-combatant women in Rhino camp refugee settlement. It has highlighted the intersecting identities and characteristics of ex-combatants and the physical space they live and how these intersections make them experience their lives in the settlement. The chapter has discussed the identification encounters of ex-combatants and noting that women are given more attention when it has to do with SGBV and not necessarily because they are ex-combatants, which gives an emphasis on how gender is played in ex-combatant identification. Another identity is that they come from low economic status, given their current life style and opting for institutionalized settlements. Due to limited avenues for income, these women depend of food distributions by WFP which they say can barely last for a month. The chapter also discusses the role of identity, political ideology and geographical location among others how they influence the lived experiences of these women.

Chapter 4. Psychosocial wellbeing

4.1 Overcoming depression and traumatic stress

Exposure to physical, emotional and sexual violence among other kinds of violence, causes depression and traumatic stress (Robjant et al. 2019; Annan et al 2011). Ex-combatants are noted to suffer from distress, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression etcetera, often worsened because of discrimination by the society and what they went through during the war (Annan et al 2011). It was found that their mental health gets impaired in their everyday functioning due to war trauma which never heals but deteriorates if not attended to (Schuaer, Elbert and Martz 2010).

In a study done among the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) ex-combatants, there showed resilience among some ex-combatants who received social support (Annan et al. 2011). Psychological distress is higher among ex-combatants living in low- and middle-income countries (Kaiser 2006). Refugees are all exposed to war trauma, however, ex-combatants are extra vulnerable to psychological distress. As stated, "Every group had been affected by the war and many people had psychosocial problems, but ex-combatants arguably more than others" (Willems and Van Leeuwen 2015: 330).

4.1.1 Psychosocial experiences of ex-combatant women in Rhino camp

Research on ex-fighters' Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) relates to characteristics of experiences during the war, for instance being the initiators of death and injury, being a target, an agent, or failure to fulfil a mission (Fontana et al. 1992). This indicates that the level of exposure to traumatic experiences for ex-combatants tells a lot about what their psychological experiences are, setting them apart from the rest of the refugees. This intersection of them being ex-combatants but also refugees in the way they experience trauma needs to be highlighted.

PTSD is understood from the experiences that are "outside the range of usual human experience that would be markedly distressing" (Fontana et al. 1992: 748). For example, an ex-combatant shared about the psychosocial disturbances that were involved in her work as a radio operator:

> "This radio work is not easy, some people have become mentally confused because of a lot of communication especially during war, but also when there is no war, you can become mentally confused. Even there in the barracks there are many who are mentally confused. The government sees that their mind got confused here in the radio, so they let them stay in the barracks, so they do not go home because they are mentally confused" (Charity, ex-combatant woman in an interview on 7th August 2019).

Research in Northern Uganda on the impact of war on men and women and their experiences of rehabilitation indicates that there are psychosocial problems especially among females, however there is also evidence that in some cases there have been high social acceptance and psychological resilience by the women who get social support (Annan et al. 2011).

Among the sixteen participants, eleven women reported post war unhealthy feeling of losing sleep, uncomfortable when in isolation and having night mares whenever they go to sleep. Three mentioned that they keep hearing gunshots inside their mind. Two mentioned that they feel someone is after them when they go to public places and hence prefer to keep a low profile in their community. One woman said, "I sometimes don't realize that I am not in the bush, I don't feel very well. I get this feeling on and off" (Isho, ex-combatant woman, interview, 9th August 2019) and another said, "When I was a soldier, there were gunshots, the gunshots make the brain not to work very well" (Modo, ex-combatant woman in an interview on 12th August 2019). The traumatic thoughts of a failed mission could be heard: "we used to do that for our country but unfortunately the country is still in trouble" (Respondent 15, Ocea zone, in an interview on 20th Aug 2019). Ruba narrated how whatever happened in war comes back to her:

> "I get visions of what was happening in the war whenever I go to sleep. I always dream about shooting, rolling and all that was happening in the bush. This does not happen to me during the day when I am busy with work, but when I am alone or sleeping these nightmares come" (Ruba 35yrs old, ex-combatant woman, in interview2 on 21st August 2019).

Three women witnessed the killing of their family members, while thirteen confirmed to have witnessed killing of other members of their own groups or the opponent group. With sadness she said, "they caught and slaughtered my brother in-law in my presence" (Kiden, ex-combatant woman in an interview on 19th Aug 2019).

