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A case study of the Trans-Cultural Psychosocial Organisation (TPO) in Northern Uganda and the Hero Book Project working with forcibly displaced child soldiers as examples of an alternative healing to the PTSD model.

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Dedication

Abstract

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"…the word disorder tends to pathologies a normal response to an abnormal situation" (interview with Jonathan Morgan)

1.1. Introduction to the Study

This study explores the role of healing interventions targeting ex-child soldiers that had been abducted in the Northern Uganda to fight in the war. The thrust of this study is to explore the alternative healing strategies to the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) diagnostic criterion as it applies to ex-child soldiers. The strategies have been used by African centred trauma service providers who have assisted ex-child soldiers abducted by the Lord Resistance Army[1] rebels (LRA) in Northern Uganda. Blattman and Annan (2009) notes that whilst it is not clear on the total number of child soldiers in Africa, more than one thousand children have been abducted by the LRA each year to save as combat fighters and porters since fighting began in Northern Uganda. The children were abducted and recruited in the ranks and files of the LRA and taken to Southern Sudan for military training as preparation for combat fighting. Some children managed to dissert the LRA and returned home were they were assisted by local Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Alternative therapies used by the NGOs are being studied in this

[1] The LRA was a rebel group led by Joseph Konny in Northern Uganda and they abducted children to train them in Southern Sudan to enable them to fight as rebels in Northern Uganda in the early 1990s.

study. These ex-child soldiers were aged between 11-16 years old and they had all participated as combat fighters in the LRA. The study has been motivated by my own experience as a soldier for the past ten years in the Democratic Republic of Congo[2] (DRC) war situation. It was my involvement in this war that gave me an interest in looking at a critique of the PTSD model and alternatives to this for abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers. My argument here is not to generalise my experience as an adult soldier to all war situations to include that of child soldiers, but to provide an insight in understanding wartime experiences. War experiences differ from one person to another as it differs from context to context. Following that, my experiences would help in understanding the situation of ex-child soldiers and in analysing their own experiences.

Suffering is contextual. Whilst Nayback (2009) who is a biomedical practitioner in the United States of America Army argued that post-traumatic stress disorder is the most prevalent mental health disorder from combat fighting. My own personal experience as a Zimbabwean soldier with an extensive military conventional operation in the DRC war has led me to think that there are other ways of understanding combat fighting experiences. In this study, the researcher's experiences of war are important understand the experiences of child soldiers.

The researcher was deployed in DRC after the government of the late President Laurent Kabila[3] was under attack from the Ugandan and Rwandese backed rebels. We were deployed under the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) protocol on defence and security. The researcher had the opportunity to interact with some LRA child soldiers from Northern Uganda who were our friendly forces since they were reinforcing the DRC government. What also sparked my interest in this study are some similarities between the context of my experiences as a soldier trained in Zimbabwe and that of the ex-child soldiers. Moreover my experiences give an insight into wartime experiences that help me to understand the drawings of child soldiers and also cast light on different ways

[2] DRC was formerly known as Zaire before Laurent Kabila stage a coup detat against Mobutu Seseko.
[3] Laurent Kabila and his Banyamulenge rebel military group had toppled Mobutu Seseko a long time dictator who had ruled Zaire now DRC for more than forty years. Laurent Kabila and his forces were supported by Rwanda, Burundi and Ugandan government forces.

of understanding trauma in the context of combat experiences. It is important to provide some information on my combat experiences to provide more insights on different understandings of war trauma and healing.

The researcher was deployed for three years in the Eastern front in Lubumbashi-Kasenga and Bukama area. In these deployment areas which were close to the rebel front line in the Pweto area the researcher witnessed mass death of rebels and friendly forces from various patrols and ambushes and dawn attacks for a successive period of time. Although the events were traumatic, the researcher had never heard any of the soldiers in operation saying they experienced this distress as trauma. After every contact with the rebels, the Battalion Commander would give us a debriefing saying, "a good Soldier does not fear the bullet. If you don't fire, you will be the next victim of this 'Kabila war' and seeing dead bodies are the results of our task. We fought in the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe and that is the endurance we are passing to you today" the researcher get emotional strength from those words and for any attack the researcher did not panic, knowing that it was my task as a soldier. We could not eat and sleep but patrolling in the swamp and rainy forest became the only command of the day, our food could be bombed on the way to our deployment and for two weeks we would rely on Cassava (not our staple food) from the Congolese civilians fields.

The researcher derived strength from the military training which hardened him and had confidence in the machine gun and grenades the researcher carried along in the operation and the tactics the researcher was taught during military training. After three years of operation in the DRC, we withdrew from war and all Colonels, Brigadiers, Generals and the Army Commander waited for us at the Zimbabwe International airport and they gave us a handshake, congratulating us of the job well done. In his welcome home address His Excellency, the Commander-in-Chief gave us a 'hero welcome' address. We were then presented with SADC medals for brave fighting and they granted us two months leave.

We were promised huge sums of US dollars (although it never came). The researcher felt great and this hero welcome was sufficient in his case in ameliorating the bad experiences the researcher had gone through and witnessed in this external operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The welcome and promise of United States dollars became part of the healing process in the aftermath of war. The researcher also understood the ideological and political context of the DRC war which helped him to cope with the devastating memories of war. Whilst the researcher do not wish to generalise his experience to all fleeing war situations, the fact that so few soldiers I was with made mention of 'trauma' or expressed distress in other ways sparked my interest in this study.

When the researcher was appointed as an Army counsellor responsible for welfare provision in the form of soft loans to soldiers after an assessment of their stressful problems, the researcher learnt that soldiers were more troubled by marital and economic problems than by the 'trauma of war' they had experienced. The researcher also offered counselling services in exit interviews to soldiers who had problems with their commanders on which the researcher would recommend for their transfer to other barracks especially closer to their families. When the researcher asked soldiers what they saw as important in assisting them in dealing with their family problems (which mostly involved them perpetrating domestic violence and low morale at work) they wanted some soft loans, at least 3 months leave and more time with their families. The researcher found that most soldiers were happy when they were given soft loans. Thus addressing both the economic and the psychological part of their 'suffering' was a useful strategy in ameliorating emotional pain. This gave me an interest in looking at approaches that used a broad intervention rather than just a psychological one. Although this has been my experience as an adult soldier, it is likely that child soldiers may have similar or different experiences depending on the context of the war. This is something this thesis aims to explore in detail.

Given this personal experience, the researcher was drawn to documenting the alternative healing strategies implemented in the post-conflict situation for child soldiers, by the Hero Book Project in partnership with the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) in Northern Uganda because they use a broad social and economic intervention as an alternative to the traditional PTSD approach. In this study the researcher used key informant interviews and data from a set of Hero Books made by six child soldiers.

1.2. Background of the Study

Child soldiering has remained central in Africa and the problem has continued unabated over the years with little social, cultural and economic intervention (Honwana, 2006). In Northern Uganda abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers returning home are in need of social and economic support and there is need to re-unify communities and children returning from war (Blattman and Annan, 2009). Lustig *et al*, (2004) notes that there is a high prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among children who have been involved in war and many children are in need of trauma informed-services. However, despite evidence for such mental health need, Keinzler (2008) argues that until now, there is no agreement on the public health value of the concept of PTSD and no consensus on the appropriate type of mental health care. Honwana (2006) notes those intervention strategies that are African centred need to be in place to address wartime suffering particularly abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers as well as the reality of those children who choose to join the ranks of adult combatants in Africa. Malose Langa poses a relevant question as*; to what extent do African informed therapies have the capacity to all the needs of forcibly displaced child soldiers in an African context considering the material resources to spearhead such economic projects?*(Langa, 2010). As the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) noted in 2005 little information exists with respect to which mental health interventions are appropriate for war traumatized children. This is complicated by lack of consensus on how to conceptualize trauma amongst abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers due to the phase in their development and the fact that they have been displaced from their families and communities from which they depend in terms of social, economic and emotional

support. This complication poses challenges to trauma service providers who might want to assist child soldiers in helping them to cope in the aftermath of the war especially in the reintegration process.

Again, the NCTSN (*ibid*) point out that little is also known about what trauma service providers are doing and which approaches they are taking to address the mental health needs of children who would have witnessed war atrocities.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

After more than three decades of debates over the universality and implementation of PTSD as a diagnostic criterion, it is now widely agreed that the kind of intervention strategy needed is more context specific to the trauma event. So the question is how do service providers working with child soldiers who had witnessed war, violence and atrocities respond to the need of healing the wounds of the experiences? And how do they assist in ending the suffering endured by these children? It is therefore the focus of this study to document the alternative healing strategies that have been put in place by the Hero Book initiative project in partnership with the TPO.

There is dearth of research with particular attention to what is being done by service providers helping children who had been involved in war, violence and torture. Studies in this area have mainly focused on the experiences of children participating in war while there is little knowledge on what is being done to assist them to come to terms with their families and communities which have been the target of war and violence. Honwana (2006) says that we also need to be concerned about what needs to be done to reverse the damage that has been done to children who have been involved both as agents of war and victims. In this case it is essential to understand how alternative healing strategies are put in place to assist child soldiers in an African context from an Afro-centric point of view. As, Malose Langa (2010) points out we need to look at the capacity of emerging alternative care in Africa in addressing the major social, economic and political needs of children who had witnessed war, torture and violence. In order to provide an insight into

this problem this issue will be integrated into this main research question. What alternatives healing approaches are there to the PTSD model when assisting forcibly displaced child soldiers in the African context?

1.3.1. Specific Research Questions

The specific research questions of this study are as follows:

i. What are the alternative therapeutic strategies to trauma that service providers use when assisting forcibly displaced child soldiers?

ii. How do service providers (re) conceptualise the discourse of 'trauma' in light of their experiences? Do we still need the concept of 'trauma' to address reality of forcibly displaced child soldiers?

iii. What are the displaced child soldier's experiences of war and what initiatives are set to respond to their experiences?

iv. How is healing of war trauma taking place? What are the changes and innovations they had introduced in 'trauma' care?

1.4. Aim of the Study

To learn about alternative therapeutic strategies service providers are using when assisting abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers.

1.5. Research Objectives

The research objectives are as follows:

- To document the alternative therapeutic strategies to the PTSD trauma model being used by trauma practitioners when dealing with forcibly displaced child soldiers.
- To find out the service providers own conceptualization of trauma in light of the intervention strategies they implement.
- To establish how the process of healing is spearheaded for forcibly displaced child soldiers when they are re-integrated into the community after abduction.

1.6. Rationale

This study situates itself within the Forced Migration Studies Programme (FMSP) on a research initiative funded by South African Netherlands Project on Alternative in Development (SANPAD) which seeks to study alternative therapeutic strategies to trauma among migrant populations in Africa and South Africa in particular.

This research aims to document alternative healing approaches to the PTSD model used with abducted and forcibly displaced child soldier's. In the case of abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers their social, economic and wartime experiences in particular are different from other children since they have been forced to leave their families and communities. Apart from that, they have been directly involved in war both as perpetrators and victims in the process. Whilst war is perceived to be an adult task children have increasingly been involved in the ranks and files of the rebels combatants. The context of forced displacement arises from the fact that children have been forced to leave their homes for military training in Southern Sudan. Thus during the war they are far from home and lack family support. In this case trauma service providers have adopted a broader therapeutic approach to assist them to adapt to a renewed social and economic environment when they are re-integrated into their communities. As the NCTSN (2005) point out although children who have been fighting in war may share some aspects of their experiences with internally displaced children, their experiences of war is purely distinct since they have been involved in killing people. Thus therapy considerations by service providers and intervention design in this case are tailored to address specific social and economic challenges faced by abducted and displaced child soldiers. Johnson (2007) argued that, children who have been involved in war often face social, economic and personal hardships-poverty, separation from family members, and challenges of cultural adaptation-that may affect their mental health and overall well-being. Thus there is need for service providers to have a broad intervention strategy.

This study takes a step ahead in seeking to understand the alternative healing strategies to PTSD model meant to assist abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers. Thus this research will contribute in giving an in-depth understanding on what actually motivated service providers working with forcibly displaced child soldiers in Northern Uganda to employ alternative therapeutic strategies to the trauma model. In addition it will explore how they also conceptualise trauma and trauma healing. As the NCTN (2005) points out that there is little information on other approaches taken to address the complex mental health needs of children abducted who have witnessed war and violence. It is expected that the research findings contribute to fill the gap on the conceptualization of trauma among service providers assisting forcibly displaced child soldiers and assist other providers on the alternative therapeutic strategies to the trauma model to help child soldiers.

There is dearth of research in Africa in general on what trauma service providers are doing when assisting forcibly displaced child soldiers. Trauma service providers included in this study have gone beyond the PTSD model. They have done this through counselling child soldiers who have returned from war and economically empowering them with goats and other agricultural inputs as a way of sustaining their lives communities directly affected by war and violence which assist in ameliorating war trauma.

Some past research has been confined and focused more on the experiences of African child soldiers and other non-Western societies while paying less attention to what trauma service providers are doing in assisting abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers. For example, Punamaki (1996) focused on post-traumatic stress disorder among Palestinian child soldiers from Gaza strip and West Bank and found that they were not experiencing symptoms of PTSD because their strength was derived from ideological and political support they enjoyed. However, among Cambodian war time children Sack *et al* (1993) found out that PTSD was high and there was need for intervention. Similarly, Bolea *et al* (2003) found that among the Sudanese boys, PTSD was prevalent because of

high exposure to trauma events before and during flight. Thus these studies have been more concentrated on war time children experiences while paying little attention to how service providers conceptualise trauma and the intervention they have adopted to facilitate healing. More importantly little is known on what has been done in circumstances of abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers which add the challenge of addressing the process of reintegration into the child soldiers communities. As Honwana (2006) in her Mozambican and Angolan child soldier studies argues the major concern is how to help child soldiers to cope with the aftermath of war. This adds to the complex nature and understanding of trauma and healing particularly for displaced child soldiers following their different experiences in varied African war contexts.

Previous studies show that the understanding of trauma is elusive. In this regard, it is important to focus on the alternative healing strategies to the PTSD model in an African context and learn what strategies service providers have adopted in assisting returning child soldiers in their communities. This can contribute to an improvement in African informed therapies in trauma care particularly for forcibly displaced child soldiers in Africa. The information may help other African informed trauma service providers in finding best approaches to help abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers.

1.7. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured in the following chapters:

Chapter 1

This chapter give an introduction, background to the study. The research questions and aims of the study would be explored.

Chapter 2

This chapter provides the literature review, gives the background of PTSD and analyse the social, economic and political critique of the PTSD model. The chapter also reviewed some child soldier's experiences and intervention that were put in place to help them in

Africa. The chapter also discusses existent in interventions used by trauma service providers with child soldiers'.

Chapter 3

This chapter explain in detail the methodology used in this study, the research techniques and the analysis were conducted.

Chapter 4

The chapter presents the research findings on what TPO/Hero Book Project have done in assisting forcibly displaced child soldiers.

Chapter 5

This chapter focuses on the evidence of children verbalising their trauma through drawing their wartime experiences. The chapter also show how child soldiers cope with their devastating war memories. The evidence of healing is presented and explained in detail. Child soldier's reveal their goals and show how best they can accomplish them in a specified time.

Chapter 6

This chapter give a conclusion on the alternative healing approaches to the PTSD model and assess the extent to which this research aims and goals have been accomplished

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the experiences of children who have been forced to join armed formations in Africa. Whilst experiences of children fighting in such armed wings are an important phenomenon, it is also essential to delve on the psychosocial impacts and how local communities have helped them to cope with the trauma of war. The literature review will focus on the following (i) understanding child soldiers and the role of local communities in reconnecting prior social and economic relations (ii) the involvement of the state in the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process and (iii) the understanding of children's drawings in re-telling their experiences of war.

2.1. Understanding Child Soldiers

There has been considerable debate on the involvement of children as soldiers in African civil wars. McCallin (1998) defines child soldiers as those boys and girls under the age of 18 coming from poor peasant families. In his argument he notes that it is important to know the background of children recruited to join the war as this helps in the process of

reintegrating them back to their communities. The position of child soldiers is also important as it helps in understanding the trauma children suffer in the aftermath of war. This is mainly characterized by their age; they are very young to experience war and violence.

The controversy has been centered on the concept of childhood which is characterized by dependency and discipline. As Honwana (2006) notes childhood is usually associated with innocence, weakness and dependence on an adult, parental guidance and nurturance. This is in great contrast to a child and a soldier whose task is to take orders, to kill and destroy.

However, there have been also other views surrounding child soldier recruitment. Machel (1998) argues that there is a powerful link between victimization and soldiering. Thus children who had lost their parents and friends may join armed wings as a way of survival; some seek revenge and may also view soldiering as an avenue for material gain.

The situation of child soldiers in Africa is both a social and psychological problem. Socially, Honwana (2006) argues that child soldiers find themselves in an unsanctioned position between childhood and adulthood. She further notes that whilst they are still children, they are no longer innocent, they perform adult task but they are not yet adults. Machel (1998) notes traditionally children have been regarded as unfortunate victims of war and not as actors in joining and participating in the war situation. She further argues that children are increasingly becoming victimized on a massive scale by attack, loss and sexual violence. It follows that the space in which child soldiers are forced into is one in which childhood and adulthood experience always rub against each other. Straker (1996) posits that the child world of games and fantasy is turned into one in which the child is trained as a soldier to be aggressive and behave wildly to fulfill the needs of war. For Honwana (2006) experiencing the two worlds for a child is worrisome as it provides a

new terrain for the emergence of new forms of selfhood and identity. Child soldiers tend to take responsibility of adult tasks at a tender age.

Similarly McCallin (1998) notes that child soldiers appear to receive the same training as adult soldiers. Whilst from a military perspective it is important to prepare recruits to endure for war during military training, for children it is somewhat immoral. McCallin (1998) argues that child soldiers are gradually apprenticed to become seasoned combatants by forcing them to be porters of ammunition and other heavy baggage. This also involves them carrying other lighter duties of patrolling and manning guarding posts in war zone.

Gibbs (1996) reiterates that the greatest challenge that child soldiers face during their involvement in war is separation from their families and friends from which they used to receive social, economic and emotional support. This the worry that most child soldiers and communities affected have in today's participation of children in civil wars. Thus in situations were help is initiated for these children, focus should be directed toward social, economic and emotional support and restoration of community relationship. Honwana (2006) added that war destroys social order and child soldiers re-create social roles according to the situation presented to them when they are conscripted in armed groups.

2.2. Consequences of Child Soldiering

The involvement of children in vicious wars in Africa has its effects on the well-being of children. Whilst Peters and Richards (1998) argue that children have rational reasons to join armed formations during civil wars in Sierra Leone due to their impoverished backgrounds, the consequences of the war were considered to be terrible for children's future. The effects of war for child soldiers range from loss of home, time, family and education. As Blattman and Annan (2009) note child soldiers are not educated, emotionally damaged and may need social and economic intervention and repair in their communities. Similarly, Akello (2009) notes in Northern Uganda ex-child soldiers suffer

from both physical and psychological interventions. She further notes that interventions have to be centered on ex-child soldiers' real needs as well as their psychological problems. Again Akello et al (2010) argues that trauma has been the most compounding problem for ex-child soldiers in Northern Uganda. In her recommendations she notes that both the local community and developmental NGOs need to work together if they are to tackle the effects of child soldiering.

The impact of war on child soldiers has been largely testified by the landmark study on child soldiers by Graca Machel termed the 'Machel study (1996)' which recommended that armed conflict in Africa is impacting on children at an unprecedented scale. The major findings of Machel study included: (i) a severe experience of sexual exploitation due to hunger and destitution, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases were pervasive; (ii) several child soldiers were deprived of education which armed conflict destroys and their forced conscription in the armed wing could not allow them to attend school (iii) psychosocial effects which were mainly caused by loss of families and friends, attack, separation and destruction of their homes and community. Whilst war can be experienced differently even within the same context, the common psychological symptoms seems to be the same across cultures. Machel (1998) notes child soldiers persistently experienced nightmares, boredom, social isolation, diminished interest from childhood activities and friends. Such psychological effects may persist for a long time and makes it difficult for child soldiers to be reintegrated back into the community. Although Graca Machel study (1996) did not examine the meanings of such symptoms to different cultures in light of the experiences of child soldiers in order to come out with a more consistent intervention, symptoms of war experiences have different meanings and so is intervention. This study will pay attention to the different understandings of trauma and the alternative responses available to help ex-child soldiers to cope with trauma.

2.3. Psychosocial Impacts on Former Child soldiers

There has been a tendency to conflate former child soldiers' experiences of war with social needs and refer to them as a war traumatized population. In some cases there has

been an over emphasis view of former child soldiers as a more resilient group leaving them with little or no social and economic intervention (Cairns', 1997). Some former child soldiers have been portrayed as resilient survivors who can adapt in a situation of adversity and cope with a large amount of war suffering. However, it is not very clear on how they will cope to the social and economic world and be able to focus on their future lives. Clancy and Hamber (2008) argue that war and violence affects total institutions like churches, schools and other community relations as well as social and economic structures in which people frame their suffering. It is against this background that the impacts of war for child soldier are a multiplicity of challenges which needs a multiple of interventions meant to address social, economic and political problems.

