TRAUMA HEALING OF VICTIMS OF SIERRA LEONE’S TEN-YEAR CIVIL WAR: A NEEDS INTERVENTION STUDY BASED ON PERSONAL TESTIMONIES OF SELECTED VICTIMS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Armed conflict broke out in Sierra Leone, a country on the west coast of Africa, in 1991. Civilians, especially women and children were greatly brutalized. This resulted in significant psychosocial problems on all affected persons, especially children.

The study set out to investigate the extent of the traumatic experiences of war affected school children in two regions of the country, namely, the Northern Province and Western Area. It is evident that the trauma of the war lingers on as this is manifested in widespread lawlessness in the country, the increased number of children on the streets, child prostitution and deviant behaviour in school children. This study is therefore important to the government and all agencies interested in the plight of war affected children. The outcome of the study reveals the need for the services of guidance counselors in schools.

School children that were victims of the war were identified and the level of their trauma assessed. This was followed by relevant recommendations for therapeutic interventions in schools.

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected to determine the interconnections between the children’s traumatic experiences and their general comportment and performance in their academic work. The outcome of the investigations ascertained that traumatic experiences of the children still affect their general behaviour in school but not necessarily their academic output, as many who were directly affected by the war still passed their Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). This examination allows them to proceed to Senior Secondary School level. In spite of their level of trauma they scored both average and good grades.

Recommendations are made to both government and agencies working with children affected by the war concerning the provision of necessary interventions for them, and other steps that will help to detraumatize these children.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study
On 23 March 1991, armed conflict broke out in Sierra Leone, a country on the West African coast made up of approximately 5 million people. A group of rebels calling themselves the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) claimed responsibility for the incursion, with the declared objective of overthrowing the so-called ‘corrupt and tyrannical government’ of the All People’s Congress, the party which had ruled the country since 1968.

Ten years after taking power in 1968, the APC declared a one-party system. The APC as the single party became unaccountable and suppressive, suppressing any form of opposition in various ways. Another key issue was failure in governance and institutional processes in the country. They failed to meet the security and livelihood needs of the people and suppressed democracy especially in decision-making processes. These resulted in increased poverty, marginalization, greed and grievances which resulted in the conflict. There was massive abuse of human rights. The Civil Service, major state machinery became redundant, while the Army and Police force became instrument of violence against the people they were established to protect. In addition, non-state bodies like the media houses and civil society groups, who should ensure accountability, were co-opted into government. The one party Constitution of 1978 banned opposition political parties. Consequently, Sierra Leoneans became increasingly disgruntled and aggrieved with the malaise of governance and their inability to do anything about it. Later, many citizens especially the poor and marginalized youths became open to radical means of effecting change; therefore many aggrieved Sierra Leoneans joined the RUF incursion to vent out their grievances.

This singular event heralded the beginning of a decade of violence that devastated the country. As the country exploded into appalling brutality against civilians, the world recoiled in horror at the tactics used by the RUF. Reports emerged of indiscriminate amputations, abductions of women and children, recruitment of children as child soldiers, rape, sexual battery and wanton destruction of villages and towns.

According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2004) it is estimated that over 100,000 people were killed, a significant number of these being women and children. When the war was declared over in 2001, it left in its wake significant psychosocial problems that continue to have negative impacts on all affected persons, especially children. These children witnessed or were direct victims of many of the atrocities that were committed by the rebels. They witnessed or some of them even participated in the deaths of close family members or someone in their community. It is also estimated that more than 15,000 children (TRC, 2004) were separated from their families and communities during the war. This resulted in their being refugees in countries like Liberia, Guinea, Gambia, to name a few.

Many children who experienced these atrocities are now aged between 13 and 23, although 13-18 is the official age range for secondary schooling. In fact, most of them did not attend school for almost 10 years because of the war since there was fighting in most areas of the country and many of the schools were destroyed. At the end of the war government put structures in place aimed at improving access to school and encouraging over-aged children to continue to go to school. Firstly, free education for classes 1-3 in 1999, and in 2001 for
classes 4-6. Secondly, the Rapid Response Education Programme (RREP), aimed at returning school aged children between the ages of 10 and 13 years, who have lost formal schooling as a result of the war. The programme lasted for five months. Thirdly, The Complementary Rapid Education for Primary School (CREPS) aimed at returning over-aged children into primary school. The six years primary school syllabus was compressed to three years.

The traumatic events they experienced, as victims or perpetrators, are likely to manifest themselves via physical, emotional, social and psychological symptoms. Such symptoms include headaches, muscle tension, irritability, anxieties, isolation, lack of concentration, violent behaviours and poor school performance. Trauma affects every aspect of one's life and for the holistic development of the child the school must play a pivotal role in restoring children to healthy living and as peaceful and productive members of society. This is in consonance with the twin issues of peace and citizenship education so critically important for these children. This has informed the study.

**Statement of the problem**
The children of Sierra Leone were disproportionately affected by the war in a negative way. The traumatic events they encountered as victims or perpetrators is likely to be manifested in misplaced physical, emotional, social, psychological, and educational attributes and aptitudes. The study investigated the extent of the traumatic experiences of the war affected school children some of whom have become young adults, and how their posttraumatic status influence their general comportment, emotional, social, psychological and educational attributes and aptitudes.

**Objectives of the study**
The general objective of the study is to identify school children directly affected by the war, and to determine their level of trauma and make recommendations for therapeutic interventions at school. Specifically, the study will:

- Ascertain if these victims observed any of the atrocities committed by the rebels during the war;
- Determine the type and extent of bodily harm experienced by victims;
- Determine the type and extent of bodily harm these victims, later turned perpetrators, carried out on others during the war;
- Assess the effect of any of these acts on the psychological health of the victims;
- Assess the level of academic performance of the victims who are still attending school, in school and external examination
- Present the various stories narrated by the victims.

**Significance of the study**
To elicit relevant data from various experiences of the war both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were employed. This approach aimed at presenting different perspectives of the war to bring out subjective and objective views with the hope that combining both will elucidate the extent of trauma experienced and at the same time exhibit posttraumatic status of the respondents.

This study is important to the government of Sierra Leone and all other stakeholders interested in the plight of war victims, especially school children. It is evident in many situations in Sierra Leone that the trauma of the war continues to linger on. There is widespread lawlessness in the country; hundreds of street children are all over town; child prostitution is at an alarming level; petty theft is rampant and there is chronic
underperformance of children in public examinations. If it is determined from this study that many of these negative behaviours can be attributed to the remnants of the war then corrective measures should be put in place to mitigate these negative outcomes.

The outcome of the study is therefore significant to the victims of the war.

**Scope of study**
This study of victims of Sierra Leone’s ten-year civil war, particularly of victims still in the educational system has focused on two regions of the country, primarily because these are the two regions where the war lingered before it was over. Also, most of the perpetrators migrated to these regions refusing to go back to their home towns for fear of the consequences of their acts. Consequently, schools in both regions became host to majority of the school-going aged children at the end of the war. Some of these children had grown into young adults. This was why the study concentrated on children and young adults.

**Limitations of Study**

There are many definitions of the term trauma, apart from the dictionary definitions. Some are medical and others legal. All three definitions presented in the Literature Review were used in analyzing the traumatic experiences of the children. We were exposed to a wide range of literature but these dealt mostly with healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. We were however able to extract relevant information for this study from these.