4.1.2 Solace in religion? the story of Kiden

Thirty years old Kiden lives with five children, one is her biological child and the four are her brother's children who she says is still in the bush at war under NAS since 2015. Kiden left South Sudan and entered Uganda in 2017. While showing a bullet scar on her arm, she narrates the tragic moments that still bother her psychological wellbeing:

> "I decided to revenge Dinkas for the death of my brother in-law and I joined SPLA/IO which I served for one year. We noticed that although they were all soldiers, Equatorians and the Nuers in SPLA/IO, the Nuers were the ones handling the guns while the Equatorians would share one AK47 by about five soldiers, so after one year I decided to join NAS which is for the Equatorians. We used to make ambushes against SPLA to take their guns and bullets to equip NAS. I got an injury when we try to ambush the Dinka, and I was shot in the hand with a bullet. My aim was to revenge the death of my brother in-law and to return the family land that was confiscated by the Dinkas. So, when I got that Dinka guy, I immediately got a knife, I wanted to pay back.
>
> All this still feels as if it is real in my dreams"- (Kiden, ex-combatant woman in an interview on 19th Aug 2019).

When asked what she does to better her sleeping time and forgetting the tormenting experiences of war, kiden said:

> "Currently, I am only going to church but haven't become a born again (charismatic Christian) I am just going to church so at least it has consoled my heart" (Kiden, ex-combatant woman in an interview on 19th Aug 2019).

Research shows that opening up, talking about negative and stress-related thoughts and experiences improves both physical and mental health (Lepore et al. 2000). However, for these women, there are no social connections to share these past experiences with besides their leaders. Speaking to one of the refugee leaders in Rhino camp, he identified an example of his neighbour who confined in him about her past experiences;

> "My neighbour here, what they have done, the experiences what they have gone through. At times when they are left alone, all those stresses come back to their mind. To my observation these women need to be helped in one way or another. Especially with psychosocial support. These women need to be counseled"- (Jumah, Block leader, Tika 1b village in Tika Zone, in an interview on 22nd Aug 2019)

Such experiences that have traumatizing images still appear to them in sleep. Chances of rehabilitation become jeopardized by psychological effects of war (Schuaer, Elbert and Martz 2010) This is said to be worse for Self-demobilized ex-combatants as shown in Congo (Kiyala 2015), for example these women are trying to cope on their own.

4.2 Overcoming hostility

This fourth domain is a result of the first three domains; economic, social and psychological rehabilitation. Ex-combatants can be seen as posing a threat to peace as they might be ready candidates to re-join the conflict due to their social networks, traumatic anger and the need to accomplish their missions (Annan et a. 2011). The success or failure of the first three domains, leads to the same outcome to the forth domain. All four domains are inter-linked and can become obstacles to the rehabilitation of ex-combatants if unattended.

There are risks associated with integration when ex-combatants are dissatisfied with the process of their rehabilitation which also may lead to violence or susceptible to re-joining the conflict as a way to release their frustration. Else, they may involve in criminal activities to achieve what they want in the sphere of their new civilian life (Brethfeld 2010). In some cases, the ex-combatants may also fall victim to revenge attacks by community members for the atrocities they may have committed during the conflict (Brethfeld 2010). In this case, we can note that, women also commit horrible crimes in war (Hintjens and Zarkov 2014; McKay 2005).

4.2.1 Exit from armed groups

Overcoming hostilities start with exiting the hostile conditions. The exit from armed groups was experienced in various ways and with different reasons. For example, the four Equatorian prison wardens just ran away when they were accused of conniving with the SPLA/IO rebel group to invade and release their colleagues who were imprisoned. Two decided to quit the armed group as the ammunitions were not enough for them. For example, one said: "We had the interest of protecting our place, but we had

no weapons. The weapons were not enough. That is why I had to let the others continue" (Poni, ex-combatant woman, in an interview on 12th August 2019). Another lady was an abductee and had to find means of escape into Uganda. All the rest gave reasons related to children as the biggest factor to quit;

> "I left the armed group because my mother who used to look after my children when I went to war had died. So, I had to return and take care of the children. I quit in Dec 2017" (Ruba 35yrs old, ex-combatant woman, in interview2 on 21st August 2019).