Terr (1999) notes that trauma in children exhibit different symptoms from one context to the other. Among the groups of children she had studied in the US, Californian children exhibited repeated dreams while other children from other places did not exhibit such symptoms. Other children experienced diminished expectations for the future. In both contexts the symptoms fall short of the diagnosis of PTSD.
Terr (1991) identified four symptoms of childhood trauma: (i) repeatedly perceived memories (ii) repetitive behaviours (iii) trauma specific fears (iv) changed attitudes about people, aspects of life and the future.

Following this, Terr (1991) argues that childhood trauma is a result of external factors which destroys past coping strategies and renders the child hopeless. It follows that children need an environment which has the capacity to provide them with enough social and economic resources to cope with the horrors of war and violence. For Terr (1991) all childhood traumas originate from outside and affects the inner self of the child. She notes that none of childhood trauma is generated within the child's own mind. It may be because children are still young to think too much, though in some cases they can do so. Children are a socially and economically dependent group; hence the idea is that children can be easily affected by social and economic problems around them and their families.

Kaser-Boyd (2004) notes that for children who had witnessed domestic violence, their coping resources are largely affected since their parents are violent. In her argument, she notes that children's ability to cope depends on a stable home. The home should be places were children's coping resources are strengthened. It follows that, it is important to rebuild family relations in order to deal with childhood trauma. Thus for Kaser-Boyd (2004) good family relations are at the centre of understanding children's social and emotional needs. In some situations were children are helped to cope with violence, Kaser-Boyd (1989) notes that children need to be helped to recover their memories through strategies such as art therapy. For Malchiodi (1998) art helps children to remember the past events in their lives. Children can draw their memories to retell their story of their past experiences. Kaser-Boyd (1989) argues that the home should not be violent so as to allow children to scribble on paper with fewer disturbances from the parents and the family at most.

Similarly, Garbarino (2008) notes children who had participated in war need a reassurance that they and their loved ones are safe and that their normal life is not yet over. It is important in this case to build the institutions in which children frame their sufferings. Garbarino (2008) argues that childhood trauma is likely to be as a result of poverty. In his study in Sudan, he found that children were living in poverty and they were experiencing a lot of malnutrition. Most of the children in Sudan were in need of food as well as going to school. Others were worried about the extreme poverty which they were not aware of how best they will come out of it. These arguments are similar to Terr (1991) who had found that childhood trauma is generated outside the child's own mind. It is therefore important to address the social, economic and political world of the child in order to deal with the trauma that is within the child's mind.

Similarly, Machel (1998) reminds that psychosocial effects are situated in a set of wider interacting factors to include food, shelter, health, security, poverty and other basic needs. This assertion counters the psychological views which tend to focus on former child soldiers emotional needs while paying less to day to day basic needs which are central to

the well being of children to enable them to re-join their world of games and fantasy. However, my argument here is not to say psychological intervention like counselling is not important, but it should be partnered with other social and economic approaches to attend to the needs of former child soldiers who would have lost their families, education and homes.

2.4. Critics to the PTSD Model

One of the greatest challenges facing child soldiers is that of their experiences of war being pathologised by external agencies meant to help them. Their experiences have been reduced to mere medical experiences guided by the medical model of trauma. Straker (1996) argues that excessive emphasis on war trauma and PTSD pathologies ex-child soldiers' problems and reduces them to medical terms on problems that are profoundly social and economical. He further notes that the medical model which is oriented toward the individual fails to recognise the inseparability of mental health and socio-economic context particularly in non-Western context. It follows that the interaction of both emotional and social intervention is essential to understand former child soldiers once they are back to the civilian world. Machel (1998) notes that it is normal for former child soldiers to exhibit PTSD symptoms as these are normal responses to highly stressful situations. It is then essential to understand the meanings of such symptoms in a given context and the interventions that should follow to help former child soldiers suffering from their past experiences of war. Sraker (1996) notes for children who had participated in war, poverty is the chronic stressor than PTSD. In most cases in the aftermath of the war, poverty continues to torment former child soldiers while PTSD loses its meaning in their daily lives.

It is also important to note that former child soldiers' responses to war differ from context to context (Cairns, 1997). Whilst it is not clear whether children exposed to conventional warfare for a longer time are likely to suffer more than those exposed over a shorter period of time, it can be argued that experiences of war varies with the context in which war and those fighting are involved. For Machel (1998) former child soldiers resilience

highly depends on the effectiveness of protective factors available to them such as the availability of a well-functioning care giver who can provide necessary emotional, social and economic support. Other factors that contribute to former child soldiers ability to cope with adversity include their age and sex. While there is no empirical study which supports this, boy child soldiers are likely to cope far much better than girl child soldiers. But in some situations girls may cope better than boys. So it is not yet clear which group may suffer most in the aftermath of war. Following this argument, Punamaki (1996) posits that few studies have focused on the connection between former child soldiers' psychological responses to war and specific socio-political context in which the war was experienced.

However, Cairns (1996) argues that some evidence suggests that girl child soldiers use emotional strategies such as wishful thinking and seek social affiliation more than boys. In so doing they are likely to cope better than their male counterparts. But, little evidence supports the idea. There is still need to do such research in the social sciences to substantiate any arguments on whether boys suffer more than girls when they participate in war. Thus while age and sex is important in issues of child soldiering and intervention, they are just starting points when dealing child soldiers who had been involved in the war as fighters in and outside their communities. Interventions for child soldiers coming back from war mostly starts with the state intervention on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) model.

2.5. Disarmament, Demobilisation and Re-integration of Child Soldiers

The DDR model is common as the starting point to transform former child soldiers to civilian status at a national level. Annan et al (2008) argues that reception centres for returning child soldiers are important as they help children to reintegrate in their communities. In such centres child soldiers are disarmed and demobilised followed by re-integration programmes in their communities. Although it is out of scope of this study to review all of these models in depth, it is essential to tease them out to give a general view of dealing with former child soldiers in Africa. Whilst demobilization and

disarmament are short-term intervention, reintegration is relevant as it helps to understand the social, economic and political interventions implemented to help child soldiers to cope with the social world in and outside their local communities.

In order to contextualize the DDR model in Africa, Dzinesa (2008) defines the terms as follows: Disarmament is the documentation, control and collection of arms from combatants. Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from the army. Reinsertion is an immediate financial package given to combatants on their discharge to help them to reintegrate in civilian life. Reintegration is a long term process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. For ex-child soldiers reintegration may include reworking with them and secure their places to both primary and secondary education with full social and economic support both from NGOs and local communities. This latter process (reintegration) is central in understanding the experiences and the meanings assigned by ex- child soldiers in the aftermath of war. The challenges they are facing, ways they use when they are dealing with such challenges and strategies used by trauma service providers to assist them to cope with the adversity of war and political violence.

The essence of the DDR model aims to minimize any form of violence recurring in and around Africa and to help out the individual ex-child soldier to start a new civilian life in their communities. Following this Knight and Ozerdem (2004) talk of post-discharge orientation in which ex-combatants need social and economic support to establish them in a civilian life. Dzinesa (2008) notes that successful reintegration means the basic needs of ex-combatants are met to sustain their daily lives. However following where the DDR model has been implemented ex-child soldiers such as in Mozambique, Angola, and Uganda to mention a few, few ex-child soldiers had benefitted from the project. Honwana (2006) notes the DDR model had only concentrated on the disarmament phase than the more long-term important transitory phase of reintegrating the ex-child soldiers. Van der Merwe and (2006) argue that dominant model (DDR) views and treats ex-combatants as

a threat to the society. They emphasized that the model view them as carriers of violence who can be (re)mobilized if they are not well reintegrated in civilian life.

Van der Merwe (2006) assert that reintegration is even more difficult to achieve in a society where a civilian life no longer exists that can accept an ex-soldier in their midst. For ex-child soldiers this will include family reunion and sending them back to school in which issues of stigma and social exclusion have to be resolved. It is often difficult for ex-combatants to relive a more civilian life in a society where social exclusion is common. The other argument is more psychological in the sense that reliving a civilian life in its totality is somehow difficulty in which more social and economic interaction with the local communities is a critical challenge. This hinders the successful implementation of the reintegration programme. Becoming a civilian means leaving behind all the experiences of a soldier and adopts a civilian status. In a broadest sense it is difficulty to forget what happened in the war. Thus community oriented programmes have to be implemented in which the local community participate as the main beneficiary of such intervention strategies to help ex-child soldiers to cope in the aftermath of war.

McCallin (1998) argues that such programmes may only assist some of these former child soldiers in the short term. In her argument she asserts that such psychosocial intervention should be done with caution as it tends to divert other important issues from the perspectives of former child soldiers and their families such as the need for counselling. She argues that family counselling helps to deal with the stigma that surrounds issues of rape, sex, etcetera in most cultural contexts (Barbra, 2008). Thus other healing strategies based on community beliefs may be also important to help ex-child soldiers to cope with the effects of war and it helps the locals to understand children as part of them again.

2.6. Contextualising Social Suffering and Community Healing

Social suffering was coined by Good and Arthur Kleinman in the 1980s and they referred to it as the total problems including social, cultural, legal, economic and political faced by survivors of war and political violence (Kapteijns and Richters, 2010). For ex-child soldiers healing at community level has been important over the years in post conflict societies. In Mozambique reintegration of child soldiers took place through community purification of rituals in which traditional healers *(Curanderas)* cleansed out the evil spirits which were believed to have contaminated the child soldier (Honwana, 2001). For Honwana (ibid) blood of a chicken was spread around and on the child and a ritual place to cleanse him/her and the chicken was then cooked and offered to the ancestors as a sacrifice meal and thanksgiving for protection of the child. The argument here is that ritual cleansing purified ex-child soldiers from the bad deeds of the war and the spirit of killing as well as to open a new future for troubled children.

Barbra (2008) reveals that traditional healers invoke the ancestral spirits of the ex-child soldier to help them deal with evil war deeds and seal the dirty past. They did so to lay war traumas to rest and open a way to reconciliation with the community. In this case rituals serve as an acknowledgement of the bad deeds of the war and they help ex-child soldiers to be reintegrated back in the community.

Similarly, Machel (1998) notes that stress is a social construct and the response to it for ex-child soldiers is socially influenced by culture. Green and Wessells (1996) argue that in Angola ex-child soldiers who were experiencing sleepless nights due to nightmares, the community believed that they were being haunted by the unavenged spirits of those they killed during the war. So the need was to deal with the spiritual contamination. It follows that, failure to address ex-child soldiers spiritual contamination may lead to community rejection and viewing them as a threat (Wessells, 1997). Socio-cultural beliefs are central in dealing with ex-child soldiers for them to be accepted by the local community. As Machel (1998) notes, trauma is not an individual phenomenon but is socially understood as a communal and manifestation of social disorder. For Machel (1998), to talk about the ex-child soldier may violate the views of collectivist societies.

However, for intervention to be successful it is important to understand what children want in their lives. This can be done through children re-telling their stories either through games or drawing their past experiences. Whilst available literature argues that such intervention re-traumatises ex-child soldiers, it can be argued that ex-child soldiers should not be forced to re-tell their past and they should select what to re-tell.

2.7. Putting Children's Drawings into Perspectives of Trauma Healing

Malchiodi (1998) notes children's drawings express their emotions and personality in which they represent the inner worlds depicting various thoughts and feelings which represent different aspects of the child's world. She argues that children's drawings express feelings which language cannot. In this case drawings allow children to self-express themselves without necessarily probing them. Drawing enables vulnerable children a creative space to re-tell the memories of their past and to rebuild future aspirations of a child (Welvering, 2006). Whist drawing is fun and represents a world of fantasy, for children it brings in the memories of the war and reveals best ways in which children want to be assisted by the people around them. Malchiodi (1998) notes drawing is an extension of children's play and activities with less direct investigation into their thoughts. She argues that children draw specific figures and common themes such as houses and trees which reflect perceptions and attitudes about their inner thought and the social environment.

2.8. Contextualising Children's Drawings

Children's drawings vary with context in which they are created. Following this, drawings differ according from the experiences of a child. For example drawings of children who had witnessed domestic violence may differ from those who participated in war. Malchiodi (1998) argues that children's drawings are affected by age, the motivation to draw and the relationship with the facilitator. For Malchiodi (1998) children's drawings are centred on three aspects, their (i) memories (ii) imagination and (iii) real life.

Children drawings involve their memories of the past and what they need for their future. Malchiodi (1990) notes that when children draw they try to recall their past. However, she argues that drawing from memory is difficult especially for traumatized children. Cohen and Cox (1995) reveals that imaginative drawing helps to understand children's past but is problematic as children can not remember everything they saw in the past. However, real life drawings seem to be the most common, when children draw the social environment around them with common themes like their houses.

2.9. Representation of trauma through children's drawings

Children's drawings help to explore their emotional lives. As Malchiodi (1998) argues for children who have witnessed and involved in violence are reluctant to talk about their experiences. According to Clacherty (2006) children who choose to re-tell their stories through drawing create 'thick' stories. For her, an account which seems to be a passive experience is turned to one in which children is survivors of war and violence. Re-telling ex-child soldier stories provide children with a space in which they self-express themselves without fear and destruction (Janzen and Janzen, 1999). For example among Tutsi child soldiers who had witnessed war in Rwanda they draw their early flight of genocide massacres and the way their parents were killed by the Hutu. Jansen and Jansen (1999) argues that the drawings that child soldiers made show how they had lost important structures like churches, schools and houses which were important in their lives. In this case drawings help to understand children's needs to cope with the social environment.

According to Terr (1990) children who are depressed execute images with little detail. Malchiodi (1990) added that such children might have lost internal resources and interest to concentrate on the colours and other detailed features of the drawings. In such cases children may just scribble on the paper with less emphasis on the image to be drawn. It

follows that the capacity to express themselves is withered away by the horrific traumatic events (Malchiodi, 1998).

However, it has been argued that not all children who had witnessed violence may reveal their trauma through drawings. Some children may execute images which depict violence but may not be traumatised. It can be argued that, images of violence do not necessarily mean children have experienced trauma. Malchiodi (1990) argues that in interpreting children's drawings a more phenomenological approach has to be adopted to avoid imposing assumptions about content and meaning. Malchiodi (1998) argued that in using a phenomenological approach a 'not knowing' approach has to be used in order to have a multi-meaning of children's drawings. It means that when looking at a child's drawing a broader analysis should be applied to successfully interpret it.

2.10. Resilience

There has been some recent work on psycho-social healing for vulnerable children that focuses on the concept of resilience. Some social thinkers related to resilience among vulnerable children have described ways in which a child can cope in the context of vulnerability. Grotberg (1995:5) defines resilience as, "universal capacity which allows a person, group or community to prevent or minimize or overcome the damaging effects of adversity." So, resilience may be understood in terms of the risks involved in daily lives of vulnerable children and the protective factors available to the child to cope with the social, economic and political environment. Bala (1996) identified four levels at which resilience can be built in children which include (i) reducing stressors, (ii)strengthening and supporting the use of existing protective factors within the child(the family and community), (iii) broadening the coping alternatives and (iv) strengthening and opening future perspectives. This perspective can be useful to examine the impact of the strategies and interventions to deal with ex-child soldiers.

2.11. Summary

This chapter has focused on the mechanisms and processes involved when dealing with ex-child soldiers in an African context. Whilst psychological interventions such as counselling are considered to be important when working with former child soldiers; the literature has teased out the need to take into account the social, economic and political context when trying to understand and deal with war trauma. Some interventions on child soldiers and reintegration have also been reviewed and the concept of resilience has been introduced. However, what lacks from such interventions is that child soldiers' voices are not heard in the process of healing. Communities either perform rituals or work with non-governmental organisations with less emphasis on the voice of the displaced child soldier. This is one of the aspects that make the analyses of the Hero Book/TPO healing process worthwhile as they are child centred and aim at giving children a voice to verbalize their wartime experiences. Not only do the Hero Book/TPO project helps ex-child soldiers to talk about their past through drawing but it brings in other community members as facilitators of the Hero Book drawings. This latter aspect reconnects the social relationships and trust which would have been destroyed by war and political violence. The study explores the Hero Book healing process in partnership with TPO Uganda with former child soldiers in Northern Uganda. Their approaches are both community and essentially child focused.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the process of data collection. In order to understand the TPO and Hero Book helping work the study was grounded on a qualitative methodology.

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984:5), "qualitative research refers in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data, peoples own written or spoken words and observable behaviour." Thus in order to understand therapist's strategies in their helping work different techniques was employed. The techniques used to inform the case study include in-depth interviews with key informants in Cape Town and Johannesburg and secondary data from six hero books made by child soldiers. Some healing strategies such as drawing which was a central approach were further analysed to give an in-depth understanding of the psychosocial support given. The researcher also used his own military experience in the DRC to explore some meanings of the drawings and written words by child soldiers.

This study was also grounded on case studies in order to understand the healing approaches used by therapist to assist displaced child soldiers'. A case study refers to the study of a specific case and has an in-depth understanding of the results found therein and be able to draw conclusions (www.wisegeek.com). In one way it is defined as a puzzle in which a problem has to be solved. In order to come up with a conclusion, a case study has to fully describe for the readers to be able to understand and analyse it for the purpose of reaching a certain solution. Before the researcher goes to the field for the case study the researcher found more information on the internet and the website of the case study. When the researcher was in the field of study, he interviewed knowledgeable people/experts in the field of study. Some form of questions that were asked included questions that helped in drawing and understanding experts/therapists opinions for example on the conceptualisation of trauma. The researcher asked the following questions about the Hero Book: What can you tell me about how the Hero Book developed? What do you think should be different in terms of assisting forcibly displaced children? What is your own conceptualisation of trauma?

Some people cannot manage to go to the field of study were the case study was studied. Thus it is also important to bring the case study to the reader by fully explaining its background, location and how the project started. This will also help the reader to draw

his/her own conclusions about the case under study. The following is a description of the Hero Book Project and TPO in Northern Uganda.

3.1. Research Techniques

This research was done using a set of research tools which included in depth interviews with key informants, secondary data from the six Hero Books made by abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers'.

3.1.1. In-depth Interviews with Key Informants

In-depth interviews were done face- to- face with key informants served as the primary source of data in this research and set the platform in understanding the hero book and the healing process with child soldiers. The key informants explored how they use the hero book in their helping work and outlined the changes they had introduced in psychosocial support and more importantly how they conceptualize trauma and PTSD in light of their experiences. Through interviews with service providers the researcher explored how the social, economic and political experience informs the kind of trauma services they offered to assist child soldiers to cope with war trauma and to normalise their lives. The experiences of service providers when assisting forcibly displaced child soldiers were also explained in detail, since working with communities that have been destroyed by war means that there is a lot of support needed both by the abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers and the community at large to mend their social structures and social relationships destroyed during the war. As Kleinman and Good (1985) note war and political violence alter interpersonal relationships in developing communities and healing has to take place at a collective level than at the individual.

While researchers conducting qualitative research may develop a focus as they collect data, they do not approach the research with rigid specific questions to answer (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).The open-ended questionnaire were used to allow therapists to answer and express their perspectives and motives freely on the therapies they use when assisting

child soldiers who had witnessed war, violence and torture, instead of the structured ones that may have limited their responses.

In conducting qualitative research Strauss (1987) notes that qualitative research encourages to probe in order to address specific research questions. The researcher asked detailed questions in order to understand the healing process when assisting returning child soldiers from war. Similarly Bogdan and Biklen (1992) assert that in collecting data qualitative researchers move from the general to the specific area of study. In this case probing the responses enabled the researcher to understand therapist perspectives on the effectiveness of their therapies. Again this enables the researcher to cultivate close relationship with therapists.

3.1.2. Secondary Data

The researcher also used TPO Northern Uganda project reports and the hero book anthology. A Hero Book Anthology is a collection of forcibly displaced child soldiers own written/drawn stories their experiences of war. The child soldiers' stories are full of experiences of abduction, war, torture and how they later managed to survive and return to their families and communities. These hero books helped in understanding child soldiers own written and drawings were further analysed to understand the healing process. My military expertise in the DRC war situation helped in interpreting the drawings made by child soldiers. Similarly Bickman (1998) talks of documentary evidence in bringing additional records and value when doing research. Documentary evidence contribute to the richness of the research findings by adding missing information from the field thereby helping in analysing primary data.

3.2. Ethical Considerations

Ethics are defined as what is or are not legitimate to, or what moral research procedure involves (Neuman, 2000). The researcher considered ethical guidelines in this study which was important during and after the research. Researching experiences of trauma-service providers who had assisted child soldiers is one of the most difficult tasks since they had assisted a vulnerable group. Thus maintaining high ethical standards in this

study was vital in doing no harm to trauma service providers and the child soldiers. The researcher ensured that participation from therapists in the research was a voluntary exercise that is respondents were not coerced at all.