Due to the unique sample available for the study, results may not be generalized beyond the specific population from which the sample was drawn. Most of the children directly impacted by the war experienced these atrocities when they were quite young, about 6-8 years old. Since many years have elapsed after the war, their memories may be distorted and consequently their stories may not be as accurate as one would want.

During the interviews there was problem with some interviewees who were hesitant to call names of towns and people. It appeared they were still scared of the consequences of their acts. Many said they did not burn houses or kill people when filling the questionnaire but explaining their stories they admitted that they committed all of the atrocities the rebels were known for, because if they did not do what they were told they would be killed.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

What is Trauma?
The Collins Essential English Dictionary defines trauma as ‘Psychological and emotional shock that may have long lasting effect’ (second edition, 2006). While the American Heritage Dictionary puts it in the most simplistic way as, ‘An event or situation that causes great distress and disruption’. A third definition is from the American Heritage Science Dictionary (2005). It states that trauma is the ‘Psychological or emotional injury caused by a deeply disturbing experience.’

In this context, Dr. Syed Husain (2004) of the University of Missouri regards trauma as involving the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically distressing event that is outside the range of normal human experience. Such events may include a threat to one’s life, harm to one’s self or family members, the sudden death of family members or the destruction of one’s home, or the witnessing of violent injury or death. Traumatic events become internalized in the minds of victims and are relived by them long after the events are over. Some symptoms of traumatic stress include; disturbing recollections, distressing dreams, flashbacks, inability to recall the events, diminished interest in significant activities, to name a few.

There are numerous articles relating to the issue of trauma healing. However, the work of Eric Brahm published in January 2004 on the Internet appears to be the most comprehensive as it looks at trauma healing from a variety of perspectives. According to Brahm, individuals who experience hardship and suffering often feel the lasting effects of the trauma no matter what the source of the trauma is. It could be from natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods as well as from man-made catastrophes such as terrorism or war. In dealing with man-made traumas, providing lasting interventions can be difficult in that the perpetrators of the atrocities sometimes live in close proximity to the victims. This is especially true in the Sierra Leonean context in that as a result of reconciliation and reintegration, some of the perpetrators have returned to their hometowns where the atrocities were committed and are living side-by-side with the victims.

Brahm believes that individuals suffer trauma in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons. Trauma sufferers may have personally seen their homes or communities destroyed or are victims of physical abuse such as rape, torture, or other violence. Individuals in such situations are likely unable to cope with these extreme events, consequently inhibiting both their ability to carry on with life and to function effectively in society.

Dr Husian (2004) further states that Individuals with traumatic symptoms usually go through a number of cognitive, emotional, physical and behavioural responses. These include memory difficulties, lack of concentration, poor judgment, inability to discriminate and inability to make choices, all of which are cognitive responses. Also, withdrawal, excitability, flashbacks, intense fear, feelings of helplessness, loss of control and loss of connection and meaning may lead to emotional depression. Stomach pains, tightness of the chest, headaches, perspiration and psychosomatic complains are such physical responses. While irritability, hyper-alertness, insomnia, communication difficulties and substance abuse are behavioural.

Essentially, victims of violence often feel humiliated, vulnerable, helpless, and that their lives are out of control. In addition to the individual dimension, trauma can also exert a toll on
communities. During the war in Sierra Leone, communities across the country became suspicious of outsiders, and sometimes even members of their own communities did not know which community members had joined the ranks of the rebels. Many times they resorted to mob violence, attacking anyone who was suspected of being a rebel. Entire communities were usually on edge as they braced themselves for possible attacks at any given time. This led to feelings of frustration and resignation.

To maintain the sanity of both individuals and their communities, traumas must be resolved. Sierra Leone went through a formal process of Truth and Reconciliation allowing victims to tell their stories and perpetrators to ask for forgiveness. This process facilitated the development of mutual trust so that victims and perpetrators can come to terms with what happened in the past and chart a way forward so that lasting peace can reign in the community.

Providing Healing
Brahm makes the point that the goal of trauma healing must be to give victims a feeling that they have control over their lives again and this takes the form of safety, acknowledgement and reconnection. Providing a safe place for victims to tell their stories will encourage them to open up and reveal details of their ordeal. The opportunity to tell one’s story is a critical therapeutic intervention that helps victims come to terms with the reality of what has happened to them. When these stories are told in the presence of perpetrators, the opportunity for acknowledgement, apology and reconnection is established.

Jarman (2001), a counselor and trainer is in agreement with Brahm for the creation of a safe space as part of the healing process. It gives an opportunity to the counselor to work with the self-healing potential of each person. The process involves developing empathy and active listening skills. Active listening enables a person to go through painful and disturbing experiences. Other skills suggested by Jarman include play, art, etc. These he said can help put sufferers in control of their emotional energies.

Bey and Turner (1996) in support of creating a safe space suggested that to enhance effective trauma healing there should be emotional outlets in order to enable traumatized individuals to express their anxieties.

In Sierra Leone, these stories absolutely had to be told. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission set up by the government immediately after the war in 2000 determined that the conflict “destroyed individual lives, families, and communities, people’s belief systems and cultural heritage. Traditional and community meeting places and institutions were demolished and desecrated. People were forced to commit sacrilege against symbols of religion or faith. Certain groups such as property owners, chiefs, figures of traditional authority and representatives of government institutions were targeted on the basis of revenge, economic appropriation and because of ethnicity.”

Given this background, sustainable peace in Sierra Leone would have been impossible if victims had been denied the opportunity to face their perpetrators and tell their horrific stories, accept apologies and effect reconciliation. This element of “constructive communication” elicits attention, respect and compassion from all those who hear these stories. The net effect is that victims are able to move forward and repair their damaged lives.

Brahm shows how children are negatively impacted by the effects of war in that as a result of limited emotional development, they are unable to understand the difficulties they are experiencing and as a consequence have constrained coping mechanisms. This inability to cope can lead to undesirable behavioural manifestations such as aggression, disrespect for authority, prostitution, stealing, and so on. Traumatic experiences may also be translated into
physical disorders, such as nausea, headaches, and backaches, as well as severe learning difficulties. Priority attention on the needs of such children is therefore necessary to negate the prolonged effects of their trauma.

Sierra Leone, former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia and many other countries have experienced devastating wars that have caused mayhem in these countries. In addition to reconciliation and reintegration, bringing perpetrators to book, through the International Court of Justice, and in the case of Sierra Leone the Special Court, victims are able to get some relief in knowing that those who have the greatest responsibility for the atrocities they suffered are being punished.

HELPING TRAUMATIZED POPULATIONS
According to Dr. Syed Husain of the University of Missouri (2004), millions of people around the world have experienced psychological distress caused by exposure to armed conflict. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as it is often called, involves a range of normal responses to events outside the realm of normal human experience. As in the case of Sierra Leone, traumas caused by the civil war produced profound changes in social and political processes that have affected not only the current victims in the case studies but also subsequent generations. The TRC reports referenced the large number of children that were born as a result of the war. Many fathers of these children died during the war and others abandoned the children once they were born. These children, as they grow up, will have bitter memories of their heritage with resultant negative psychological consequences.

The needs of these children as well as others affected by the war can be successfully addressed in different ways by a variety of professionals, ranging from psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers to educators and religious practitioners. For these programmes to succeed, a deep understanding of the complex political, economic, and social events in which the trauma occurred is necessary.

