

**Exploring economic reintegration in Namibia:
Individual trajectories of PLAN ex-fighters and
SWAPO exiles, 1989 – 2018**

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements in
respect of the Doctoral Degree Africa Studies in the Centre
for Gender and Africa Studies (CGAS) in the Faculty of
Humanities at the University of the Free State

November 2019

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Abstract

This thesis draws from life histories to present constraints and possibilities that have shaped former SWAPO exiles' economic reintegration in post-colonial Namibia. The thesis advances three arguments each of which pushes beyond existing scholarship on Namibia and/or reintegration broadly. Collectively, these arguments challenge dominant narratives that have generalised former SWAPO exiles' reintegration experiences, highlighting that there is no single narrative that can describe their unique life stories of reintegration in the post-colony.

First, for almost three decades, patriotic history has shaped and influenced Namibia's post-colonial reintegration discourses and policies, delineating who fought on the 'right' or 'wrong' side of the liberation struggle. However, for the majority of former SWAPO exiles (including PLAN ex-fighters) whom patriotic history has designated as having fought on the 'right side', their glorification in liberation histories has not always translated to tangible benefits in their actual lives. Consequently, former SWAPO exiles have often exploited their 'hero' status to push for various benefits. Nevertheless, they have profited unevenly from these initiatives, with benefits often being skewed in favour of direct participants of the armed struggle/violent resistance. Moreover, patriotic history distinguishes between the patriotic credentials of a range of people with differing relationships to the armed struggle as defined by the ruling Swapo Party elites. Its social impact, therefore, is quite complex and requires a nuanced understanding of Namibians' experiences in exile that can best be accessed through tracing the details of individual life stories.

Beyond highlighting the complex repercussions of patriotic history, former SWAPO exiles' personal stories also reveal how UNTAG's limited role in Namibia's transition had lasting effects that shaped former SWAPO exiles' reintegration processes in the post-colony. These life stories invite the reader to consider the prospect of UNTAG's mandate as having been limited and its humanitarian support to returning SWAPO exiles as being overrated. This then brings the spotlight back to the Cold War and how it dictated UNTAG's minimalist security centred approach that had far-reaching consequences for economically vulnerable former SWAPO exiles in the aftermath of repatriation.

Finally, life histories show how former SWAPO exiles' human and social capital originated in exile where differing access to skills and networks were instrumental in class formations that manifested in the post-colony. These forms of capital have contributed to the economic inequality amongst former SWAPO exiles in post-Independence Namibia. Nevertheless, some life stories highlight how some former SWAPO exiles who have found themselves in difficult positions in postcolonial Namibia, have built decent lives for themselves in spite of these circumstances. These former SWAPO exiles highlight the limitations of reintegration programming and the broader DDR framework, which privileges its own measures of analysis at the expense of understanding how people make lives in the aftermath of war with or without assistance from programming. Thus, they suggest that successful reintegration hinges, to a great extent, on one's ability to adapt and not necessarily on benefits from reintegration programming.

Keywords: DDR, liberation struggle, patriotic history, reintegration, life histories, SWAPO exiles, PLAN ex-fighters, UNTAG, human capital, social capital

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CCN	Council of Churches in Namibia
DBC	Development Brigade Corporation
DD	Disarmament and demobilization
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
FAPLA	People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique
GDR	German Democratic Republic
IDDRS	Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
IVP	Individual Veterans Project
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MLRR	Ministry of Lands, Rehabilitation and Resettlement
MPLA	Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NAMPOL	Namibian Police
NBC	Namibian Broadcasting Corporation
NBC	Namibian Broadcasting Corporation
NCS	Namibian Correctional Services
NDF	Namibian Defence Force
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NNLVA	Namibia National Liberation Veterans Association
NRI 1989	Namibians Repatriated in 1989
PLAN	Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia
RRR	Repatriation Resettlement and Reconstruction Committee
SWABC	South West Africa Broadcasting Corporation

SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SADF	South African Defence Force
SWANU	South West African National Union
SWAPO	South West Africa Peoples Organization
Swapo Party	
SWATF	South West Africa Territorial Force
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDPKO	United Nations Department of Peace Keeping Operation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIN	United Nations Institute for Namibia
UNITA	National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNTAG	UN Transitional Assistance Group
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VON	Voice of Namibia
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African Peoples Union
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
ZNA	Zimbabwe National Army

Declaration

I, Tichaona Trust Mazarire, declare that the Doctoral Degree research thesis that I herewith submit for the Doctoral Degree qualification in Africa Studies at the University of the Free State, is my independent work, and that I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my profound gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Christian Williams for his unwavering and consistent support throughout my thesis project. From the proposal phase to the completion of the project his guidance and wisdom was invaluable. I would like to thank my co-supervisor Professor Henning Melber, for his inputs and perspectives which helped further fine tune my work. I would also like to thank University of Namibia, faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences staff for hosting me and providing me with an office from which I spent many hours writing my thesis. I would also like to personally thank Ueshitile ‘Banana’ Shekupe, for granting me access to the organisation, *Namibians Repatriated in 1989*, his support was invaluable. Thank you to the staff at University of the Free State’s Centre for Gender and Africa Studies (CGAS) for their support, especially Ankia Bradfield and Dr Stephanie Cawood.

I would also like to thank my wife Luiza, for her unwavering support and encouragement through the tough times, as I pushed to finish this thesis. I would also like to thank my parents and siblings, who were supportive throughout the whole process. Finally, and most important of all I would like to thank God, my faith kept me from giving up or succumbing to pressure when things got tough, *thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path (Psalm 119:105)*.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Background	1
1.1 Patriotic History, Ex-combatants and Reintegration in Namibia.....	5
1.1.1 The making of Patriotic history: the past in the present	8
1.1.2 PLAN ex-fighters in Patriotic History	10
1.1.3 Reintegration in the Post-Colony.....	12
1.2 Contextualizing and Problematizing DDR in and beyond Namibia.....	14
1.3 Methodology	22
1.4 Structure of the thesis.....	31
Chapter 2: Deciphering how ‘Patriotic’ history shaped reintegration discourse, policy/programmes and processes in Namibia: winners and losers	37
2.1 Brief Background: Contextualizing patriotic history in reintegration policy/programmes	37
2.2 Exploring SWAPO exiles’ post-liberation war identities and their interaction with reintegration policies.....	42
Chapter 3: Disarmament, Demobilization and Repatriation – The limitations and consequences of UNTAG’s mandate on economic reintegration in Namibia	87
3.1 What was UNTAG?.....	87
3.1.1 How the Cold war influenced UNTAG’s priorities.....	91
3.2 SWAPO exiles’ individual experiences of repatriation and its aftermath	96
3.2.1 Repatriation Process.....	96
3.2.2 Stories of repatriation and its aftermath.....	100
3.2.3 SWAPO exiles and the cycle of economic hardship in the early 1990s... ..	112
3.3 Namibians Repatriated in 1989: Confronting past injustice or strategic lobbying?.....	117
Chapter 4: SWAPO’s human capital Investment in Exile: how class distinctions in post-colonial Namibia were unwittingly carved out in Exile	126
4.1 Human Capital and Social Capital	126
4.1.1 Human and social capital in reintegration studies	129
4.2.2 SWAPO’s Investment in Human Capital in exile.....	132
4.3 SWAPO exiles’ trajectories: From Exile to Independence.....	134
Chapter 5: Exploring limitations of DDR through ‘self’ reintegration – Life histories of PLAN ex-fighters & SWAPO exiles who defied the odds	167
5.1 Conceptualizing and contextualizing self-reintegration of SWAPO exiles.....	167
5.1.1 The Limitations of reintegration programming in Namibia	170

5.2 An Analysis of SWAPO exiles' self-reintegration stories.....	174
Chapter 6: Conclusion	197
6.1 New dimensions of post-colonial marginalisation.....	198
6.2 The vacuum UNTAG left	201
6.3 Limits to DDR as an analytical framework	204
Bibliography	208

Chapter 1: Background

Namibia has enjoyed considerable peace and stability for nearly three decades, in which the country has made significant socio-economic progress. However, beneath these developmental strides have been simmering tensions between people affiliated with SWAPO in exile and the ruling Swapo Party.¹ These tensions have primarily been spurred on by the need for recognition and compensation by former SWAPO exiles for their contribution during Namibia's liberation struggle (1966-1989).² Some, but not all, of these exiles were previously affiliated with SWAPO's guerrilla army, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN).

Independence on March 21, 1990 brought expectations of not only political freedom but also economic prosperity to all Namibians. Indeed, the expectations were even higher from SWAPO exiles who had returned to Namibia with hopes of getting jobs, purchasing houses or vehicles. These hopes, dreams and aspirations were pinned on the ability of the newly elected Swapo Party led government under President Sam Nujoma to *fast track* the reintegration of these former exiles into society. This task was always going to be challenging considering that approximately 45 000 SWAPO exiles had been repatriated in 1989-90 (Preston et al. 1993).³ The reintegration process was bound to

¹ The acronym SWAPO (block letters) for the purposes of this research refers to the liberation movement in exile prior to Independence, whilst Swapo Party is the name that will be used to refer to the political party after Independence (post-March 21,1990).

² The term SWAPO exiles is the broad term used to refer to all Namibians who were affiliated with SWAPO in exile. When referring to Namibians affiliated to SWAPO (in exile) in the post-colony the term former SWAPO exiles will be used whilst the term SWAPO exiles will be used to refer to the period they were in exile. However, wherever the acronyms PLAN/PLAN ex-fighters and SWAPO exiles/former SWAPO exiles are used together, SWAPO exiles/former SWAPO exiles will be referring to non-combatant Namibians who were in exile and not necessarily affiliated to PLAN. Therefore unless specified (e.g. PLAN ex-fighters or Cassinga survivors), SWAPO exiles/former SWAPO exiles shall refer to all Namibians affiliated with SWAPO in exile regardless of their sub-group affiliations.

³ It should be noted that many former exiles were unlikely candidates for the integrated security forces at Independence due to former exiles' ages (many were children and senior citizens)

be a mammoth task especially when one is cognizant of the size of the Namibian economy during the early 1990s when it was simply not possible for the Swapo Party led government to create enough job opportunities to accommodate all the SWAPO affiliated returnees from exile (Metsola, 2006).⁴ One of the major challenges that former SWAPO exiles, especially those educated in so called ‘socialist’ countries, faced in the aftermath of repatriation and Independence was that their qualifications were often considered by the private sector as mere solidarity qualifications (Preston et al., 1993, p. 15).⁵ Moreover, employers (primarily in the private sector) also cited poor qualifications and incompetence as the primary reasons for not offering former SWAPO exiles employment (Preston et al., 1993, p. 16). Such negative perceptions of former SWAPO exiles coupled with few employment opportunities meant that some former SWAPO exiles were pushed to the fringes of society, a situation that further heightened tensions between the exiles and the Swapo Party led government which at the time assumed reintegration would be spontaneous (Preston et al., 1993 in Dzinesa, 2017, p. 109). Such an assumption by the Swapo Party led government arguably was likely a result of the perceived human capital investment that SWAPO had done in exile which they presumed was adequate to expedite reintegration of former SWAPO exiles through employment. It became increasingly clear that the economic realities of the ‘new Namibia’ had fallen far short of the expectations of former SWAPO exiles who simply could not fathom how SWAPO that had taken care of them in exile was failing

⁴ Returnees is the term that refers to all Namibians (regardless of their political affiliations) who returned to Namibia from exile after the implementation of Resolution 435 (1978). The majority however, were affiliated to SWAPO in exile.

⁵ With government jobs being limited in the early 1990s it meant that SWAPO exiles had to turn to the private sector which as Metsola (2006) notes was also limited in terms of employment opportunities due to the structure of Namibia’s economy which was capital intensive but created limited employment opportunities. Moreover, even for those limited positions that were available in the private sector SWAPO exiles’ ‘solidarity’ qualifications were shunned.

where it mattered the most, that is, to provide them with a decent livelihood through jobs in post-independence Namibia.

Notwithstanding the broader challenges of all former SWAPO exiles, PLAN ex-fighters were one of the most vulnerable sub-group (of SWAPO exiles) as most of them not only lacked post-secondary education but had rudimentary military qualifications which were not recognized (or advanced enough) as they were excluded from the newly established Namibian Defence Forces (NDF).⁶ With no civilian qualifications to fall back on, most PLAN ex-fighters found their position in the post-colony untenable. In 1990 the Namibian government could only manage to absorb a meagre 10 000 soldiers from PLAN ex-fighters, ex-South West Africa Territorial Forces (SWATF) and ex-Koevoet into the new integrated Namibian Defence Force (NDF) whilst the majority of former SWAPO exiles including PLAN ex-fighters were left out due to the limited security forces jobs (Metsola, 2010, p. 592).⁷ This was particularly problematic especially for the majority of PLAN ex-fighters who had spent their youthful years at the front and did not get a chance to finish their education, consequently the majority of them had no skills that were transferable to the Namibian job markets other than the

⁶ Part of the broader group of former SWAPO exiles are the exile-born Namibian children sent to the German Democratic Republic (GDR) between 1979 and 1989 (Schmitt and Witte, 2018). Also in this category are the so called “struggle children” who were also born in exile and were under the care of SWAPO in the camps. This thesis does not engage the circumstances of this group as their process after repatriation was *integration* and not *reintegration*. Unlike other Namibian returnees, the ex-GDR children and struggle children were coming to Namibia for the first time and had to integrate (not reintegrate) into the society. Integration therefore departs from the subject matter of this thesis which explores economic reintegration of former SWAPO returnees/exiles. These groups are however, a potential research avenue that could be pursued as future research especially with regards to mapping of their individual economic integration processes in the post-colony. Metsola has previously mapped some life stories of children of the liberation struggle in *Out of order? The margins of Namibian ex-combatant 'reintegration'* (2007).

⁷ The policy of National Reconciliation led to the newly formed Namibia Defense Forces (NDF) accommodating both South West Africa Territorial Forces (SWATF) and Koevoet into the national army as a gesture of goodwill. However, this meant the majority of PLAN ex-fighters particularly those whose human capital was imbedded in military training, were left out as the new NDF limited recruitment to only 10 000 soldiers.

combat skills they had acquired during the liberation struggle. This limited them to the menial, lowly paid unskilled jobs, which were demeaning (e.g. security guards) considering their heroic status in the *official* liberation struggle narrative as the liberators of the Namibian people who had won Independence through the barrel of the gun (Becker, 2011, p.552)⁸.

In an attempt to accommodate primarily PLAN ex-fighters, the Swapo Party government introduced several government sponsored schemes (reintegration programmes) including a skills training scheme called the Development brigade which was meant to counter the skills deficit amongst PLAN ex-fighters through skills training with the ultimate goal of the skills training translating into job opportunities (Metsola, 2010, p. 592). By the mid-1990s it became clear that this programme had failed to translate the skills training into job opportunities. This predicament of skills training for jobs that do not exist is not unique to Namibia alone but a common phenomenon amongst post-conflict African states that have often faced the stark reality of weak economies and high unemployment in the aftermath of political Independence (Devon et.al., 2012).⁹ Namibia was particularly vulnerable because its economy is dominated by a capital-intensive private sector that contributes substantial revenue into the state coffers but offers very few employment opportunities, hence the high unemployment (Metsola, 2006, p. 1120). McMullin Jaremey (2013) suggests around 80% of ex-combatants were unemployed by the early 1990s whilst unemployment figures for the general populace stood at 35%. These figures show how perilous the position of PLAN ex-fighters was in the early 1990s in the backdrop of the euphoria

⁸ Swapo Party's master narrative coined '*Swapo brought us freedom through the barrel of the gun*' (Becker, 2011, pp552)

⁹ Mozambique, Angola, South Sudan and Zimbabwe had the same challenge immediately after Independence

that Independence had brought in 1990.¹⁰ This situation was untenable for particularly PLAN ex-fighters who had heroically *brought freedom by the barrel of the gun*. By the mid-1990s a looming clash between Swapo Party and its ex-fighters was inevitable as these ex-fighters interpreted the failed government initiatives and lack of employment as neglect and they felt they had to remind Swapo Party and the Namibian nation who had fought for the freedom, peace and stability they were enjoying in post-colonial Namibia.¹¹ It is also pertinent to note that PLAN ex-fighters and those who are claimants of that title felt the boldness to make economic demands to the government for jobs (despite unemployment being a wider societal problem that all Namibians were facing in the 1990s) primarily because they understood the significance of the liberation struggle in the official narrative of the history of the liberation struggle and how their role was integral in bringing freedom through the barrel of the gun. Their demands to be treated as a ‘special’ category can be traced back to a particularly narrow but dominant type of history that Swapo Party had been propagating (from the inception of the liberation struggle in 1966) as the official narrative of the liberation struggle which Terrence Ranger (2004) coined “patriotic history.”