Whist confidentiality was important in this research, it was somehow difficult to maintain since the study focused on case studies of service provider which had already been named. The researcher used the organisation names, places were the child soldiers came from as indicated in their hero books. The hero books are entitled to anyone as Asio Betty p.59 in her Hero Book say, "I want all people to read my Hero Book so that they can also learn how to overcome obstacles/problems". However, a copy of the full research report will be given to REPSSI so that they may add the findings of this research to their data base as Jonathan Morgan the Knowledge Development Manager had indicated that it is important to have such kind of work from this study for reference purposes and also for programming reasons and improve hero booking in future.

The participants were ensured that the research was only for academic purposes only and that the findings of the research will not harm them.

3.3. Gaining Entry

Bogdan and Biklen (1992:33) note that "getting into a setting involves a process of managing your identity, projecting an image of yourself and self-confidence that will maximize the chances of the researcher in gaining access". The researcher was part of a bigger study within Forced Migration Studies Programme under the South African Netherlands Project on Alternative Development (SANPAD). This link facilitated the research to the case study. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) notes that field researchers usually try to cultivate close relationships with one or two respected and knowledgeable people in the early stages of the research. Access to the Regional Psychosocial Initiative (REPSSI) was done through telephoning and e-mailing the Knowledge Development Manager Jonathan Morgan in Cape Town who is the gate keeper and main key informant since he is the one who started the Hero Book Project and had worked with the child

soldiers in Northern Uganda. He gave me access to the anthology of hero stories with six hero books made by child soldiers in which child soldiers re-tell their stories. He also linked the researcher to the hero book trainer in Johannesburg. Through telephoning and emailing rapport was built which enabled the setting of dates and time for the interviews in both Cape Town and Johannesburg.

3.4. Data Analysis: Thematic Content

Patton (1999:1190) notes that, "although many rigorous techniques exist for increasing the quality of data collected, at the heart of much controversy about qualitative findings are doubts about the nature of the analysis" He further argues that the qualitative researcher has to be methodical in reporting and in the process of data analysis to permit others to judge the findings of the subject under study. The data was transcribed and only those parts that assist in giving meanings to the study were analysed. Child soldiers drawings and own written words were pasted and analysed too in order to reveal the healing processes and what they consider important in their day to day lives and what hinders them from benefiting from achieve their goals as they portray their problems as big like an elephant. Whilst the researcher do not want to generalise experiences of war to all soldiers, the researcher only used his own wartime experiences in analysing child soldiers' experiences of the war. My wartime memories are also reflected in child soldiers' drawings and this helped me to provide a description of the environment depicted in the drawings. As Engel (2005) notes analysis can be from the content of the story (in which meaning is derived), the form, underlying meaning and idioms used that may convey a certain meaning on the subject. Themes were identified and developed from the field notes in consultation with the supervisors. Literature review from previous studies was used to analyse and interpret alternative healing processes.

3.5. Reflexivity

In social sciences research there is a growing recognition for intersubjectivity approach. The researchers experience as a soldier helps to shape the narratives and interpret

children's stories. Such past experience helps to interpret the analyses of children's drawings. England (1994) argues that an intersubjective approach means the researcher and the people being researched have shared meanings. Steier (1991) defined social reflexivity as telling ourselves a story about ourselves.

Whilst it is true that people experience war and violence differently, it is important to note that people who have experienced war can understand it better than those who have not. Thus narratives told are a result of one's past experiences which affect the output of the research. An understanding of war assists in shaping the analyses of child soldiers' experiences. Jackson (1985) notes that reflexivity offers an opportunity to convey the inner life and texture of the diverse social enclaves of a particular groups in a society. Thus in situations where an intersubjective approach is used it provides an insight to the outside world when researchers investigate social lives among their own group.

Denzin (1989) argues that the orientation of researchers is highly shaped by their historical background which includes their social, economic and political interests. It therefore follows that social research is affected by the social processes to include the researcher's interests. For example feminist research begins with their own experiences to spearhead their agenda for emancipation in a world dominated by men.

Steier (1991) notes that reflexivity brings in the identity of the researcher and reveals how such identity helps in understanding the people being studied. Thus reflexivity is not only a confession of the self but a reflection in the processes of research. The researcher's experience of being a soldier helps in understanding ex-child soldiers' drawings. England (1994) argues that when the analyst's self is exercised through out the research process it helps to give a complete output of the research. The researcher becomes an instrument of the whole research. In this case it helps to understand the power relations between the researcher and those being researched. However, reflexivity is not an end in itself but it is a means to an end in social research. There is need to move away from the self as

experiences differs from one context to the other. Thus applying one's experiences to the 'Other' is tantamount to undermine other people's values, culture and interests.

3.6. Study Limitations

This study had its own limitations. Dealing with trauma service providers who are working with child soldiers is sensitive since they are minors and in this case service providers assumed guardianship. Hence they were protective of children. However for this study it is interesting that the service providers had acknowledged the study as helpful to them since it will assist them in programming their helping work.

A further limitation of this study was that the researcher was not able to observe the therapies in progress or attend any of the therapies sessions. The researcher relied on what the therapist said and he was also not able to speak to the child soldiers' in order to have an added voice of their experiences and challenges they faced during and after war. However a critical analysis of six hero books was used to assist in analysing child soldiers own experiences. The researcher relied on TPO project reports to reveal and understand their helping work. Since the main aim of this research was to achieve an understanding of alternative healing to the PTSD model the fact that the researcher did not talk to forcibly displaced child soldiers or observe therapies in progress it did not constitute a problem to achieve such a goal because the service providers explored alternative therapies in a detailed manner.

3.7. REPSSI's Hero Book Project

This study made reference to alternative healing strategies among child soldiers in Northern Uganda through the Hero Book Project. It is important to understand how the hero book started to work with children to provide psychosocial healing. According to REPSSI started in 2001 as a response to orphans living with Human Immuno Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) at Masiye Camp Salvation Army Church in Zimbabwe (www.repsi.org). Through the support of non-governmental organisations such as the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA) the organisation

developed psychosocial support tools for vulnerable children such as orphans. The Hero Book Project was one of these tools. In 2007 they started to include children who were affected by conflict in countries such as Uganda. As REPSSI's Knowledge Development Manager says he was curious as to what significance the hero book could add in assisting abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers. The Hero Book worked in partnership with TPO Uganda to assist displaced child soldiers to verbalize their war time experiences.

3.8. The Transcultural Psychosocial Organization in Northern Uganda (TPO)

TPO Uganda started to work in Northern Uganda in the early 1990s as a response to the consequences of war and violence to assist child soldiers to cope in the aftermath of the war. The organisation has been involved in providing individual counselling and economic empowerment not only to child soldiers but to families and communities directly affected by war. For example they have provided displaced child soldiers' with goats and agricultural inputs to families affected by war. This organisation has worked in partnership with the Hero Hook Project to help children to retell their stories through writing and drawing. It is their community-centred nature of their intervention programmes that are of interest to this study.

This chapter has presented how data was gathered, and some of the challenges encountered. It must be noted that dealing with child soldiers is a political issue in as much as it is a security one in most developing countries and therapist working with children may be protecting children for fear of further victimisation by the rebels in Northern Uganda.

The next chapter starts by exploring the background of the Ugandan war and reveals how children became a target of war and violence as fighters. Then findings of this study will be presented after an understanding of the background of the war so as to tease out the appropriate intervention strategies.

Chapter 4: An Alternative to PTSD: The TPO/Hero Book Intervention with Forcibly Displaced Child Soldiers in Northern Uganda.

4.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and the analysis on the work done by the TPO/Hero Book Project in assisting abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers'. The chapter starts by exploring the background of the war in Northern Uganda and show how children became involved in the war.

4.1. Background of War in Northern Uganda

Civil war in Northern Uganda is still continuing and the war has been there for more than three decades now and of interest to this study is the inclusion of child soldiers as perpetrators, victims and survivors of the same war. What is important now is how healing process is being done by different psychosocial support organisation to ameliorate the pain suffered by these children. As Annan et al (2008) notes thousands of children have been both the primary victims and actors of war in Northern Uganda.

How the Northern Ugandan war started is somehow spelt differently as Giller (1998) argues the war had already begun before 1985 in Southern Uganda where there has been controversy over economic control. However, Blattman and Annan (2009) trace the developments of war in northern Uganda and found that historically Uganda economic power rest in the south while political power is predominantly in the north. The war started in 1986 when the southern rebels overthrew an ethnic Acholi dominated government in the north. Annan et al (2008) reiterates that although other guerrillas settled for peace, other refused to do so and they joined the Acholi leader Joseph Kony under the Lord Resistance Army and decided to move on with the battle with the belief of conquering the entire Uganda in order to restore the Acholi to a more prominent position. For Blattman and Annan (2009) the decision to fight and continue the war was very unpopular with the public, hence the LRA received minimal support with few recruits and material support thus they resorted to looting homes and abduction of children. For the LRA children were a cheaper resource and they can be taught the LRA political ideology. The abducted children were to serve as combat soldiers, luggage carriers and sex slaves and they were to be trained in Southern Sudan and DRC. However, the Acholi people were disappointed by the war and after three years of fighting they resorted and joined the government sponsored militia. However in 1991, Joseph Kony ordered the brutal killings of Acholi civilians who had betrayed him in this road to power. Blattman and Annan (2009) notes that although the Lord Resistance Army popularity was at its lowest ebb in the early nineties, in 1994-1995 LRA got support in form of weapons and enough ground to train its militias. The support from the Southern Sudan came after the government of Sudan realised that the government of Uganda was supporting Sudanese rebels to topple the government.

Annan et al (2008) note that from 1996 onwards the abduction of children from northern Uganda for training in southern Sudan increased drastically since the much needed military support was squeezed out in Sudan. Blattman and Annan (*ibid*) found out that more than 80 000 children were abducted by the LRA for training in Sudan to fight against the Ugandan Army. However, since 1999 more than eighty percent of abducted

children escaped during fighting when there was less supervision of personnel (Blattman and Annan, 2009). Since then an Amnesty has been granted by the government of Uganda for communities to accept those children returning from rebellious war in which they were forcibly conscripted by disgruntled militias. After the issuance of a warrant of arrest by the International Criminal Court (ICC) to Joseph Kony and his four rebel leaders, abduction decreased and a number of children were able to return to their respective home and communities. Giller (1998) talks of silence among those who had returned from war. She attributed the inability to talk to the Ugandan culture, but of interest they did not found spaces to talk about their experiences of war and abduction. For Tankink (2007) the cultural predisposition to keep silent coincides with the state policy of discouraging people to commemorate their war experiences.

The map of Africa below shows Uganda, DRC, and Southern Sudan were abducted children were trained as rebels so that they can fight the Ugandan government forces and the Acholi people in Northern Uganda since they were accused of being against the rise of Konny a spiritual gifted Acholi LRA rebel commander.

Map 1: Africa[4]

[4]Source: http://www.africamap.com/



The abducted children were abducted and displaced from Northern Uganda for training in Southern Sudan. As Blattman and Annan (2009) notes that the government of Southern Sudan supported the rise of the LRA rebels since Southern Sudan rebels were also trained and supported by the Ugandan government. The map below shows the detailed parts of Northern Uganda from which children were abducted. According to Blattman and Annan (2009) UNICEF report more than half of the children involved in the Ugandan war were abducted from Northern Uganda in areas such as Kitgum, Gulu, Pader, Lira, Kotido and Arua. Thus in terms of humanitarian intervention Blattman and Annan (ibid) note that more social, economic and psychosocial help was directed towards the Northern parts of the country.

Map 2: Uganda[5]



[5] Source: http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/northern-uganda/maps.php.

The background has teased out how children became conscripted in the LRA ranks as fighters against their own families. It is important here to focus on how the TPO Uganda and the Hero Book assisted these child soldiers.

4.2. Repairing 'Wounds' of War

It is important to note that the Hero Book Project did not work as a 'stand alone' project but as an additional alternative healing strategy to respond to child soldiers war experiences. Thus before the child soldiers made Hero Books they were assisted by TPO and the local community through economic empowerment and ritual cleansing respectively. Schools also helped through involving abducted children in dramas and music and churches as well. The idea of the Hero Book was to break the silence by assisting them to re-tell their stories in a more participatory way through drawing their war experiences in a more narrative way. What is interesting is that the hero book utilized available local community resources by employing facilitators from children's communities. Children could then identify the person whom they wanted to work with and in cases where external assistance was needed it was offered by TPO to facilitate the healing process.

4.2.1. TPO Uganda Spearhead Healing?

TPO started to work with communities and children affected by war in Northern Uganda in the early 1990s. Initially their work was helping people living with HIV and AIDS in a conflict ridden situation. But with an increased number of children returning from abduction, they then moved on to target communities highly destroyed by conflict to socially integrate them by empowering them through irrigation projects, agricultural training and provision of farming inputs. They also worked with the Acholi spiritual leaders to provide the much needed traditional rituals to cleanse child soldiers of the evil spirits of war, including those angered spirits of people killed during the war. TPO supported community cleansing rituals by providing goats that would be used as a sacrifice to the ancestors of the child soldiers.

According to TPO (2008), their child protection approach entails identifying and mitigating the problems that hinder children to enjoy normal life development. They aim to create an environment that is supportive to children who have been involved in war. TPO (2008) argues that this approach of identifying and dealing with the problem child soldiers are facing in their context is underpinned by a process of identifying the circle of support around the child. In order to achieve this TPO identify community support structures including duty bearers at village level. For example TPO does not only encourage and fund former child soldiers to go to school but they support activities that encourage the child's self esteem like sports which strengthen them to cope positively with the social environment around them.

TPO (2008) support both communities and individuals affected by war and violence. For TPO conflict resolution and peace building begins in an individual mind. They argue that an individual has to make peace with himself before he may be able to make peace with others. So it means an individual child's social and economic development in terms of livelihood needs is important before any social integration in the community. They also promote peace building and conflict resolution at community level, by mobilizing community discussion forums in which traditional ways of dealing with conflicts are used, and elders have a role in resolving problems within such communities. In such traditional dispute resolutions they encourage ex-combatants to take social roles in mediation. So for TPO there is a continuous learning relationship within communities.

4.2.2. Economic Empowerment Programme: Farming

TPO started to work with communities particularly families who have been displaced by war and violence. As a way of reintegrating such families, TPO provides agricultural inputs to achieve self sustainability (TPO, 2009). For a continuous learning process to enhance an incorporation of modern farming methods in such communities devastated by war and violence, TPO employs agricultural extension officers who supervise such farming projects. In a case study of the Teso community which is one of the communities affected by war, they described TPO as an agent for development and refer to themselves

as ‘new farmers’ imparted with knowledge and skills not only for themselves but to teach others in the community as well. In their narratives they expected more harvests after TPO input than ever before.

Apart from supporting agricultural activities within such communities, according to their (2008) report TPO target and ensure food security to returnees from abduction particularly children and their families at household level. Households are organised into groups of 15 families to ensure proper and manageable groups. The targeted families receive proper nutritional training to feed former child soldiers. They also invite other government and non-governmental organisations to partner in community development for the well being of child soldiers. One such organisation includes the Hero Book process which will be discussed later in this study on its helping process. One of the best projects done by TPO is the spearheading of social integration of child soldiers back into their communities by providing those children with goats to sustain their lives. The child soldiers identify problems that are obstructing them from achieving their intended goals. A number of children mentioned school fees, loss of their parents and friends as their main obstacles inhibiting them from attaining goals. In the children’s narratives in the hero books they describe how such goats may reproduce and be sold to pay for school fees and other social and economic challenges for them to reach their goal

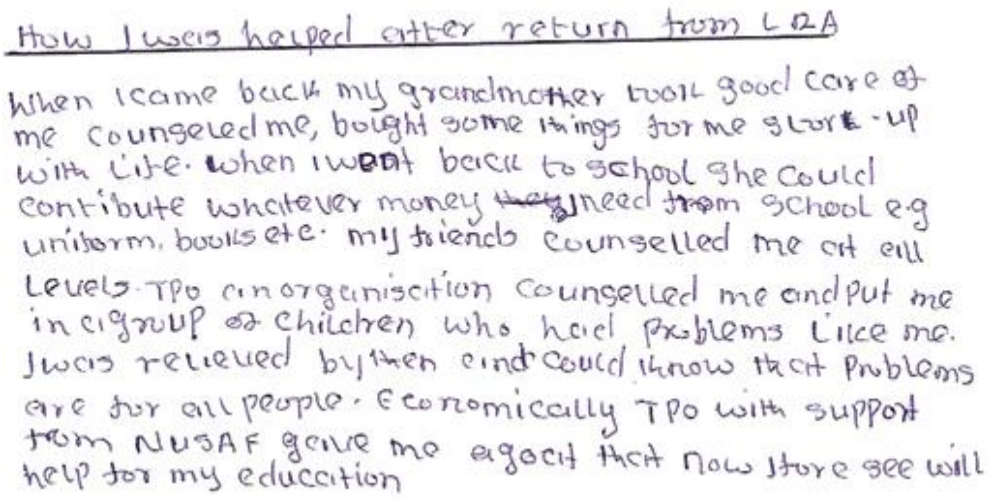
4.2.3. TPO Working towards Material Reparations

> …and the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization in Northern Uganda helps these children by giving them **goats** for them to have their own money supporting them to go back to school and so on (interview, Jonathan Morgan)



Illustration 1 by Simon Omache aged 15. TPO Uganda. This is when TPO gives children goats.

The role that TPO has played in the lives of the child soldiers who participated in the Hero Book project is obvious in this drawing from a hero book. In the above drawing the child portrays TPO Uganda as a big man. Children are showing the importance of TPO in their lives in providing them with what they consider important in helping them to come to terms with the past. It is clear from an analysis of the hero books that the children saw the help they were given with economic issues as important to their healing. Below Asio Betty aged 15 explained how she was assisted by TPO to cope both socially and economically and go to school.


How I was helped after return from LRA

When I came back my grandmother took good care of me counseled me, bought some things for me start-up with life. When I went back to school she could contribute whatever money I need from school e.g uniforms, books etc my friends counselled me at all Levels. TPO an organisation counselled me and put me in a group of children who had problems like me. I was relieved by then and could know that problems are for all people. Economically TPO with support from NUSAF gave me a goat that now have see will help for my education

Text 1

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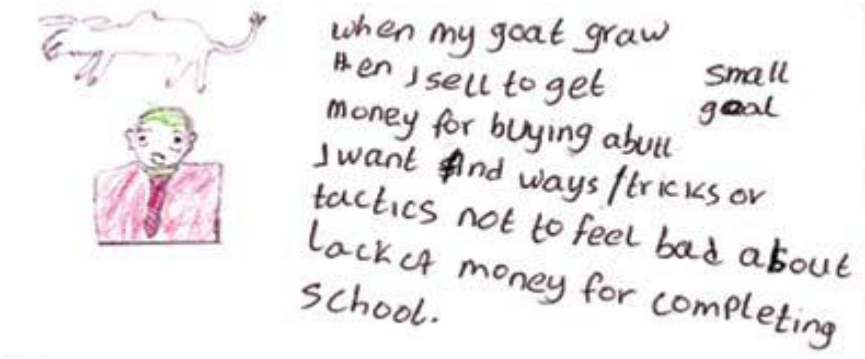
Betty was helped to get livestock which helped her to contribute to her own schooling. What is also important from the extract above is that child soldiers were assisted by TPO with counseling. TPO employs the old people in the local community to provide the much needed counseling. It is interesting because healing was provided in multiple layers within the community. War and violence had destroyed their economic means of production hence; giving them goats was one way of helping them cope with the social and economic environment created by civil conflict.

For Clancy and Hamber (2008) war and violence often destroy the constituent parts of the community in which people give and frame meanings. For them individuals are often rendered outsiders when their institutions are destroyed thereby robbing individuals of the necessary coping resources they use to come to terms with situations experienced in the past. Hamber and Palmary (2009) reiterate that reparations are done to deal with the

devastating consequences of political violence and benefits have to be directed to the victims of such violence. As Giller (1998) found the overriding problem for Ugandans was poverty since their livestock was taken away by the rebels during wartime. In this case for TPO compensation through providing livestock was an important part of the healing strategy among children who were involved in war, violence and torture.

As Hamber and Wilson (2002) found material reparations can be opening spaces for bereavement, addressing trauma and ritualizing symbolic closure. For these authors reparations acknowledge and recognize individual suffering and place it within a new officially sanctioned history of trauma.

So, reparation is one way of recognizing and valuing the victim suffering. As one child soldier Simon Omache in the hero book say;



Text 2

Small goal

When my goat grow then I sell to get money for buying about I want and ways/ tricks or tactics not to feel bad about lack of money for completing.