Dr. Paula Gutlove of the Institute for Resource and Security Studies in Cambridge, Massachusetts outlined four general principles for trauma assistance interventions that should guide victims through the healing process, as follows:

- Those working with traumatized populations must understand that most post-traumatic reactions are normal reactions to abnormal events.
- The healing of traumatized individuals cannot take place within a social vacuum, and it is often part of an on-going social process. By helping others, traumatized individuals can help themselves.
- Where international professionals are active in zones of conflict, they should seek to establish cooperative, mutual partnerships with local professionals where they come together to both teach and learn from each other. They should be prepared to make a long-term commitment to those relationships and to their work in the conflict area.
- Trauma recovery is a long-term recovery process, requiring periodic assessment of the needs of the community and the caregivers, and the adjustment of approaches and techniques accordingly.

During the interviews that were conducted with victims of the war in Sierra Leone, it was evident that even after the conclusion of the war seven years ago, victims vividly recalled the events causing their trauma as if it was yesterday. Traumatic events that seemed to have been resolved could become full blown again if effective therapeutic interventions are not employed to help trauma victims interpret and heal from their experience. Brahm attributes this to the fact that the memory repeatedly occurs as flashback, which can occur at any time, and the victim is unable to distinguish the memory from actually experiencing the event again.
It is important therefore, that periodic reinforcement is available in the community to help mitigate the lingering effects of the trauma.

In this chapter we have presented a few definitions of trauma and different types of trauma, though not exhaustive. We have presented a few individual contributions to trauma studies which include providing healing and helping traumatized populations. These definitions and individual contributions will form the bases of our analysis, especially the qualitative data.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design of Study
This survey presents a collection of case studies. However, quantitative data was also collected as is shown in chapter four. The variables involve level of trauma as independent variable and victim attributes (attitude, temperament, school performance etc) as dependent variables.

Population and Sample
The study population consisted of 30 school children who were victims of the war, mostly children, between the ages of 13-23, with some much older depending on when they resumed their education after the war. Three categories of schools were selected: all boys, all girls and mixed. These schools have a high concentration of victims of the war who are still attending school: The schools were: Ahmadiyaa Secondary School; Collegiate Secondary School; Sierra Leone Muslim Congress; St Edwards Secondary School, all in Freetown; St. Francis Secondary School and St. Joseph’s Convent both in Makeni, a northern town approximately 120 miles from Freetown. Both of these schools in Makeni have the largest number of war-affected school children in the country attending their school at the time of the study. The four schools in Freetown were selected because they served as hosts for the many displaced children who fled to Freetown to attend school. They also accommodated the school-aged ex-combatants. A total of six schools formed the study sample and 5 pupils per school were interviewed. 12 teachers from these schools also responded to questionnaires relating to the pupils’ behaviour and academic performance.

Sampling procedure
The sampling employed techniques such as purposive (to select two out of the four geopolitical divisions of the country), stratification of schools by sex type and simple random selection of pupils. The purposive selection of the schools was being based on the extent to which they served as hosts for internally displaced and demobilized ex-combatant school children.

Instrumentation
Two instrument types were developed and administered, as follows:
- Questionnaire for Pupils (QP)
- Questionnaire for Teachers (QT)

Data collection procedure
Prior visits were made to the schools after they were identified as having a large proportion of children affected by the war. The visits were to acquaint the Principals and their staff with the purpose of the research and to solicit their assistance in identifying such pupils and their teachers for an interview, and to agree on dates for the interviews and filling of questionnaires

A combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques were used to collect data. Primary data were collected mainly through the completion of questionnaires and asking respondents to tell their stories. The research team were trained on data collection techniques and ethics. Pupils were assembled to fill questionnaires while teachers filled theirs individually. Later, pupils were encouraged to tell their stories on a one to one bases.
Data analysis
Data collected from the quantitative aspect of the study were collated and coded. Descriptive (Frequencies, percentages, and graphs) and inferential (Chi-Square) statistics were used with SPSS Software. The qualitative aspect was analyzed by narrative to reflect level of trauma, and the impact of their various experiences as they attempt to adjust to life in Sierra Leone today.
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Introduction
In this chapter we have presented results from six of the schools that host children affected by Sierra Leone’s ten-year civil war. Two of the schools are in the Northern Province and four are in the capital city Freetown, which is in the Western Area. A total of 30 pupils and 12 teachers who directly interact with these pupils formed the study sample. Two teachers were selected per school. The results are presented in tables and narratives. We had to summarize the stories in a way to reduce the length and at the same time retain the facts. Therefore only aspects of how they were captured, what happened after that and combat experiences are presented here. 4 pupils were not captured but suffered in other ways, from wounds (case studies 8, 14, 16, 22), amputation (case studies 11, 16), watched loved ones killed (case studies 2, 12, 13, 19, 20, 22).

Table: showing respondents by sex and region

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<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
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</table>

Source: Compiled from questionnaires
MAKENI

Case Study 1
Rugiatu, aged 21 (female) was with her family in Kambia, Northern Province, when the rebels attacked on 4th December, 1999. She was 12 years old at that time. Screaming was heard from every house on their street and the entire area was in chaos. Soon the rebels entered their house. She and her mother were raped while her father was forced to watch. Her father was commanded neither to cry nor show any emotion, otherwise he would be killed. She lost her virginity in a very brutal way.

She was taken to Makeni where her captors continued to rape her. She feared not escape because if she was caught it would mean certain death for her. Her original captor who later became her husband got killed in an ambush and another rebel took her to be his wife. This new husband was very cruel. He beat her and subjected her to hard labour. Sometimes he would torture her. At one time he put her in prison accusing her of stealing his money. In prison he and his friends continued to rape her. When the money was not forthcoming he tied her to a tree in a stream where she stayed for several days. He came around to see her at intervals during which he cut her body and put cocaine and also gave her marijuana to smoke. He later removed her and tortured her in the sight of the other civilians. This cruel husband was later killed. After going through this ordeal she developed confidence in her ability to survive under harsh conditions. She now became a perpetuator. She participated in amputation, raping men, looting and killing.

Case Study 2
Tamba, aged 17 (male) was with his family when rebels truck their village. It was late in the night and they had all gone to bed. He was woken by his father and they left the house running. His father was carrying his 6 years old sister. He asked for his mother but his father promised to tell him her where about in the morning. Suddenly his father fell to the ground and was breathing hard. He and his sister sat by him until, morning when some rebels came and told him that his father was dead. One of them carried his sister on his shoulder and ordered him to move along. They walked for two days without food but on reaching the rebel camp in a small village he and his sister were given boiled yam to eat. He ate but his sister did not. She eventually got very ill and died.

A month after he was captured he was given a gun and told that if he did not use it to kill, someone would use it to kill him. He was continually injected with drugs so he had no fear of battle even though he was small. He was among the group that attacked Freetown on January 6, 1999. During the attack he was ordered to shot his uncle. When he refused, the rebel commander threatened to kill him. So he shot his uncle dead. The heavy bombardment by ECOMOG forced them to retreat from Freetown and they eventually arrived in Makeni. He returned to school after the war.

Case Study 3
Abu, aged 18 (male) was staying with his uncle in a village near Makeni when he was captured. He was taken to a rebel base and given a gun to use. He was taught how to use it, which he did on several occasions. In January 1999 he was deployed to attack Freetown. He killed many people in Freetown. Too many to count. He also burnt many houses. He lived with the rebels for seven years.
When Freetown was re-taken by ECOMOG he was sent to fight in Lungi, where the international airport is situated. When he got there he decided not to continue fighting and tried to escape. He was caught together with other escapees. The others were brutally killed in his presence. He was spared because he told them he could effectively use a gun. He was given a gun and he started killing again. After sometime, he escaped leaving his gun behind. He stayed under cover until the war was declared over. He is now in JSS1. His ambition is to pursue a career in medicine.