1.1 Patriotic History, Ex-combatants and Reintegration in Namibia

Before delving into the importance of PLAN ex-fighters in patriotic history, it is imperative to attempt to define who a PLAN ex-fighter is. As mentioned earlier former SWAPO exiles refers to Namibians who were affiliated to SWAPO in exile during the liberation struggle and among them were those who were recruited and served PLAN

¹⁰ Most PLAN ex-fighters in comparison to other SWAPO exiles lacked comprehensive post-secondary education/training as they had spent most of their time at the front fighting consequently most of them had few or no qualifications that were required by employers in the post-colony.

¹¹ Between 1995 and 1998 (when registration for the Peace Project began) PLAN ex-fighters protested demanding for jobs (Metsola, 2006, p.1124)

during the liberation struggle (1966-1989) and this sub-group is often referred to as PLAN ex-fighters. However, this definition is too simplistic as life in exile was more complex than this. In exile and in the post-colony the line between PLAN ex-fighters and other former SWAPO exiles also known as freedom fighters is blurred, with some moving between civilian and military roles whilst in exile. This can be attributed to the fact that many SWAPO exiles received some kind of military training but were either never deployed to the front or were deployed and served for a short period of time. Williams (2015) points to this conundrum of separating actual PLAN ex-fighters from so-called freedom fighters, this is due to the fact that in exile many SWAPO exiles overwhelmingly identified themselves as “freedom fighters” irrespective of the extent to which they received formal military training (p.21).¹² In the post-colony vetting combatants from non-combatants has been further complicated by the Veterans Act of 2008, which defines both non-combatants and combatants who participated in the liberation struggle as ‘veterans’ of the liberation struggle.¹³ Consequently, many have made claims to being PLAN ex-fighters despite not having been affiliated with PLAN in exile and this has to a large extent been a result of the social power that PLAN ex-fighters wield in the post colony due to patriotic history.

¹² Williams (2015) also argues that “...distinctions between camps intended for combatants and noncombatants were inevitably blurred. Those camps that the liberation movement creates to offer health and educational services to noncombatants routinely harbored military units affiliated with a given movement’s army and responsible for camp defense. Likewise, camps that were designed to train and deploy guerillas often accommodated noncombatants, including children, women, and elderly people fleeing into exile or traveling between sites administered by a liberation movement” (p. 21)

¹³ According to the Veterans Act of 2008, a veteran is anyone who participated ‘consistently’ in the liberation struggle (1966-989). Moreover, whilst the veteran Act does not define or categorize SWAPO exiles as civilians or PLAN ex-fighters it does “reward” those who participated in actual combat under PLAN by giving an additional amount of up to N\$ 5000 (in addition to the N\$ 2200 that all veterans receive) to those who were *trained and deployed* during the liberation struggle (Haufiku transcript 26 p. 2, 24/02/2019). Arguably this is tantamount to rewarding participants of violent resistance.

In order to comprehend why being identified as a PLAN ex-fighter in the post-colony mattered and still matters today it is important to define and then contextualize how patriotic history created a powerful discourse that legitimized PLAN ex-fighters demands in the post-colony. According to Ranger (2004) patriotic history is a history that is narrow in scope, is antagonistic towards academic historiography, re-emphasizes colonial exploitation as well as colonial brutalities and celebrates violent resistance (pp. 218, 220). Although Ranger (2004) was identifying this phenomenon within Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) in Zimbabwe, parallels can be drawn with Swapo Party, which in many ways mirrors ZANU-PF in its remembrance of the liberation struggle (Kossler 2010).¹⁴ In Ranger's (2004) argument for framing ZANU PF's version of 'national history' as patriotic history, he points out at several factors, but two particularly resonate with Namibia's reintegration politics in the post-colony. Firstly Ranger notes how patriotic history is a form of condensed history where there is repetition and over emphasis on liberation era guerrilla wars and related colonial brutalities (Ranger, 2004, p. 218; Saunders, 2007, p.14).¹⁵ In Namibia's case, the memorialization of the nation's past framed in the heroic efforts of PLAN ex-fighters and the embedding of the nation's identity in the liberation struggle is indicative of a narrow and condensed history that tends to ignore non-military wartime contributions and documented contradictions that may threaten the official narrative.¹⁶ Secondly Ranger (2004) points out at how patriotic history is "indefensibly" narrow in how it divides the nation into "revolutionaries and sell outs", a binary that is dominant

¹⁴ Becker (2011) points to how Swapo party copied ZANU-PF in building a war memorial, in the form of a national heroes acre and attributes this as a step Swapo party took in furthering patriotic history.

¹⁵ Saunders, Christopher (2007, p. 14) argues that patriotic history tends to emphasise selected aspects of the past in an effort to impose a glorious past and attempts to impose hegemonic view of the liberation struggle.

¹⁶ Internal contradictions include the Shipanga rebellion (1976) and the spy saga in Lubango (1980s). Also receiving minimal attention from the official narratives is the role of non-military efforts that helped achieve Independence.

in Namibia's post-colonial society dating back to the liberation struggle (p. 223).¹⁷ Such politicization of the nation's past which Ranger (2004) identifies as patriotic history has tended to benefit primarily Swapo Party and its ex-fighters in the Namibian context. To understand this dynamic between Swapo Party and PLAN ex-fighters there is need to reflect on how this relationship that has enabled the perpetuation of patriotic history came into being during the liberation struggle.

1.1.1 The making of Patriotic history: the past in the present

Namibia's liberation struggle was a long and protracted war that began in 1966 through 1989. However, it should be noted that resistance to white minority rule did not begin with South West Africa Peoples Organization (SWAPO). In fact, PLAN's military campaigns were presented by SWAPO as historical continuity of primary resistance that had taken place earlier at the advent of colonialism in Namibia (1904 – 1907) (Kossler 2010).¹⁸ Kossler (2010) describes SWAPO's attempt to sew together primary resistance and 'national liberation' as an 'obsession' that SWAPO has pursued from the onset of the liberation struggle.¹⁹ Arguably this obsession in more ways than one was meant not only to legitimize SWAPO's ambition of becoming the sole and true representative of all Namibians but also to project PLAN as the people's army that took over the mantle of the armed struggle from the armies of chiefs Maherero, Witbooi

¹⁷ Swapo's patriotic history has presented a history that centers on a binary of "us versus them". The roots of this mentality can be traced back to the liberation struggle where you were either a revolutionary or a sell out. And there is no better example of this than the Lubango spy saga in Angola in the 1980s where you were either a revolutionary or a sell-out.

¹⁸ SWAPO began publishing material that propagated the notion of it continuing the uprising against colonial forces which they noted had been begun in 1904-1907 by chiefs Maherero and Witbooi and in 1917 by Mandume.

¹⁹ Kossler (2010) presents Namibia's history as a fragmented past that cannot be sewn together

(1904-1907) and Mandume in 1917. Consequently, this notion of PLAN having been the people's army has legitimized their position in the post-colony giving them substantial leverage to make economic demands as the liberators of the nation who brought freedom by the barrel of the gun.



Figure 1: Namibia's Independence Museum gallery, Windhoek. Captioned centre is the face of former President Sam Nujoma (in military fatigues), president of SWAPO and commander of SWAPO's military wing, PLAN. To the left and right of former President Nujoma in much smaller frames are the early resistance leaders of the late 19th and early 20th century (picture courtesy of Museums Association of Namibia (MAN)).

Figure 1 is an example of how Swapo Party has memorialized the nation's past. The centrality of Sam Nujoma's picture in the exhibit suggests Nujoma's role as a national figure who brought all the other ethnic early resistance leaders together. Moreover, one

could also argue that by inference, Nujoma's mural being adorned in military fatigues points to the subtle indication of the importance of the armed struggle epitomized by PLAN's commander in chief, Sam Nujoma in military fatigue. This museum mural is just one of the many war memorials that celebrate SWAPO and more particularly PLAN's dominant role in the liberation struggle. It is therefore not surprising that such a narrow history that centres around the exploits of a single political movement (SWAPO) propelled by its military wing (PLAN) has become the very basis that former exiles affiliated with SWAPO (particularly PLAN ex-fighters) have sought to make claims in the post-colony regarding compensation.

1.1.2 PLAN ex-fighters in Patriotic History

Melber (2005) draws our attention to the fact that in post-independence Namibia, Swapo Party has made the liberation struggle central in the memory and history of Namibia as a nation and has peddled the narrative that portrays PLAN ex-fighters to be heroes who sacrificed their lives for the liberation of the country and therefore deserve to be honoured. Arguably, public holidays such as 'Heroes' Day and built monuments like the Heroes Acre²⁰, which through imagery celebrate the triumph of PLAN ex-fighters over colonialism confirm the aforementioned narrative (see figure 2 below).²¹ Moreover, glorification of living or deceased PLAN ex-fighters through monuments and selected narratives related to war(s) meant SWAPO was forging an identity for

²⁰ Although there is nothing wrong with creating public holidays in remembrance of the liberation struggle, SWAPO party has used these days to glorify PLAN ex-fighters contribution to the liberation struggle, often neglecting to honour non-combat contributions to the liberation struggle and reaffirming the notion of *Swapo brought us freedom through the barrel of the gun*.

²¹ Therefore, heroes day 26 August (battle of Ongulumbashe) is not merely a commemorative event but it is meant to stir up passion for the ruling Swapo party through the memory of the violent resistance that was exhibited by PLAN fighters at Ongulumbashe but also to reaffirm and acknowledge the role played by the 'sole' liberator of the Namibian people, that is, Swapo party

PLAN ex-fighters that is synonymous with privilege. This identity portrays PLAN ex-fighters as brave heroes and martyrs clearly making their struggle efforts 'superior' to those who were not combatants, thereby creating a distinct class of 'special' citizens.²² This memorialization of Namibia's liberation struggle framed exclusively in the heroic efforts of PLAN ex-fighters omits a plethora of groups of individuals, including combatants²³ and non-combatants, who contributed in the struggle.²⁴ Further evidence of Swapo Party's insistence on patriotic history can be deduced from the use of what Becker H (2011) has coined the master narrative; '*Swapo brought us freedom through the barrel of the gun*' which underlines the centrality and the importance of the liberation struggle and its fighters in post-colonial Namibia (p.552). Furthermore, through this memorialization, Swapo Party has embedded the identity of the nation in the liberation struggle and buttressed its own legitimacy (Melber, 2005; Becker, 2011).

²² Patriotic history according to Ranger (2004) is history that celebrates and over emphasizes violent resistance. On the other hand patriotic history as a phenomenon makes no space for individuals who played *support roles* in the liberation struggle such as teachers, nurses, agricultural workers, journalists, child carers etc. Non-combatant SWAPO exiles found themselves at the periphery of the conversation of reintegration in the post-colony yet the roles they played were crucial and pivotal during the liberation struggle. Consequently most of them have tended to gravitate towards being identified with PLAN's violent resistance in order to become relevant and to accrue social power in the post-colony.

²³ The role of Cuba, Russia and MPLA is particularly downplayed although they were crucial in thwarting the SADF's effort to annihilate PLAN's military capabilities stationed within Angola.

²⁴ Non-combat and non-violent players such, civilians in Namibia, the Church (which provided material support & served as a contact point between SWAPO and its international donors, international supporters such as friendly western nations e.g. (Norway, Sweden, Finland), front line states, NGO's and diplomatic efforts spearheaded by the United Nations



Figure 2: Tomb of the Unknown Soldier captioned in the imagery of a PLAN ex-fighter with a striking resemblance to the founding president of Namibia, Sam Nujoma (Courtesy of Dr Reynolds 2017)

1.1.3 Reintegration in the Post-Colony

Lalli Metsola's scholarly writings are particularly important and insightful in understanding reintegration politics in Namibia's transition process. Metsola's scholarly work on reintegration in Namibia is best exhibited through his articles, notably *The Struggle Continues? The Spectre of Liberation, Memory Politics and 'War Veterans' in Namibia* (Metsola, 2010), and his doctoral thesis (Metsola, 2015, p.188-237).²⁵ Metsola's seminal work focuses on how reintegration as a discourse is

²⁵ Metsola's 2010 article *The Struggle Continues? The Spectre of Liberation, Memory Politics and 'War Veterans' in Namibia* (2010) also featured in his doctoral thesis (Metsola, 2015, pp.188-237) is particularly important as it encompassed the analysis of veterans reintegration politics in Namibia spanning two decades. Moreover the article pertinently covers an analysis of the Veterans Act of 2008, the most comprehensive reintegration policy to date in the post-colony.

mobilized in Namibian memory politics and thereby traces the construction of statehood, power and citizenship in Namibia. In his analysis, Metsola (2010) argues that “...public representations of history are dominated by a narrative of national liberation that was crafted by the former liberation movement and current ruling party, Swapo and its allies” (Metsola, 2010, p.589). This then allows war veterans to utilize “...particular histories to justify claims to recognition and associated titles” (Englund & Nyamjoh, 2004 in Metsola, 2010, p. 591).²⁶ The description above and the suggestion of the use of particular histories from the dominant narratives presented by Swapo Party is indeed indicative of the phenomenon which Terrence Ranger (2004) coined *patriotic history*.

To this point, Metsola’s assessment of veteran politics in Namibia overlaps with that presented in this thesis, which also considers the collective agency of former SWAPO exiles in their pursuit of economic reintegration through Namibia’s memory politics related to the liberation struggle. Nevertheless, the point of intervention of this thesis is that it works with economic reintegration as an analytical category, delving into lived experiences of individual former SWAPO exiles to analyse how and to what extent they have met their basic needs and incorporated themselves into the Namibian economy. Hence, this thesis generates knowledge which is extraneous to Metsola’s analysis, concerning experiences of economic reintegration both inside and outside the official Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) frameworks.

²⁶ This is Metsola’s overarching argument in assessing Namibia’s veteran reintegration politics in the post-colony.

Another point of convergence between Metsola's research and this thesis is their focus on how memory politics has led to marginalization and exclusion of various groups in reintegration programmes. For example, Metsola (2006, p.1122-1129; 2007, p.131-146) has written substantially about the *Peace Project* (a government employment initiative for former SWAPO exiles) which to a large extent was exclusionary to those that did not fit neatly into the official narrative of the liberation struggle. In addition Metsola (2010, p.595-597) interrogates the exclusionary nature of the Veterans Act of 2008 pointing to the omission of deserters and ex-SWATF and Koevoet combatants. This thesis goes beyond the time frame of Metsola's work, however, examining the implementation of the Veterans Act beyond the early 2010s where Metsola's doctoral thesis ended. In doing this, the author is able to identify more recent instances of marginalisation and discontent within Swapo Party ranks, particularly amongst beneficiaries of formal reintegration programmes, revealing how amongst the 'recognized' former SWAPO exiles, access to, and the amount of, gratuity payments is based on one's patriotic credentials rather than their actual economic needs. To achieve this, the thesis utilizes the concept of patriotic history clearly delineating how the use of particular histories over thirty years has elevated some whilst marginalizing others among loyal former SWAPO exiles.²⁷

1.2 Contextualizing and Problematizing DDR in and beyond Namibia

In the past, DDR has primarily been measured for its success or failure based on programmes. This method has proved to be flawed, as it does not focus on the "lived

²⁷ See chapter two: Deciphering how 'Patriotic' history shaped reintegration discourse, policy/programmes and processes in Namibia: winners and losers.

experiences”²⁸ of ex-fighters but rather on whether the programmatic ‘goals’ have been achieved, thereby giving DDR programme sponsors/donors an incomplete picture of the impact of the programme on ex-fighters’ lives.