Another woman said,

> "I left the army on 20 June 2017. I left the army because of the pregnancy; I was not intending to leave the work, but I was forced to leave because of the sicknesses and symptoms" (Roda, 24yrs old, ex-combatant woman, in an interview on 8th August 2019)

As can be seen, gender and roles assigned to gender are evident as an influencer also for quitting the armed groups. It is generally believed, as taken from John Garang's "Reproductive policy" that women were to keep safe in refugee camps for the purpose of nurturing children who would replace the killed soldiers and to reproduce (Bubenzer and Stern 2011: 29). While they keep in the refugee settlement, they should be known for the multiple identities they hold in order to support them but also facilitate peace.

4.2.2 Plans beyond refugee life

Three felt that there is no future for them in South Sudan and prefer to settle somewhere else like Uganda or elsewhere. However, the rest disregard that and wish to go back home as soon as they can. Four women wanted to return to soldiering mentioning that also life in the settlement is not easy. And all the rest just wanted peace to return to their country and return home.

> "I really don't have intentions of dying from Uganda but to die as a soldier" – (Dudu ex-combatant woman in an interview on 22nd August 2019)

> "this is not our destiny we are still going to go to our country, we are not going to stay here for life, so going back to the country is still going to your destiny" (Roda, ex-combatant woman, interview, 8th August 2019).

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, two domains of rehabilitation were discussed focusing on ex-combatants' experiences of psychosocial and traumatic stress and overcoming hostilities. The chapter has highlighted the high susceptibility of ex-combatants to psychological stress and how their distress varies with their encounters of traumatic events. We have looked at examples of women who still have psychological problems and notably a story of Kiden who witnessed the slaughter of her brother in-law and until now the solace she

gets is from going to church but did not get psychological support. The chapter has also highlighted the need to keep an interconnection between the first three domains to achieve the forth. The next chapter draws conclusions of this study

Chapter 5: Conclusions

5.1 Overview

This research attempted to answer the question "What are the economic, social and psychological experiences and narratives of ex-combatant South Sudanese women living in Rhino camp refugee settlement?". In this attempt, I used an intersectional framework and a four-domain model of ex-combatant rehabilitation to analyse the findings. The paper was divided into five chapters;

Chapter one discussed the back ground of the study, identifying women's participation in war, rehabilitation of ex-combatant women in a refugee setting and the Uganda-South Sudan refugee situation through the years. Chapter two included the methodological and theoretical framework which was a combination of Annan et al. (2011)'s four-domain model of rehabilitation and Crenshaw (1989)'s intersectional approach to identifying the multiple dimensions of vulnerability.

The study used an ethnographic research orientation to understand the lived experience of these women. Chapters three and four discussed the findings. To analytically look at the data using the proposed model, each of the two chapters discussed two domains of rehabilitation to understand how these women experience the social, economic, Psychosocial and overcoming hostilities on their different levels and identities. The last one, which is Chapter five, concretes on giving an overview of the study, summary of the findings and prospected gaps for future research.

5.2 What the research did

This research has problematized the definition and the use of the term 'ex-combatant', which has been mainly used to define or target a person who involved in armed conflict in a role of holding a gun. This research instead opts for a more inclusive reference to this term, pointing to all war participants regardless of their position or role in the armed group. It is not the role that defines who a combatant or non-combatant is but rather their involvement in war regardless of position or role played. I agree when "Difference feminists" say that feminine roles and qualities should not be de-valued but rather celebrated, valued and promoted (Goldstein 2001: 41). By so doing, all women taking part in armed conflict should, regardless of their roles be recognized and acknowledged that they did take part.

The findings in chapter three indicate that the way ex-combatant women experience living in the camp depends on identification of their skills and education level and acknowledgement of the ex-combatant status. However, it was found that gender plays a big role when it comes to their identification as ex-combatants. Despite of women taking part in war, men are more identified even in a refugee setting. This is in line with scholars who have done research on ex-combatant women in DDR programs. Therefore, it is evident, as noted by these scholars like MacKenzie (2009), van Gog (2008),

Anna et al. (2011), and Maiden (2014) among others that DDR's failure to acknowledge full women's participation in conflicts does not start with DDR programs but even before they start to register for DDR programs. It is important to highlight again that this paper concentrated on ex-combatant refugee women within a refugee setting and not ex-combatants who are seeking reintegration on their homeland where DDR is possible. It was found that, for women to get special attention for further rehabilitation, it should be a different 'special' case like SGBV but not because of their involvement in conflict.