Case Study 4
Isata, aged 18 (female) was staying with her parents when the rebels attacked. Both parents were killed and she was abducted. She was raped continually by several of the rebels. She was assigned to do domestic work for them. She remained with the rebels until the disarmament process started. They were always moving from one place to another to avoid detection. Later she was trained to fight. They killed and burnt houses. At the end of the war an international NGO Caritas provided housing for her until her aunt came to get her. She is now in Junior Secondary School in Makeni.

Case Study 5
Isatu, aged 15 (female) was staying with her parents in Kambia when the rebels attacked about 6 00 a.m. She was nine years old then. She ran into the bush to take cover only to find herself in the midst of the rebels that were lying in ambush. One of them immediately grabbed her and stripped her of her clothes. He was about to rape her when an older rebel told him to stop. He disobeyed and would have raped her but the older rebel shot him dead and handed her over to another junior rank rebel to take care of her. They were told to shot her if she did not co-operate with them.
They walked for four days before reaching a rebel camp called ‘Zogoda’ where she met other abductees. They were warned that if they tried to escape they will be killed. To demonstrate this, four other civilians who had been caught trying to escape were brought forward and beaten. They were then taken to the nearby bush one by one and slaughtered. Loud screaming came from their direction. At the end the ones that did the killing came with their bloody hands and showed them.

She was assigned to do domestic work by Captain ‘Spare no Soul’. One day he took her to his tent and raped her. Afterwards his friends too began to rape her. She spent a year with the rebels. When the AFRC came to power, they were told that the country was now in the hands of the AFRC and the RUF so they could move around. She eventually returned to Makeni. She is now in Junior Secondary School year 2 (JSS2).

Case Study 6
Mariama, aged 17 (female) was staying with her aunt in Makali, her home town when the rebels attacked the town in the early hours of the morning. She, her aunt and her children escaped to a nearby village. Unfortunately, this was the route the rebels used to retreat. They were hiding behind a big tree when a female rebel spotted them and beckoned to them to join the group of captives. They were led back to the town they had escaped from (Makali). ‘I found other rebels there with more captives’. The rebels conferred among themselves out of the hearing of the captives. As a result some of the captives were selected and lined up in a row and executed. Her relatives were among those executed.
Initially she worked as servant to the Commando’s wife. This lady was too fat to walk the distances they covered, she was therefore carried in a hammock by two of the Commando’s men. One day she told her that a secret marriage was been arranged for her and the two men who carried her. The woman saw the horrified look on her face and told her that if she did not comply she will be killed and eaten. She therefore obeyed and slept with each on alternate days. She escaped when ECOMOG attacked their camp and the rebels ran leaving behind their captives. She managed to reach Makeni and went to the house of her former teacher who accepted her. She is now living with a distant relative and is Senior Secondary School (SSS3).

Case Study 7
Saidu, aged 19 (male) was living with his parents in Makeni, when he was abducted in December, 1998. Himself and other children were playing under the moon lit sky when they heard gun shots from the direction of the Army Barracks. He ran in terror to his grandmother. There he was grabbed and taken away. Their first stop was at the police barracks where he watched policemen been captured and shot in the head. His captors made it clear that if he ever attempted to escape and was caught he will face the same fate. They were conveyed to the rebel base by a truck. He noticed that there were hundreds of small boys like him at the camp. Some were even younger. No one was allowed to cry or call the name of any relative. From this camp they were transported to Bumbuna, another Northern town. Here they received training for two weeks and given guns before they were carted away to Freetown to re-enforce the rebel troops fighting in the city. This was the time of the January 6 invasion of Freetown. His first battlefield experience was at Lumpa, near Waterloo, which is 20 kilometers from the city. They encountered the Malian troops here. The Malians had more sophisticated weapons. They however attacked them and suffered heavy causalities, the majority of whom were child-combatants. He was constantly dragged. He was subjected to frequent beating, forced labour and starvation. He was able to escape in Freetown and locate a relative of his who later arranged for him to return to Makeni. In Makeni he re-entered school.

Case Study 8
Aminata, aged 18 (female) was living in Kono with her parents when the town was attacked by rebels. She was ten years old then. She and her mother managed to escape to a nearby bush. As they were looking for a safe place to hide they saw many dead bodies in their path, and saw many people with different parts of their limbs hacked off. ‘One night as we were hiding from the persistent shelling that was going on around us, I was hit in the head by bomb fragments and I sustained a large gash on my head’ (she removed her head tie and showed the scar). There was no medical facility so her mother used local herbs from the bush to heal her wound. They suffered many things in the bush, hunger, cold and other discomforts. When they returned from the bush she came to live with her aunt in Makeni and returned to school. She will be completing Senior Secondary school in June 2009.

Case Study 9
Baimba, aged 18 (male) was in Kambia attending school when the rebels attacked in the early hours of a Sunday morning. He was staying with his aunt who had brought him over from Makeni to help his mother in raising him up. They were awoken by gun shots and loud cries from nearby houses. The whole family was in confusion. They ran out and soon they were going in different directions, confused as to which direction was safe. In the dark he ran straight into a rebel ambush and was captured. His captors told him he was in safe hands. Many civilians fleeing in that direction were captured. Many small children who were crying
continually for their parents were killed to keep them silent. This served as a warning to the rest of them. The rebels took them along as they retreated. They walked for two days in the bush before reaching a rebel camp. Here he was trained to use the gun to fight. Food was scarce. They however left this camp one night and went in a certain direction. In the early hours of the day they reached a village. They stayed in the bush for sometime, were injected with drugs before attaching the village. Here they burnt houses and looted food and properties. It was not long before the war was declared over. They attacked several villages, burnt houses killed fleeing civilians and looted properties. He did not return to Kambia but went to stay with his mother in Makeni at the end of the war where he is currently attending school.

**Case Study 10**

Shekuma, age 20 (male) was staying with his family in Kono when the rebels attacked. When the rebels entered their house they were told to come out and without taking any property out their house was set on fire. They were then lined up to follow the rebels into the bush. As they left, his female cousin was given a heavy load to carry. In the bush he was given a gun and taught how to use it. He was told that he needed to carry a gun because they would need to defend themselves as they journeyed. Later they came across another group of rebels and some people including his cousin were assigned to this other group. He remained with his original captors. Many miles into the bush they reached a large clearing where they rested. They stayed in this place for two days. During this time he thought he was going to die in the bush, because they did not have sufficient food and water. They traveled mostly by night. They eventually reached the rebel base where they met other captives. The rebel commander gave instructions that if anyone attempted to escape the person should be shot on the spot that he was caught. He admitted to have fought many battles on the side of the rebels, he burnt houses killed and looted properties. He came to Makeni with other rebels but were scattered during a raid. As he roved the township he came across a relative who took him to his house. He never went back to fight. He was enrolled in school and is now in Senior Secondary School year two.

**Freetown**

**Case Study 11**

Momodu, aged 17 (male) was captured in Makeni in 1996 and initially asked to carry looted items from place to place. After a while, he was trained in combat and made to take drugs before and after an attack. He spent a total of five years with the rebels during which time he participated in the atrocities for which the rebels were notorious. He fought on the side of the rebels until the commencement of the disarmament and demobilization process in 2001. He now lives in Freetown, the capital city. He was fortunate to trace his family at a refugee camp in Freetown. His parents assisted him in returning to school. However, Momodu is experiencing sleep disturbances, depression, restlessness, poor concentration in school etc. He also has behaviour problem especially with people who still see him as a rebel.