The limits of a programmatic approach to DDR are evident in most of the literature on reintegration in Namibia. Previously scholars on Namibia’s reintegration have focused on either the ‘delivery’ of reintegration policy by the Namibian government or the collective agency of veterans of the liberation struggle that led to the formulation of such policies (Dzinesa, 2004 & 2017; McMullin, 2013).²⁹ The problem with such approaches is it generalizes the experiences of former SWAPO exiles missing out on the unique individual histories which when mapped give a more accurate account of their reintegration progress. Therefore, this thesis proposes to analyse individual life histories/trajectories of former SWAPO exiles in order to ascertain to what extent they have reintegrated into society as opposed to analysing their reintegration from a programmatic perspective or generalizing their collective experience.³⁰ Moreover, the problematic tendency of putting emphasis on those who participated in formal reintegration programmes over those who did not, limits scholars to a parochial view

²⁸ McMullin, J. 2013

²⁹ Robert Muggah in his scholarly work titled *Security and Post-Conflict Reconstruction, Dealing with fighters in the aftermath of war* (2008) begins to address an important subject, that is, what informs DDR policy makers’ decision when they set DDR policies? Muggah rightly laments at the lack of a credible mechanism that evaluates whether DDR initiatives are working or not. He argues “*Priority in the field is naturally on delivery rather than monitoring and evaluation...*” (Muggah, 2008, p. 3-4). The Namibian government’s reintegration policies have largely been considered a success based on delivery rather than on actual empirical evidence based on a proper monitoring and evaluation system. The number of registered veterans, jobs allocated to veterans and number of veterans receiving gratuity payments has been used as a yardstick to measure the success of reintegration policies. This thesis departs from focusing on this results-based approach (which prioritizes delivery over impact) and engages the war veterans at a personal level documenting the direct impact of post-independence reintegration policies on the lives of SWAPO exiles from 1989 through 2017

³⁰ Analysing reintegration from a programmatic perspective entails assessing whether programmatic goals have been achieved or not, that is, it focuses on reintegration programme delivery. Moreover a programmatic perspective narrows reintegration as being applicable to DDR programme participants often disregarding those who do not qualify or are excluded from participating in such programmes.

of reintegration, negating the fact that reintegration is a social process that all former SWAPO exiles experienced and continue to experience regardless of being a beneficiary or non-beneficiary of reintegration projects, their gender, occupation, political affiliation and whether they are rich or poor.

The fate of former SWAPO exiles in postcolonial Namibia have been understood in terms of several generalisations about their militancy, employability, sense of entitlement, dependency on Swapo Party and impoverishment (e.g Preston, 1993, 1997; Tapscott, 1994, 1995; Colletta et al., 1996; Dzinesa, 2006, 2017; McMullin, 2013). However, this thesis through life histories complicates most of these notions as it presents how the lives of former SWAPO exiles have not been static but have evolved over the last 30 years since Independence (1990). Individual life stories presented in this thesis show that the above mentioned generalisations do not tell the whole story of former SWAPO exiles' lives in the post-colony. Indeed, overtime, former SWAPO exiles' lives evolved as new reintegration policies/programmes were introduced benefiting former SWAPO exiles varyingly, especially since the mid-2000s. In addition this thesis tracks the role of other indicators of human development at an individual level particularly the role of human and social capital in the economic reintegration processes of former SWAPO exiles as it developed first in exile and then over a 30 year period since exiles' repatriation. Therefore, careful mapping of each exile's life is required, paying particular attention to the constraints and possibilities that have shaped their lives from exile through 2018. Generalisations (as noted above) of former SWAPO exiles' lives will be tested against former SWAPO exiles' individual life

histories.³¹ In addition, this approach will allow such generalisations to be challenged by life stories of how former SWAPO exiles navigated the constraints and possibilities that life presented them in the post-colony, thereby cementing the notion that there is no single narrative that can describe the economic reintegration of this unique, diverse and dynamic group of former exiles.

There is much at stake in such a life history approach to reintegration, not only for understanding postcolonial Namibia but also for engaging critically with the field of DDR itself. To understand the importance of the Namibian case for DDR scholars, it is important to locate it historically in the development of DDR programs. The first ever formally United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctioned DDR operation was conducted in Namibia (1989) under the auspices of the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG) with the primary aim of dismantling South Africa and SWAPO's armed forces as well as other paramilitary forces (Dzinesa, 2006 in Muggah, 2008, p. 5).³² Thereafter several DDR operations were conducted both by the UN (e.g. Angola, El Salvador, and Cambodia) and by individual countries independently (e.g. Russia in the 1990s, the Philippines in the late 1990s and Columbia since 2003) (ibid). Therefore, Namibia's case stands out as one of the most important DDR operations in history as it became a harbinger project from which future DDR operations drew lessons.

³¹ Former SWAPO exiles are often regarded as militant, entitled, having a dependency syndrome and reluctant or unwilling to use their own initiative to improve their economic well-being outside of government reintegration programmes.

³² Earlier operations with similar characteristics to DDR came in the form of post-conflict demilitarization and decommissioning of armed groups most notably in interventions supported by the UK in Zimbabwe (1979-1980) which was also viewed as a bilateral form of technical military cooperation (Mazarire & Rupiya, 2000 in Muggah, 2008, p. 4)

Gwinyayi Dzinesa's (2017) work "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in Southern Africa Swords into Ploughshares?" is particularly important for scholars on Namibia's reintegration as the book engages with Namibia's DDR within the Southern Africa context where comparisons are drawn with neighbouring Zimbabwe and South Africa. Zimbabwe's reintegration is particularly juxtaposed with Namibia wherein similarities between liberation movements' military wings led to similar reintegration challenges for ex-fighters in the two post colonies.³³ Dzinesa's (2017) work importantly highlights how reintegration challenges/short-comings of liberation movements-cum-governments is not just a Namibian problem, and invites the reader to consider wider historical contexts that have influenced reintegration in post-colonial Southern Africa. Moreover, Dzinesa's (2017) work brings the spotlight to Southern Africa as he carves out Namibia and Southern Africa's unique positioning in international DDR discourse.³⁴

Dzinesa (2017) distinguishes what he coins 1st generation DDR and 2nd generation DDR with the former having taken place in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa in that order chronologically. The latter (present day) 2nd generation DDR has been more prominent in weak states emerging from civil wars, for example, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Central African Republic (Dzinesa, 2017, p.1). According to Dzinesa (2017), 1st generation DDR in Southern Africa was associated with liberation movements cum-governments where state agency and local ownership dominated the DDR process especially with regards to the *R*, that is,

³³ Zimbabwe had ZIPRA and ZANLA military wings with ZAPU being the political party for the former and ZANU being for the latter. Whilst PLAN was the military wing of SWAPO for Namibia

³⁴ This is important as Southern Africa's DDR discourse has often been neglected by scholars of DDR who often focus on West Africa and the Great Lakes region in Africa where armed conflict often recurs and where international bodies such as the UNDP who conduct DDR have permanent missions.

reintegration (p.15). On the other hand in 2nd generation DDR cases, the international community particularly the United Nations Department of Peace Keeping Operation (UNDPKO) tends to lead DDR interventions with the support of other donors such as International Financial Institutions (IFI's) (e.g. the World Bank) (Dzinesa, 2017, p. 22). These interventions (2nd generation DDR) usually happen in the immediate aftermath of war in countries where central political authority is absent or too weak to carry out the DDR process (ibid). Such interventions by the international community have previously taken place in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Central African Republic (CAR).

In cases where 2nd generation DDR is undertaken by the UN and its partners, DDR interventions (as from 2006) are guided by the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS)³⁵. The IDDRS (compiled by a UN interagency working group) serves as a professional guide to DDR on best practice in terms of planning, management and implementation (Muggah, 2008, p. 13). Meanwhile, 1st generation DDR has been largely through 'trial and error' without any standard template being used by either of the three countries in that category, that is, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa.

This distinction between 1st and 2nd generation DDR is an important contribution to the DDR discourse by Dzinesa (2017) as it appropriately puts Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa in a distinct class of DDR processes where the state (liberation movement-

³⁵ The Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards IDDRS was assembled by a UN inter-agency working group (UNWG) between 2004-2006. The IDDRS laid out a wide-ranging list of protocols and procedures covering more than two dozen separate aspects of DDR. In effect, the standards aimed to consolidate policy guidance on DDR providing a comprehensive approach to planning, management, and implementation (Muggah, 2008, p. 13)

cum governments) is the main agency for implementing DDR. Although this categorization helps to distinguish the two distinct DDR approaches and simplifies the categories, it also exposes the problematic case of Namibia's DDR history and process and the importance of rethinking it. This is because Namibia, unlike Zimbabwe and South Africa (that had locally driven DDR processes with limited international support) had its Disarmament and Demobilisation (DD) process bankrolled and supervised by the United Nations leaving only the reintegration process to the post-colonial government.³⁶ It raises the prospect that Namibia's DDR process is unique and fits more as a 'hybrid' type of process that has elements of both 1st and 2nd generation DDR processes.

Moreover, by categorizing Namibia's DDR process as strictly 1st generation Dzinesa (2017) has worked on the assumption that reintegration was the sole or primary responsibility of the newly elected Swapo Party government which would in effect put most of Namibia's post-colonial reintegration challenges squarely on the shoulders of the state. Whereas this thesis will invite the reader to reassess the role of UNTAG and attempts to illuminate the limitations of the UN and presents its efforts in Namibia's transition as incomplete. For instance, the notion of UNTAG's local partner Council of Churches of Namibia's (CCN) Repatriation Resettlement and Reconstruction Committee (RRR Committee) insinuated that substantial reintegration assistance would be extended to SWAPO exiles after repatriation through resettlement and reconstruction.³⁷ However, this hardly took place as it turned out that "...RRR's principal task was the reception and short-term care of returnees prior to their departure

³⁶ UNTAG's budget for Namibia was \$US 373,4 million (Melber 2014:15) or US\$416 million (Dzinesa, 2017, p. 102)

³⁷ UNTAG's mandate on Namibia, did not explicitly spell out reintegration as a process or concept (Dzinesa, 2006, p. 184)

for homes or other chosen destinations” (Dzinesa, 2006, p. 218).³⁸ This is despite UNTAG having had a budget of a whopping \$416 million for the transition process (Dzinesa, 2017, p.102).³⁹ This does not imply that this thesis absolves the Swapo Party led government of its policy flaws in the reintegration of former SWAPO exiles or that it merely blames the UN for reintegration short-comings in the post-colony. Rather the thesis presents the reader with former SWAPO exiles’ life experiences during and after repatriation highlighting their reintegration stories and how they were shaped by UNTAG’s intervention in the transition process. Through this material, I suggest that one needs to challenge the long-standing assumption that UNTAG’s mission in Namibia was a success.

In addition, Dzinesa (2017) also tends to focus more on analysing DDR programmatic challenges in Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa instead of focusing on the actual reintegration processes of ex-combatants – a problematic tendency in the DDR literature which I, following Torjesen, have previously noted. This bias is understandable given that DDR has its historical roots in programme centred approaches. There is need, however, to go beyond Dzinesa’s (2017) critical engagement of Namibia’s DDR programming. For instance, the need to make former SWAPO exiles’ social, political and economic processes the starting point for reintegration analysis, is key to understanding the complex patterns and movements that former SWAPO exiles have taken since Independence, which would in turn, accurately

³⁸ This task included installation of cooking and sanitary facilities, water and electricity supply in reception centres, transportation of returnees from entry points to reception centres and then to their respective homes or special centres run by CCN member churches, as well as provision for special categories including orphans, the elderly and disabled (Dzinesa 2006 p.218)

³⁹ It would be interesting to probe to what extent UNTAG’s budget priorities were humanitarian related.

highlight their reintegration progress in the post-colony. This is particularly crucial in Namibia, where the country's former SWAPO exiles' profiles are not homogenous, having been shaped by a complicated past and a post-colonial dispensation wherein there is widespread inequality.⁴⁰ Moreover, differing personal socio-economic circumstances may also affect the pace of reintegration in the individual lives of former SWAPO exiles. Of course, one cannot get such insights regarding former SWAPO exiles through analysing reintegration programmes, but rather through analysis of their lived experiences by mapping individual trajectories. In light of the aforementioned points, it becomes imperative to assess the methods (methodology) used by the author to map the life trajectories of former SWAPO exiles for this study.

1.3 Methodology

The reintegration of ex-combatants has always been a topic that captivated me from the days when I first learnt about Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) whilst undertaking my Master of Philosophy degree at the University of Tromsø, Norway (2009 -2011). Therefore, when the time came to apply for a Ph.D., DDR was the natural choice for me to pick as a topic. Having previously conducted DDR research on Zimbabwe's ex-combatants (for my master's thesis), I became interested in pursuing DDR in a neighbouring country, that is, Namibia where I also happened to be residing. My Ph.D. proposal that was accepted at the University of Free State in early 2017

⁴⁰ To begin with, Namibia has a fragmented past wherein histories have shaped former SWAPO exiles from different regions of the country. Exile life during the liberation struggle also complicated matters, with some former SWAPO exiles being arrested detained and tortured (e.g. The Shipanga rebellion (1976) and the Lubango Spy saga (1980s). Moreover differing statuses in the liberation struggle has also led to significant differences in the reintegration trajectories of former SWAPO exiles. For example the distinction of being a PLAN fighter or a non-combatant SWAPO exile, or between political prisoners and prisoners of war (POW) just to mention a few. Finally differing access to human capital in exile led to class stratifications in the post-colony with former SWAPO exiles finding themselves divided by social classes in the post-colony.

proposed to explore economic reintegration of PLAN ex-fighters through mapping their individual trajectories between 1989 and 2018 through life history interviews.

When I began my fieldwork my initial intention was to focus on interviewing marginalized groups of PLAN ex-fighters such as former SWAPO dissidents from exile. However, in retrospect I realize that I was somewhat naive to have thought that it would have been easy to get former ‘dissidents’ to easily open up about their marginalization in post-independence Namibia considering how the issue is extremely sensitive and shunned upon by the current Swapo Party-led government, as they feel it will open up old wounds and harm the peace and stability the country is currently enjoying.⁴¹ Therefore, I adjusted my approach and became flexible, interviewing all the former SWAPO exiles I was referred to via the snowballing technique without requesting for former dissidents.⁴² Once in the field, I also had to adjust my expectations of strictly interviewing PLAN ex-fighters as I soon discovered distinguishing an exile who was a combatant from those who were not was far more complex as Williams (2015) correctly notes. I quickly discovered that sometimes a former SWAPO exile (who was a PLAN ex-fighter) would recommend me to interview another former SWAPO exile who was in fact not a PLAN ex-fighter and the same would occur vice-versa. I soon let my guard down and decided to interview non-PLAN combatant SWAPO exiles too. I soon discovered that having both former PLAN

⁴¹Siegfried Groth's book 'Namibia - Breaking the Wall of Silence' published in 1995 revealed alleged human rights abuses that took place in the SWAPO dungeons in Angola. Groth's account was denounced as false by the Swapo party government and he was accused of undermining the policy of peace and reconciliation (adopted at Independence) which entailed a 'forgive and forget' approach to all atrocities committed by either side of the warring parties during the liberation struggle.

⁴² The first SWAPO exile I interviewed was a PLAN ex-fighter but also a former dissident. He was very guarded about his experiences in the Lubango dungeons in the 1980s, and when I asked for referrals to other former dissidents he was evasive. Eventually when I asked for referral to other SWAPO exiles he was very co-operative and that is when I decided to adjust my approach and become more flexible.

combatants and non-combatants enriched my thesis as I could document the different trajectories that all returnees went through allowing me to juxtapose the “lived experiences” (e.g. McMullin, 2013) of the different sub-groups within the broader group of former SWAPO exiles. Moreover, this also allowed me to explore the social power of the various identities that former SWAPO exiles use to identify themselves. For instance, the terms *freedom fighter*, *ex-combatant* and *war veteran* mean different things to different people and their use by former SWAPO exiles often invokes a deep sense of pride in their accomplishments during the liberation struggle and their desire for recognition in post-independence Namibia.