Similarly Hamber and Wilson (2002) assert that when symbols are personalized they can concretize a traumatic event and help re-attribute responsibility. They argue that, "the latter stage is important because labeling responsibility can appropriately redirect blame towards perpetrators and relieve the moral ambiguity and guilty survivors often feel" (Hamber and Wilson, 2002:38). It follows that the idea of giving goats to abducted children who have been separated from parents, family and close friends serves as a node

in the grieving process which survivors ought to be allowed to go through so that they can come to terms with reality. Survivors can link the past to the present so that they are able to understand it as an abnormal process which they had come through with certain difficulties. As Hamber and Wilson (*ibid*) found survivors often externalize their grief and seek to come to terms with it, and more importantly reparations can mark a new beginning with new possibilities in life. They may represent that an individual had allowed letting the bygones be bygones after a mastery of the past.

Reparations may be important in dealing with the stigma surrounding child soldiers, as Honwana (2006) notes war as space in which child soldiers kill people and often they are contaminated with the evil spirits of destruction and death. So raising livestock brings them into the realm of life and hope.

However there are problems with reparations as they may help in creating deviance. Reparations are like labels. As Kleinman and Tsung-Yi Lin (1981) argue these labels may help in creating secondary deviance that include cultural expectations about how deviants with a particular label should behave. For example ex-combatants may be expected to act in a specific way. From social labeling theorist perspectives, such expectations may then function as self-fulfilling prophecy. However, whatever may be the consequences of reparations, they are functional for an individual and the community per se in providing the necessary steps in the healing process. In my case, labeled as a hero after the DRC war I felt recognized for the cause of war and this helped me in understanding the experiences I had gone through as worthwhile.

Hamber and Palmary (2009) assert that whilst it is possible for individuals to come to terms with the past, more intervention should be at the community level. TPO has managed to economically empower families with agricultural inputs and goats so that they self sustain themselves. But to what extent can healing be achieved through material reparations such as giving goats to child soldiers? Hamber and Wilson (2002) argues that neither apology nor material reparation can have a total closure on all psychological pain

suffered by the survivor; instead they are only a beginning of the healing process. Similarly Hamber and Palmary (2009) argue that there is often a problem from an individual perspective since reparation for human rights violations is trying to repair the irreparable. Their argument was that neither symbolic nor material reparation can 'bring back the dead'. To them reparations are nominal and they are not a conclusive way of dealing with past trauma. TPO seems to recognize this as their intervention does not stop with reparation in the form of livestock.

4.2.4. TPO Funding and Support of Traditional Ritual Cleansing Ceremonies



Illustration 2. Beatrice in Primary 5.

The above drawing depicts the cultural dancing in which children are welcomed by the community. Beatrice shows herself happy with other friends and community members. This testifies how important culture is in bringing forcibly displaced child soldiers in their communities. In her Hero Book Beatrice had indicated her experiences in Sudan where she had been closely living with Kony the rebel leader.

According to a TPO (2009) report their interventions in communities affected by war and violence are designed to match with the socio-cultural context. In addition to livestock for production goats given to child soldiers and families are used as a sacrifice to ancestors to invoke the spiritual powers to protect the child from further affliction from angered spirits of the bush. In recognising traditional approaches to peace building, TPO work with Acholi traditional healers with whom they had formed referral linkages.

In Northern Uganda Acholi rituals include "stepping on the egg" (nyouo tong ngweno), 'drinking of a bitter herb' (mato oput) and cleaning of an area (moyo pinny), all are vital in the reconciliation and reintegration of child soldiers in their communities (Ojera, 2008). For instance girl child soldiers were forced to become wives of rebel commanders. Such girls they are often stigmatized and humiliated because rape is an unusual cultural phenomenon which may negatively influence the healing process and its negative effects may be deeper and prolonged overtime (Hapwood, 2008). In Hapwood's view rituals set a space in which children have the opportunity to reconcile with their families and come to the realization that they are forgiven for what they did in the war.

Barbra (2008) notes that "stepping on the egg" (nyono ton gweno) is the most prevalent ritual intended for those who would have spent most of their time fighting in the bush. This is meant to cleanse all the wrongs that the fighter may have committed during his or her combat tour of duty. This ritual involves the child soldier stepping on the egg (tongweno) placed on a slippery branch (opobo) and a stick with a fork (layebi). The egg symbolizes soft and fragile which suggest a restoration of innocence. The slippery branch (opobo) which is soapy helps to cleanse all evils that may have contaminated the child. The fork (layebi) symbolizes a spirit of welcome and togetherness were the family and the child renews the family relations and start eating together again.

Ojera (2008) argues that drinking the bitter root (mato oput) reconciles and mends the social divisions resulting from the intentional and accidental killing. For him this ritual is performed for both the family of the perpetrator and the victim to wash away bitterness which is the most crucial to deal with and important in the psychosocial recovery process.

The "cleansing of an area" (moyo pinny) is a ritual ceremony which involves the sacrifice of goats (Ojera, 2008). TPO has been supportive of this cleansing ceremony through the provision of goats to families carrying out this event and working with Ker Kware Acholi and Acholi traditional leaders to assist in reintegrating child soldiers in the community. The sacrifice of goats appeases ancestors and to cleanse the evil spirits wondering around areas where massacres have taken place. Such areas may include ambush places were mass murder took place. For Barbra (2008) ritual cleansing ceremonies act as rupture with the past and mark a new life full of hope and success.

4.3. The Hero Book Process

According to Morgan (2008), a hero book is defined, "as a document, and a process, in which a child is invited to be the author, illustrator, main character and editor of a book that is designed to help them set goals, and give them power over a specific challenge or obstacle in their lives." Table 2 below has been drawn from Morgan (2009) it illustrates the activities in making a Hero Book.

Table 2: Hero Book Process

Theme/ title	**Description of art activity**	**Purpose**	**Time frame the child is likely to spent on each activity**
Building blocks	Is an introduction to making hero book and it explains the contents of the hero book	To be able to identify the their goals, problems, obstacles, tricks and tactics and support	20mins
Defining a hero in their own knowledge	They work in small groups or alone to develop their own meanings of a hero	To identify and draw their own hero in their lives	**20mins**
What is a hero book?	Encouraging children to make their own hero books in which they are the author, editor, illustrator and main character. Helping them to define the main character as an active citizen in a story e.g. the main character does not die in any movie. An author is a person who writes a book or a story	For them to think about the obstacles getting in the way of their goals. Find ways on how best they can overcome their problems. Think about how they can get more support and love from communities around	**60mins**

	with originality in it. An illustrator draws the pictures to tell a story.	them	
Power over sharing, what, whether how much and to whom you want to share	Some children may want to see, hear how other children in the group are writing and drawing their experiences. Some may find it scary to share their hero books within the group and at home. Some are worried about who would hear, read and saw their hero books. Some may be interested in sharing some parts of their story while the other parts remain confidential	To guarantee confidentiality within and outside the group. To identify children who may want to work together and other facilitators or members of the community. Children would identify whom they want to work within their hero book process	**60mins**
Identifying their big goals	Divide the page into two. On the left hand side write **'me now'** and add date. On the right hand side at the top of the page write '**big goal'**. On the left hand side draw yourself looking at the big goal in your life e.g. to finish school and be a nurse. On the right side you can draw yourself assuming you have achieved your goal e.g. a nurse in uniform.	To identify their goals	40mins
Monitoring and evaluation	Ask children how do they feel about the process	To find out children feelings and thoughts about the hero book process	**30mins**
Making it safe	During and after the hero book process no one is allowed to read or look your hero book without the child permission. No one is allowed to share about the child hero book without the child permission. No one is allowed to give bad comments of what the child draw. It's not about good or bad drawing but telling a powerful story	Guarantee safety during and after hero book process.	**60mins**
Reading other hero books and watching hero book films	Allow children to see and read other hero books and watch related hero book films	To encourage them to make good hero books.	**60mins**
Filling in protection forms	The facilitator agrees to what the child want during and after hero book process, either to share or not. If the child decides otherwise at the end of the hero book process his/her decision should be respected.	To guarantee confidentiality and consent with the child.	**30mins**

A hero in their lives	Identify and draw their heroes and they may explain why such persons are heroes in their lives.	To find out what kind of role models the children have. If the hero is dead this may help children to grieve and hold on to positive memories of the person.	**30mins**
An earlier memory	On every day we either feel closer or far away from our goals. Encourage children to draw any memory that is important in telling their story. They can draw either a bad or happy memory but don't force them to do it.	To help them identify the beginning and end of their story.	**30mins**
The Club of Life (Also called the Circle of Support)	They draw a map of their whole life story divided into where they come from, where there are now and some of the movements in between. They must open their books so that they have two blank pages facing each other that is right and left page. The **whole of the left hand page** is for the 'Club of Life' or 'Circles of Support' Children imagined themselves as the President of the Club or the VIP in the centre of the Circle of Support. Draw all the people who have been important to you forming a circle around you, and in situation the child feels the love of those who passed away they are encouraged to include them in the 'Club of Life'. Fill in their names or they may be churches and other institutions that have helped you. Use arrows to join them to you and next to the arrow write what the member or institution helped you with e.g. encouragement, education, love etc. Also draw an arrow pointing to each of them and write what you can give to their lives, e.g. thank you Leave a space for other people or institutions that you want to include in your 'Club of Life'. On the **right hand page** write '**Road of Life'**. Divide the page into three horizontal parts. In the top page write 'My birth family'. In the bottom third write	This activity helps them to feel loved and supported. In the case of child soldiers they dedicated much to this section (more on this will be presented in the next chapter) because they have been involved in so many migration experiences to Southern Sudan.	**60mins**

	'Where I live now'. In the middle of the section write 'Along the way' The whole of this page is a complete story of where you began, you pass through and where you are now. The road of life takes us from our family of origin and if the child doesn't know their family origin it is not a problem what is important is they are loved now and supporting each other. **My family birth:** Put yourself in the middle, above you draw a small father and mother, above them draw your grandmother and father, next to you draw your sisters and brothers, write their names if you remember any and where they are, if they are dead cross the portrait or any other way you feel like is good to represent them. Include any family member important to you. Leave the middle space on along the way and move to where I am living now. **Where I am living now:** Draw all the people you are living with now and explain how they are helping you. Along the way: In the middle section draw where you lived before you ended up where you are now.		
My community	Children identify their community which includes their home or where they live. They then draw it in the middle of the page. Identify other places outside home such as school or church. Show places where you don't feel comfortable and the other two where you feel uncomfortable.	This activity maps out where social problems feel less difficult and more difficult for the child.	**30mins**
Catching in a net	Think about the problem that troubles them and hinders them to reach their goals. **This is the obstacle which prevents them from reaching your goal.** When they begin to capture their problems they begin to understand it better and be able to see it as different from them.	Throw a net to catch the problem, name it and try to understand it in the fullest manner	**60mins**
The telling and re-telling	In groups or in pairs children can choose how and to whom they want to retell their story.	To be helped to identify their problems and find out the strength of the	**60mins**

	Some may choose to retell to the facilitator and if so they are accommodated. But the capacity of this activity is for children aged 11years and above. The tellers may choose whom they want to retell their story, the parts they want and do not want to retell.	children when they retell their story. To find out how children perceive their problems	
Drawing and naming the obstacle	Draw themselves as a person on the left hand corner and draw the problem on the top right hand corner. Draw two lines round the obstacle and joins it to your goal. Name the problem in their own understanding or language, like lion because the problem might be so challenging in their lives.	To encourage children that heroes who are able to name their problems and goals are able to achieve in life with the support from people and institution around them**.**	**30mins**
Shinning moment	Sometimes our problems have power over us but sometimes we have power over our problems or you may feel closer to achieving your goal, which is a shinning moment. Draw the time when you feel a little more happy and hopeful.	To help the child to identify the time he used to be happy**.**	**30mins**
The Tricks and Tactics.	Tricks and Tactics are things you do to reach your goals or to keep more shining moments happening. They bring them closer to their goals and give them power over obstacles and may lead to more shinning moments. There are things that children do to past their problems to reach their goals e.g. Children may play and talk to people whom they trust and play games such as football**.**	To enable children to think about what they can do to past through their problems.	**40mins**
Finding a title for the cover of their hero book	Find the title they can give to their hero book, put their names if they want to do so or use pseudonyms They also dedicate the book to the person they want their hero.	This may help to identify an alternative story of the child, the cover may have a meaning, you may ask them to explain the meaning in detail.	**30mins**
Planning and doing a remembering party and – community mobilization	Marks the end of making the hero books for the group. They can then invite their members from the Club of Life or Circle of Support.	To reintegrate children with other members of the community and other organization that may want to help and support children.	**90mins**

It can be noted from the above table that the principles of the hero book intervention are to give child soldiers a voice to re-tell their wartime memories, to identify their own problems and the kind of support they need from individuals and institutions around their communities. Children also have the opportunity to identify their heroes in their lives. The role of identifying a hero in their lives is to establish people who have helped them socially and economically on their return to communities. Such heroes have been important in their lives before, during and on return from abduction and captivity.

4.3.1. The Theory Behind the Hero Book

> It is neither a short nor a long-term intervention but might be seen to fall between the two-neither too short to be a 'hit and run' intervention, nor too long so as to be unsustainable in terms of resources that is needed to implement it (interview, Jonathan Morgan).

The hero book is a practical therapeutic approach which creates a safe space for children to reflect both their good and bad memories. For Jonathan Morgan who initiated the hero book, it is informed by and draws heavily on Narrative Therapy which is a body of knowledge pioneered by (Epston and White, 1990). Morgan describes the thinking behind the tool;

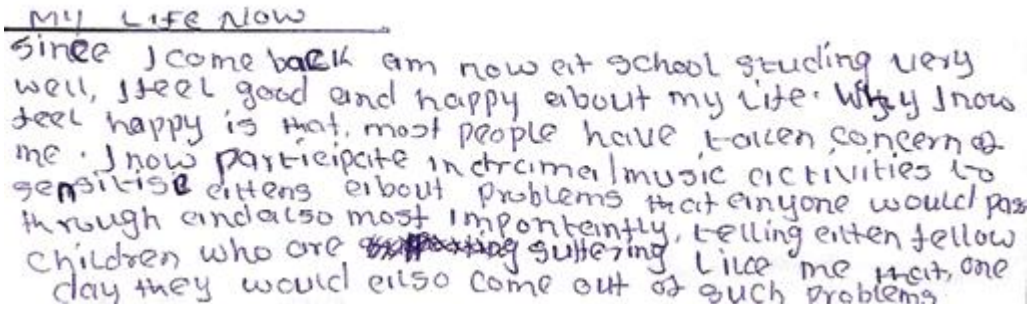
> "…and what was the gap? There was no tool that was really and strongly participatory with the child. The memory box was made by the parent or an adult for the child so the degree of child participation was very low, so I wanted to develop a tool that allowed a child to fully participate. I was interested in Narrative Therapy so this is a different tool-approach to counseling with the facilitator not the expert and not interpreting or analyzing what the child says. It allows the child to be an expert on their own and a child can develop and re-author a new story about their own lives in which they are not only a victim but a survivor and a hero..So this is the whole idea that informs my Narrative Therapy that Iam interested in but I wanted a practical, and tangible and user friendly format which was standardized in a form of a manual in which there could be a product at the end so it would not be only about a conversation between a counselor and a child but a book in which

> we talk about re-storing or re-authoring your life story and here this can be quite conventional because you can literally re-author your life story into a book made from a piece of paper, card boards and it gives an inner version of your life."

In this case what is important in the narrative practice is that the child's own experiences are heard without interpretation by facilitators and in such a way a specific intervention for the child's real needs can follow within a specific time and social context.

Morgan notes that narrative therapy concerns itself with the re-authoring of life stories away from thinly described problem saturated accounts of people's lives, full of very negative conclusions towards richly described multi-voiced accounts. These richer stories contain possibilities for hope, new directions and renewed efforts.

This is illustrated in the example from one of the hero books made by the child soldiers. Asio Betty aged 15 in her hero story talks about how she became a happy person after going back to school, finding social and economic support from the community as well as how she found relief in music and drama at school. She is full of hope for the future.


My Life Now
Since I come back am now at school studing very well, I feel good and happy about my life. Why I now feel happy is that most people have taken concern of me. I now participate in drama/music activities to sensitise others about problems that anyone would pass through and also most importantly, telling other fellow children who are suffering like me, that one day they would also come out of such problems

Text 3. Asio Betty aged 15.

My life now

Since I come back Iam now at school studying very well, I feel good and about my life. Why I feel happy is that most people have taken concern of me. I now participate in drama or music activities to sensitize about problems that anyone would pass through and also most importantly, telling other fellow children who are suffering like me, that one day they

would also come out of such problems.

Narrative therapists believe that often the constraining stories we hold about ourselves are too tightly scripted, and re-authoring practices might help to loosen up these scripts to explore new ways of being. In the case of formerly abducted children re-telling their stories through the hero book is likely to empower them with the opportunity to unlock the bad experiences they have undergone as recruits and rebels in and outside northern Uganda, so that they rebuild the lost confidence in their lives. Jonathan Morgan notes that a central tenet of narrative therapy, but no means the only one, is the practice of externalizing conversations in which it is highlighted that the problem (and not the person) is the problem.

According to Morgan narrative practice is a non-pathologising counseling approach that centers people as experts in their own lives. He notes that the emphasis on externalizing conversations in narrative practice influenced the fact that in the hero book process children zeroing in on a problem only then look for solutions. In narrative practice externalizing questions are always followed by questions searching for unique outcomes. The Hero Book approach uses another narrative therapy device by calling for the child to throw a net and try to capture a multiplicity of descriptions and perspectives on the problem then come up with a central metaphor or image or the problem this is a way of externalizing such problems. The idea of a 'shining moment' in which a child is encouraged to remember good times in the past is another way of helping the child see alternative stories within their own experience. Thinking of 'Tricks' and 'Tactics' that help you survive are also used in hero booking. In this way potential skills and knowledge are explored in detail.

Morgan emphasized that narrative practice also makes use of multiple layers of telling and re-telling by outsider witnesses which contributes to the richness of the story development by luring more opportunities.

> the hero book process is designed for groups of individuals who are led through a series of drawing exercises and autobiographical storytelling exercises. Each child makes a choice through informed consent on whether to work alone, sharing with other children, working within the group or sharing outside the group and as time goes on working and sharing outside the group becomes possible ... (Morgan)

In the hero book process children may share their stories if they feel like doing it. Thus by casting their net wider to include other people there are possibilities of hope and trust. In the case of child soldiers, sharing Hero Books with people and organizations outside their group they may get more social and economic support. The hero book process includes thinking about the club of life in which abducted children list their social networks including their family members and friends where they can share and benefit from social and economic support. So, in this case a club of life is like a phone book full of corresponding contactable names and numbers of friends and relatives from which social and economic help can be sourced. So, the club of life speeds up a sense of identity and belonging through community mobilization.

This tie in with the work of Ong (1995) where the Khmer Cambodian refugees in the USA, were much more interested in having catharsis, not with the therapist but with close relatives and friends. Similarly, Summerfield (1998) found that relatives and friends where important in the ay refugees framed their illness. Furthermore, Bracken *et al* (1995) found that in situations where war and organised violence have destroyed the traditional ways of life and cultural institutions, people are left without meaningful frameworks in which to structure their lives. The idea here is to place an emphasis on the importance of the social world in which the individual is a part. The hero book process acknowledges how important close family members and friends might be in ameliorating the trauma of child soldiers in northern Uganda. More important by involving local community facilitators who are known to the children or even part of their families hero booking goes beyond what Bracken (1998) refers to as culturally ‘foreign therapy’ in which a therapist is said to be knowledgeable while the client is perceived as passive and

dependent on therapist knowledge and practice. So the hero book gives children choice to choose their helpers.

4.3.2. (Re) telling the 'Trauma' and Breaking the Culture of Silence

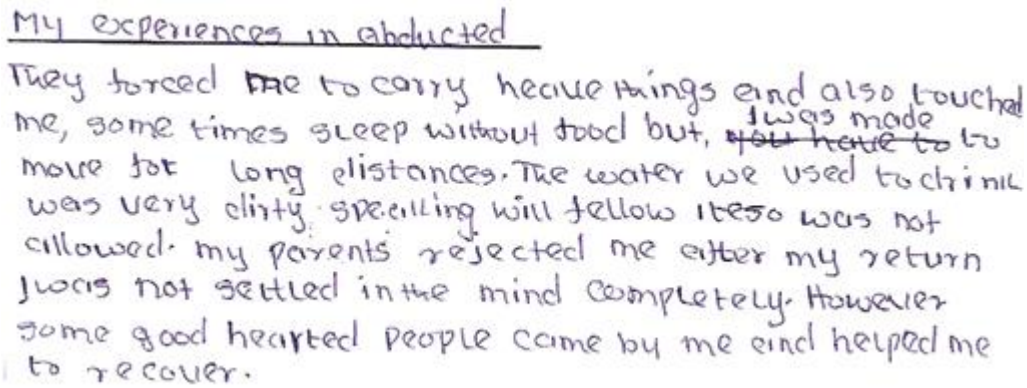
Though Morgan does not talk about this it is also clear that the hero book process is important because it breaks the culture of silence. The Hero Book encourages child soldiers to talk about their war trauma experiences. By encouraging them to work with people of their own choice, it enables them to share wartime experiences with their communities and families at most.