**Case Study 12**

Fatmata, aged 18 (female) is the third of seven children. She is the only child among her siblings that attended school. She was sent to school by a social worker who befriended her. She was with her family when the war broke out in 1991. Her village was attacked in 1995 and 1996 respectively. Her father was killed in the latter attack. The rest of the family fled to Lunsar, Port Loko and eventually to Freetown where they now live.
Their hiding place in Port Loko was bombarded and several of her family members were killed. She had just passed the National Primary School Examination (NPSE) to enter secondary school. She vowed to avenge her dead relatives and left home to join the ‘Kamajors’, a civil defense group. On her way she was captured by a rebel who raped her and made her one of his concubines. She participated in the attack against the capital city, Freetown. One day she was captured by a group of ‘Kamajors’ who amputated her left leg. She returned to school in 2001 but memories of the war keep hunting her.

Case Study 13
Yaya, aged 21 (male) was staying with his grandmother when he was captured. His grandmother was killed in his presence. The rebels hung a tyre around her neck and put kerosene on it and lit it. He stayed with them until for 7 years.

While staying with them he was constantly beaten with a stick on his back. This left deep scars on his back. He was also given heavy loads to carry for long distances. As he grew older he was give a gun. He refused it at first on the grounds that it was heavy. The rebel commander ordered him to be thoroughly beaten. Afterwards he was ordered to carry a gun and to use it. His first encounter was with the ‘Kamajors.

When they were not in active combat they would assemble them in one place and begin to teach them the rebel ideology. This included telling them the reasons for the war, which included overthrowing the government who had plundered the country’s resources especially the diamonds. Other reasons included tribalism, nepotism, corruption, the unfair judicial system. In addition they were warned that if they were caught trying to escape they will be cut into pieces and eaten. Whenever they wanted launch an attack he will be sent to spy on enemy position. To prepare them for an attack they would inject them with drugs in the head. He is now living in Freetown and is attending school. An NGO called Children Affected by the War is helping his father to keep him in school.

Case Study 14
Moses, aged 21 (male) was in school in Kono when rebels attacked one afternoon. He was in primary school then. He ran home to escape the bullets. Unfortunately, He was hit by two bullets, one in the thigh the other in the abdomen, but the bullets did not penetrate deep into his body. He kept running until he reached his house and found that his mother and other relatives have escaped. He collapsed in the veranda of his empty house. The rebels found him in this state and took him to the hospital which was now under their control

When he recovered he found out that his mother was a captive in one of the rebel camps near the township. He made his way to the camp and found that she was under the control of a rebel commander who had forced her to be his wife. At the camp he was conscripted and given a crash course on the use of weapons. He participated in the many atrocities committed by the rebels. He was with them a year and a half. They attacked villages and captured civilians. He was injected with cocaine and ingested other drugs. When he was deployed to fight in Freetown he escaped by boat to neighbouring Guinea where he was handed over to the International Red Cross. He was later repatriated to Freetown and sent to COOPI an NGO responsible for ex-combatants This NGO sent him back to school.
Case Study 15
Hawa, aged 19 (female) was in kabala when the rebels attacked the town. She escaped with her family into the bush. Their food supply ran out and as they tried to move to another location they were captured by a group of rebels who were searching the bush for fleeing civilians. They moved from place to place until they encountered a group of renegades from the Sierra Leone Army (SLA). The leader of the group knew the RUF leader. They conferred secretly and the leader of the renegade soldiers came up to her and said she was now his wife.

For reasons unknown to her both groups developed inter fractional rivalry that led to negative consequences for the captives. The rebels invaded the village she was staying with the SLA and captured it. They lined up all civilians and began to chop off their heads. Among the victims were her three uncles. Her aunt who was nine months pregnant was not spared. As it was getting to her turn, the rebel who had given her to the leader of the SLA recognized her and removed her from the queue. She became part of the rebels again. At the end of the war she moved to Freetown where she re-entered school and is staying with her uncle.

Case Study 16
Amadu, aged 16 (male) was living with his family in Masama village, about 12 miles from Port Loko town, Northern Sierra Leone, when the rebels attacked one evening. There was panic among the villagers. He wanted to flee with his mother but the shelling was so heavy and he was so confused that he did not see the direction she took. As he ran he was shot in his right foot. He fell and lost consciousness. When he came round he was at a Military base manned by Guinean soldiers. There were other people with bullet wounds. There was no doctor at the Military base so his feet got worse and worse. A Guinean Commander sent for a doctor who after examining his foot recommended amputation at the knee, to save his life. ‘The dreadful feeling I experienced will never be forgotten’. He was later removed to Connaught Hospital in Freetown. Here a specialist examined his foot and explained that the infection had spread beyond is knee. He recommended further amputation at his hip. One day as he was recuperating in hospital he had a visitor it was his mother. They both held on to each other and wept bitterly at the re-union. His mother left and promised to come back. She never as she died in child birth afterwards. He is currently staying with his maternal uncle and is in Junior Secondary School.

Case Study 17
Posseh, aged (female) was11 years old when her hometown, Makeni was attacked by rebels. She was abducted by the rebels. While with them she was repeatedly raped by several of them. Fortunately for her she never got pregnant. She traveled with the rebels on foot from Makeni to Freetown, a distance of114 miles. It took them several weeks to get to Freetown. On their way they attacked villages looting properties and killing civilians. When they arrived in Freetown, they as captives were rescued by ECOMOG and sent to refugee camps where they registered and were provided with food, medicine and housing. From the camp she started attending school. She is now living with a relative in Freetown and is in Junior Secondary School.

Case Study 18
Musa, aged 20 (Male) was in Kabala when the rebels attacked the township. He and three other boys were captured from the street as she had been sent on an errand when he was cut off and could not return to his house. Two of the boys were instantly shot because they attempted to escape. She was transported with other captives to a camp near Kono. He was with the rebels for eighteen months. She performed several roles, as combatant, and looter. He and the other
captives were trained to use offensive weapons so that they could fight and protect themselves. But they used the knowledge to initiate attacks against civilians. Before an attack they were given drugs whether they wanted it or not. At the end of the war he went to his mother who was now living in Freetown. He is now in Senior Secondary School, year two.

Case Study 19
Brima, aged 19 (male) was in Kono with his family when the rebels attacked the township. His father was killed in his presence. His mother and two sisters escaped in the dark. He never saw them again. The cold-blooded act against his father sent shivers down his spine. He almost collapsed at the sight of the brutal way his father was killed. He was too afraid to run or to cry. He and other civilians were abducted and trained for three weeks. Thereafter he was forced to participate in several atrocities committed by the rebels. He also fought in Freetown. At the end of the war he refused to go back to his hometown. He still remembers the last battle field in Freetown, but refused to tell the name of the place. He feels uneasy whenever he passes through this place. He explained that he had to do the things he did because if he disobeyed the rebels would kill him. He still has disturbing memories of the war. Consequently he has lost confidence in interacting with people.