Initially the plan had been to conduct interviews across at least four regions of Namibia, however, my fieldwork was limited to Windhoek due to limited funding. The focus on Windhoek became an opportunity rather than a setback, as I was able to interview former SWAPO exiles in different urban spaces in Windhoek and consider more fully how they adapted to life in the Namibian capital. I interviewed former SWAPO exiles from diverse backgrounds. For instance, I had interviews with exiles who were bank managers, retired military generals, deputy directors in government ministries, teachers, the unemployed, farmers, SWAPO activists, pensioners to mention a few. Of course carrying out interviews within the confines of Windhoek’s urban district meant that the sample would to some extent be skewed towards former SWAPO exiles who have some form of education and/or have at least had some form of employment. However, rather than it being problematic, the sample is in fact representative of the reality of many former SWAPO exiles in urban centres like Windhoek. This is because being a city where many rely on formal employment to earn a living, most former SWAPO exiles tend to have some form of post-secondary education or are in the

process of acquiring such education due to the competitive nature of urban job markets where employment opportunities are limited and tend to favour skilled job seekers. Therefore, in many ways, this sample to a large extent represents the wider population of former SWAPO exiles in Windhoek.⁴³ For this particular study, interviews were conducted in Windhoek between September 2017 and August 2018. In total 25 respondents were interviewed in this time period.

From the beginning of the proposal writing, I was concerned about the women's demographic as it was pertinent for me to have them well represented in the sample. The notion that most women ex-fighters fade into the background prior to reintegration as they slip back into traditional gender roles especially in patriarchal societies, leading to many of them not participating in reintegration processes (e.g. Bouta, 2005, p.11) led me to be keen to interview females formerly associated with SWAPO in exile. Once in the field, it became obvious that it would not be easy to convince female former SWAPO exiles to talk about their life histories especially to a foreign (Zimbabwean) male researcher. I eventually had to build rapport with particular female former SWAPO exiles (e.g. Paulina a teacher by profession from Peoples Primary School in Katutura Windhoek and Lovisa a bank manager at a local bank in Windhoek), who eventually connected me to other female former SWAPO exiles who were more open once they were informed that I had interviewed their 'comrades'.

My foreign nationality also meant that some former SWAPO exiles (both male and females) were initially skeptical about my intentions when I mentioned that I am

⁴³ Moreover, this opens up the possibility of a similar (life history) research being undertaken in a rural setting, with findings from such research potentially opening up avenues for comparative studies for life history research of urban and rural settings.

Zimbabwean. However, most of the respondents tended to become more responsive when I mentioned that I was married to a Namibian national, with discussions often beginning informally with questions about my wife's family and where her rural village was located in Namibia. This proved to be a critical point in building rapport with my respondents and this led them to being more open as they perceived me more as a "local" who would not collect their information and "leave" but would stay in Namibia after the research as I had legitimate local ties through marriage to the nation. In other words, they could trust me more with their information. This was particularly important especially as building trust with respondents is one of the key tenets of successful life history research (Goodson & Gill, 2011, p. 38).

On the other hand my foreign nationality, particularly being a Zimbabwean researcher, turned out to be helpful in other instances especially in building rapport with research participants who had served in the military such as General Shilongo who was keen to participate in the interview as he indicated to me he was forever grateful to Zimbabwe as he had received part of his military officer training at the Zimbabwe Staff College. Other research participants such as Dr. Charles and Lovisa who had studied and lived in Zimbabwe in the late 1980s were also keen to participate due to their past affiliation with Zimbabwe. The two studied journalism at Harare Polytechnic between 1988 and 1990 and they assisted in identifying potential research participants I could also interview.

My Ph.D. proposal proposed to interview beneficiaries of formal reintegration programmes and non-beneficiaries. This was of course on the backdrop of my initial approach that non-beneficiaries were the marginalized group (especially former

SWAPO dissidents). However, as I steered clear from pursuing former SWAPO dissidents and focused on the respondents I had, I soon discovered that some beneficiaries of formal reintegration programmes were actually marginalized whilst participating in formal reintegration programmes from the 1990s through 2018.⁴⁴ Moreover, some former SWAPO exiles who had not participated in formal reintegration programmes in the 1990s had participated in the latter reintegration programmes of the early 2000s. Therefore, the notion of attempting to distinguish those who participated or did not participate in formal reintegration programmes or those who were marginalized or not became problematic and instead I focused on the life histories of the exiles, taking note of their reintegration process. In essence, I made the life histories of former SWAPO exiles the starting point of attempting to understand issues such as marginalization and whether they are a beneficiary or non-beneficiary of formal reintegration programmes.

My interview sessions began with me asking the respondents to tell me their life history rather than asking whether they were a beneficiary or non-beneficiary, marginalized or not marginalized. As Torjesen (2013) suggests, reintegration is a process that takes place regardless of whether an ex-combatant has participated in a formal reintegration programme. Therefore, any analysis should begin with the life histories of the exiles which reveal their reintegration process, at the same time illuminating how their trajectories were influenced or affected by reintegration policies, whilst also revealing the resourcefulness or lack thereof of those who self-reintegrated. As I engaged my participants I would first ask about what motivated them to take the journey into exile

⁴⁴ Formal reintegration programmes in Namibia include the Development Brigade, Development Brigade Corporation (DBC), The Peace Project and Veterans Act of 2008.

and how their life progressed whilst abroad. I would ask about what human capital they acquired in exile, that is, the education they received, scholarships, skills training short courses, etc. I also asked whether they received military training (where, when and how). After engaging my research participants regarding their life in exile, I would then ask them to narrate their repatriation process and how they experienced life in Namibia after repatriation. I soon realised that asking my research participants about their life history in exile was particularly effective in building rapport before I asked more personal questions regarding their economic circumstances in the post-colony. This is because many were keen to tell their story, particularly of their contribution to the liberation struggle. For some it was nostalgic, taking them back down memory lane, with some research participants reminiscing the simplicity of life and comradeship in SWAPO camps where their needs were provided for by SWAPO (Akawa, 2014, p. 120; Namhila, 2013, p. 131).⁴⁵ By the time most participants narrated their repatriation stories, most were comfortable opening up to me. It's as if the gateway into their lives was listening to their life histories of exile. At this stage, most research participants felt free and were open to me asking more personal questions regarding their career trajectory, income levels, property ownership, pensions and their experience of formal reintegration programmes in the post-colony. Most research participants were glad to share these personal details as it appears they felt that because I had sat through and listened without interrupting their exile stories, I now understood them and there was no fear of them being judged by me especially regarding their economic circumstances, this was true particularly for the marginalised former SWAPO exiles, who under

⁴⁵ Akawa (2014) notes how some of her respondents reminisced on life in SWAPO camps where there was comradeship, the sisterhood and brotherhood (p.120). Moreover many noted how life was less complicated in exile in terms of provision as SWAPO provided for most of their needs as compared to life in post-independence Namibia where everyone was focused on themselves. Namhila (2013) also mentions how Mukwahepo was nostalgic of life in the SWAPO refugee camps where SWAPO took care of them as compared to life in the post-colony where she had to fend for herself (p.131).

normal circumstances would not have revealed their personal economic circumstances due to embarrassment or fear of being looked down upon.⁴⁶ In essence, by employing the life history approach, I was able to open up the complex inner landscapes of former SWAPO exiles, accessing their emotions, subjectivities, identities and personhood (Goodson & Gill, 2011). I was therefore, able to get the finer details of their life stories which statistics or generalised perceptions of their collective economic circumstances would not ordinarily provide.

However, despite the immense benefits of mapping life histories to assess economic reintegration, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this methodological approach. Above all, there is a danger that the researcher may at times become biased by focusing on the respondent's story without due consideration being given to wider contexts (Goodson & Gill, 2011, p. 53). Moreover, the interviewer may get caught up in the complexities of human subjectivity and perception which at times blur the lines between how individuals narrate their lives and what they have actually experienced (Goodson & Gill, 2011, p.54). To mitigate the above mentioned risks the author attempted to locate each of the former exiles' unique life stories within the broader historical and contemporary contexts in order to identify possible discrepancies between what the author narrates and what they actually experienced. Although it is impossible to verify all the information given by the respondent, I tried my best to critically engage the life stories I recorded, flagging any inconsistencies that I picked up as I unpacked their stories in relation to the broader themes of the study.

⁴⁶ Moreover, I got a sense that most of my research participants identities were deeply imbedded in their exile experience henceforth their desire to narrate their exile life histories.

In addition to conducting life history interviews, I also collected a range of secondary data. I achieved this by visiting the Veterans Affairs office in Windhoek, to collect relevant information including annual reports and current pamphlets that state the current benefits of war veterans. I also visited the University of Namibia's (UNAM) Human Rights Documentation Centre (HRDC) housed in the law faculty to collect documents on UNHCR repatriation efforts in the late 1980s through the early 1990s. UNAM Library, Special collections, and online resources were also invaluable as I collected material for my thesis there as well. Finally, University of the Free State Library's online database provided the bulk of the journals that I utilized in writing up this thesis.

In view of the personal nature of the information I was acquiring from my respondents, that is, information regarding their life histories of over thirty years, it became imperative for me to ask my respondents whether they wanted their identities concealed or to be visible in the thesis (De Vos et al., 2005). This was particularly important where sensitive information such as income, wealth, pensions, etc was being shared. About half of the respondents opted to become anonymous and I accordingly used an alias in the thesis and removed information that would make them easily identifiable such as, suburb, street name, house number and in some instances I also did not indicate the specific location of their workplace. This was done to uphold one of the fundamental tenets of ethical social science research, that is, the notion of *do no harm* (Berg and Lune, 2012). Meanwhile, some respondents insisted and were emphatic about their identities being visible in the thesis as some saw the interviews as an opportunity for their life histories to be shared, whilst at the same time highlighting what they felt was their contribution to the country's liberation struggle. Other

respondents, such as members of the organization Namibians Repatriated in 1989 (NRI 1989), saw the interviews as an opportunity to air out their grievances towards the United Nations, particularly United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) over the 1989 repatriation process.⁴⁷ In addition, all research respondents were given a research study leaflet with information regarding the nature and scope of the research including their rights as a research participant. Once they (respondents) were satisfied with what their role was and how the interview information would be used, they signed a University of Free State (UFS) consent form agreeing to participate in the research and usage of their information. Therefore, careful ethical considerations were made to uphold the notion of *doing no harm*.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis structure departs from the traditional structure which frames literature review, results, discussion and data analysis in different chapters. Rather the author organizes the chapters from chapter two through to five in the form of arguments or themes that attempt to address the research questions.

Chapter two begins to address the question of how and to what extent patriotic history shaped reintegration policy in Namibia. The chapter identifies sub-groups within former SWAPO exiles such as female PLAN ex-fighters, male PLAN ex-fighters, non-combatant SWAPO exiles (male and female), Cassinga survivors and prisoners of war (POWs). The life histories of these exiles are examined in depth with particular attention being paid to how they lived their lives over the last 30 years and how they narrate these lived experiences in order to understand to what extent patriotic history

⁴⁷ See chapter three

has influenced their life trajectories, highlighting the unintended ‘side effects’ of policy on the lives of former SWAPO exiles. The chapter by no means exhausts the consequences of patriotic history on the lives of former SWAPO exiles through documenting their “lived experiences” but brings to the fore a discussion on how particular histories have influenced policy formulation for almost three decades elevating some and marginalizing others. This is done through analysis of the life histories of exiles rather than the traditional myopic approach of analysing reintegration policy.⁴⁸ As Torjesen (2013) points out, the lives of the ex-combatant should be the starting point of analysis and not the reintegration programme/policy (p.2).

Chapter three begins by challenging the notion that UNTAG’s mission in Namibia was a success. The author addresses UNTAG’s mandate which was limited to DD and repatriation. Dzinesa (2004) mentions that UNTAG’s mandate on Namibia did not explicitly mention reintegration (p.184). In order to understand how this limited mandate came into being, the author contextualizes background of the Cold War and how its outcome had a bearing on UNTAG’s limited DD mandate. To demonstrate the limitations of UNTAG’s mandate, the author documents the life histories of former SWAPO exiles during the transition period and in the immediate aftermath of Independence.

The author suggests that UNTAG’s minimalist approach to Namibia’s political transition which led to UNHCR’S approach of repatriate and ‘disperse’ had real

⁴⁸ The traditional way of analysing reintegration policy entails focusing on delivery of the programme, for example how many individuals were registered? Or how many are employed? This approach does not analyse individuals’ life histories.

consequences for some former SWAPO exiles as there were limited institutional mechanisms (in the post-colony) to assist vulnerable former SWAPO exiles in their short to long-term economic reintegration. The author goes on to analyse the emergence of the organization *Namibians repatriated in 1989* led by Ueshitile Shekupe “Banana” (a PLAN ex-fighter). The organization has over 20 000 former SWAPO exiles registered from the country’s thirteen regions. The organization’s campaign demanding compensation from UNHCR for its failure to rehabilitate, resettle and reintegrate former SWAPO exiles is driven by their claim that UNTAG fell short of their expectations. The author ties the agency of this group to the disillusionment of UNTAG’s minimalist approach to DDR in Namibia which was more focused on security matters that is, Disarmament and Demobilization than on developmental issues which are linked to Reintegration (maximalist approach). The chapter will conclude by tying some of former SWAPO exiles’ reintegration woes to the limited UNTAG mandate. The life histories of former SWAPO exiles will be the basis for the arguments that the author will make regarding the limitations of UNTAG’s mandate, drawing from their “lived experiences”. Although the chapter focuses on the limitations of UNTAG’s mandate, it by no means absolves Namibia’s Swapo Party led government of its reintegration policy failures since 1990.

Chapter four explores two primary concepts, that is, human capital and social capital. With regard to human capital, the chapter explores the implications of SWAPO’s human capital investment in exile in the post-colony. The chapter begins by giving a background of the trajectories of former SWAPO exiles in terms of the educational opportunities they were afforded (or not afforded) in exile. The author explores the politics behind gaining these opportunities, which often came in the form of

scholarships. The chapter highlights how SWAPO leaders in exile had the power to shape the destinies of many exiles by deciding who got a scholarship, what they were to study and where they would go to study. To illuminate this the author then uses examples of interviewed former SWAPO exiles who felt they had no control over their destinies and were denied the opportunity to study (in exile). The chapter brings to the fore the argument that by wielding such influence SWAPO was basically determining class stratifications in the post-colony, with certain professions affording some exiles excellent jobs whilst others had to settle for mediocre jobs due to their qualifications or lack thereof. From this vantage point the author begins to explore wealth, poverty and inequality amongst former SWAPO exiles linking their human capital from exile and their current economic condition, henceforth showing how exile directly shaped social stratification in the post-colony.⁴⁹ The chapter also examines how social networks (social capital) that have roots in exile helped some former SWAPO exiles to secure jobs in the aftermath of Independence. In Namibia's context, the role of social capital in shaping the career trajectories of former SWAPO exiles becomes increasingly important especially when one is cognizant of the fact that Namibia is governed by a single liberation movement/party and has an economy dominated by the government. In this case, the importance of social networks, particularly who you know and how that person can assist you to get a job becomes imperative. Unsurprisingly all the respondents interviewed work or have worked for the government (at some stage in their lives), and most of them got a government job because of someone they knew (in government) who had influence. However, it is important to note that the chapter does not imply that social capital supersedes human capital in importance. Rather it points

⁴⁹ The author will use respondents feedback on house ownership, land, Job, pension business.

to how these two forms of capital (human and social capital) which are often conceptualised as different are in fact intertwined. In essence, it was not enough to be educated (to have human capital) in the aftermath of Independence, it also mattered whom you knew (especially in government) that could assist you to get a job offer. In conclusion the author suggests that post-secondary education and durable strong social networks were instrumental in creating economic opportunities for some SWAPO exiles, whilst those who lacked or had minimal forms of these capitals were and continue to be economically disadvantaged in the post-colony.