For economic attainment, education is crucial. However, women in South Sudan have a low level of literacy which also affects these women when they are in the camps as they have no skills for employment. In addition, their geographical space too influences their economic experiences. Having been situated in an area of the settlement that is rocky leaves some of these women with no options for agriculture but to entirely depend on ration card meals worth 7€ per month from WFP which they say can barely finish a month.

It was also found that their experience and involvement in conflict limits their current economic potential as the skills learned at war for example shooting do not necessarily fit into civilian life. Those who learned some skills there like driving, are not also identified and this is to do with the power structures they are situated that do not position them as capable employees but only refugees. This related to the finding that there is a gap between the policy on how ex-combatants in a refugee setting should be treated and what is known on ground. For example, all the women did not know that they have a right to protection even if they are former soldiers. This makes them live in fear, they cannot share their experiences and how these experiences affect them. This robs away their social and economic freedom. Interestingly, there was a gendered aspect that men do not have this fear, while women have the fear to declare.

There was also a gap on what is anticipatedly done by the state in screening ex-combatants and what exactly happens. All the women said they had never received any screening not at entry and not at registration. All this influenced the social experiences and acceptance of these women. Eventually, the healing of their traumatic war experiences are not catered for as the research found that all the women were still facing psychological difficulties in their daily lives having nightmares of war, having the sound of gunshots in their mind and feeling unsafe due to their involvement in traumatic events.

Studies about gender, women, girls and war have taken root in feminist researches indicating women's experiences of agency, empowerment, participation and victimization struggles (Goldstein 2003). It was by such feminist efforts that the UN adopted resolution 1325 which demand inclusion and acknowledgement of women's involvement in conflict and peace-building (Hintjens and Žarkov 2014; Annan et al 2011; Ollek 2007). Research indicates that gender shapes war and war shapes gender (Goldstein 2001), something that should be taken into account when recounting war time and post war. However, for these women, either voluntarily or by the circumstances they are unknowledgeable and kept in fear on what life they should live after the war. No wonder, "during wars, women are ubiquitous and highly visible; when wars are over, and the war songs are sung, women disappear" (Goldstein 2001: 59).

5.3 Recommended future research

Future research should look into the comparison of why women do not freely declare as ex-combatants while men on the other hand do. The research could study and compare men and women former combatants in order to see what is distinctive about the women i.e. femininities and masculinities in practice. The research could also involve the organization partners who made identification of the previous recordings that indicated low numbers of women ex-combatants for example that identified in UNHCR March 2019 report of Arua district where there are 2 women ex-combatants identified among 400 men. Future research could also look at the comparative advantage in rehabilitation of women who declare and get recognised by UNHCR and OPM; and those who do not declare their status as ex-combatants in a refugee setting.

Future research could also look closely into the humanitarian policy of keeping the civilian character and what ways it influences the lives of ex-combatants, this should be made in relation to DDR programs, identifying how the humanitarian policy may also influence the success and effectiveness of DDR programs.

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Accessed on 13 May 2019

Appendices

Note: These were guiding questions. The discussions involved probing questions de-pending on the responses of the participant. The probing questions are not listed here-in.

Also not listed below is my introduction to the participants.

Appendix 1: Guiding interview questions for ex-combatant women

1. Zone and village of residence
2. Name:
3. Age:
4. Date of Arrival into Uganda: Chapter 0on page ivon page ivon page iviv
5. Date of joining the army:
6. Name of armed group served:
7. Role/Position in the armed group
8. Period of service
9. Who do you live with here? (children, husband…)
10. What was your entry point into Uganda?
11. under what reception center?
12. Is this the first time you are coming to Uganda as a refugee?
13. How did you join the armed group?
14. How were men and women treated at war?
15. What does it mean to you to have taken part in war?
16. How did you exit the armed group?
17. what does the experience of being a soldier bring to you now?
18. What skills did you use in or learn in the armed group and you can still use them?
19. What economic activities are you involved in?
20. Apart from WFP ration, what are the other sources of your daily living
21. What are your experiences in an army group?
22. What were the reasons to taking part and how did you join?
23. What activities did you take part in while in the armed group?
24. What does this mean to you?
25. What does it mean to the people around you?
26. At entry to Uganda, how were male fighters and female fighters treated?
27. How about in Rhino camp, in comparison with a male refugee ex-fighter, what are the experiences of a female refugee ex-fighter?