Case Study 20
Francis, aged 22 (male) was living in a village near Kenema, Eastern Sierra Leone, with his parents when the rebels attacked. Before they could find a way to escape they were surrounded by rebels. Both parents were killed instantly, their house set on fire and he was abducted. He and other captives were trained to fight. They were told that they had to fight whether they liked it or not because they had to defend themselves and at the same time find food and clothing. Before any attack the rebels would give them drugs this made him fearless and did not hesitate to do anything his commander told him to do. He was threatened with death if he tried to escape. He was forced to take alcohol which he never did before. He was also subjected to frequent beating. One day he was beaten and kicked at the same time this left him with one of his ears partially deaf. He is now staying with his uncle. Though his uncle is paying his school fees he is not showing much interest in his health. He is very much worried over loosing his hearing in this ear. He will be finishing school in June 2008.

Case Study 21
Gibrilla, aged 21 (male) was in Koya with his guardian when the rebels attacked the town. His biological parents lived in Goderich, one of the fishing communities in the Western Rural area. There were nine children in is house. When they heard that the rebels were threatening to attack their town his guardian sent the younger children to her sister in Freetown. He and four others remained. One Friday the rebels flooded the town and started shooting at random. People ran in different directions. He later learnt that rebels caught some people, tied them and laid them on the ground. Meanwhile they had escaped into the bush. Some rebels began to search the bushes for fleeing civilians. They were discovered and captured. His guardian’s husband was slaughtered but she dashed into the bush. On their way back to the town they saw many dead bodies but dared not take a second look at them. They were taken to a house where they taught them to use the gun.

They left two days later for Freetown but traveled only at night. They raided villages along their route, Killing civilians, looting their properties and burning their houses. After one encounter with the ECOMOG soldiers, he purposed in his heart to escape. He knew where his biological parents where so when they reached Freetown, he abandoned his gun in the bush.
and went to his parents. It was not difficult to escape in Freetown because they were scattered all over the city. After the disarmament and demobilization process he resumed schooling.

**Case Study 22**
Mohamed, aged 23, (male) was in Masongbo in the Northern Province when they heard that the village next to theirs had been captured. His family ran into the bush and stayed there for three weeks. While in the bush their town was captured. They ran to Robun, a village nearby. One day some rebels came to the village and told them that the entire chiefdom had been sold to them and that their main job was to take lives. They were ordered to stand in a line and were marched to the far end of the village. One of them repeated that they have come to kill them so he stabbed him in his side, he fell to the ground. This same rebel took his youngest brother aside and killed him in their presence. His other younger brother began to cry. One of the rebels held him up and beat him while the other kicked him behind his neck and he fell unconscious to the ground. Their father had gone to find food for the family. By the time he returned the rebels had left. He took the unconscious child and still bleeding they found their way to the highway where they boarded a vehicle to Freetown. They lived in the clay factory refugee camp until his father traced his relatives in Freetown. His father now has a job and is taking care of his school expenses.

**Case Study 23**
John, aged 19 (male) was living with his parents in Mayamawa in the Northern Province. Rebels attacked the nearby village and as the people ran to their village they too fled. After three days they returned to their village. At a time they least expected their village came under attack. Their family ran into the bush. They stayed in the bush for four months. While in the bush the village was attacked a second time. This time their houses were burnt, their stock of rice was burnt too. They no longer had a source of food. The rebels located them in the bush and they ran in different directions. He was captured and beaten for fleeing to the bush. He was given looted item to carry. One day he escaped and came to another village where his uncle was staying. His uncle told him that his family had moved to Freetown, he later join them. After some time his father was directed to an NGO in charge of children affected by the war. He took him there and was registered. They helped him return to school. He is now in the third year of Junior Secondary School.

**Case Study 24**
Augustine, age 20 (male) was living in Rotifunk in the Southern Province when the rebels attacked the town. The headman was captured and five people were killed instantly. Next, the town was set on fire. There was great confusion in the town. The rebels warned that any one who attempted to escape will be shot. Him and other civilians were later abducted and brought into a camp far into the bush. They were undergoing training when the rebel base was attacked. In their confusion they ran in different directions to save their lives. He went back to the town from where he was abducted but it was abandoned. He walked back to the road leading to Freetown because he did not know the where about of his parents. He was found by some people who brought him to Freetown. When his name was announced over the radio, his eldest sister who is married in Freetown came and took him home. She later sent him back to school. He is in second year of Senior Secondary School.
Case Study 25
Joseph, aged 18 (male) was living with his parents in Batkanu, Northern Province, when the rebels attacked his town and killed many people. This happened at night. He did not see the direction his mother and father took. As he tried to find his way in the dark he was captured. He saw many dead bodies and houses on fire. They walked the whole night. During the day they would rest but traveled at night. After three days they arrived at a rebel base. There were no houses there but plastic sheets. The rebels lived in the make-shift while the captives slept in the open air. There were always some rebels among them to watch their movements. They were trained in war tactics. He participated in all other attacks after his abduction. He remained with them until the war was declared over in 2001. During the disarmament and demobilization process he expressed his desire to return to school. He is currently living with a relative in Freetown. He has not heard from both parents since the night they parted in confusion.

Case Study 26
Ibrahim, aged 18 (male) lived in Kolenten Kambia district, Northern Province with his family. One morning they woke and found men in military fatigue standing at different positions in the town. Shortly afterwards they heard gun shots from every direction in town. They did not know what to do so they ran towards the river. Some people jumped into the river and many got drowned. He and others hid in the bushes along the river. By evening they went towards the Guinea border to a place called Gbala-Musa. They lived in a camp in this town until cholera broke out killing many people. When some people decided to come to Freetown he joined them since he knew the address of his elder brother who is a trader in Freetown. On arrival he spent the night with these people. The following day someone accompanied him to his brother’s house and the fare was refunded. He remembers the difficult times in the bush. They did not even have enough sleep for fear of the rebels. His elder brother sent him back to school. His father was killed but his mother has returned to Kolenten.

Case Study 27
Karim, aged 19 (male) was living in Pujehun Southern Province when the war started. When they heard that the rebels had reached Zimi Mapele they did not believe because they could only come by boat. Earlier, all boats along the seaside had been withdrawn into the town, not realizing that the rebels had crossed before the boats were withdrawn and were lying in wait in the rubber plantation in Potoru. One morning they flooded the town. Some had daggers others had guns. An alarm was raised that the rebels wanted to see everyone in the town. They all assembled in the court barray. Everyone going to the meeting had to carry a leaf in his/her hand. By the time they got to the barray the rebels had grabbed the chief and placed him on the ground. They told the people that things were too difficult in the country that was why they had come to overthrow the government. This group of rebels were repelled by the by the Special Security Division (SSD). After sometime the rebels returned in a larger number. Fortunately, the Guinean soldiers arrived on the scene and they asked all civilians to depart. He and his mother joined those who were walking to the next village. On their way they fell into a rebel ambush and he was captured. He was taken into the bush and trained to fight. He was then given a gun. Twice he almost lost his life fighting on the side of the rebels. So he made up his mind to escape. One day they sent him to spy on an enemy base, instead he gave himself up to the government forces. He was later sent to Freetown. He is currently staying with a relative in Freetown.
Case Study 28
Daniel, aged 19 (male) was living in Boama Koya, Southern Province with his parents when the rebels attacked one Friday morning. After shooting mainly in the air they called all the towns people together in the chief’s compound and told them they have come to save them hardship. They asked for food. Some women were appointed to cook for them. After eating they asked everybody to lie on the ground. They threatened that anyone who resisted them will be shot. They lined up all the young boys and girls who were present and ordered them to move forward and not look behind. They were led into the bush. They reached the rebel base in the evening. Early the next day they were addressed by their commander who told the captives that they should get ready to help them fight this ‘worthy course’. They trained them in the use of weapons and combat. They were each given a gun and injected with drugs. They left immediately to attack a town called Small Bo. They went straight to the main road and started firing at vehicles, killing civilians. His mother and father fled to Bo town and later traveled to Freetown. One day their base was attacked by the Kamajors. In their confusion both rebels and captives ran in various directions. He escaped to Potoru where his aunt gave him money to go to Freetown. On arrival, his parents sent him back to school.