In chapter five the reader is introduced to the notion of self-reintegration which emphasises individual agency of former SWAPO exiles in their reintegration processes. The author presents various life stories of former SWAPO exiles where individual agency was instrumental in facilitating their reintegration. What sets apart these life stories from other life histories in the other chapters is that these former SWAPO exiles did not wait for reintegration programming to facilitate their reintegration. Two of the three former SWAPO exiles' lives explored in chapter five were not beneficiaries of any government reintegration programme in the 1990s but yet through self-initiatives were able to get gainful employment and acquire assets. One of the three former SWAPO exiles interviewed used his individual agency to delve into farming and embarked on other entrepreneurial endeavours that have led him to be economically stable and not rely on reintegration programming gratuity payments as is the case with some former SWAPO exiles in the preceding chapters.

The chapter shows that beyond reintegration discourse and programming, former SWAPO exiles are men and women just like everybody else trying to make ends meet.

The humanity behind former SWAPO exile identities is laid bare as stories of them trying to earn a living to provide for their families are narrated. What the life histories in chapter five show are the limitations of DDR as an analytical framework, especially with regards to DDR's emphasis on programmes. The potential of individual agency to propel reintegration processes without or outside reintegration programming is the overarching argument of chapter five, showing that former SWAPO exiles who are able to take own initiatives can self-reintegrate in the post-colony.

Chapter six draws arguments from the various chapters together to highlight their broader significance. The chapter points to the importance of recognizing that post-colonial reintegration policies have ushered in new dimensions of post-colonial marginalisation, particularly amongst former SWAPO exiles recognised as 'veterans' of the liberation struggle by the country's constitution. The chapter also draws the reader to reconsider UNTAG's role in Namibia's transition, pointing to how the lived experiences of former SWAPO exiles expose limitations of UNTAG's mandate. As suggested, these limitations had far-reaching repercussions for former SWAPO exiles in the aftermath of repatriation. Finally, the author points to the limitations of DDR as an analytical framework. Forms of capital (human and social) and individual agency, are presented as having facilitated the reintegration of some former SWAPO exiles outside of institutionalised reintegration programming. Importantly, this challenges dominant reintegration discourse in Namibia that limits reintegration to (government/donor) programmes.

Chapter 2: Deciphering how ‘Patriotic’ history shaped reintegration discourse, policy/programmes and processes in Namibia: winners and losers

2.1 Brief Background: Contextualizing patriotic history in reintegration policy/programmes

The militarization of Namibia’s nationalist struggle had serious consequences for post-independence realities as well as for the images projected about how Independence was achieved (Kossler, 2010, p. 38). In the post-colony, enduring images of how liberation was achieved through the armed struggle (e.g. the national heroes’ acre and the Independence museum)⁵⁰ are monuments that stand to remind the nation that Independence was birthed through a violent past. Kossler (2010) nods in this direction when he points to the fact that the image of national history often determines the image of the nation itself (p. 30). Furthermore, Kossler points to how a common reference to the past is crucial for the constitution of political systems to justify their very existence (ibid). It is therefore not surprising that phrases like *Swapo brought freedom through the barrel of the gun* became quite important as political slogans for the ruling Swapo Party in the post-colony (Becker, 2011). Meanwhile, non-military forms of Namibia’s liberation struggle histories have effectively been side-lined and the nation’s history has been condensed to primarily centre around SWAPO’s armed struggle.

It follows that former SWAPO exiles who participated in the armed struggle (1966-1989) are an integral part of the nation’s memorialization of the liberation struggle and that reintegration policies pursuant of their welfare have been shaped by this dominant form of history.

⁵⁰ See Figure 3



Figure 3: Sculptured carvings illustrating how PLAN fighters won Independence at the National Heroes Acre located south of Windhoek

It is important to note that this history, that Terrence Ranger (2004) refers to as “patriotic history,” is a form of dominant history that utilizes particular histories (as noted above and earlier on in chapter one) and has a prominent role in Namibian politics often being presented as the ‘official’ narrative of the liberation struggle. Consequently, this has led to reintegration policy-makers in the post-colony mobilizing ‘patriotic history’ as a reference to frame reintegration policy in the post-independence era with far-reaching consequences on the lives of veterans of the liberation struggle. For instance, Metsola (2010) highlights the exclusionary nature of patriotic history when he notes:

Apart from enabling links between Swapo and its former exile cadres, the liberation narrative also serves to exclude people and remembrances. The former SWATF and Koevoet fighters are a case in point (Metsola, 2007). As we have seen, the liberation narrative rests on an overarching dichotomy between colonial oppression and unified national resistance...‘progressive

Namibians' versus South Africa and its allies (Metsola, 2010, p. 604).

Ranger nods in this direction when he points to the fact that patriotic history divides the nation into revolutionaries and 'sell outs' (Ranger, 2004, p. 223). Such a binary mindset of 'us' versus 'them' has been instrumental in shaping Namibia's reintegration policy since 1990. Although in the immediate aftermath of Independence Swapo Party under Sam Nujoma promoted the policy of national reconciliation, very little was done to heal the nation of the historical mistrust and attitudes between Swapo Party and its supporters (on one side) and their erstwhile enemies better known as former 'collaborators' of the South African apartheid regime. Therefore, it is not surprising that the formation of the Namibian Defence Forces (NDF) was the first and last 'real' attempt to unify these two opposing camps.⁵¹ This exclusion became rather obvious, as the NDF eventually became dominated by former SWAPO cadres (Metsola, 2010, p.593; McMullin, 2013, p. 85). The Peace Project also initially excluded ex-SWATF and ex-Koevoet fighters and after their eventual recognition, only a meagre 2,420 former SWATF and former Koevoet fighters were registered in comparison to the 13,992 former SWAPO exiles registered by the year 2000 (Metsola, 2010, p. 593).⁵² The pinnacle of exclusion of former SWATF and Koevoet fighters is the Veterans Act of 2008 which also happens to be the most comprehensive reintegration policy created

⁵¹ The new National Defence Forces (NDF) absorbed both PLAN ex-fighters and ex-SWATF and Koevoet. Between 1989 -1990 during the transition to Independence, 25 000 former SWATF and Koevoet fighters and approximately 50 000 Namibian returnees/exiles and ex-combatants of SWAPO's military wing PLAN were^[1] demobilized and only 10 000 from the combined 75 000 were absorbed into the new integrated security forces.

⁵² Due to persistent protests by SWAPO veterans of the liberation struggle from the mid-1990s the Namibian government decided to register and give government jobs to veterans of Namibia's liberation struggle under an initiative dubbed *The Peace Project*. Most of the jobs given to registered SWAPO veterans were mainly in the police and army, with others getting entry level jobs as cleaners in government ministries.

by Swapo Party since 1990 (Bolliger, 2017, p. 202 - 204).⁵³ The Act boldly states that a veteran is a person who

...was a member of the liberation forces provided the person was above 18 years of age on 21 March 1990 or ...consistently and persistently participated.... in furtherance of the liberation struggle. (Veterans Act 2008 p.16-17).⁵⁴

The Act was the clearest sign yet that patriotic history's interpretation of reintegration was deeply entrenched within Swapo Party and the state's "us" versus "them" doctrine, and at this stage, it became apparent that ex-SWATF and ex-Koevoet marginalization had become the de facto policy as far as reintegration was concerned.⁵⁵

This subject of marginalization of ex-SWATF and ex-Koevoet fighters in Namibia's reintegration politics and policies has been dealt with in much detail by Metsola (2010), McMullin (2013) and Bolliger (2017). However it should be noted that such an approach of marginalization is rather minimalistic as it primarily focuses on how patriotic history has marginalized ex-SWATF and ex-Koevoet fighters as opposed to considering the notion of marginalization (via patriotic history) more broadly by examining the phenomenon amongst those who fought on the *right side* of the liberation

⁵³ In response to their outright exclusion from the Veterans Act of 2008, two pressure groups namely Namibia War Veterans Trust (NAWVET) and Old South African Soldiers in Namibia (OSASN) were formed in 2012. NAWVET is primarily made up of both ex-SWATF and ex-Koevoet soldiers, whilst OSASN is exclusively made up of ex-SWATF soldiers. NAWVET however, focuses on demanding recognition through the Veterans Act of 2008 whilst OSASN is seeking to make claims for veteran benefits through the South Africa government through the South African Military Veterans Act of 2011. (For more on these organisations background and objectives see Bolliger (2017, p. 203 -213)

⁵⁴ https://laws.parliament.na/cms_documents/veterans-ccc664ef50.pdf accessed 18 April 2019.

⁵⁵ Unsurprisingly, due to their continued marginalization particularly, their exclusion from the Veterans Act of 2008, ex-SWATF and ex-Koevoet fighters recently took the step to revive an existing but dormant political party, that is, the National Patriotic Front (NPF) in order to participate in the upcoming November 2019 general election in order to add a political dimension to their campaign for justice. Speaking at a press conference in Windhoek (August 2019), the acting secretary general of NPF Uapiruka Papama suggested that engaging in politics was the only way for their grievances regarding reintegration to be taken seriously. It remains to be seen though how well the NPF will perform in the upcoming general election on November 27, 2019 and whether having representation in parliament will help to reverse almost three decades of marginalization. (The Namibian, 28/08/2019). <https://www.namibian.com.na/82438/read/Ex-Koevoet-SWATF-to-join-political-arena>

struggle through an economic lens.

Therefore, the exclusion of both ex-SWATF and ex-Koevoet fighters from the Veterans Act of 2008 was not supposed to surprise scholars on Namibia's DDR considering the rhetoric that Swapo Party had propagated since Independence. Moreover, the minimal participation or outright exclusion of both ex-SWATF and ex-Koevoet fighters in earlier reintegration initiatives (e.g. Development Brigade, Development Brigade Corporation, and the *Peace Project*) was already indicative of the political attitude that Swapo Party had regarding this issue. It is therefore important to explore the concept of marginalization in a much broader scope, delving into the politics of Swapo Party and former SWAPO exiles over the last three decades and this can be best exhibited through the life histories of former SWAPO exiles as their stories highlight the real-life experiences of how politics and reintegration policies have left some marginalized whilst elevating others. This thesis, therefore, pushes the boundaries of marginalization beyond the realm of "us" versus "them" to that of "us" versus "us". It shifts the narrative of marginalization back to within SWAPO exile ranks addressing this issue with empirical evidence from former SWAPO exiles' lives.

Moreover, beyond pushing the boundaries of the "us versus "them" narrative, this thesis directly highlights new dimensions of post-colonial marginalization within SWAPO exile ranks by exposing through life histories the direct economic impact (on individual former SWAPO exiles) of patriotic history driven reintegration policies. This is clearly highlighted through the economic circumstances of former SWAPO exiles gauging their economic wellbeing through an analysis of their human capital, social capital, assets, income, employment (type of employment), retirement preparedness and overall

economic wellbeing over a period of nearly thirty years.⁵⁶ However, it should be noted that not all of the life histories mapped show marginalization as some also expose how some former SWAPO exiles have benefited economically from patriotic history driven reintegration policies. Once again this is not generalized but such individuals' lives are mapped from 1989 through 2018 in order to ascertain their economic circumstances. Therefore, this chapter exposes through tangible and traceable empirical data, the economic status of former SWAPO exiles across different class stratifications within Windhoek urban district.

2.2 Exploring SWAPO exiles' post-liberation war identities and their interaction with reintegration policies

Randolph Rhea (2014)⁵⁷ suggests that labels like ex-combatant are social constructs that are used to distinguish ex-combatants for the security threat they are thought to pose in post-conflict environments (p.19). In Namibia's context, although labelling of former combatants of SWAPO, that is, PLAN ex-fighters was initially based on them being a potential security threat especially in the mid-1990s when they protested for jobs (e.g. Metsola, 2007, p. 1123), these identities carry far more social power than just being security threats.⁵⁸ Patriotic history, that is, the dominant and official narrative of the liberation struggle has given much glorification to the armed struggle, that is, freedom having come by the barrel of the gun. Consequently, identities of PLAN ex-

⁵⁶ Although several scholars of Namibia have examined how history has been mobilized to marginalize people inside SWAPO (particularly those suspected of being spies during the Lubango spy saga) and have utilized life histories to convey this notion, (e.g. Leys and Brown,2005; Williams, 2017). However, these narratives by Leys and Brown (2005) do not speak directly to how individuals within SWAPO exile ranks have been marginalised by patriotic history driven reintegration programmes nor do they address the economic circumstances of former SWAPO exiles over a thirty year period as this chapter does.

⁵⁷ Rhea (2014) *A Comparative study of ex-combatant reintegration in the African Great Lakes region, trajectories, processes, & paradoxes*

⁵⁸ Metsola (2007) points to how ex-combatants and former fighters in post-colonial Namibia were perceived as a threat to the security of the state and society (p.1123)

fighters in particular in the post-colony have carried significant social power, with PLAN ex-fighters being able to leverage benefits from the state using their dominant role in the liberation struggle. Besides PLAN ex-fighters, other identities that are connected to violent resistance in the liberation struggle also carry considerable social power (e.g. Cassinga survivors who are considered as victims of violent resistance) although they have had limited success in their quest to get a special status (that would entail a special compensation) within the ambits of reintegration laws and policies in the post-colony.⁵⁹ Consequently in the post-colony, former SWAPO exiles have tended to carve out or socially construct (and sometimes reconstruct) their identities in a manner that ties them to the dominant narrative of violent resistance. The social power of labels that former SWAPO exiles are identified by, are in themselves a contributor to marginalization amongst former SWAPO exiles and have been instrumental in the (economic) elevation of some groups whilst disadvantaging others. Again, the social power of former SWAPO exile identities is best explored through the life histories of the various sub-groups that constitute former SWAPO exiles.

However, before delving into the life histories of former SWAPO exiles, it is important to ascertain how Swapo Party and government perceive SWAPO exile identities and to what extent their perception of former SWAPO exiles has been influenced or shaped by patriotic history. The first contention is that of defining who a PLAN ex-fighter is, and who is not. Williams (2015) highlights the conundrum of separating actual PLAN ex-fighters from so-called ‘freedom fighters’. The veterans Act of 2008 is rather vague on SWAPO exiles’ identities and it circumvents this complicated process of vetting

⁵⁹ Although Cassinga’s survivors and deceased victimhood is celebrated/memorialized annually through Cassinga day (4th of May), there has been no special recognition through reintegration policies or laws in the post-colony that has distinguishes them or their victimhood from the broader former SWAPO exiles group

actual PLAN ex-fighters from the rest of former SWAPO exiles or “freedom fighters” (as others would like to be called) by defining both non-combatants and combatants as veterans. Of course, one could argue that this was probably the best possible way to avoid the potential fall out with former SWAPO exiles, who may have felt that they should not be distinguished from other PLAN ex-fighters regardless of whether they fought in PLAN or not. Edson Haufiku public relations officer at the ministry of veteran affairs argued that:

In exile, almost everyone was trained and having been trained soldiers, one could have been called to the front at any given time. Therefore, if some SWAPO exiles who did not go to the front but were trained militarily want to be called PLAN ex-fighters it is their right to use that title because they were trained (Haufiku interview transcript 26 p. 6, February 24, 2019).⁶⁰

Indeed it did not take long in my interviews to encounter the desire of former SWAPO exiles to define themselves in post-independence Namibia with the more heroic identity of PLAN ex-fighter. It should be noted that most former SWAPO exiles recognize and realize that to have relevance in the post-colony their identities must line up with the prevailing political rhetoric that glorifies the heroes and heroines who carried the gun as best exemplified by Becker (2011) when she points to Swapo Party’s master narrative, that is, ‘*Swapo brought us freedom through the barrel of the gun*’ (p. 552).⁶¹

This gravitational pull of former SWAPO exiles who were non-combatant towards being identified as former combatants has become even more apparent in the wake of a cabinet directive which in 2015 instructed the veteran affairs ministry to give an extra payment of N\$3000 – 5000 (improvement grant) to veterans who were *trained and*

⁶⁰ Edson Haufiku interview transcript 26 p. 6 (24/02/2019)

⁶¹ Becker (2011, p. 552)

deployed by PLAN in exile (in italics, my emphasis).⁶² Edson Haufiku clarified this point when he stated that:

To distinguish PLAN ex-fighters who should receive the improvement grant from those (PLAN ex-fighters) who will not, cabinet established a simple criteria where the directive states that to receive the improvement grant one should have been *Trained and Deployed* between 1958 – 1989. If you were only trained, you do not qualify to receive this amount (Haufiku interview transcript 26 p. 6, February 24, 2019).⁶³ (in italics my emphasis)

This cabinet directive effectively side-lined former SWAPO exiles who were never deployed as if saying, their contribution without the *barrel of the gun* was not good enough as those who were deployed to the front during the liberation struggle.