In most African countries especially were violence has been used to seize power and followed by dictatorship people have been generally silenced. As Torpey (1998) notes that whilst Karl Marx talked about the expropriation of the means of production to render workers powerless, for Max Weber modern state expropriated the means of violence from the individual and only state could legitimately use violence. The situation was also similar in Uganda where community narratives have been regularly silenced and misrepresented.

Tankink (2007) found out that among the southwest Ugandans in Mbarara district the social code requires that people keep their sufferings private. She asserts that among the Ugandans silence continued unabated in post Idi Amin dictatorship and there were hardly any cultural conventions or opportunities for people to share the memories and sufferings caused by war. In her argument she emphasized that as late as 1999 there was no book available in which people's personal experiences of war and violence could be read and no songs that expressed their sufferings. She found out that people in Uganda did not have the courage to talk because people do not have answers to their problems.

Following that, the hero book closes the gap of silence and symbolizes a public space for the child soldiers to break their silence, not only to write and publish but it gives them the opportunity to escape from silence by sharing with community members and their voices

heard by the world at large. In this case, it is important to re-tell because people will get to know what is going in child soldiers lives after abduction. Similarly Tankink (2007) notes that talking about personal problems even in the context of testimonies, has as a side effect that the other members get a glimpse of what is going on in the life of the person giving a testimony. A part of the testimony is that people get to know where one needs help. As Tankink (*ibid*) notes that memories are not only a personal static record but are also connected with one's active membership in a social group and determines what can be recalled and how. As Asio Betty below gave a narrative of her wartime experiences.


My experiences in abducted

They forced me to carry heave things and also touched me, some times sleep without food but, I was made ~~I had have to~~ to move for long distances. The water we used to drink was very dirty, speaking with fellow friends was not allowed. my parents rejected me after my return I was not settled in the mind completely. However some good hearted people came by me and helped me to recover.

Text 3. Asio Betty aged 15.

My experiences in abduction

They forced me to carry heavy things and also touched me, sometimes sleep without food but, I was made move for long distances. The water we used to drink was very dirty, speaking with fellow friends was not allowed. My parents rejected me after my return. I was not settled in the mind completely. However some good hearted people came by me and helped me to recover.

The narrative above reveals the shyness of Asio Betty as she could not say exactly what the rebels did to her. She could only say, 'they touched me'. Barbra (2008) notes that for the girl child involved in war rape is associated with stigma and they are shy to reveal issues of sex. However, her narrative is full of courage and soldiering since she was made to survive with less food. She also pointed out the importance of people around her for support as she was 'not settled in the mind'.

Richard Duuki below (illustration 3) depicts his war experiences. The drawing depicts actual battle contact and shows some people who have been killed in the process of fighting.

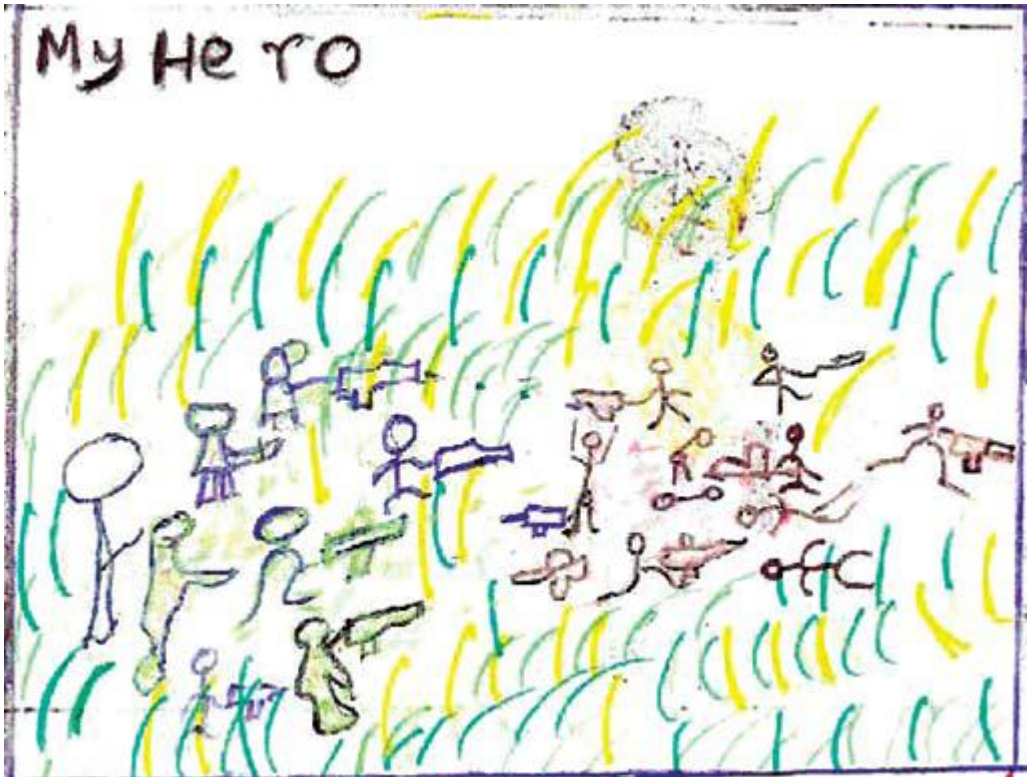
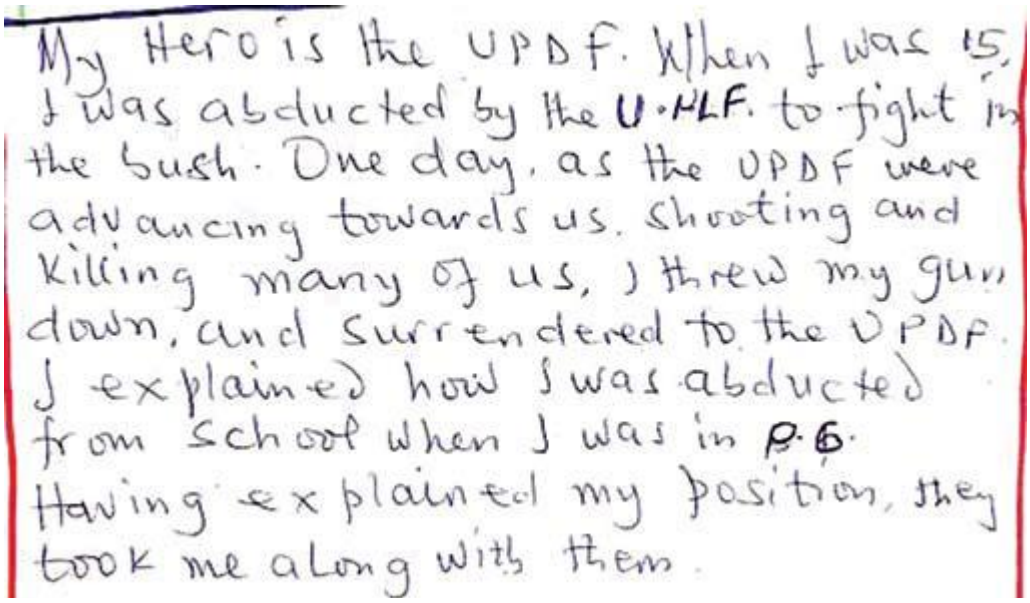


Illustration 3. Richard Eduuki.

The drawing above depicts and testifies how child soldiers were fighting against adult combat groups; it is a clear testimony of children fighting as they are portrayed in small images on the right front retreating and witnessing death. A drawing of war experiences re-tells more and is a thick description of events.

The extract below explores Richard Eduuki's experiences of capture under the United Patrotic Defence Force (UPDF), which was the Ugandan government army fighting against the LRA and other rebel front.


My Hero is the UPDF. When I was 15, I was abducted by the U.N.L.F. to fight in the bush. One day, as the UPDF were advancing towards us, shooting and killing many of us, I threw my gun down, and surrendered to the UPDF. I explained how I was abducted from school when I was in P.6. Having explained my position, they took me along with them.

Text 4: Richard Eduuki

My Hero is the UPDF. When I was 15, I was abducted by the UNLF to fight in the bush. One day as the UPDF were advancing towards us shooting and killing many of us I threw my gun down and surrendered to the UPDF. I explained how I was abducted from school when I was in P.6. Having explained my position they took me along with them.

The above extract testifies how he escaped death during the battle. From my own war experiences in DRC fighting against Ugandan and Rwandan rebel groups, when a soldier is captured he is heavily tortured to disclose all information on the deployment state and strength of the mainstream military combatants in order to counter the tactics when advancing and attacking. This is similar to children who have been tied one after the other on abduction so that they feel the pain of being a soldier and to force them to obey the command when fighting. So, the hero book has become a platform to talk about their past and a way to appeal for external economic support - way to break the culture of silence. Morgan describes the impact of this.

> I had an opportunity to work with the formerly abducted children with the hero book to consolidate healing, and we had a good experience with these abducted children making hero books and parents say you know I thought my child was totally mad but now I can understand what they have been going through, so these hero books were shared with the community as well to help them understand

> children experiences war experiences as normal and they were able to come to terms with children's own war experiences.

The hero book encourages forcibly displaced child soldiers to retell their story and in this case it offers a place to talk about past experiences through drawing and writing. Child soldiers in the LRA rebel front were forced to fight against the Ugandan Army government as well as their own communities through destroying crops and burning homes to destroy families behind. But in what ways does talking about their problems assist in community reintegration? And to what extent can the community that had suffered violence and torture forgive and forget the perpetrators of war and violence that is former abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers.

Without this forgiveness can there be healing for the children? Telling the truth does not necessarily mean the rebuilding of destroyed bridges. As Hamber and Wilson (2001) argue revealing does not necessarily lead to healing. Tankink (1999) talks of the receptive audience as not neutral but consists of both victims and perpetrators, thus for her people may ask for forgiveness which may be difficult or even impossible to implement. By breaking the silence and sharing how they are have been affected and mostly by being able to ask directly for help from their community the hero book process gave a tool that went into this area of implementing forgiveness.

4.4. (Re) Conceptualizing Trauma and PTSD Outside Clinical Concepts

> "…and it's almost different from trauma counseling where you are asked what was the worst moment for you and here we are going a different direction by asking, what was the most shining moment for you in your life…"(interview; Jonathan Morgan)

The hero book approach has a different view of trauma than that used in the typical PTSD model. In the quote below Morgan gives his understanding of trauma.

> …what kind of intervention follows when people are classified as traumatized? We find that for instance people say, eh we need to rush in with trauma debriefing and in this case debriefing involves you giving the person the opportunity to re-tell the trauma and eh the idea will be that you allow the person to go through catharsis in which they will let off the steam and it will get out the chest so the more they tell, they recount the trauma the more they get better. This is the conventional model of dealing with trauma.. And what happens after the *tsunami* disaster or any other conflict situation, emergency organizations rushing in with trauma interventions in the form of trauma counseling for individuals affected and now research has strongly shown that there is such a strong possibility that such intervention re-traumatize people instead of offering the much needed support, so for a child unaccompanied child who has just survived displacement and suffered along the way and if you sit down and say, I am going to offer you trauma counseling you will tell me what happened, you will tell me the worst moment and this will help you to get it off your chest and you will feel better, it's likely that you will actually re-traumatize the child even more, you will just make them feel like re-experiencing the trauma and it's not necessarily going to be a healing experience for them, so that is why we want to be very careful when using the word trauma for diagnosis purposes only because the right kind of intervention needs to follow and our research shows that for people who have been traumatized it might be necessary for them to have some individual counseling and this has to be done by an expert who has up to date literature and practice and what certainly shouldn't happen is that we pull all survivors into a group of people who have the same experience we say everybody should talk about his experience a because people experience the same event differently and they attach different meanings to it, different anxieties and it can be very stressing to talk about their experiences in a group situation, we say this is not the right thing to do at all. So the hero book allows for a group intervention where children can process their trauma without sharing it out in front of everybody.

In this long extract above Jonathan Morgan acknowledges the experiences of trauma but what he differed most is the kind of intervention that follows after diagnosis. In his argument clinicians tend to rush and label people as traumatized and in so doing they (re)traumatize people. As, Jonathan Morgan asserts although these abducted children

exhibit some PTSD related symptoms, caution must be taken not to pathologies these symptoms and refer the children as either deviant or mentally ill since these are normal reactions to abnormal situations. In terms of intervention Jonathan Morgan said;

> I think trauma should not be used outside the clinical concept, I think there are other words that we must use, we should leave trauma as a very precise description which is used clinically and I think we could use other description such as children in difficult circumstances or challenges and children in distress those kinds of terms. For instance working with child soldiers in Uganda who have been for a long period of time like up to a year they were displaced and separated from their parents and care givers, they experience war as young fighters and as sex slaves in Sudan, so they attach certain meanings to their own experiences, and although they have been reported to have experienced nightmares but we couldn't say that was trauma because they have their own political and cultural meanings to this abduction experiences. .

> many speak of the after effects of the abduction in terms that closely resemble PTSD such as nightmares, flashbacks etc, so they are clearly experiencing effects of trauma, however the word is often used very loosely and in emergencies well intentioned but misguided people want to rush in and offer "trauma debriefing" to everyone irrespective of whether they are experiencing PTSD…group intervention that pools survivors or victims together and put pressure on them to re-tell their experience in a group context, are likely to do more harm than good and are likely to re-traumatize people…some people recover completely without any assistance…having said in our experience with TPO the hero book was effective within the context of multi-layered phased and integrated psychosocial support response in which one year after returning from abduction and after receiving individual counseling as well as a range of individual interventions that can be said to be deeply rooted within Ugandan local culture including traditional acceptance and cleansing rituals and ceremonies, hero books offered an additional opportunity to consolidate healing and integration.

For Morgan, trauma has been understood differently and intervention that follows is highly determined by the context in which it occurs. Morgan's understanding of trauma is that trauma has to be constructed within a specific context for a proper intervention to follow after the event had happened. The idea that people experience PTSD-related symptoms

after a trauma event does not necessarily mean that such people experience PTSD in a clinical sense and would need a clinical intervention. Following this, Kleinman (1995) talks of category fallacy in which he argues that the fact that symptoms are reliably common across cultures does not necessarily mean that they mean the same. In such cases meanings of response to war and violence have to be understood within the group affected for interventions that are beneficial. Similarly, Young (1995) found PTSD to be mistakenly understood; to him the disorder is neither eternal, nor an end in itself. PTSD had a specific time and context in which it was constructed it is not ahistorical; hence there are possibilities and changes in grasping it depending on meanings attached to events occurring to a specific cultural group. For Young (1995:5) made it clear on his understanding of PTSD that,

> "It is glued together by the practices, technologies and narratives with which it is diagnosed, studied and treated, and represented and by the various interests, institutions and moral arguments that mobilized these efforts and resources."

Thus following the Vietnam War a clinical diagnostic criterion of PTSD facilitates the giving of compensation to the victims of war (Keinzler, 2008). However such assumptions are less sustainable in context which the diagnostic was not meant to assist. Regarding the Northern abducted Ugandan child soldiers who had their experiences of war and violence in both southern Sudan and northern Uganda, Jonathan Morgan said;

> "…and although they have been reported to have experienced nightmares but we couldn't say that was trauma because they have their own political and cultural meanings to this abduction experiences…"

Similarly, attention has to be paid to the social, economic and political experiences of war and derive the most needed meanings in order to understand and come up with alternative responses that address the very problems. Because societies are culturally diverse, there is

no one way of pining down PTSD as Young (1995) reiterates even in the most primitive societies they have their own beliefs and practices that are identifiably ‘medical’, they are not amusing bags of superstition and they have similar terms to ‘disease’ to differentiate these phenomenon as pathological.

This chapter has focused on the work done by the TPO/Hero Book Project in assisting displaced child soldiers to re-integrate into their communities. The following chapter focuses on the drawings made by the child soldiers not only in telling their war trauma but how they managed to cope with their environment through the tricks and tactics they used. Displaced children were not only encouraged to talk about the bad moments they had experienced in war but the shining moments in the past that is the positive past they used to enjoy. This helped them in building more shining moments in their future and strengthens their hopes for the future by setting goals to be accomplished in a specified period mostly after completing their school. In this case child soldiers realised that they can only make it in life after they would have completed their life. In their drawings and texts they indicated that war had delayed them to reach their goals. There is an acknowledgement of loss of time, health, family and other forms of social and economic support after their families were killed during the war.

Chapter 5: Using Evidence from Hero Books to Show Healing

5.0. Introduction

This chapter focuses on drawing as one of the central approaches used in hero booking; the strategy brings the much needed space and healing as ex-child soldiers were able to re-tell their past experiences of war in a more spontaneous way. Through drawing ex-child soldiers were able to express their experiences of war torture and violence inflicted upon them by the LRA rebels.

According to Malchiodi (2001) a drawing is worth a 'thousand words' and does reflect a child who creates it. The drawings made by ex-child soldiers will be presented and analysed. These drawings describe what happened to them before, during and after abduction when they return 'home'. The drawings also show ex-child soldiers experiences in different phases (i) the abduction period is characterized by grief, separation and despair (ii) fighting phase and finally (iii) return which is characterised by welcoming from the community, sense of belonging, feeling of companionship and hope. In all these phases ex-child soldiers draw their memories of experiences to include; pain and social suffering, resiliency, expectations of the social environment, people around them for help and social support, future, world of fantasies and games and their wishes.

The drawings gave evidence of how the Hero Book Process in partnership with TPO Uganda helped ex-child soldiers to re-author their stories. One of the first steps in this re-authoring is to re-tell the story with a focus on the bad experiences. This is the first step in the Hero Book Process.

Illustration 4 below shows how ex- child soldiers were abducted to join the ranks and files of the LRA rebels to receive military training.

5.1. Drawing: a way of re-telling a story

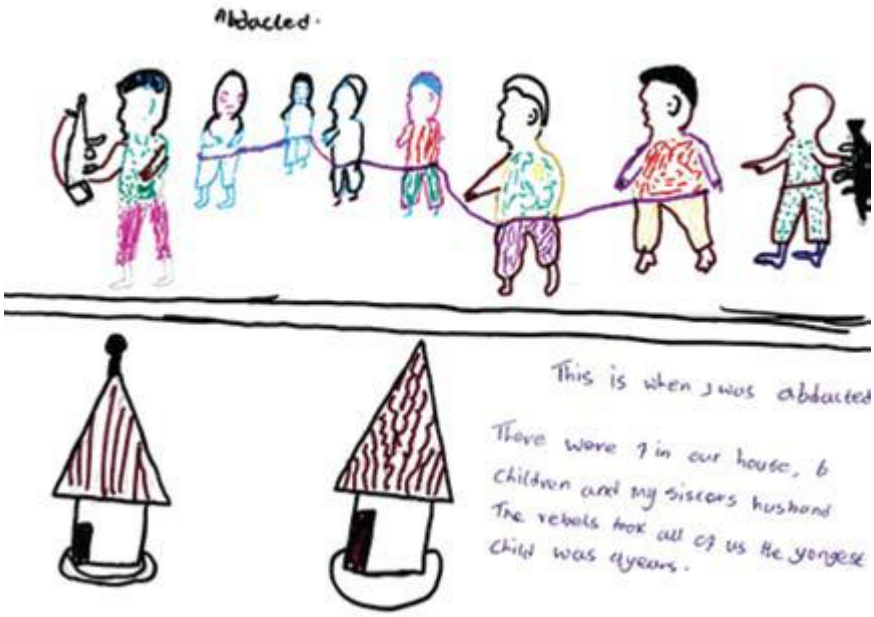


Illustration 4: Omache Simon:

Abduction

This is when I was abducted. There were one in our house, 6 children and my sisters husband. The rebels took all of us the youngest child was a year.

The above drawing shows how ex-child soldiers were abducted by the LRA tied in their waist one after the other so that they will not escape. The abduction of children also marks the period when children where forced to leave their families and communities. This illustration testifies that ex-child soldiers were forced to join the rebel group, tying children reveals that children were unwilling to be part of the rebels. Such a period is characterised by fear, panic and resistance. The drawing shows ex-child soldiers initiated into the military way of life. This can be witnessed by the drawing which shows abducted children moving in a single file patrol format which is a military movement when going for an attack or patrol. The section commander will be in front while the

second in command will be the last man. This is what is exactly depicted in the drawing. What can also be noticed in the drawing is that the six abducted children represent a military section number which is the smallest fighting unit. This reveals that abduction was done in smaller groups. An illustration of the houses shows that people were also displaced during abduction. This testifies how the war had affected not only children but the community at most. As Machel (1998) argues trauma is more understood as a communal suffering than an individual issue.

According to Janzen and Janzen (1999) in their Rwandan experience with children in conflict argue that when wartime children are drawing, the meanings derived are twofold. First, drawing the picture as a form of self-expression offers the child a way to cope, as this activity helps children avoid destructive burial of feelings of insecurity, anxiety, fear, terror, distrustfulness and unhappiness produced by the major disruption, violence and despair. Second, these children drawings of war are powerful, first-hand documentation that carries with them a level of authenticity.