28. Would you please share your experiences of rehabilitation in the settlement?

29. (if not mentioned above) What activities are you involved in that influence your rehabilitation?

30. (if not mentioned above) What institutions play a role in your rehabilitation

31. What would be done to facilitate your rehabilitation?

32. What influences your decision to either report yourself as an ex-fighter or not to report?

33. How does your participation in war influence your stay in Rhino camp as a refugee?

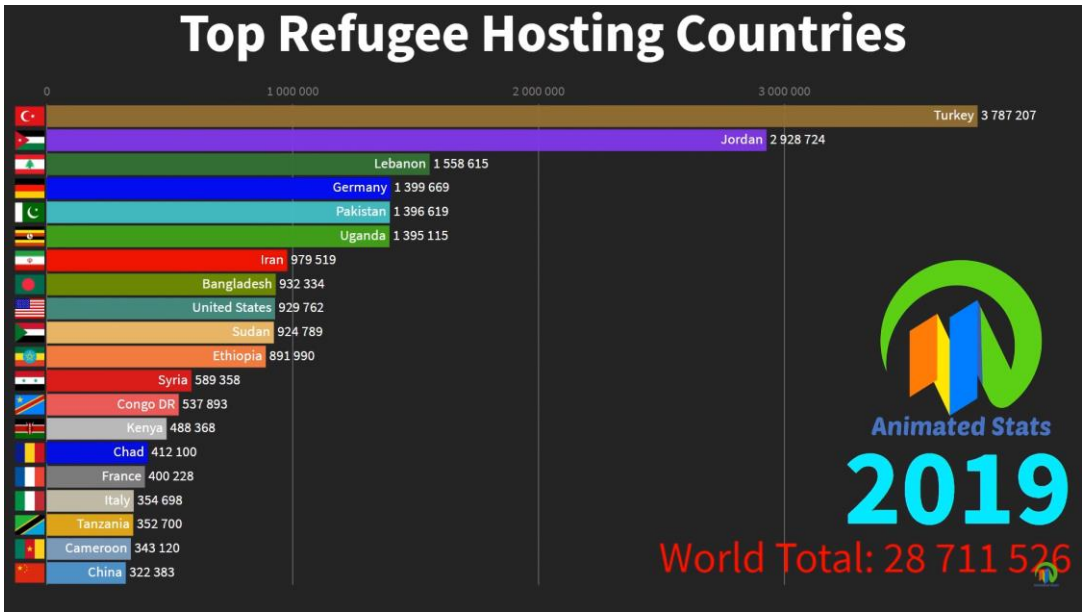
34. What are the experiences you go through in the camp that are as a result of your involvement in the conflict?

35. What are you plans after Rhino camp?

Appendix 2: Uganda's Refugee Policies

Uganda is currently among the top five refugee hosting countries in the world and the number one in Africa (See Appendix 2; UNHCR 2019b). It is projected that in a ref-ugee influx there are combatants or former combatants amongst them (UNHCR 2018b). Uganda hosts refugees from DR. Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, Burundi, Somalia among others (UNHCR 2019a).