In order to fully grasp the notion of marginalization within SWAPO exile ranks it is important to explore different reintegration experiences of former SWAPO exiles. Moreover, it is equally pertinent to juxtapose the experiences of those who consider themselves to be marginalized to those considered to have benefited from Swapo Party's patriotic history driven reintegration policies. The life histories that will be explored below, that is, of Ellise, Helvis, Alberts and General Shilongo show widely varied life histories of former SWAPO exiles that focus primarily on their economic trajectories in the post-colony. Reintegration experiences of the four respondents mentioned above include life histories that range from stories of unemployment to stories of triumph in public service, where some reached the pinnacle of their careers. These life histories will show how one's position in patriotic history has been interpreted by reintegration policies which in turn have to a certain extent shaped their

⁶² The cabinet directive meant veterans who were trained and deployed to fight at the front during the armed struggle would receive an extra N\$3000-5000 depending on time spent at the front. The improvement grant is however, given on condition that either the veteran is retired or earns below the tax threshold, that is, an annual income of N\$36 000 or less. (Edson Haufiku, Transcript, 26 p. 2)

⁶³ Edson Haufiku Interview transcript, 23, p. 6 (24/02/2019)

economic experiences in the post-colony. However, in order to ascertain their position in patriotic history a brief history of their life histories in exile paying special attention to their actual role in the liberation struggle will be analyzed, thereby, giving context to their life histories in the post-colony. These histories of their lives in exile will precede their life histories in the post-colony.

Ellise

Ellise Nakalondo is a female former SWAPO exile, single mother of two and retired primary school teacher who left Namibia for exile to Angola in 1979. After arrival in Angola, Ellise was informed that she was to be sent to Zambia to undertake a preparatory teaching course. Upon completion of the course, Ellise was stationed at a SWAPO camp in Nyango, Zambia, teaching children whilst waiting to be sent back to Angola. Regarding her teaching career, Ellise argues that it was imposed upon her, noting how the militaristic nature of SWAPO camp life, gave one little room in terms of freedom of choice to choose which career path one wanted to take. Such descriptions of SWAPO's militaristic approach to determining career paths of SWAPO exiles resonates with Ben Mulongeni's narrative (in Leys and Brown 2005) who points to how SWAPO considered all the activities that were being undertaken (in exile) as a "front" meant to further the goals of the liberation struggle. Ben Mulongeni mentions how SWAPO in exile argued that the liberation struggle was fought on four distinct fronts, that is, the military front, political front, diplomatic front and the educational front (Leys and Bown, 2005, p. 30). In each of these fronts, SWAPO designated and assigned SWAPO exiles responsibilities as the organization saw fit. Therefore, Ellise's sentiments arguably point to a career choice constraint that many SWAPO exiles probably faced in exile. Eventually, Ellise was sent to West Africa to study for a

teaching diploma at Free Town's teacher's college. She studied in Free Town from 1986 until 1991. Thereafter, she was able to obtain employment a year later (1992) at Peoples Primary School in Katutura (Windhoek) where she remained employed until her retirement in 2016. To a large extent Ellise considers her teaching career (that began in exile) as having disadvantaged her, not least because she did not want to become a teacher but more so because former SWAPO exiles like herself who fought on the "educational front" are not celebrated (as those who fought on the military front) nor fit in the national narrative of patriotic history, that has tended to "reward" those who fought on the military "front" with special benefits such as the improvement grant.⁶⁴

Theoretically, Ellise does not qualify for the improvement grant (N\$3000-5000) given to PLAN ex-fighters who were *trained and deployed* as she was a mere teacher in exile. Ellise narrates her viewpoint regarding the issue of the improvement grant being tied to the notion of PLAN ex-fighters having been deployed:

...In exile I received military training first in self-defense (at Kwanza-sul), thereafter I was sent to Lubango for further military training for a month. Afterwards I was sent to Kwanza sul to teach, whilst at the camp, we were in constant danger because of South African aerial attacks. We were all in the war zone and at risk of being killed, both PLAN fighters sent to fight and us who remained at the camps.⁶⁵ ...because of my training I also consider myself as a female PLAN ex-fighter, I deserve the extra N\$3000-5000. When I left Namibia, I had no intention of being a teacher, but we were instructed to go in different sectors, education, communication, military or medical. Therefore, we should be treated the same because we all contributed to the liberation struggle albeit the differences. So no divisions should be considered when it comes to compensation. It is absolutely unfair that some people receive the improvement grant (N\$3000-5000) in addition to the

⁶⁴ A cabinet directive which in 2015 instructed the veteran affairs ministry to give an extra payment of N\$3000 – 5000 (improvement grant) to veterans who were *trained and deployed* by PLAN in exile

⁶⁵ Between 1975-1988 Angola became the scene of a fierce war between Cuba & FALPA on one side and SADF and UNITA on the other side. It should be noted PLAN collaborated with both FALPA and Cuba in fighting the SADF. Therefore, Angola can be regarded to have been at war during the period that Ellise mentions she was in exile.

N\$2200 whilst others only get N\$2200 (Ellise interview transcript 4 pp 1-2, February 5, 2018).⁶⁶

The insistence by Ellise that she is a trained PLAN ex-fighter who just happened not to be deployed points to the problematic nature of the criteria used by the ministry of veteran affairs to elevate PLAN ex-fighters who were deployed from the broader grouping of former SWAPO exiles.⁶⁷ Ellise's mentality exposes the rift between policy makers (Ministry of Veteran Affairs) and their intended beneficiaries and initiates a conversation that contests the past of the liberation struggle with regards to the risks of being in SWAPO camps (Angola and Zambia) versus that of being on the battlefield and whether that is an adequate parameter to single out one group (PLAN ex-fighters who were *deployed*) from the other former SWAPO exiles as being 'special'.⁶⁸ Ellise's case also points to the social power of identities amongst former SWAPO exiles. Her insistence to be identified as a female PLAN ex-fighter and her emphasis on the minimal military training she received points to the recognition by former SWAPO exiles of the importance of being associated with the armed struggle rather than the non-combat facets of the liberation struggle. For instance, although Ellise was a teacher at Kwanza-Sul in Angola and Nyango in Zambia, she does not focus on that contribution but rather on her supposed military capabilities and emphasizes the notion of SWAPO camps in Angola being in perpetual danger of an imminent SADF attack.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ellise Nakalondo Interview transcript, 4 p. 1-2 - (05/02/2018)

⁶⁷ Namhila (2013) also notes how Mukwahepo was also trained and combat ready but never fought a single battle, that is, she was never deployed (p. 38).

⁶⁸ Namibian former exiles, particularly SWAPO exiles often distinguished SWAPO "camps" from "the front" or "the battlefield". But it is also worth noting that those at the front also lived in camps (see General Shilongo's narrative below)

⁶⁹ Yet education was a powerful weapon in the liberation struggle as children being taught in the SWAPO camps were being exposed to broader educational material that intellectually liberated them as opposed to the apartheid Bantu education system that was prevalent in South West Africa at the time. Moreover, education was considered as one of the "fronts" that the liberation struggle was being

One could argue that Ellise is positioning her personal story in relationship to patriotic history as presented by Swapo Party in the post-colony through locating her identity as a female PLAN ex-fighter within the matrix of violent resistance in order to make a claim on the improvement grant which one could argue is a 'reward' to the direct participants of violent resistance in the liberation struggle, that is, PLAN ex-fighters who were deployed.

It is now important to get insight into Ellise's life to better understand her motivation or desire for the PLAN ex-fighter label and the fringe benefits that come with it (improvement grant). Ellise's economic condition is rather modest, having retired (from her teaching career) in 2016, she used a substantial sum of her pension lump sum to pay off her house in Katutura's Wambo location leaving her with very little to invest in terms of the remainder of her pension lump sum. She depends on her monthly teacher's pension and the N\$2 200 financial assistance grant (given to all veterans as prescribed in the Veterans Act of 2008). Her insistence on being recognized as a PLAN ex-fighter who deserves the improvement grant (N\$ 3000 – 5000) speaks more of her desire to receive more money to meet her needs in her retirement than it is to be recognized as a genuine female PLAN ex-fighter who fought in combat. Ellise's economic condition although not rosy is not dire. As we sat in her living room, she drew my attention to the brand new silver Honda MPV parked outside which she proudly claimed she had bought upon retirement. Ellise also pointed out that although she spent a substantial amount of her pension lump sum paying off the house she stays in, the house now belongs to her and she is no longer indebted to the bank. Yet Ellise perceives herself as having been marginalized by Namibia's post-colonial reintegration

fought, that is, the emancipation of the Namibian people through education (Brown and Leys, 2005, p. 30)

policies that have skewed benefits in favour of those who militarily participated in the armed struggle, that is, PLAN ex-fighters who were *trained and deployed*⁷⁰. Consequently, despite the positive economic strides Ellise has had since 1992, she still does not consider herself as having been economically reintegrated.

In light of Ellise's perception of herself as having not yet achieved economic reintegration, it is imperative at this stage to consider to what extent Ellise's perception of economic reintegration measures up to how economic reintegration has been theorized by leading DDR scholars like Torjesen. Economic reintegration has been defined as when one is

...able to obtain long-term gainful employment (formal or informal) or initiate other legitimate income generating activities, including agriculture, which allows them to support themselves and any dependents. (Torjesen, 2013, p. 2).

In light of the definition above, Ellise would be considered as having been economically reintegrated as she was able to obtain long-term gainful employment (teaching career at People's primary school 1992 – 2016) which allowed her to support herself and two dependents, that is, her two children⁷¹. While obtaining long-term gainful employment may be considered as a key indicator of one economically reintegrating (by DDR standards), it diverges significantly with Ellise's understanding of what economic reintegration is. This is primarily due to the fact that Ellise's understanding of economic reintegration hinges on the programmatic (monetary) benefits that come with reintegration policies and the identities/labels (eg. *trained and deployed* PLAN ex-

⁷⁰ In addition to the financial assistance grant that all registered veterans of the liberation struggle receive, an additional amount of between N\$3000 – N\$5000 (improvement grant) is given to PLAN ex-fighters who were *trained and deployed*.

⁷¹ Ellise has worked at People's primary School in Katutura for almost 25 years.

fighter or non-combatant SWAPO exile) these benefits are associated with.⁷² Such an understanding or view of economic reintegration is a direct consequence of how patriotic history as presented by Swapo Party has pushed the discussion of reintegration to hinge on compensation and benefits based on who contributed what and how during the liberation struggle, thereby generating social power for those who fit the mould or template of ‘true’ heroes.⁷³

However, it should be noted that Ellise raises a powerful discourse on recognition, by insisting that everybody who contributed to the liberation struggle deserves the improvement grant, she raises the prospect of equating her teaching contribution at Nyango (Zambia) and Kwanza Sul (Angola) as a ‘front’ at par with the military front that the war was fought on. She notes:

...When I left Namibia I had no intention of being a teacher but we were instructed, to go in different sectors, education, communication, military or medical. Therefore, we should be treated the same because we all contributed to the liberation struggle albeit the differences..... (Ellise transcript 4 pp.1-2, February 5, 2018).⁷⁴

Ellise points to the militaristic nature in the camp where as a ‘soldier’ you had no choice but to obey instructions and you were deployed where SWAPO deemed it necessary and like a soldier you obeyed instructions whether you were sent to become a teacher or to the (military) front. Ellise therefore, challenges the insinuation by the veterans’ policy (particularly the cabinet directive on the improvement grant) that those SWAPO

⁷² Ellise raises a topical issue worth exploring regarding reintegration, that is, what does reintegration mean for individual former SWAPO exiles as opposed to the textbook definition of reintegration as described by the UN or leading reintegration authorities like Torjesern (2013).

⁷³ The latest criteria as directed by cabinet in 2015 being PLAN ex-fighters who were *trained and deployed* evidenced by the extra benefit of the improvement grant they receive upon retirement or if they are unemployed.

⁷⁴ Ellise Transcript, 4, p. 1-2 (05/02/2018)

exiles who did not go to the front did so by choice. Moreover, this raises the prospect of discussing to what extent SWAPO ‘civilian’ camps were militarized in exile (e.g. Williams, 2015). Therefore, if one had no choice to choose whether to go to the front or not, are veterans policies also not supposed to be cognizant of that in the post-colony as opposed to the stratification of former SWAPO exiles depending on whether they were deployed or not to the front? Ellise’s life history and perspective bring these issues to the fore. Moreover, one cannot down play the role that the likes of Ellise played on the education ‘front’ for indeed a lot of children and SWAPO exiles received part of their education in SWAPO camps that provided a foundation for further academic or vocational training in neighbouring and friendly countries overseas (Akawa, 2015, p.163-166).⁷⁵ Therefore, the role education played in exile cannot be down played as it laid a solid foundation for exiles preparing them for life in exile and beyond exile in post-independence Namibia (This topic is dealt with in-depth in chapter four of this thesis).

Helvis

Ellise’s category of SWAPO exiles who played a non-combatant role during the liberation struggle is not the only group of former SWAPO exiles who feel disenfranchised by reintegration policy in post-colonial Namibia. Cassinga survivors are another sub-group of former SWAPO exiles whose identities as victims of colonial brutality are seemingly important in the memorialization of the liberation struggle but in reality, have not been given much attention (economically) in the post-colony. With

⁷⁵ SWAPO exiles received scholarships from the United Nations to study abroad as well as from several friendly nations sympathetic to the liberation struggle from across the globe including Zambia, Nigeria, Mauritius, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Tanzania, Russia (Soviet Union), Austria, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, Commission of the European Communities, the Africa Educational Trust, the Ford Foundation, OXFAM, China and the Word University Service.

May 4th holidays (Cassinga Day) being marked as an important national holiday, such commemorations are bound to arouse amongst survivors, feelings of injustice not only towards the perpetrators of the attack (SADF) but also towards the Swapo Party led government whose praise of Cassinga heroes/heroines has often ended with rhetoric but with no actual special treatment (economically) being given to the survivors. Therefore, when I had the chance to interview Helvis a Cassinga survivor and widowed mother of two from Katutura it was yet another opportunity to explore the social power of identities, in this case, that of being a Cassinga survivor and how they perceive themselves in post-colonial Namibia within the context of reintegration politics and policies. However, before delving into the life history of Helvis it is important to briefly explore the background of Cassinga in order to understand its relevance in Namibia's reintegration context and how survivors like Helvis harness the social power of survivors' identities to claim a superior standing among veterans of Namibia's liberation struggle and the Namibian populace in general.