Di Leo (2008) notes that despite lack of experimental support, psychosocial healing now values drawing as a means of establishing personality and perspective. For him each drawing is a reflection of the personality of its maker that is it expresses effective aspects of the personality as well as cognition. In that case it will be telling more about the artist (child soldier) than about the object portrayed, so the approach of the audience must be intuitive as well as analytical to draw the meaning of it from a child's view point. Following this, children are great artists who can stir expression by colour of the picture, facial expression which imbue their drawings hence they can convey feelings of joy and sorrow.

Having conceded that the drawing is telling something, I believe the message will become more apparent when the product is viewed as a whole. For Gestalt psychologists the whole is greater than the parts and it only gives meaning when viewed in its totality. In this case drawings provide clues that standardized tests are unable to provide.



Illustration 5: Aguio Dinah Frances

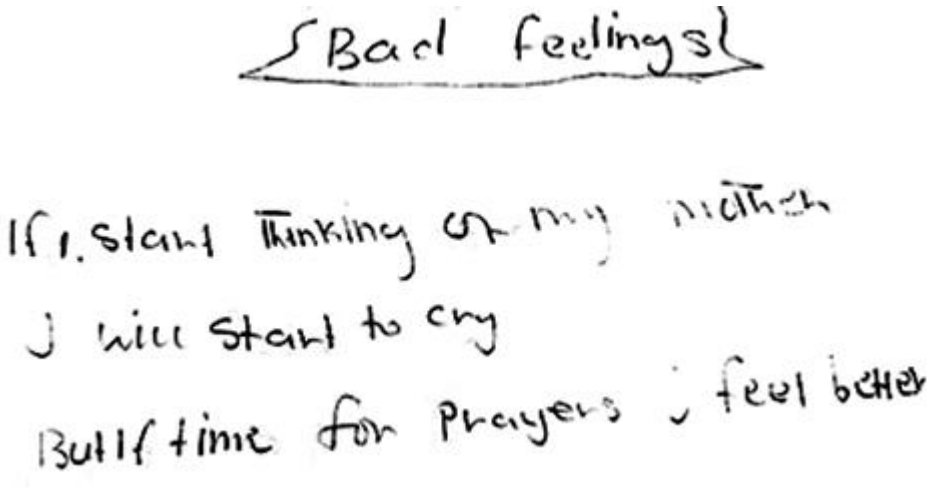
Maka maka mean "catch"

This is like church where rebel abducted me.

Aguio Dinah Frances aged 14 born in Tubur Sub country Achuna Village, Achu parish. She is one of the girl child soldiers, illustrating how she was abducted from the church. The drawing depicts that people were killed during abduction. From my experience this is normally done to instil fear so that people would not resist when children are abducted. People will just follow orders from rebels. From the drawing visible arms of war include the Rocket Propelling Launcher 7mm size meant to destroy buildings and AK-47 rifles.

Aguio Dina's drawing in Illustration 7 clearly shows how the war did not only traumatize abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers but communities as well when community buildings such as churches were destroyed. Clancy and Hamber (2008) commented on how war and violence tend to focus on the destruction of institutions like churches where people find a public space for healing and how such spaces have been literally turned into unsafe spaces of fear and frustration. So, churches support people in coping up with devastating war experiences. The target on churches means that people are left with no public spaces to express their war sufferings, since in these churches feelings of trust,

hope and solidarity are spiritually restored. Tankink (2007) found that many people affected by war in southwest Uganda become born again Christians. For her the church gives them another orientation towards the future with a different perception of the past. Beatrice a child soldier wrote in her hero book below about how she feels after she had prayed, she feels better. Whist illustration 6 portrays Dina Agulo crying, Tankink (ibid) notes that some pastors urged people not to cry but to keep it inside and forget. For Tankink (2007) crying may be a sign of weakness or madness. But in the case of children in captive, it is a sign of despair.

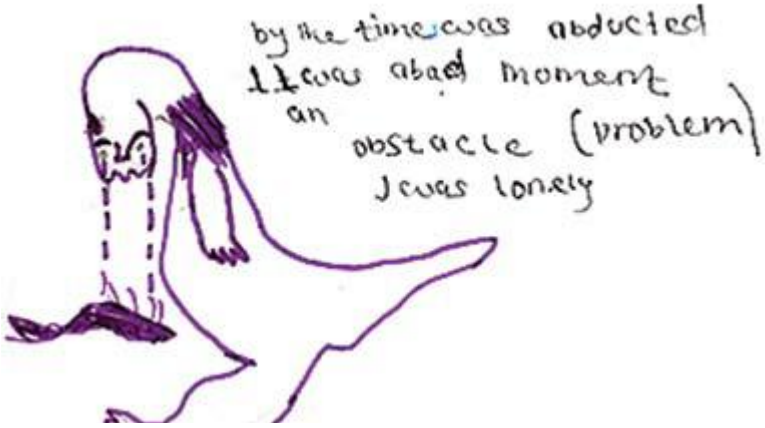


Text 5:

Text 5 above was written by Beatrice in her hero book expressing how she feels after praying.

Bad feelings

If I start thinking of my mother
I will start to cry
But if time for prayers I feel better



By the time I was abducted
It was a bad moment
An obstacle (problem)
I was lonely

Illustration 6:

In the above drawing Agulo Dina Frances did not portray herself clearly. But what is important is that she depicts herself crying when she was abducted and she was lonely separated from her parents and friends. It is also showing the importance of having close family members to children situations as she referred to her situation as lonely, without support from either friends or relatives. What is also interesting here is how child soldiers understand their problems as a bad moment. It is important because child soldiers are not using or referring to their problem as 'trauma' which is a conventional understanding of witnessing war and violence.

Welvering (2006) notes drawing provides a creative space which enables a spontaneous individual response, for children it gives them a sense of power and control and the ability to form their narratives. As Children draw they tend to unconsciously lose themselves and it encourages the free flowing of ideas that could not be possible with conventional counselling approach. This seems to be what has happened in drawings above.



Illustration 7

The drawing above by Agulo Dina Frances depicting how the LRA attacked her village with people being harassed by the LRA rebels and tortured while adjacent to the church people were sitting by the fire.

From my personal experience in the DRC war, this is the exact military way of beating, called the prone position. In this illustration it is interesting because child soldiers are drawing rebels taller than the church and the house. The idea here is that children view rebels as more powerful than the surroundings which they seem to have cordoned and searched. It is likely that people fear those places which previously have been safe places. The other drawing of the house is missing a door, which reveal how important children have neglected these spaces as haven of peace, since violence and torture and abduction takes place within these spaces, hence children are likely to have been forced not to belong to what was previous their home The church roof is painted in red which is likely to signify blood after people were attacked and killed at the church. In this case the child soldier memory of the past is carried from one event to the other and the idea of death is revolving around the child soldiers mind.

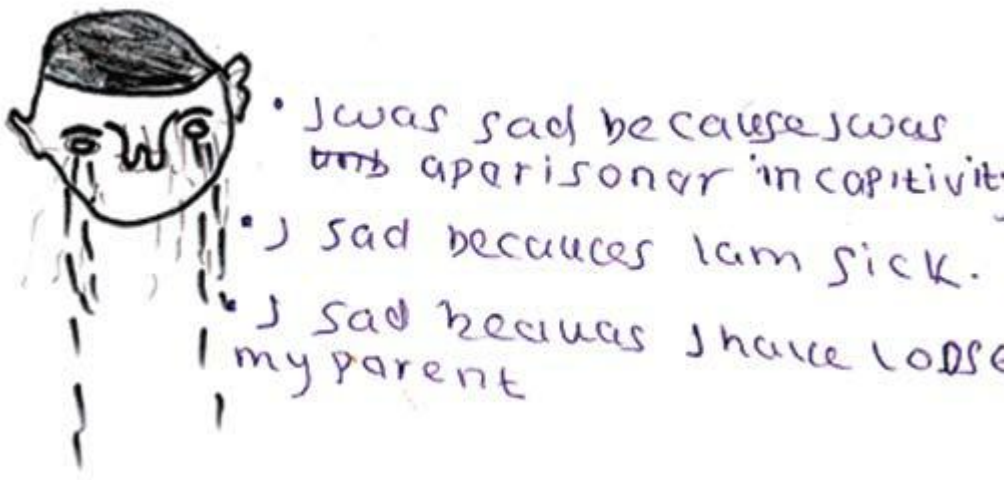


Illustration 8: Agulo Dina

I was sad because I was a prisoner in captivity. I was sad because I was sick. I was sad because I had lost my parents.

Agulo Dina Frances depicts herself crying because of loss of parents and other belongings. More over because of the bad experiences in captivity which includes sickness, separation and loss of parents punctuated by war and violence. The drawing depicts sorrow and grief.

In spite of this being traumatic in a clinical sense, for Morgan who had worked closely with these ex-child soldiers during and before hero booking their reaction to abduction was a normal response to an abnormal situation. Janzen and Janzen (1999) note that one of the worst traumas of children in war is separation from significant others and disruption of attachment relationship. This is what is depicted by the child's drawing above as she cries for loss of parents. In this case the child reveals what is important to her to help in normalising her life.

In drawing child soldiers have an image of what only happened to them which is an effective way of telling a story for children who had gone through bad war experiences. Di Leo (2008) argues that the drawings of children are a representation and not a reproduction, and without imagination there is no choice but to transform our view on the reality that surrounds us. It is interesting that child soldier drawing zeros in on the

challenges they faced more that their future. This entails that child soldiers are exploring more on what they had experienced than what they are likely to experience. As Di Leo ibid points out that children tend to draw what they know, than their future, their goals are small and imagined. The past had a more influential role on children coping with the consequences of war and abduction. Below in (illustration 9) Asio Betty notes that, the whole village was deserted and no one was at home. Asio Betty's drawing placed emphasis on social and economic support of her family and the community to cope with the trauma of war. Clancy and Hamber (2008) found that war and violence have robbed the social and economic ways of coping. So, the drawing depicts the importance of her family and the community. As Malchiodi (2001) notes child drawings are useful in bringing issues valued by children to the fore and this enables helpers to intervene appropriately. For him such drawings hasten expression of hidden traumas and child perception on solutions.



Illustration 9. Asio Betty.

The drawing shows the whole village deserted by Asio Betty's family members. This illustration is a clear picture in showing how the communities were fearful of their lives and seek refuge in other places and nearby countries. Thus in order for NGOs working with forcibly displaced child soldiers to heal war trauma they have to address community trauma by rebuilding not only the infrastructures destroyed, but social relationships as well as community structures.



Illustration 10: Eduku Emma aged 15 born from Tubur Sub country Aparisa parish, Tubur village.

The above drawing by Eduku show how the LRA managed to destroy what the community depend on and frame their understanding of their world. Eduku depicts houses being burnt. As Clancy and Hamber (2008) discusses on how war and violence destroy the constituent parts and institution of the society through which coping can be achieved. He argued that war and violence rob people's ways of coping. It is interesting in the drawing how children were transformed to military language through abusive, authoritative talking and forced to move in single file. When one is a new recruit at military training commanders expose you to abusive language and when you are in pain commanders would say 'enjoy it' so as to harden you and prepare you for fighting. In Eduku's case in (illustration 10) above it was the rebels who were saying 'enjoy it', the idea is to frustrate someone still civilian and mould them in military language where no one seems not to be caring about pain but to endure it. For soldiers there is nothing hard to achieve and that is the message they are conveying. Similarly, when I was in DRC war, we were told that we were going to fight until the last man is dead, meaning to say that if we could not afford to leave enemies in our axis of advance, as it was our mandate to wipe them.

Honwana (2006) argues that in modern societies, childhood is usually associated with innocence, weakness and dependence upon adult guidance and nurturance. But soldiers are somehow associated with aggression. He notes that the paradoxical combination of a child and soldier is unsettling. As they are instructed to carry and posses guns, their position in wartime is worrisome as they are in an unsanctioned position of childhood and adulthood.

When I had the opportunity to mix with child soldiers from Uganda, they where referring to themselves as adults because they had guns. In Swahili they called themselves *Mkubwa waUganda* meaning the president of Uganda while calling those left in Uganda as *Vatoto meaning* kids. Even in situations where we could be talking and laughing together as friendly forces, a child soldier could call an old aged soldier, *yes I mean you my friend*. It is interesting because war had transformed them from childhood to adulthood where they are tasked to kill. They will no longer respect the social structures.

In the drawing below the LRA rebels have displaced people and rebel leaders are drawn being bigger than the houses and the surrounding environment. The idea here is to show how powerful the rebels were in forcing the children to work for them under guard.



Illustration 11: Eduku Emma showing how the LRA loot cassava in community fields. Uprooting cassava in the Garden. The LRA guards are guarding us so we do not escape. The cassava belongs to this home but the Tamicy (owners) went away because of this war.

But my military experience tells me that doing other work in combat like camouflaging your deployment place, fetching water and looking for firewood particularly in war situation is fatigue. The idea of doing such work is to keep soldiers occupied with war thoughts. The tactic of keeping soldiers awake is to keep them busy. Thinking about your family in war situation drives the soldier away from his core duty. In the above drawing the idea of keeping child soldiers in cassava fields was also to keep them focused within the war situation. In most cases it happens to new recruits as their thoughts will be still

about home. That was the case when I was a new recruit, I was thinking about home, but we could spend the whole night forced to sing, so that no one will run away.

An illustration 12 below shows how the LRA including Kony rebel leader were fighting government forces, whist the government forces were using mighty weapons of war like gunship aircraft attack rebels were using other arms of war like machine guns and low machine gun as shown in the drawing. What is also interesting below is how child soldiers managed to escape during battle contact when the LRA was engaged in fighting.

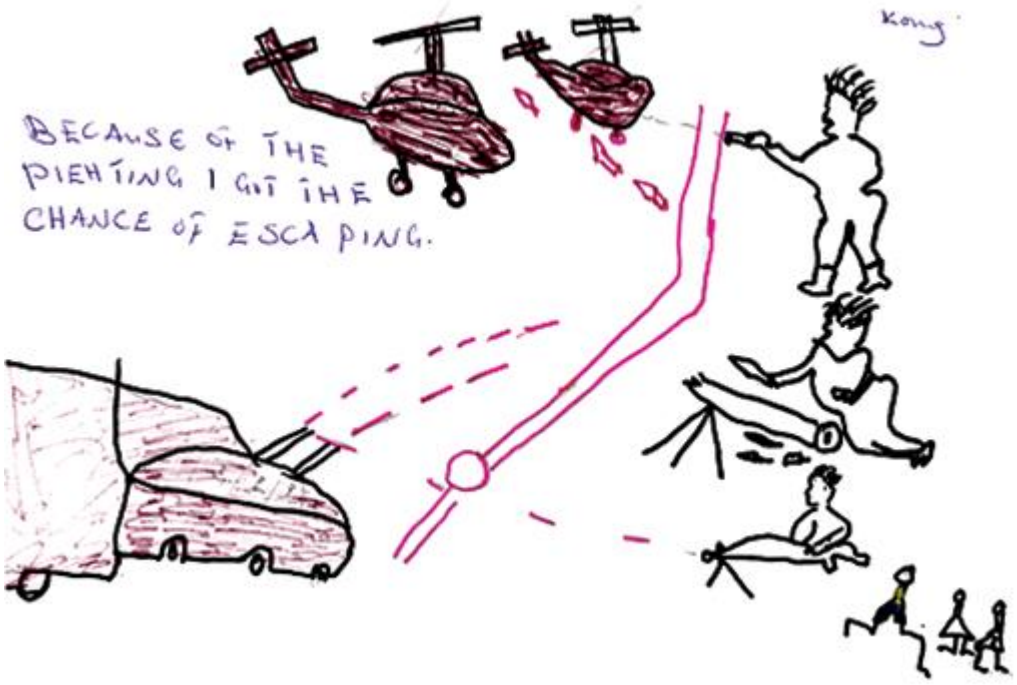


Illustration 12

Because of the fighting I got the chance of escaping.

The drawing above Illustration 12 shows child soldiers escaping to return home during battle contact. What is not clear is whether the children who would have returned from war will not be exposed to danger again since they would have deserted from the LRA. From my personal experiences in war, the above armoured car has been supporting air force fighting. For children involved in such warfare it might be disturbing because ambushes are one of the most fierce attacks and a bad experience because they are

sudden attacks and lives are lost on such kind of battle contact since it is difficult to escape once the trap of the attack has been set out.

5.2. Tricks and Tactics in Healing

Whilst the trauma model ask people about the worst moment in the past, the Hero Book does not stop in the past but it goes beyond the bad and asks about the future also. It also asks about the good experiences before the war in which child soldiers used to enjoy. According to the Narrative Therapy in re-authoring a story, individuals need to tell about more than just the bad experiences. Adding the good makes their stories 'thick' and full of meaning-they see that they are not just victims but also survivors and people who had a life being child soldiers. The Hero Book Process explores this by encouraging child soldiers to explore not only about their war trauma but how they are coping with the trauma of war. This is done by asking children to look at the 'tricks' and 'tactics' that they use to survive and cope both in the past and now. Children show this through drawing the activities which enable them to cope with the trauma of war.

The drawings from the hero books show how the child soldiers through the hero book process were able to 'thicken' their stories by representing not just the trauma that had happened to them but also how they had been able to cope with what had happened. This is most obvious in the tricks and tactics section of the books where children show what gives them power over their past and leads them to more shining moments. Tricks and tactics are ways in which child soldiers were able to cope with the trauma they had suffered during conflict. In this way the Hero Book Process goes beyond the PTSD model by giving children space to articulate their own ways of coping with the trauma of war. Children go beyond talking about the trauma to identifying how they managed to go through the trauma in their everyday life.

The drawing below Illustration 13 is one of the tactics the children drew that described how child soldiers' cope with the devastating war memories through playing; it seems as child soldiers make friends through playing football. When we came back from DRC war every Wednesday was a sports day for soldiers in barracks, it enables us to chat, laugh

and loose ourselves. We move from talking about war and violence to sports. Similarly Davison Mudzingwa (2010) who is a Zimbabwean journalist reporting on Zimbabwean migrants in Cape Town South Africa found out that after xenophobic attacks in 2008, in South Africa children spirit was high and they merely find happiness in playing football than any other activity (www.radiovop.com). It therefore tend to give them strength and the 'I can do it spirit', and it also explores skills and knowledge which children possess.



Illustration 13: Eduku Emma playing football as he feels like going there to play with his friends.
I can go and play football with my friends. Some were I feel like to go.

In the above drawing Eduku portrays himself well in football uniform. This illustration portrays happiness and hope as he indicates that he feels happy to play football. Thus in this case Eduku Emma illustration 13 finds space to express him and be able to move away from the past. Breaking away from the past to the future is what children desire in order to fulfil their goals. This means that children are not always interest in verbalizing their trauma but seek alternatives to assist themselves in the healing process. It is important to integrate such activities for children because it works for them to achieve the much needed healing of war trauma and violence.

The drawing below illustration 14 shows how Richard Duuki abducted at the age of 16 years manages the consequences of war by working in coffee plantations for school fees. He also read books and allows himself to rest. Child soldiers are not passive recipients but have the agency to help cope. In this case the hero book help in understanding the resources children needs to cope with war consequences.



Illustration 14: Richard Eduku

The drawing shows how Richard manages his life through working in the coffee plantations, reading and resting. In this case child soldiers know the best they can do to keep themselves alive in the community. It might not be the best for them but it is what they can do to survive.

5.3. Shining Moment: Linking the Positive Past to the Present

The Hero Book Process encourages child soldiers to look not only at the terrible aspects of their past but also at the good things in their past-these are called 'shinning moments'. In this case the positive past gives them strength and hope for the future. For child soldiers their immediate past is full of despair and hopelessness characterized by a little happiness. So in the Hero Book they are asked to re-tell the story of positive things they remember from their life and this becomes a morale booster. It also emphasis the view that life is 'multiple storied' and full of experiences.

Jonathan Morgan had this to say about this process;

> "…Well part of this re-authoring of one's stories is that the dominant stories might be a complete story of oppression and subjugation and defeat and a shining moment is an exception to the dominant story, it a little exception, it's a gem, a little sparkling of another story that is trying to come out that life is not all bad may be there was just a moment when it was a shining moment when there was hope and acceptance, so we try and grab on to that little shining moment very squarely and its almost different from trauma counseling where you are asked what was the worst moment for you and "here we are going a different direction by asking, what was the most shining moment for you in your life", but not necessarily in trauma but in the story that you are re-authoring, they might be very little but we try and document them put a date and time and try to make them a dominant story of your life because for those traumatized they may not remember such shining moments … because life is like

for them 99% is full of problem,
so we try by all means to find that little shining moment
so that they can at least find hope in it rather than to
focus on the trauma…"

This extract explore how important is the positive past in child soldiers lives. Remembering the positive past tends to bring strength and hope for the future. The pictures and text presented below illustrate this. Below Aguio Dinah Frances (Illustration 15) depicts her happiness when she passed and became the best girl in her class of 32 other children.