Case Study 29
James, aged 20 (male) lived with his grandmother in Kangama, Kono district. His parents were living in Freetown because his father had been transferred to work there and did not want to interrupt his schooling. They heard rumours that the rebels were moving towards their town so they packed their belongings and left for their village Ngelahun. Two nights after they arrived the rebels attacked the village. They burnt several houses including theirs. As they were shooting all over the place, a bullet hit his grandmother. He began to run but a rebel stopped him and told him to join them. He and several others were captured. He was given a load to carry as they left the village. The rebels were in control of a small house that was situated on the top of a hill. They took the captives there and began to train them in preparation for an attack on Freetown. They made several raids on nearby villages. One night they were put in a truck and transported to Freetown. When they met with resistance from ECOMOG their captors abandoned them. He and a few others who hung together ran into the bushes around the city. They had neither food nor water. They hid their guns in the bush and went into the city to find food. There he ran into a man who knew his father. He explained how he got to Freetown and the man took him to his parents.

Case Study 30
Jonathan, aged 19 (male) was in Freetown with his parents when the city was attacked on January 6th, 1999. He was captured while they were trying to flee to a safer place in the city. He was forced to carry looted property. Many of them were abducted at that time. He was with the rebels for two days. They met with strong resistance from the ECOMOG soldiers who were better trained and had more sophisticated weapons. When the heavy bombardment continued they began to retreat. They could not carry all of the looted properties so they put them in a house in the East end of the city and set fire on it. As they hurried out of the city they fell into an ambush and were scattered. He quickly headed for the National Stadium where displaced people were gathering. They were given food by some organization until the city was recaptured by ECOMOG and people were told to go about with normal life. He went back to his house but it was disserted so he went to his uncle until he knew where his parents were and later joined them. They were not given guns because the rebels did not have time to train them. He watched people being killed, amputated and others burnt in their houses.
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS
The results of the investigations are analyzed according to the objectives of the study.

1. **Ascertain if these victims observed any of the atrocities committed by the rebels during the war.**

All 30 respondents witnessed various atrocities committed by the rebels before they were abducted and afterwards. Even those who were not abducted ‘saw many dead bodies, and people with various parts of their bodies amputated (case studies 8, 21, 25). Case study 22 was wounded and watched his younger brother killed and the other kicked unconscious. Immediately he was captured, Saidu (case study7), watched policemen shot in the head. The fact that some watched close relatives and other civilians executed (case studies 2, 6, 9, 10, 12, 14, 20) would leave ‘psychological and emotional shock that may have long lasting effect’. As Brahms states, children have limited emotional development and therefore would not understand these difficulties. Consequently, they had no coping mechanism.

2. **Determine the type and extent of bodily harm experienced by victims**

The female abductees were repeatedly raped (case studies 2, 12, 14). Others were wounded (case studies 6, 8, 22) while one of them suffered from amputation (case study 12) at the hands of the Kamajors.

3. **Determine the type and extent of bodily harm these victims later turned perpetuators, carried out on others during the war.**

Respondents did not admit, with the exception of case study 1, to have participated in amputation or other brutalities but acknowledged later in telling their stories that they had to kill to save their lives from their captured. They however watched brutality meted on civilians and fellow abductees (case studies 2, 5, 6, 7, 15, 19, 20, 22, 24, 30). Burning of houses was not a direct bodily harm, but a physical harm in that properties were lost. (Case studies 3, 4, 9, 10, 14, 20). Others simply said they participated in the atrocities committed by the rebels. These events were psychologically distressing events that were outside the range of normal experience.

4. **Assess the effects of any of these acts on the psychological health of the victims**

All 30 respondents agreed that they had flashbacks about the war and these memories were disturbing. Momoh, (case study 11) admitted to experiencing sleep disturbances and behaviour problems (especially with those who still saw him as a rebel). Amadu (case study 16) was shot in the leg. When told by medical personnel that he had to undergo amputation at the knee, he responded ‘The dreadful feeling I experienced will never be forgotten. Brima (case study 19) admitted that each time he passed through a particular community in Freetown he had flashbacks of what he did there. There was also the problem of poor concentration in school (case study 11). Francis (case study 20) was not happy that his uncle only took care of his academic needs. He had physical health problem he needed to address which he did not have money to solve. He wished his father was alive but he had been killed right in his presence. The fact that all abductees were threatened with death was scaring. They would not want to continue to stay with the rebels, but at the same time would not want to loose their lives by attempting to escape. These experiences must have resulted in psychological and emotional injury on the victims. Their experiences in the bush were horrific and marred with brutality –
rape, slaughter, beating, torture, hard labour. According to Husain (2004) these experiences must have been internalized and re-lived over and over in flashbacks long after the war. Diminishing interest in significant activities could be pointing to those who had poor concentration in school. Many of the victims though they re-entered school may have dropped out because of this factor.

5. **Assess the level of Academic Performance of the victims who are still attending school, in school and external examinations.**

Table 2: Showing Academic Performance of Students as seen by Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Complied from questionnaire

As stated above, many ex-combatants dropped out of school. However, there were those for whom education remains the only hope in life. These were those who lost both parents or one parent. They are determined to succeed and be able to take care of their future needs. Those interviewed were at various levels of academic achievement, from Junior Secondary School (JSS1-111) to Senior Secondary School (SSS1-111). They had passed the National Primary School Examination (NPSE), some had passed the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), and some were preparing for the West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE).

The silent flashbacks on humiliation suffered, their vulnerability in the face of disaster and helplessness at that time may have affected their concentration in school and contributed to the abandoning of their schooling.

What was evident in school was their negative behaviours to both teachers and fellow pupils.

Table 3: Showing Negative Behaviour of Pupils as seen by teachers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Behaviour</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Aggressiveness</th>
<th>Rudeness</th>
<th>Disrespect</th>
<th>Stealing</th>
<th>Possession of Weapons</th>
<th>Destruction of School Property</th>
<th>Throwing Missiles</th>
<th>Other</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
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<td>67</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Complied from questionnaire
6. **Present the various stories narrated by the victims**
These have been presented above.

**Summary**
The entire war period caused great distress and disruption. Some of them watched their homes destroyed, were victims of physical abuse, e.g., rape, torture, and other violence. They were subjected to threat of life, harm to self and family members, sudden death of family members, witnessing violent injury and death. They are bound to suffer from cognitive, emotional and physical responses.

**Discussion of Results**
This section examines in detail the results presented above, by objective. Certain commonalities exist in the interviews. These include:
- The element of surprised attacks on innocent civilians
- Burning of houses
- Looting of properties
- People moving from place to place in search of a safe haven
- Wanton killing
- Atrocities committed – rape, cold-blooded murder
- Separation of families temporarily in some cases for ever
- Presence of female rebels
- Convergence in Freetown of all who could make it.

There is every evidence that the pupils went through traumatic experiences both as victims and as perpetuators. The war left an indelible mark on the minds of the respondents as most of the atrocities they witnessed involved near relatives. They were exposed to extreme violence. Boothby (1996) divides trauma into acute and chronic, but this depends on the nature of the violence. The study sample experienced acute trauma but a timely intervention could prevent its maturity into chronic trauma. One obstacle to smooth sail recovery from their state of trauma is the fact of living in close proximity with perpetrators.