According to Williams (2015) by late 1976 Cassinga was inhabited by hundreds of Namibians who had fled from Ovamboland and most of them had no military training (p.38). Although the camp had civilians it became of critical military significance when Dimo Hamaambo opened an office to monitor PLAN's activities along the Angolan-Namibia border, one can argue that this move by SWAPO militarized a civilian camp turning Cassinga it into a viable military target of the SADF (Heywood, 1996, p. 29).⁷⁶ Meanwhile the civilians in Cassinga were unaware of the military activities taking place at the camp (Williams, 2015, p. 40). Wallace (2011) agrees with the notion of the camp

⁷⁶ Norval (1987, p. 127) in Heywood (1996, p. 27) states that the main objective of the SADF Cassinga strike was to kill or capture Dimo Hamaambo, his staff and to kill as many "terrorists" as well as to confiscate as many documents as possible

playing a dual role of military and civilian activities when she points to the report of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission which concluded that Cassinga was "both a military base and refugee camp. It housed considerable numbers of combatants, including senior officers. It also housed considerable numbers of civilians" (p.290). Similarly some narratives of Cassinga that reinforce the official narrative of Swapo Party such as the one by Ben Mulongeni in Leys and Brown (2005) acknowledge the presence of soldiers at Cassinga although he argues they were either passing through or injured (p. 35).⁷⁷ Meanwhile YaNangolo & Tor Sellström's (1995) narrative points to Cassinga being primarily a civilian camp even comparing it to Nyango SWAPO camp in Zambia in terms of its civilian purposes (p. 22 -24). Nevertheless, all these narratives although different in their emphasis point to a large extent of Cassinga having a dual function housing both civilians and soldiers.

Meanwhile the assessment of the would be attacker, SADF's military intelligence unit, ignored civilian presence and categorically identified Cassinga as "...as the main forward operational headquarters of SWAPO for Southern Angola and a training camp capable of housing up to 1200 insurgent recruits" (Venter, 1989, p. 196). This assessment although inaccurate, gives a sense of how the SADF viewed Cassinga and therefore, it is not surprising that on May 4, 1978 the civilians living at Cassinga camp became military targets of the SADF being treated as 'insurgents', only that some of them were children (like Helvis who at the time of the attack was barely thirteen years old), others were unarmed and had little or no military training (YaNangolo & Tor

⁷⁷ Ben Mulongeni's narrative on Cassinga suggests that Cassinga was 'just' a transit camp (Leys and Brown, 2005). To prove this, he narrates stories about the children who were found at the camp and his experiences with them (ibid). The emphasis is on the innocence of the camp. His view point is echoed in the "official narrative" of Cassinga personified through monuments such as the mural at Namibia's Independence Museum where the mural which gives an account of Cassinga emphasizes the presence of children among the dead bodies in the immediate aftermath of Cassinga.

Sellström, 1995, p. 27). In Vilho Shigwedha's interview with Cassinga survivor Paavo Max, Efindi, 2008 he notes;

...Not surprisingly, the Boers call the Cassinga massacre a "battle" and a "victory" against SWAPO terrorists: because they could make no distinction between the SWAPO combatants and non-combatants and between children, women and terrorists (Shigwedha, 2011, p. 188-119)

This text once again points to the vulnerability of civilians (especially women and children) at Cassinga and the complexity of housing civilians in the same location with a military operational base. However, what is clear from the events of May 4, 1978 is that both PLAN combatants and SWAPO exiles/civilians were killed and even more were injured or maimed. Civilians suffered the same trauma as PLAN guerillas, the bombs were dropped indiscriminately and SADF troops did not distinguish civilians from combatants. Therefore, the premise of PLAN ex-fighters receiving more benefits⁷⁸ on the basis of them having fought and risked their lives in direct combat with SADF at the front becomes flawed as Cassinga is a classic example of how non-combatant SWAPO exiles living in front line states involuntarily found themselves in the midst of battlefields because of where they were located and the military activities that happened around them that they had no control over.⁷⁹ It is also worth noting that Cassinga was a mere 250 km from the Angola-Namibia border locating it within the radius of the war zone and easily accessible to the South African air force (Venter, 1989, p. 196; Akawa, 2014, p. 117).⁸⁰ The fact that so called 'civilian' camps like Cassinga where accessible to SADF ariel attacks (e.g. Williams, 2015, p. 55) gives credence to the claims of the likes of Ellise that all SWAPO exiles in camps were

⁷⁸ PLAN ex-fighters who were trained and deployed receive up to N\$ 3000-5000 more than SWAPO exiles for having participated and risked their lives in the liberation struggle

⁷⁹ Williams, 2015, p.37 notes that Dimo Haamambo's office was within camp at Cassinga.

⁸⁰ Akawa (2014 argues that during the liberation struggle, refugees, particularly women and children were most vulnerable of South African attacks in front line states that hosted SWAPO camps (p. 117).

technically in a war zone and therefore the improvement grant should be for all who were in the war zone.

Having understood the context of Cassinga, it is now imperative to explore the life history and social power of Cassinga survivors like Helvis in the post-colony and the puzzling scenario of how their glorification in the official narrative has not translated to direct economic benefits. As indicated earlier on, Helvis is a widowed mother of two and like Ellise she is a primary school teacher. When I visited Helvis for the interview, she was keen to tell me her life story particularly to highlight how she had a sense of injustice in terms of how she had been treated by Swapo Party in post-colonial Namibia. Helvis explained to me that she left for exile in 1977, after she could no longer endure the South African forces constant harassment. Below she narrates what motivated her to go into exile:

What motivated me to go into exile was the harsh and brutality of the South African Forces in my area where I grew up in the north [Owamboland]. At the time they [South African Forces] used to come with their Lorries and would plough into your field, destroying your crops, pumpkins and millet. They would beat up young people for no apparent reason...I was found several times in my house alone, by the South Africans [military] and they would be searching my house for hidden [PLAN] soldier's weapons that traumatized me a lot. Another thing that motivated me [to go into exile] were the revolutionary songs I heard on the radio, I used to go to a neighbour to listen and this was done in secret. When I finally decided to go to exile, I joined a group of students from Oshakati secondary school, I went without telling my parents". (Helvis, transcript 5, p. 1, February 23, 2018)⁸¹

Helvis and her group arrived first at a camp called Oshitumba (Angola) which was a military base, thereafter they were transported to Lubango before proceeding to Cassinga where she remained until the May 4, 1978 'Cassinga attack' by the SADF.⁸²

⁸¹ Helvis transcript 5, p. 1 (23/02/2018)

⁸² Oshitumba, Lubango and Cassinga were all in Angola

At the time of the attack in 1978, Helvis was thirteen years. Although Helvis remembers vividly the events of May 4, 1978, she indicated it was too emotionally distressing to narrate what happened, so she continued her story by narrating what happened after the attack. After the Cassinga attack, Helvis and some of the survivors were transported to Lubango, thereafter Helvis was awarded a scholarship to go and study in Cuba, she notes:

My highest level of education from South West Africa was standard 5 which is equivalent to grade 7 today. So, in Cuba I went back to start from grade 5... In Cuba I went to get trained to be a teacher and I also received military training as we had a class called *military training*. In 1984 I had to go back to Angola for many reasons, I fell pregnant. When I reached Angola I lost the baby. Thereafter I was supposed to go for military training, however, that did not happen. Instead I was sent to Kwanza Sul. I personally wanted to go to Lubango to get military training. By that time, I was twenty years old. I then received a scholarship to go and study in Zambia. In Zambia I was trained as a teacher and I finished in 1989 with a diploma in basic education (Helvis transcript 5, pp. 2-3, February 23, 2018).⁸³

Helvis got a job in 1991 from the Ministry of Education and was deployed to Ongwediva where she remained until 1994 when she relocated to Windhoek. She points out that at the time she got the job in 1991, she had the option to get a job in Windhoek but she chose not take the offer, as she wanted to be closer to her mother in Ongwediva who was widowed and alone as her father had been killed by the South African Forces and their house destroyed whilst she was in exile.⁸⁴

Despite having had several events that impacted her life negatively, Cassinga remains the most traumatic episode of Helvis's life. Moreover, there is an underlying bitterness and anger towards the Swapo Party led government regarding how Cassinga survivors like herself have been treated in the post-colony particularly with regards to the absence

⁸³ Helvis transcript 5, pp. 2- 3 (23/02/2018)

⁸⁴ Helvis transcript 5, p. 4 (23/02/2018)

of a ‘special’ monetary compensation for Cassinga survivors whom she considers (including herself) as ‘war victims’. For by virtue of being present at Cassinga on May 4th, 1978, Helvis considers herself as a ‘war victim’ because of her exposure to war trauma at Cassinga.⁸⁵ She notes:

...I am a Cassinga war victim, I even got injured during the attack, but my injury was an internal one on the arm. And I was never treated because my injury did not appear serious as those who had flesh wounds. But today that arm is giving me problems [she stretches her two arms to show me the difference between the injured one and the normal one] (Helvis transcript 5, p. 2, February 23, 2018)⁸⁶

Identifying herself as a war victim speaks of her interpretation of her life history. Helvis argues that by virtue of her being an unarmed minor and being shot at indiscriminately (by the SADF) at Cassinga, she was a war victim on the battlefield. To her, Cassinga became a “front” that the armed struggle took place. In this regard she suggested that although she was never deployed to the front in the course of her stay in exile, those present on the 4th of May, 1978 including herself and fellow non-PLAN combatant (Cassinga) ‘war victims’ should be considered as having faced the same risks as those who would have been deployed to the front. In that regard she argues that she also qualifies to be also categorized as a PLAN ex-fighter who was deployed. Helvis makes this argument to justify why she should also be receiving the improvement grant (N\$3000-5000) like those who were deployed to the front. She says

If it was fair every ex-combatant was supposed to get that N\$3000-5000(improvement grant). They say the N\$3000-5000 is for those who were physically in battle. They did not even consider those who were in Cassinga which became a battle-ground itself. The only benefit I have received so far is the lump sum N\$50 000, that all veterans got, imagine for all those tortures we had to go through at Cassinga we only got N\$50 000 (Helvis transcript 5, p. 6, February 23, 2018).⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Helvis transcript 5 p.5 (23/02/2018)

⁸⁶ Helvis transcript 5 p . 2 (23/02/2018)

⁸⁷ Helvis transcript 5, p. 6 (23/02/2018)

It is clear that Helvis does not understand why the much-politicized Cassinga attack (also memorialized through the May 4th public holiday annually) has not yielded any ‘real’ economic benefits in the post-colony.⁸⁸ In fact, the notion that deployed PLAN ex-fighters get the improvement grant whilst she who went through the “tortures” at Cassinga will not receive that amount (upon retirement) is discriminatory and unjustified from Helvis’s perspective.⁸⁹ Helvis represents a sub-group of former SWAPO exiles who feel disenfranchised by the state. And this group finds itself in a paradoxical scenario where on one end there are celebrated as heroes/heroines who survived SADF brutality and yet little has been done economically for them. In this regard, Helvis represents a sub-group of former SWAPO exiles (Cassinga survivors) whose social power has failed to leverage extra economic benefits beyond those prescribed by the Veterans Act of 2008.⁹⁰ The utilization of socially constructed labels such as *war victims* is a clear attempt by Helvis to distinguish former SWAPO exiles who are Cassinga survivors from the rest of former SWAPO exiles and more importantly the word *victim* connotes the idea of a special compensation (aside from

⁸⁸ Helvis is seeking and expecting compensation from SWAPO rather than from the perpetrators of the Cassinga attack, that is, the South Africans. This differs significantly with Vihlo Shigwedha’s account of Cornelius a Cassinga survivor where Shigwedha argues that there is need for a public apology and “reparations” of an economic nature by the perpetrators of the Cassinga attack (Shigwedha, 2011, p. 83). Whereas Helvis is making a demand for economic compensation on the Swapo party led government based on the important role Cassinga plays in the memorialization of the liberation struggle, identifying her victimhood at Cassinga within patriotic history which utilizes particular histories of violent resistance.

⁸⁹ According to Helvis over 40 years after Cassinga she still has night mares of the SADF bombing Cassinga and still sees images of decapitated bodies and she believes that she suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and yet she has not got any ‘special’ compensation for what she suffered.

⁹⁰ Although Helvis is recognized and registered as a veteran of the liberation struggle by the ministry of veteran affairs, for this she is entitled to the basic assistance grant of N\$2 200 (per month) that all registered veterans of the liberation struggle receive upon retirement, if they are unemployed or earn below the tax threshold amount of N\$36 00 per annum. However, she is not recognized as a PLAN ex-fighter who was trained and deployed by PLAN making her ineligible for an additional amount of N\$3000-5000 (per month), that is, the improvement grant upon her retirement.

veteran benefits) which Helvis is expecting from Swapo Party for her traumatic experience at Cassinga.⁹¹ Helvis's choice of identity is a clear indication of how she begins to delve into the politics of recognition and remembrance as she attempts to carve out a unique position for Cassinga survivors in the post-colony utilizing the 'official' narrative of Cassinga that has portrayed Cassinga as a refugee camp that was senselessly attacked by the South African apartheid regime. It is important to note that Helvis presents herself with dual identities that have very different functions. On one hand she utilizes the official narrative of being a war victim who was under age at the time of Cassinga which is yet to yield any 'special' economic benefits.⁹² On the other hand she also identifies herself as a female PLAN ex-fighter heroine who survived the massacre. Regarding Helvis's notion of being a PLAN ex-fighter, Helvis reasons that by virtue of the battle or front coming to Cassinga, she was faced with the same perils that PLAN fighters faced and therefore deserves to be recognized as one in the post-colony. Moreover, although she had no military training, South African forces treated them as combatants and not as civilians when they attacked. Through positioning herself as a direct participant in violent resistance like other PLAN ex-fighters, Helvis is therefore insinuating that she has the right to claim the improvement grant meant for the 'elite' sub-group of former SWAPO exiles (PLAN ex-fighters) who were *trained and deployed* (in italics, my emphasis).⁹³ In both identities Helvis is seeking a financial advantage over other 'ordinary' former SWAPO exiles that have no unique experience of having participated in violent resistance during the liberation struggle. More importantly it also becomes clear that Helvis understands that there is unlikely to be a

⁹¹ Especially considering that the improvement grant was set up for another 'special' group, that is, PLAN ex-fighters who were trained and deployed.

⁹² There is no special compensation for Cassinga survivors or families of the deceased.

⁹³ The latter of course is problematic because although on May 4, 1978 Helvis was technically at the front, by her own confession she was only thirteen years making her under age and impossible for her to have been in PLAN which only recruited those who were eighteen years and above.

‘special’ compensation for Cassinga survivors and therefore she gravitates towards being identified as a PLAN ex-fighter for which there is already an existing provision for a ‘special’ compensation through the improvement grant⁹⁴. Nevertheless it appears to be a last attempt on her part to make a claim for compensation for the Cassinga attack as she has realised that the identity of a Cassinga war ‘victim’ is a much weaker positioning (in-terms of making claims on compensation) as compared to that of being a PLAN ex-fighter. In this regard one can see how patriotic history systematically shapes former SWAPO exile identities and the ‘pull’ effect it has on former SWAPO exiles to identify themselves with violent resistance which is celebrated in the post-colony.

Ranger (1994) points to this phenomenon of returnees (returning exiles) having fluid identities, that is, interchanging identities as coping mechanisms they use as part of their process of ‘integrating’ back into society (p. 289). In fact, one could argue that Helvis’s use of these seemingly contradictory identities (PLAN ex-fighter and Cassinga war victim) is part of her coping mechanism with regards to navigating (and making sense of) the murky politics of recognition and reintegration in the post-colony. As evidenced above, Helvis is positioning herself in the post-colony in such a way that she is not identified as an ‘ordinary’ veteran of the liberation struggle (without armed struggle credentials). These ‘ordinary’ veterans are entitled to only the basic assistance grant (N\$ 2200) (and not the improvement grant) that all registered veterans of the

⁹⁴Although Helvis was a minor (thirteen years old) with no military training, she is arguably utilizing the SADF narrative of Cassinga which identified Cassinga as housing insurgents (PLAN fighters) and SADF’s subsequent findings after the attack which emphasize that it killed SWAPO terrorists (Venter 1989). Therefore if SADF alleged that Cassinga was a PLAN base that would make the inhabitants present when they attacked on May 4, 1978 PLAN fighters (including Helvis) regardless of their age . Meanwhile Swapo party’s official narrative pushes against this description of Cassinga as the party insists it was a refugee camp with the elderly and minors like Helvis, and this narrative to a large extent has effectively blocked Helvis’s desire to be recognized as a PLAN fighter on the basis of Cassinga. For if Swapo party accords Helvis a PLAN fighter (trained and deployed) status that would dilute Swapo party’s claim that Cassinga was a civilian camp.

liberation struggle receive. This also happens to be her current status (registered veteran who did not actively/directly fight in the armed struggle) as she is not recognized as a *trained and deployed* PLAN ex-fighter henceforth her desire to be recognized as such.