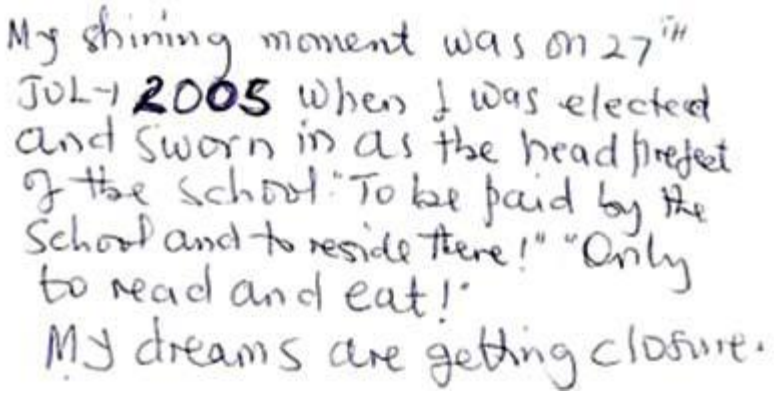
Illustration 15: Aguio Dinah

Shinning moment when you have some power over the obstacle

I was the best girl in 2nd Nov 2006 when my P.L.E results came back among 32 girls and boys who were in the class. I was very happy to see that I beaten the boys and girls who are in the same class with me as well age. The drawing above shows the clock representing the time which the good things happens in the past.

Another child soldier Richard Duuki text 6 talks of his appointment as a prefect of a school after he returned from abduction. This means that like any other war fighter, child

soldiers feel recognized by their community and some institution to which they belong. Such recognition seems to deal away with the stigma around child soldiering as killers to leaders among other children especially at school.



Text 6: Richard Duuki

My shining moment was on 27th July 2005 when I was elected and sworn in as head prefect of the school. To be paid by the school and reside there. Only to read and eat. My dreams are getting closer.

Thus in this case hero booking gave children the opportunity to retell the good they enjoyed in their previous life. It builds their self esteem and avoids self-blame. Expanding on this Siphelile a hero book trainer in Johannesburg had this to say;

> trauma is just half memory when you look on the
> experiences of children because sometimes what they
> remember is only half of their experiences mostly about
> the hardships and bad memories which they had gone through
> but now through the hero book we evoke the other half of the
> memories that the children would have erased or forgotten
> for us that is the memory of strength, hope and future.

In most cases children who had suffered war atrocities built their narratives around pain and suffering. But the hero book reveals the other side of the coin by invoking the good memories in the past lives of children which builds confidence and hope for them.

5.4. Representations of the Healing Intervention Strategies

It is important here to note that although the Hero Book did not mention the representation of healing, from the analysis and follow up of ex-child soldier stories I have done there is a manifestation of healing when children come to an end of their stories. Representation of healing in this case means the testimonies children give to show that they are breaking away from the past to focus on the future.

What is presented here is the evidence of healing after the children have gone through the hero book process. There is evidence from the Hero Books that ex-child soldiers are not focusing on their wartime experiences anymore by the time they get to the end of their book but on the future. They bring in some happiness and hope in their goals. By the end of the books child soldiers are no longer representing themselves crying but they have built strength in defining their future goals.

Very often the representations the children chose to draw at the end of their books were of the welcome they received after they returned from the war and the way they were celebrated by the community to which they belong. This shows a movement away from the past and a focus on the present.

The drawing (illustration 16) shows how child soldiers were welcomed through traditional dancing of which they were a part. It is important here because when children were abducted they were forced by the LRA to fight against their own communities but now what is important is that dancing for children returning from war is a sign of respect and appreciation. As for me when we were withdrawn from DRC war we found a national parade waiting for us to appreciate our work abroad.



Illustration 16: Beatrice

Beatrice in primary 5 drawing showing the traditional dancing from her community and she is happy because after return from war *she is back to culture.*

Englund (1998) writes about how Mozambican refugees in Malawi experienced a bad moment because they were not allowed by war and violence to perform their death rituals in burying their relatives. So performing culture practices is central especially when people have been forcibly displaced by war and violence. It is bridge to the spiritual world because they will be having the opportunity to talk to their ancestors when they are filled by the spirit. This drawing represents the view that culture is a resource in which it can be used by the community to enhance social relations. It therefore reveals the idea that child soldiers also find healing in cultural spaces to include traditional dance. Hence the power of the integrated approach (described previously) used by TPO/Hero Book Process.

5.5. The Club of Life

In the Hero Book Process after showing the shining moments the child soldiers then express their social and economic support through drawing. The Club of life involves family, friends and institutions which help them to achieve their goals. It is important because children show that they are not passive but they have the agency to identify resources surrounding them.

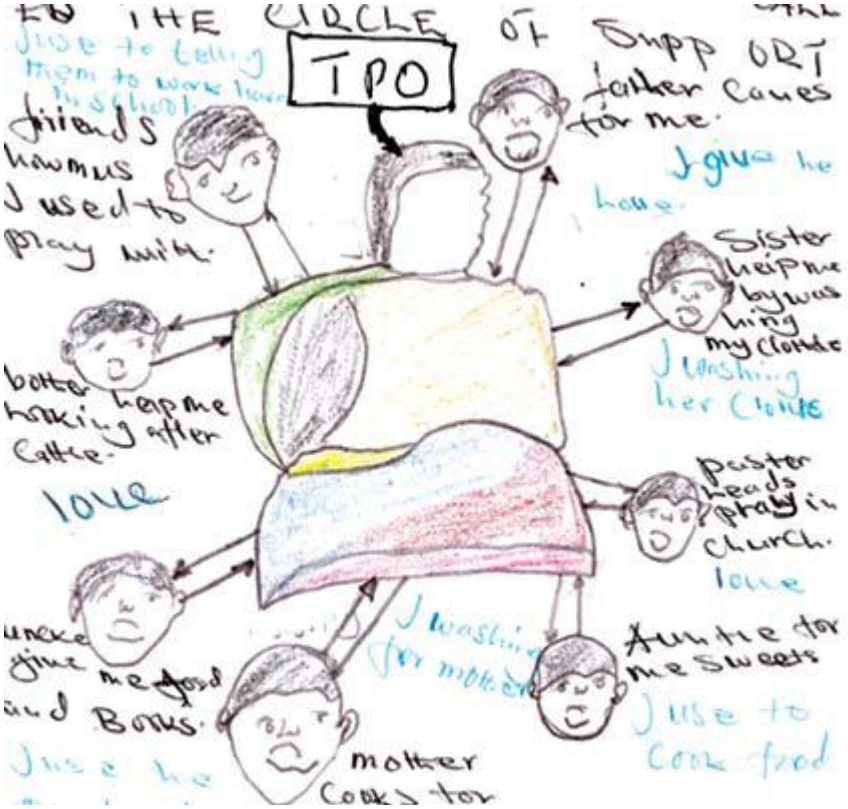


Illustration 17: Aguio Dinah

The above drawing shows the circle of support for the child soldier. She is receiving help from TPO, love from her relatives, play with her friends and prayers from her pastor. Child soldiers are aware of where they can get help, and it is interesting that in their circle of support or club of life they are rarely mentioning any psychological need but they are largely directed towards family and friend companionship and love. Instead of talking about the past they are talking about support for everyday life world issues like food including sweets and going to church for prayers. TPO has engaged with child soldiers families to assist them with food and economic empowerment to enable sustainable

development. Below Illustration 18 Dina Aguio aged 14 shows how people around her in the community comment her

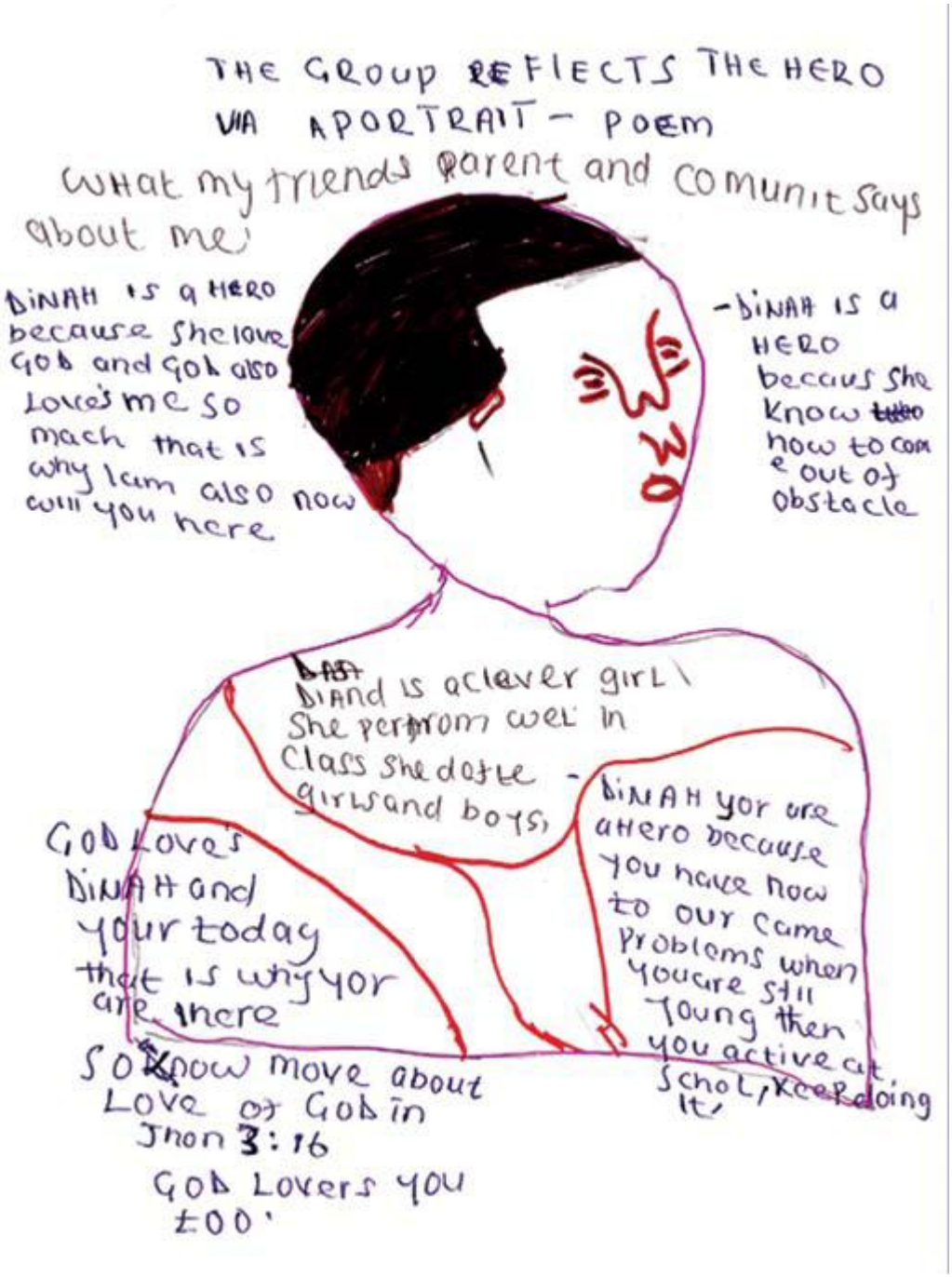


Illustration 18: Aguio Dinah

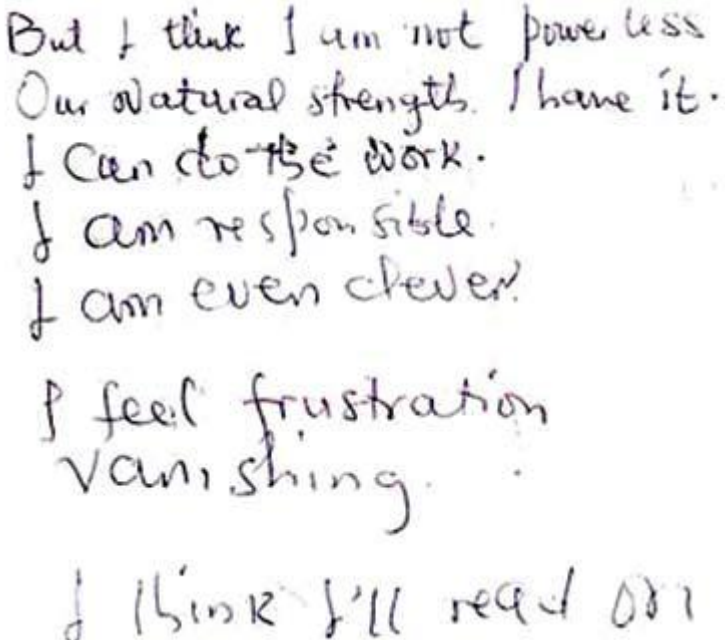
The group reflects the hero. A portrait-a poem. What my friends parents and community says about me: Dina is a hero because she loves God and God also loves me so much that is why I am also here. Dina is a hero because she knows how to come out of obstacle. Dina is a clever girl she perform well in class she do

the boys and girls. Dina you are a hero because you know how to come out of problems when you were young then you are active at school keep doing it. So know more about love of God in John 3:16 God loves you too.

5.6. Evidence of Future Orientation Thinking and Signs of Healing

Future orientation is a sign of emotional well-being. The hero books are full of future thinking. The 'goal activity' asks a child to think about big and small goals. This allows them to add a future orientation to their story. Here is some evidence of this and how goals are important in their lives.

In examining the hero stories told by child soldiers in the hero book anthology it is clear that the children gained confidence as they re-told their story. The power of this process was evident in that as they came to the end of their story they seemed to show some resilience and a feeling of overcoming their problems. As Richard Duuki aged 20 (text 7) put it at the end of his hero story;



Text 7:

But I think I am not powerless
Our natural strength I have it
I can do the work
I am responsible
I am even clever
I feel frustration vanishing
I think I will read on.

From this hand written extract it can be noted that the child can now acknowledge that he might have been powerless, hopeless and frustrated, but the hero book had helped him to identify the resources and strength around him. He suggests that he now has a future with hope and trust. Because he had regained power over his problems, he now feels less frustrated with his situation. From the above text, he had realised and finds a strategy in which he can achieve his goals that is, through going to school and reading.

What is interesting from the extract is that one can find out that abducted children believe in themselves, their mighty physical power as well as their ability to think beyond the range of what people can think they can do. It is within this space of having the capacity to handle their problems that children find some healing. It is also interesting in this context that these children are not looking to people out there to help them, but they believe in themselves, they are centred on what they have and how best they can utilise the few resources they have to reach their intended goals. In this case problems have become windows for opportunities as abducted children come to realise that they have the capacity to determine their own destiny.

Here is more evidence of how children aspire to be in their future, the careers they want to achieve after experiencing the war. The drawings of child soldiers reveal their prospects about their future and the goals they want to achieve. After going through the entire war trauma, children still have hope for the future. This is how children talk about their future goals;

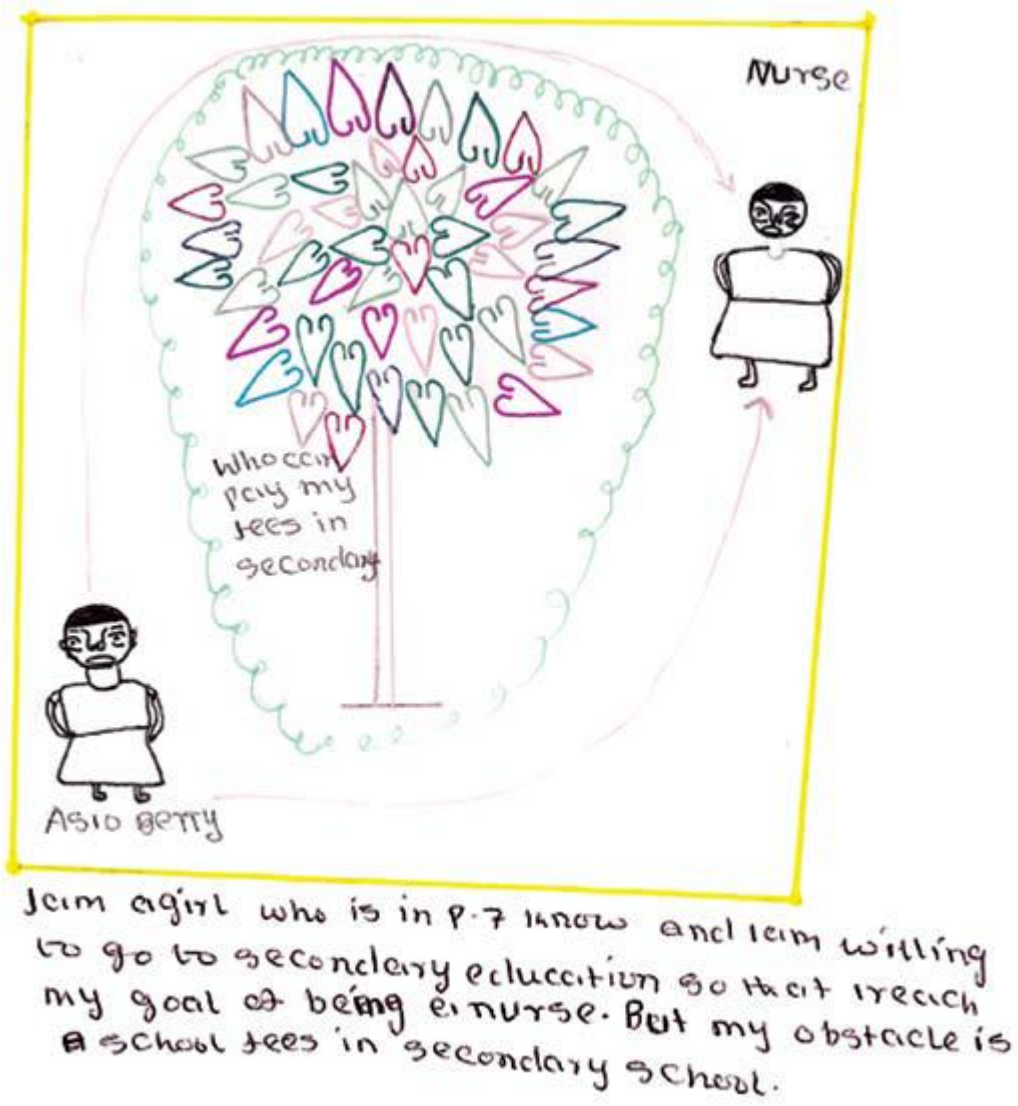
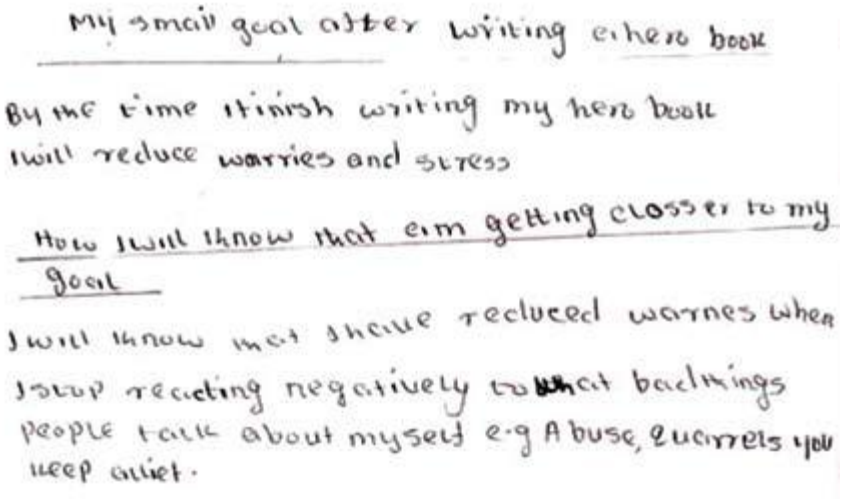


Illustration 19: Asio Betty revealing her goal to become a nurse.
I am a girl who is in P.7 now and I am waiting to go to secondary education so that I reach my goal of being a nurse. But my obstacle is a school fees in secondary school.

Although Betty is worried about the person who would be able to pay for her fees, what is interesting is that she is focused on her goal of becoming a nurse. She has identified her problem and goal as well. Being a Nurse in the future is Betty's goal. Child soldier's goals are likely to have been influenced by the past. In this case the past can be regarded as a window for opportunities as child soldiers suffering encourage them to learn and have a desire for a better goal in their future. May be child soldiers would have been

influenced by nurse's help when they were sick or injured during captivity, hence when they finish school they desire to be also a nurse. Healing can be found in setting such goals whereby focus is diverted from the past to a desired bright future.


My small goal after writing e:hero book

By the time ifinish writing my hero book
Iwill reduce worries and stress

How Iwill know that eim getting closser to my goal

Iwill know that Ihave reduced worries when Istop reacting negatively to what badthings people talk about myself e.g Abuse, quarrels you keep quiet.