Some traumatic symptoms discovered were irritability, anxiety, isolation, lack of concentration, violent behaviour, in some cases poor school performance. The major finding was behavioural problem. Poor academic performance was not a major problem instead, 80% of school performance was described as average by teachers. Teachers attested to poor behaviour.

Respondents received bodily harm in various forms, from gun shots, clubbing, stabbing. These left some form of handicap, the beating I received from the rebels damaged my eardrum making me partially deaf (case study 20), or left scars of wounds (case study13). These are evidence of the war that will be difficult to cast off. They will stay with respondents because the condition persists. These will continue to cause great stress in the lives of respondents. Another thing that came out of the study was that those captured were not just spectator but were integrated into the rank and files of the rebels and became perpetuators either after training or after going through a dangerous and life-threatening experience (case study 1). The effects of such experiences will be psychological until a safe space is created for these to pour out their emotions. Until such help is provided the psychological impact will continue to manifest in the form of the various symptoms indicated above.
Boothby’s categorization of traumatize children into two can be applied here. Those exposed to acute traumatic experiences followed by relatively stable parental, family and community care. For these he stated that trauma is an accident, it is outside their normal life. The second categories are those who suffer from additional trauma and adversities. Our respondents fall into this second category. For instance, one stated that ‘things are difficult for me since the death of my father’. Another respondent revealed that due to the death of his parents he is living with a guardian whose children are always reminding him of his status.

Finally, the presentations on personal testimonies bring out the emotional aspect of the event. The respondent gradually forces the interviewer to empathize with him or her by the vivid narration of the experiences. At this point the investigation becomes subjective as the interviewer becomes empathetic.

**Summary**
Respondents suffered from multiple traumas ranging from watching a loved one killed, personal experiences that caused bodily harm, to situations that caused great distress in their lives. As Brahm (2004) and Jarman (2001) suggest, these victims need a safe space to pour out their emotions and fears. Such a space could be provided in schools through the creation of counseling centres. These children need support in their time of distress and disruption. In Chechnya, after the war, it was in the schools that the need for counseling was first discovered. Counseling Centres are therefore pertinent to the healing process of these children.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evidence of trauma was discovered but in majority of cases this was mainly emotional and psychological rather than cognitive. This must be responsible for poor behaviour in schools and communities. This explains the widespread lawlessness in the country. The victims turn perpetrators need attention and could do anything disruptive to gain attention. They need to share disturbing memories with someone they trust. The girls who were raped need such services too.

The presence of numerous school-aged children on the streets shows that government has still not made enough provision to take care of them. Suddenly after the war, children became breadwinners in some homes, especially where fathers were killed or amputated, which explains the petty theft and child prostitution. The study therefore concludes that -:

- War affected children need counseling services in schools to create a safe space for telling their stories.
- Their level of trauma is manifested in behavioural problems in and out of school. For those who have remained in school education is their last hope.
- There are few cases of traumatic experiences affecting school performance in the form of poor concentration.
- That the provision of counseling services in school is an urgent matter to prevent further dropping out of pupils affected by the war.
- That the gross underperformance of children in school and external examinations is not solely linked to the effects of the war, but that other factor may be responsible, but which are outside the purview of this study.

Recommendations

1. Given the negative behavioural manifestations displayed by victims who are now enrolled in secondary schools, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports must intensify its efforts to train and assign guidance counselors to every secondary school in the country. Although on paper this is government policy, it is not being realized. The numbers being trained are insufficient to service the large numbers of secondary schools in the country. And those that are being trained have to combine their normal teaching load with their counseling responsibilities. Teaching and counseling functions must be separated.

2. Closely aligned to the first recommendation is a revisit of the current guidance and counseling curriculum at the teacher training institutions so that the content and methodology can pay special attention to the needs of war affected children.

3. For those children who are physically challenged war affected victims attending secondary schools career guidance services in the schools will help these students realistically chose a career suited to their abilities. These are issues that must be addressed if the nation is to achieve the Education for All initiative by 2015.
4. An introduction of Peace and Conflict studies in the curriculum of secondary schools will be useful in that it will expose students to appropriate ways of resolving conflicts not only at school but in all aspects of their lives. Peace clubs can also be established by the students to simulate conflict scenarios and their successful resolution as well as engage in field trips to various communities to talk about peaceful co-existence.

5. For war affected children who are not in school, religious organizations can help by engaging these children in religious rituals that will bring spiritual healing to them. NGOs can also use their special expertise and resources in helping these children with the residual effects of the war.

6. These children can be exposed to dramatizations and community theatres to help relieve their tension. Active participation is sports and other physical activities can also be useful.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


ANNEXES:

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

1. Personal Bio Data
   a) Sex: Male___________ Female__________
   b) Class in School___________________________
   c) Age____________________________________

2. Experiences during the war

I. With whom were you staying when the rebels attacked your town/village?
   a) Parents _______________
   b) Guardian _______________
   c) Aunt _______________
   d) Uncle _______________
   e) Other (please specify)____________________________________

II. Was any physical harm done to you personally? If yes, please indicate the ones that apply to you.
   a) Shot ___________________
   b) Raped__________________
   c) Abducted________________
   d) Amputated_______________
   e) Wounded_________________
   f) Beaten____________________
   g) Other (Please specify)__________

III. Did you witness anyone being killed? If yes, please indicate who they were.
   a) Father_______________________
   b) Mother_______________________
   c) Close family member____________
   d) Other (Please specify)____________

IV. Did you witness anyone badly injured in any of the following ways? If yes,
Please indicate below.

a) Shot ___________________________________

b) Stabbed ________________________________

c) Clubbed ________________________________

d) Other (Please specify) ____________________

V. How many houses did you burn? ______ None_____________

VI. How many people did you kill? ______ None_____________

VII. Do you still have memories of the war? Yes_______ No______

VIII. If yes, do these memories disturb you? Yes_______ No______

IX. Have you sought help in dealing with these flashbacks? Yes_______ No________

X. If yes, what help did you seek?
   a) I spoke to a counsellor __________________________
   b) I spoke to a family member _______________________
   c) Other (Please specify) ____________________________

XI. How would you characterize your school performance?
   a) Good_________________ b) Average_________________
   c) Poor__________________

XII. How many subjects did you pass at BECE?

XIII. Can you tell us what actually happened?: -----------------------------------------------

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QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

1. Are you able to identify children in your class who were affected by the war?
   I. a) Yes____________________  No_________________________

II. If yes, what is their general comportment in school?
    a) Good_________________  Average_________________  Poor________

III. In your view, are the poor behaviour patterns attributable to their war experiences?
    a) Yes____________________  No_________________________

IV. Which of these negative behaviour manifestations do you notice in your students?
    Check all that apply.
    a) Aggressiveness__________________________
    b) Rudeness________________________________
    c) Disrespect_______________________________
    d) Stealing_______________________________
    e) Possession of weapons____________________
    f) Destruction of school property________________
    g) Throwing missiles________________________
    h) Other (Please specify)_______________________

V. What interventions are in place at your school to help the students who exhibit these behaviours?
   a) There are no programmes in school to help these children________________
   b) We have a counselling center that provides assistance to these children________
   c) Other (Please specify)_________________________________________________

VI. What additional assistance should be provided for these children?
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________

VII. How would you characterize their academic performance as a group?
    a) Good_____________  (b) Average_______________
    c) Poor_______________