Animated statistics indicating the top refugee hosting countries in the world

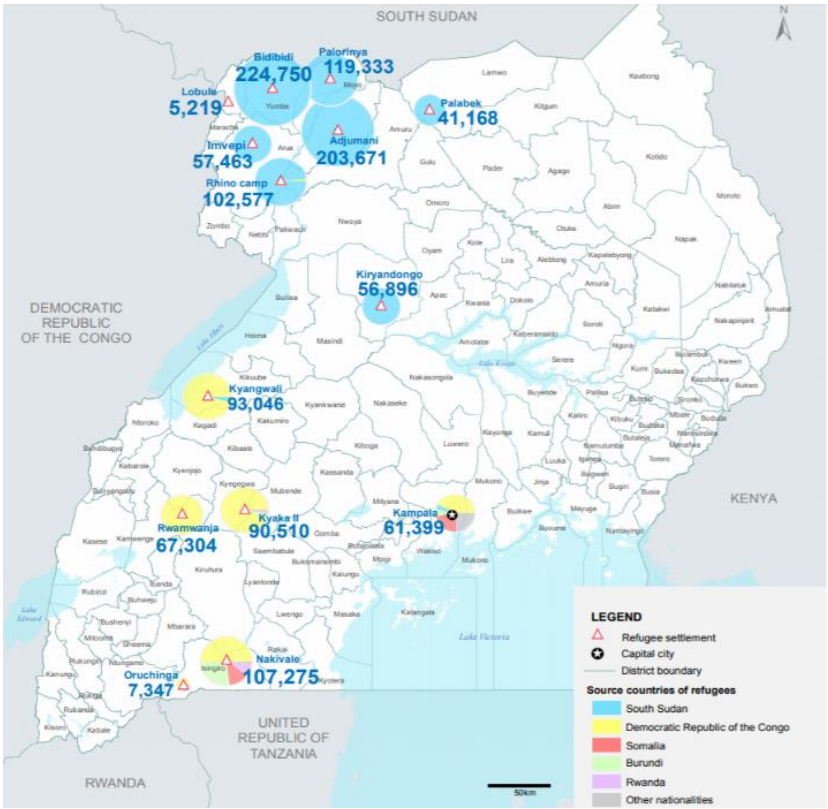


Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIJzbBfW_wk

South Sudanese refugees are mainly settled in the districts of Adjumani, Arua, Yumbe, Moyo, Lamwo, Kiryandongo, Koboko and Palabek (UNHCR, 2019a). This research focuses on South Sudanese ex-combatant women in Rhino camp refugee settlement found in Arua district. Arua district is located 520km from Uganda's capital city Kampala and 80km from the southern Sudan boarder. The district sits on 4,274.13 square kilo meter in the Norther-western corner of Uganda bordering DR Congo in the west (OPM 2018). It should be noted that those districts are in the Northern part of the country which is also still recovering from the Lord's resistance Army (LRA) twenty-one years long civil war that started in 1987 which left this part of the country in dare need for support (Annan et al 2011).

The districts in West Nile were also affected by the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) I & II rebel groups fighting to oppose the government between 1996 and 2001. Therefore, this region has not much economically to offer its people and much less to newcomers like the refugees despite the "free" movement and land poli-cies. Also, the said free movements are monitored by the Office of the Prime Minis-ter (OPM), refugees are not permitted to self-transfer from one settlement to another and their movements should be authorised by OPM and UNHCR (Kaiser 2006). On the map below, the blue circles are settlements hosting South Sudanese refugees in the country.

A map of Uganda: numbers of registered refugees



Map Source: UNHCR Uganda (2019)

Appendix 3: Guiding interview questions for OPM Staff

1. OPM being the arm of government responsible for refugees, I would like to know the screening mechanisms that OPM uses to identify EX combatants/Fighters among ref-ugees

2. What has been your experience with the policy of keeping civilian character in regard to combatants and other implementing partners?

3. What do you think influences people to declare?

4. Referring to existing literature and reports it's like there are Men declared as ex combatants than women why do you think it's the case?

Appendix 4: Guiding interview questions for refugee leaders

1. As a leader, what do you have to say about women who have been in armed conflict as soldiers?

2. What has been done so far for men who are ex-combatants?

3. What are the experiences of women ex-combatants in relation to men's experiences

4. What do you do when you identify an ex-combatant?

Appendix 5: Guiding interview questions for NGO staff

1. Under what circumstance is refugee categorized as an asylum seeker?

2. Have you encountered people that have been involved in armed groups? could be as soldiers or holding other responsibilities with in the armed group say as cooks, armory care takers etc?

3. Among the combatants you have interacted with, How many women and men?

4. How would do you define an ex-combatant as a legal officer in this context?

5. What do you think is the factors influencing ex-combatants to come out and declare or not to declare?

6. In the period you have worked, has there been any women who have come out to declare themselves as ex-combatants?

7. Do you know the policy of keeping the civilian character in the refugee settlement? what do you say about it in regards to ex-combatants' management

Appendix 5: Guiding interview questions for South Sudanese colleague with knowledge on ex-combatants

1. How do you understand the term ex-combatant as a person who worked with a UN-DDR program?

2. What are your experiences with ex-combatant women?

3. How were the women who did not fall under this particular category serviced in the DDR program.

4. What do you think might happen with IO?

5. Where were they prior to the registration in DDR?

6. Have you been in any connection with women who participated in war, in a refugee setting?

7. What experiences do you know about them?

8. What do you see as their way out to protect them and to have them talk about their experiences?