Text 8:

My small goal after writing the hero book

By the time I finish writing my hero book
I will reduce worries and stress
How I will know that am getting closer to my goal
I will that I have reduced worries when I stop reacting negatively to what bad things
People talk about myself e.g Abuse, quarrels you
Keep quiet.

Above Beatrice talks about reducing her worries after writing her Hero Book and talk about keeping quite as a way of responding to people who abuse her and quarrels with her. This is important because it shows how she found healing in avoiding talking to people who argue with her. In her case she likes people who support her emotionally and not criticize her. Her goal is to complete school and become a teacher.



Text 9: Beatrice

My goal

My goal is to complete my school
And become a teacher.
The symbol of my goal
Is a book.

Taban Adinan below (illustration 20) talks about his future. He described the role of his job that of a policeman meant to protect the village. What is interesting in Taban's thoughts is that he is aware of the threats that may happen in the community including violence. This indicates that for child soldiers the idea of justice may bring some healing in it if perpetrators of violence face the rule of law.

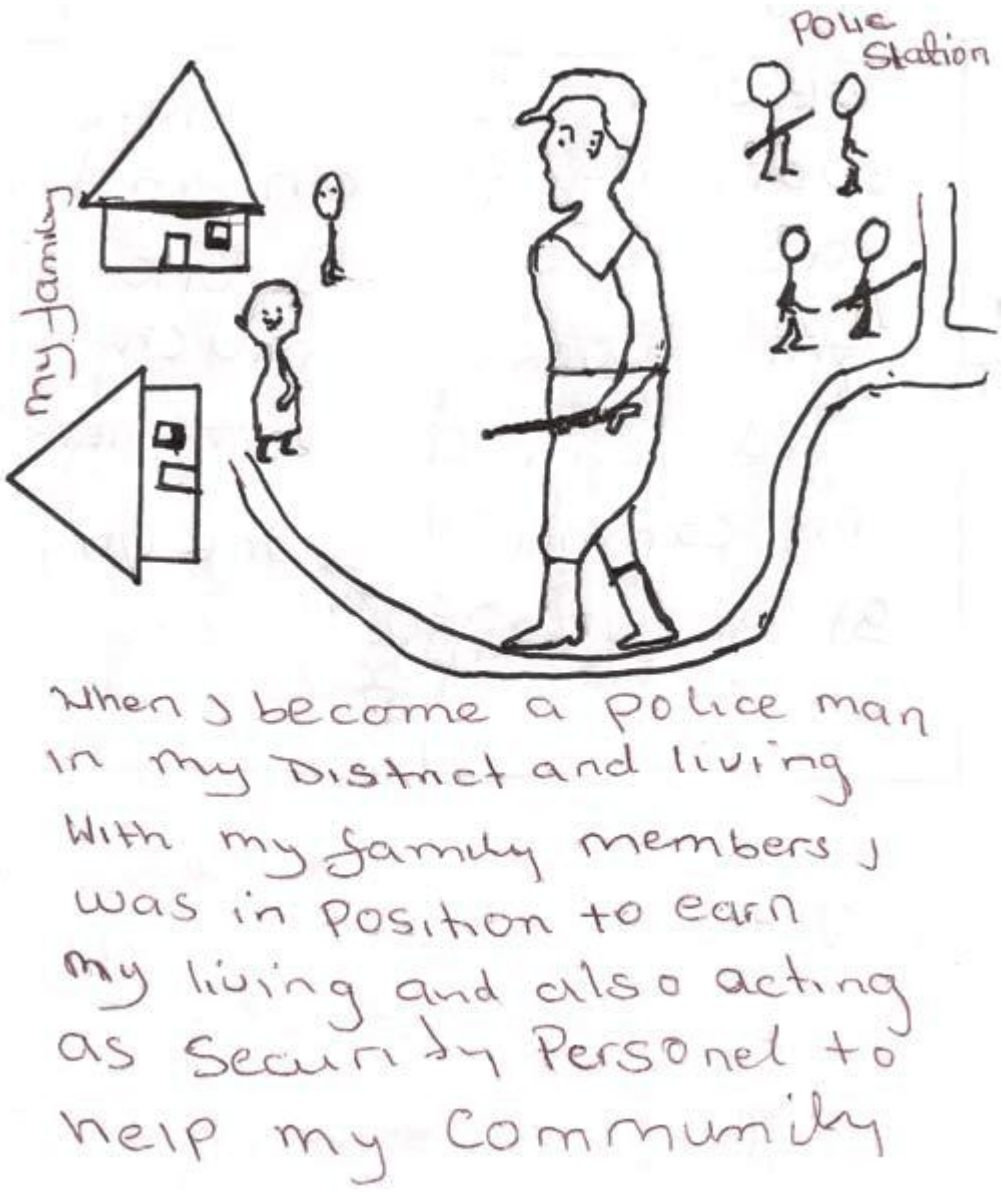


Illustration 20: Taban Adinan

When I become a policeman in my district and living with my family members I was in position to earn my living and also acting as security personnel to help my community.

Taban Adinan above was abducted at the age of 13. He wants to become a policeman. For him he wants to protect his community. His idea here might be to protect the family and community from further rebel attack. Below he is revealing his resilience in which he believes through hardworking he will fulfil his goals.

The illustration 21 below Taban feels that he is a hero since he had managed to go through war events. He had confidence that he can overcome problems in his life.

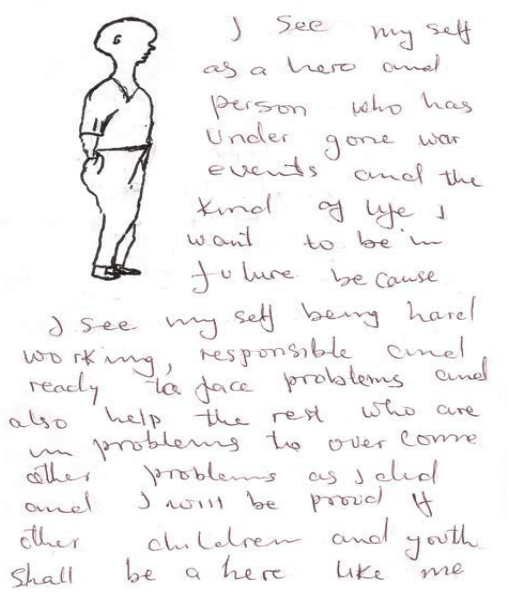


Illustration21:

I see myself as a hero and person who has undergone war events and the kind of life. I want to be in future because I see myself being hard working, responsible and ready to face problems and also help the rest who are in problems to overcome other problems as I did and I will be proud if other children and youth shall be a here like me.

Below (illustration 22) Eduuki Emmanuel 15 years old talks about his goals to be achieved in ten years time. After completing his school and college he wants to become a medical doctor. It can be noted that former child soldiers frame their careers around helping other people.

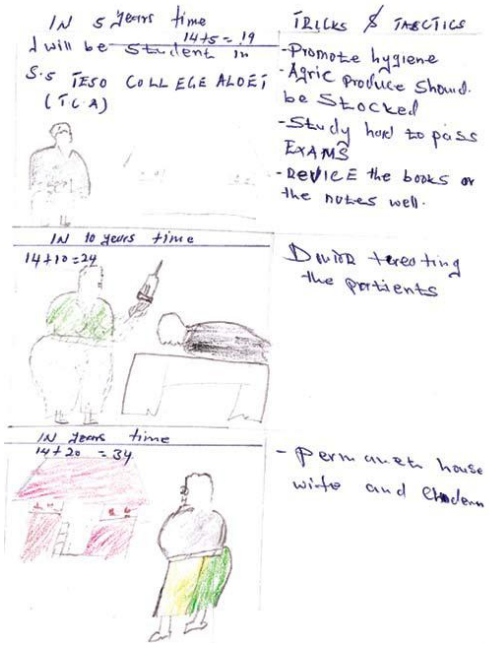


Illustration 22: Eduuki Emma

In five years time

I will be student in S.S Teso College.

Tricks and Tactics

Promote hygiene

Agriculture produce should be stocked

Study hard to pass exams

Revise the books or notes as well

In ten years time

Doctor treating the patients

In years time

Permanent house, wife and children.

It can be noted that goals are important in showing that former child soldiers have agency since they know what is best in their lives. Goals build confidence in child soldiers' future not only for themselves but for the community as well. So the Hero Book has managed to work through from enabling child soldiers to retell their past to telling their future as well. It fulfils the idea that life histories are full of challenges while the future is driven by hope. Above Eduuki aged 15 has hope in himself and his future family.

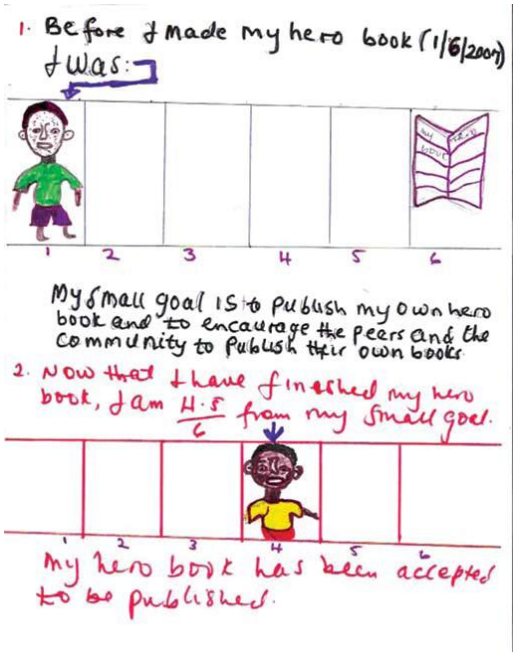


Illustration 23: Richard Eduuki

Before I made my Hero Book (1/6/2007) I was one out six steps to reach my goal.

My small goal is to publish my own hero book and to encourage the peers and the community to publish their own books.

Now that I finished my Hero Book I am four and half out of six steps from my small goal. My Hero Book has been accepted to be published.

In the drawing above illustration 23 Richard indicated that before he made his hero book he was 1/6 from reaching his goal. But after making the hero book he was 4.5/6 from reaching his goal. It is interesting because child soldiers reveal that they had gained the power to reach their goals. This also represents that child soldiers have been helped in coping to their social environment.

5.7 TPO/Hero Book Process Alternative to Traditional PTSD Approaches to Trauma?

It is clear from child soldiers' stories that they are focusing on the future, they seem to have more hope. There is evidence of healing. This becomes clearer if we look at what they have put in their Hero Books in the context of resilience theory.

There is evidence that the Hero Book Process builds young people's resilience- a concept used more and more in healing work with vulnerable children. The work of Bala (1996) is particularly relevant in the context of the TPO/Hero Book Process. It is clear that the process has resulted in many of the outcomes that she sees as beneficial for children. As stated before Bala (1996) identifies four levels at which resilience can be built in vulnerable children: (i) reducing stressors (ii) strengthening and supporting the use of existing protective factors (iii) broadening the coping alternatives and (iv)strengthening and opening future perspectives.

What the TPO/Hero Book Process has done is (i) reduced stressors through reducing the impact of present stressors, unloaded accumulated problems, assisting in peace making with the past and minimising anticipated stress that could interfere with the daily life. Respectively TPO/Hero Book Process has achieved this by encouraging reintegration through economically empowering project both for the displaced child soldier and the community. TPO/Hero Book Process has also encouraged counselling of child soldiers' by community elders. In addition to this they had funded traditional rituals to cleanse child soldiers of the wrongs they had done in war. They also minimised child soldiers stress by giving them goats and sending them to school so that they may feel closer to their goals and have more 'shinning moments'.

In (ii) strengthening and supporting the use of existing protective factors within the child, the (remaining) family and widen the social environment through friends and neighbours TPO/Hero Book has encouraged child soldiers to choose people of their choice to assist them (if they want) in the making of their Hero Books.

TPO/Hero Book has (iii) broadened the coping alternatives of child soldiers by facilitating the use of existing coping strategies and assisting children to look for new coping skills. They encouraged child soldiers to play when they feel like doing so in the community and school. Through 'tricks' and 'tactics' child soldiers visualise ways to cope with their social and economic environment.

Through setting goals TPO/Hero Book Process (iv) strengthens and opens future perspectives. It is clear from child soldiers' goals that they have human agency by understanding their goals and the time they may achieve such goals in future.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study has managed to explore how the Hero Book/TPO Project assisted abducted and forcibly displaced child soldiers in Northern Uganda. The study has revealed how the Hero Book/TPO Project works with child soldiers in giving them a voice to verbalize war trauma as well as setting goals for their future. It is interesting to discuss how the Hero Book Process conceptualizes trauma as a community problem rather than as only an individual experience for the abducted child soldiers. The fact that TPO economically empowers displaced child soldiers with goats and also provides agricultural inputs to displaced families is a clear testimony of an alternative healing to war trauma. This emphasizes the view that war trauma is not an individual issue but healing should be widespread to the entire community to re-establish social structures and social relations within the community.

The TPO/Hero Book Project with child soldiers' included welcoming and counselling and economically empowering them, the Hero Book was then integrated into TPO Project to consolidate healing of war trauma.

In their Hero Books child soldiers' acknowledge that they suffered from war and violence. However, the Hero Book does not only allow former child soldiers to talk about their bad memories. They talk about the positive past when their life used to be good. It is also future oriented as it encourages children to focus on their intended goals and how they may want to reach them. It builds strength in children by instilling the certainty that they have the ability to achieve their personal goals in their future.

There is clear evidence that the TPO/Hero Book alternative healing strategies to the trauma model have gone beyond the PTSD model in assisting former forcibly displaced child soldiers to cope in the aftermath of the war. Therapist using the trauma model emphasis on talking about the worst moment. But by focusing also on the positive the Hero Book approach 'thickens' former child soldiers' stories so the author of the story

sees him/herself not only as a victim but as a survivor. A child soldier also learns strategies for coping with on going sadness for example playing soccer.

When looking at the Hero Books in the context of resilience theory clear signs can be found that real healing has taken place. Many of the protective aspects of resilience are evident in the child soldiers' after they have made their Hero Books.

PTSD model place emphasis on the individual cognitive behaviour, the self and the mind, the TPO intervention did not stop there but have gone beyond in responding to the social and economic aspects by helping with the devastated world of families and the communities affected by war. The PTSD model does not assist the whole community but TPO had managed to economically empower families who have been victims of war by giving them farming inputs and training them in modern agricultural methods so as to improve sustainability. Such a practice goes beyond the individual particularly in the aftermath of the war. This is mainly because the aftermath of the war is largely characterized by extreme traumatisation in which different traumas can be experienced. Such intervention strategies go beyond the individual child and pays particular attention to the social world in which the individual is a part. For them what needs to be healed is the multitude of individual, political, social and cultural responses to a traumatic situation and its aftermath. So whilst the PTSD model focuses on the symptoms, alternative healing strategies by TPO in the aftermath of the war has paid attention to the rebuilding of institutions such as schools and facilitates its enrolment. I argue that such alternative healing approaches to the PTSD model is what Malose Langa (2010) referred to as African centred/informed therapy which goes beyond the individual when addressing war trauma.

PTSD focuses on using counselling to deal with symptoms such as nightmares. The TPO/Hero Book process does not stop there but go beyond counselling. In addition to counselling process (which is usually done by the community elders); TPO supports the traditional ritual cleansing ceremonies whereby the child soldier is brought back to the

family and community from the wrong doings of the war. In this case the TPO/Hero Book takes a step further from individual healing to the healing of the community.

Whist the PTSD model sees the therapist as an expert and the client as a passive recipient. The Hero Book perceives the child soldier differently. It views the child soldier as the expert and author of their own story. They perceive the child as a survivor with a 'thick' story to tell in which experiences are not only viewed as problems but as windows of opportunities/ways of telling a renewed story with encouragement from people around them. The stories they tell can be ways of mobilising and identifying social and economic support. The fact that children do not only retell their past but their future means that they create thick stories full of hope not only for themselves but for their communities as well. The idea here is that healing of war trauma goes beyond the individual by addressing the devastated social and economic world in which the meaning of life world is wholly structured. TPO/Hero Book has worked with both former child soldiers and community leaders to spearhead healing among all the people affected by war. This means that in as much as focusing on the individual is important to ameliorate war trauma, the social, economic and the religious world plays a part in the healing process. Thus in this case the child is the starting point when addressing war trauma.

TPO has worked beyond the former child soldiers by encouraging peace building. The idea is to close wartime suffering and open a new mode of healing. They had worked closely with the Acholi traditional leaders and families hard-heated by war. TPO has used the traditional leaders as a referral point to assist child soldiers. In this case TPO did not only counsel the child soldiers but work with the communities leaders to address and fulfil the cultural obligations. It is highly understood that families affected by war falls short of social and economic status. What is interesting is that TPO has been providing such families and child soldiers with goats not only for economic empowerment but to fulfil cultural obligation such as ritual cleansing ceremonies.

What can be drawn from TPO/Hero Book healing projects is that whilst institutions have a role to play, former child soldiers and communities have a bigger role to play to achieve healing. In this case TPO/Hero Book spearheads the idea that children can participate in the process of healing. It is different from the trauma model in which healing is propelled and **'Done'** by the therapist. The trauma model **'Do'** and the client is **'Done'**. The TPO/Hero Book approach has gone beyond the '**do-and-done approach'** to a more participatory healing approach. TPO does not only encourage communities to engage in their cultural practices but they support them with resources to perform their cultural obligations to fulfil their cultural bonds with their ancestors. The goats provided by TPO are used as a sacrifice for the ancestors of the former child soldier whilst the blood of the chicken is for the cleansing of past and any future misfortunes. It is in great contradiction with the PTSD model which focuses at the 'here and now' with less consideration in resolving both the past and future misfortunes which is the most worry of child soldiers.

Whilst reintegration programmes have been studied in countries such as Liberia, Mozambique and Angola, what seems to be lacking from such programmes is that projects were tailored mainly to understand what former child soldiers had experienced with less focus on providing the much needed resources. TPO/Hero Book have worked to close this gap not only in providing social and material resources but also encouraging and mending damaged social relations and networks between the child and the community through encouraging community headed forums led and designed by the community. What is interesting is that considering the work that is done by TPO/Hero Book project with forcibly displaced child soldiers and given the opportunity to access more resources they have the capacity of reintegrating child soldiers.

But to what extent can such an Afro-centric perspective which is a culturally centred therapy be incorporated in all reintegration programmes for child soldiers returning from war in Africa? I argue that the response here is twofold: (i) the continuity of an African informed therapy depend on the NGOs working in such reintegration programmes to support the existing structures within the communities affected by war. (i) economic

projects have to be in place in order to substantiate the economic livelihoods of affected communities and child soldiers returning from war.

What should be noted from this study is that my argument is not to discredit the PTSD model, as Young (1995) notes PTSD is real. My argument is that whilst PTSD model is real in its specific context and time in which it was formulated, alternative strategies are required to deal with context specific challenges. TPO/Hero Book goes beyond the trauma model by not only helping former child soldiers to cope with their past but they had supported them to work for the achievement of their goals as well. Following TPO/Hero Book helping work, their alternative healing approaches to the trauma model are neither contradictory nor competing for best recognition but they are complementary to other Mainstream therapies. Thus they may be viewed as additional approaches to self-centred approaches such as counselling. The idea here is that there is no one best approaches to war trauma healing. So whilst TPO/Hero Book responses may be appropriate in the Northern Ugandan context, they are not an end in themselves but they are a means to an end. Hence war trauma healing is an on going process. One of the criticisms against the Hero Book process working with ex-child soldiers is that it may re-traumatise children who would have participated in war as combatants. So cautions must be taken when working with such children in the aftermath of the war. Again the process should not be rushed so as to allow ex-child soldiers to gradually adapt to the social and economic environment.

Despite criticisms that may be labelled against the TPO/Hero Book alternative healing approaches to the trauma model, the approaches have gone beyond the usual trauma model by focusing on the solutions. The TPO/Hero Book did not only dwell on diagnosis which is the central bone marrow of the PTSD model but it focuses on the solutions not only for the child but for the community as well. Thus shifting the focus to the community enables former child soldiers to renegotiate their ‘roots’, positive identity and belonging in the community so as to facilitate the healing process. While this study has its own limitations which includes not talking to abducted and forcibly child soldiers, did not observe therapies in progress and could not do a follow-up study to find the progress

of child soldiers in coping with the community. The study managed to achieve its goals in understanding ways in which healing of war trauma can be implemented in Africa. It must also be noted that the Hero Book/TPO Project has so far been implemented in Northern Uganda and findings of this research should not be generalised to all child soldiering problems in Africa.

This study has its own limitations since I could not observe therapies in progress and did not interview formerly abducted and displaced child soldiers. I based my study on stories they re-tell in their Hero Books. I could not follow up child soldiers' who re-tell their stories in their Hero Books so as to find out whether some children managed to achieve their goals. While my own experiences as a soldier has helped me to understand child soldiers' context of war and analysing their drawings, my position as an adult might be different from that of children.

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