In her narration Helvis laments at how marginalization is taking place even amongst the publicly celebrated heroes/heroines of Cassinga who have found themselves marginalized in the post-colony despite the memorialization of their suffering (Cassinga day) being used to generate political capital by the ruling Swapo Party to buttress its legitimacy in post-independence Namibia. As mentioned earlier this scenario is indeed a paradox that exposes to some extent the disingenuous tendency of patriotic history which at the very least appears to benefit Swapo Party and the state rather than former SWAPO exiles themselves. Moreover, one could argue that Cassinga survivors may have been disadvantaged by the representation of Cassinga as a ‘refugee’ camp in the official narrative of the liberation struggle which is useful for portraying the SADF as an unhinged enemy who senselessly killed refugees. Meanwhile, survivors themselves have been cast as defenceless refugees. Whilst this perception is useful for the perpetuation of patriotic history, survivors themselves get the shorter end of the stick where heroism through ‘victimhood’ is seemingly inferior to heroism through ‘aggressive’ violent resistance like the heroes of Onguluwombashe⁹⁵ who are celebrated as gallant soldiers who bravely crossed the border to fight the South Africans in their own backyard (Dobell, 1998 p.36).⁹⁶ Consequently, despite the recognition of Cassinga survivors as heroes & heroines by Swapo Party and the state, it has not

⁹⁵ Also spelt as Ongulumbashe or Omugulugwombashe

⁹⁶ Dobell (1998) notes that although the “battle” of Onguluwombashe in military terms was easily won by the SADF, in propaganda terms however SWAPO took it as a victory as Onguluwombashe became a symbolic rallying point in the liberation struggle

translated to any tangible economic advantages.⁹⁷ This has been the case particularly for Cassinga survivors who were never drafted into PLAN and deployed.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, those Cassinga survivors who were deployed under PLAN (before and/or after the May 4th, 1978 attack) would generally speaking meet the criteria for the improvement grant thus giving them an extra payment of N\$3000-5000 (e.g. the story of Andreas Hashiyana in YaNangolo & Tor Sellström, 1995, p. 48 - 49). It is likely that this sub-category of Cassinga survivors (PLAN ex-fighters who were trained and deployed), would be less likely to make demands for extra compensation for war trauma thereby limiting the likelihood of them speaking with one voice (in demanding compensation) with those survivors who were not trained nor deployed by PLAN (e.g. Helvis) . Indeed, further research would be deemed necessary to understand the economic reintegration dynamics of Cassinga survivors and how these dynamics compare with those of other subgroups that make up the broader group of former SWAPO exiles.

However, it is important to note that Helvis brings an important subject to the fore, where as a survivor her narrative has now gone beyond the conversations of what really happened at Cassinga (e.g. Shigwedha, 2017) and has shifted to focusing on how she perceives herself as an individual and how she wants to be identified and honoured in present-day Namibia, particularly economically. Therefore, Helvis in a way is asserting narrative authority over her own circumstance and future and by telling her story she is also claiming an audience and directing attention towards her own current economic

⁹⁷ President Hage Geingob in a media statement released on Cassinga day (4th of May 2016) stated that “*May the memory of Cassinga always spur us on to pursue a future of peace and prosperity for all Namibians. Long live the heroes and heroines of Cassinga. Long live the memory of our struggle*” <https://www.namibian.com.na/150401/archive-read/Cassinga-Day-reflects-Namibias-painful-journey-> (accessed 23/04/2019)

⁹⁸ Cassinga survivors who were never deployed under PLAN at any stage during the liberation struggle do not qualify for the improvement grant N\$3000-5000. Meaning they can only receive the financial assistance (N\$2200) grant that all veterans of the liberation struggle receive and no other extra payments such as the improvement grant.

situation (Malkki 1996 p.393). Helvis therefore, repeats the official narrative of Cassinga and at the same time asserts “authority” over her personal story.⁹⁹ However, although the aspect of Cassinga survivors asserting “authority” over their personal story whilst repeating the official narrative of Cassinga has previously been explored by Williams (2009) and Shigwedha (2011, 2017), these narratives do not necessarily address the complexities of Cassinga survivors position within the context of recent developments in reintegration policies (e.g. Veterans Act of 2008 and the improvement grant) as Helvis did in the interview. However, it should be noted that Helvis still looks to the Swapo Party led government to intervene as by virtue of the policy of national reconciliation, SADF was in a way absolved and therefore, any compensation of any form would have to come from the Swapo Party led government.¹⁰⁰

In conclusion, Helvis’s life-history is key to understanding how cautious optimism for special recognition through financial compensation has turned into disillusionment for some veterans of the liberation struggle. The case of Cassinga survivors exemplifies how the politics of recognition is complex. It shows that being recognized does not always translate to economic benefits in the post-colony. As Helvis draws closer to retirement she is beginning to accept the fact that although her victimhood as a Cassinga survivor is significant in patriotic history it is very unlikely it will yield anymore-economic benefits than she has already received as a registered veteran of the liberation

⁹⁹ The official narrative of Cassinga is that it was a refugee camp inhabited by primarily women, children and the elderly. The SADF conducted a surprise attack on the “refugee camp” on May 4, 1978 killing over 800 people, mainly women, children and the elderly.

¹⁰⁰ Interestingly Shigwedha (2011) argues that there is an expectation amongst not only Cassinga survivors but amongst other Namibians who were victims of colonial apartheid violence for a public apology and compensation (p. 83). Yet as we noted already contradictions remain from whom compensation is supposed to come from, as some Cassinga survivors like Helvis, understand that it is highly unlikely to get any compensation from the perpetrators of the Cassinga massacre (because of the policy of national reconciliation) and therefore, she positions her narrative in terms favourable to Swapo Party (that is positioning herself a direct participant of patriotic history) for her to get economic recognition from the Swapo party led government.

struggle. And unless the cabinet directive of 2015 is altered, she will unlikely qualify for the improvement grant (N\$3000-5000) upon retirement which she feels entitled to.

Alberts

The politics of identity in the post-colony can also be explored through the lens of prisoners of war (POW), that is, veterans of the liberation struggle who were captured on the battlefield by SADF, SWATF or Koevoet. The term POW is used by the author to distinguish the likes of Alberts from political prisoners who were imprisoned during the liberation struggle but who were not necessarily PLAN fighters or captured during battle. One example is that of Toivo ya Toivo who was arrested and charged and sentenced to 20 years on 9 February 1968 (Melber, 2017, pp. 2-3).¹⁰¹ Although Toivo ya Toivo was arrested on terrorism charges, he was a political prisoner and not a prisoner of war. The term POW under the Geneva Convention was extended to include armed forces of a national liberation movement under the 1977 additional protocol (Baines, 2012, pp. 3-4). Therefore, if members of SWAPO's PLAN were captured they were supposed to be treated as POW's, however, South Africa refused to sign the additional protocol of 1977 as that would have legitimized PLAN and therefore SWAPO as a legitimate liberation movement. Consequently, South Africa continued to treat captured PLAN POW's as terrorists, whilst treating their insurgency as a domestic issue (Baines, 2012, p.4). On the basis of the additional protocol of 1977, the author refers to Alberts as a POW especially as he was captured after 1977 when the additional protocol of 1977 under the Geneva Convention was already in force.¹⁰²

In early February 2018, I had the opportunity to interview former PLAN fighter,

¹⁰¹ Heroic Narratives, Patriotic History and Namibian Politics: The Case of (Herman) Andimba Toivo Ya Toivo (1924-2017).

¹⁰² Scientia Militaria, *South African Journal of Military Studies*, Vol 40, Nr 2, 2012, pp. 102-141

Alberts. Prior to initiating the interview, I had no idea that Alberts was a POW other than the information that I had been given that he had been in exile with SWAPO during the liberation struggle. Like Helvis, Alberts was keen to tell me his life history and the tragedy that befell him whilst in exile. Alberts explained that he joined SWAPO in 1974 in his hometown of Katima Mulilo where he was born. Thereafter, he went into exile to Zambia in 1977 subsequently being trained and deployed to the Eastern Front in early 1979.¹⁰³ Around late 1979 Alberts was transferred to Angola where he was trained to use armoured vehicles. Alberts then reached the crux of his life history, which was the unfortunate event that took place in 1984 when during a combat confrontation with the SADF he was shot, severely injured in his intestines and captured. He was treated by the SADF medical team, which gave him artificial intestines and then imprisoned him at Ondangwa between 1984 and 1987.¹⁰⁴ As Alberts was narrating his life story, I noticed how he referred to himself as a *PLAN ex-fighter* and *war victim* interchangeably. Alberts conveniently used the label of PLAN ex-fighter whenever he was referring to the inadequacy and limitations of the Veterans Act of 2008 and would switch to *war victim* whenever he was referring to how he deserves more benefits (in addition to the benefits of the Veterans Act of 2008) as a person who lost his intestines and came close to death whilst fighting for Namibia's freedom. In order to get clarity on how he perceived his own identity, I then posed the question: "which label do you identify yourself with, PLAN ex-fighter or war victim?" He responded: "being a PLAN combatant does not override me being a war victim captured by the enemy" (Alberts Transcript 5, p. 2, February 6, 2018).¹⁰⁵ Although at the beginning of the interview Alberts had at least once acknowledged that he returned to Namibia as a captured

¹⁰³ The Eastern Front was the only military region located in Zambia that PLAN operated from

¹⁰⁴ Ondangwa is a town in the Oshana region of Northern Namibia

¹⁰⁵ Alberts Transcript 5, p.2 (06/02/2018)

prisoner of war, Alberts did not revert to that terminology for the rest of the interview. In fact, throughout the interview Alberts avoided using the term POW and kept referring to himself as either a *war victim* or *PLAN combatant*. It is not surprising that Alberts avoided the term POW as the identity of POW captured in battle does not make you a hero in post-colonial Namibia. In fact, patriotic history does not celebrate ‘cowardly’ soldiers who were captured by the enemy on the battlefield, especially if those battles have no historical significance.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, the likes of Alberts who were captured in minor border skirmishes with SADF forces (and taken back to South West Africa) were often suspected of betraying SWAPO by providing intelligence and carrying out pseudo-operations against SWAPO on behalf of SADF. Therefore, Alberts avoidance of using that identity may be attributed to this.

Initially, it may be difficult to understand why Alberts shied away from using the identity of POW considering he had been captured and nearly died fighting for liberation but understanding how this identity has interacted with reintegration policy influenced by patriotic history is important to get a better understanding of his viewpoint. Alberts life history in the post-colony is an ideal case study to understanding his mentality and understanding of a POW in post-colonial Namibia.

According to Alberts, when the Veterans Act of 2008 became law he was initially denied the opportunity to become registered as a veteran because the permanent secretary for veteran affairs at the time argued that he did not fulfil the *consistency* requirement in the Veterans Act of 2008.¹⁰⁷ In other words, Alberts had not consistently

¹⁰⁶In contrast those captured at battles of historical significance such as Ongulwombashe (August 26, 1978) and Cassinga (May 4, 1978) are the exceptions with the former celebrated for their violent resistance and the latter for their victimhood/suffering at the hands of the SADF.

¹⁰⁷ “A veteran is a person who was a member of the liberation forces, provided the person was above 18 years of age on 21 March 1990” or “...consistently and persistently participated... in furtherance of the liberation struggle.” (Veterans Act, 2008, p.16-17)

https://laws.parliament.na/cms_documents/veterans-ccc664ef50.pdf

participated in the liberation struggle because he had been captured by the SADF in 1984. Alberts then engaged in a campaign for recognition for himself and fellow POW's whom he refers to as fellow *war victims* for over two years, until they were finally approved (to be registered as veterans) in 2010. Alberts notes that:

For me to be recognized for the N\$2000 it was a struggle to get into the system. The Permanent Secretary for veteran affairs argued that those people who were captured did not go up to the end of the liberation struggle. He was quoting the 'consistency' phrase in the Veterans Act 2008. My argument is where were those people found by the enemy? Where were those people found? Were they found in the battlefield or were they found in their parents' homes? Now, what caused them not to be consistent? Is it simply because they were captured. Now if a person was captured where they idling or fighting? That was my argument. I fought for us war victims to get recognition. That is how we eventually got recognition. And I had to request directly to the minister to get my N\$ 50 000 lump sum after I was registered...It took me until 2010 October to get approved as a veteran. In the meantime, they were people who were already getting money since 2008.... and I got none of that (Alberts Transcript 5, p. 3, February 6, 2018).¹⁰⁸

Alberts case is an important one especially with regards to understanding the impact of patriotic history on the life trajectories of former SWAPO exiles. The binary mind-set of "us" versus "them" that has dominated reintegration politics comes to the fore in the case of POW's. Although Alberts was captured fighting for PLAN, patriotic history is not accommodative of such individuals especially considering that SADF always attempted to recruit captured PLAN fighters into SWATF or Koevoet (Bolliger, 2017, p . 199). Alberts mentions how he rejected this offer and even fled:

...Between 1984 – 1987, I was in prison in Ondangwa [Northern Namibia] and was released in March 1987. In March 1987 they tried to force me to join SWATF forces and I refused. I escaped to Windhoek to seek protection at Council of Churches in Namibia which was responsible for war victims during that time (Alberts Transcript 5, p. 1, February 6, 2018) .¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Alberts Transcript 5, p. 3 (06/02/2018)

¹⁰⁹ Alberts Transcript 5 p. 1 (06/02/2018)

Evidently despite the fact that Alberts did not join SWATF the suspicion that he was a collaborator or that he was not committed to the revolution was there henceforth his initial disqualification from attaining veteran status, wrapped up in the ‘consistency’ phrase of the Veterans Act (2008). Alberts case exposes the fact that the exclusionary nature of the Veterans Act of 2008 was not limited to ex-SWATF, ex-Koevoet and collaborators of the South African regime but also former SWAPO exiles such as PLAN ex-fighters who had been captured by the enemy fighting in the armed struggle. Alberts seems to have understood that being a POW who never returned to the battlefield meant he had to reconstruct his identity in such a way that it would appeal or draw a sense of sympathy by him insisting on his victimhood. Like Cassinga survivors (e.g. Helvis) who put emphasis on their victimhood, Alberts kept on highlighting how his intestines were destroyed, in a way emphasizing that he ‘sacrificed’ his intestines (something of worth) for the liberation of the country.

Having examined the consequences of a patriotic history influenced Veterans Act (2008) that led to the initial exclusion of POW’s and a delay in reintegration benefits to former SWAPO exiles like Alberts, it is now imperative to examine the reintegration process of Alberts in the post colony. This is particularly important so as to distinguish his participation in reintegration programmes and politics (e.g. Veterans Act, 2008) and his individual reintegration process. However, it should be noted that the two, reintegration programmes and reintegration processes are often conflated, but one is able to map out the reintegration process more easily when they engage the life history of the individual through an economic lens.

Alberts life history exposes how former SWAPO exiles pushed to the fringes or marginalized by patriotic history are often the most vulnerable who require assistance especially with regards to economic reintegration. In narrating his life history, Alberts mentions how after escaping from forced recruitment into SWATF in 1987 he sought refuge with Council for Churches in Namibia (CCN) who educated him for free until he got his ordinary school level certificate ('O'Level) in 1992. Thereafter, he lamented how he struggled to get a job and was neither called up/recruited or seconded to the NDF nor the Development Brigade (DBC). Alberts only got a job in 1995 as a records clerk at the ministry of home affairs. By 2001 Alberts resigned as he felt the money was too little and the job '*insulting*' for a veteran of the liberation struggle that had sacrificed so much for the country. Thereafter, Albert's explained how he survived between 2001 and 2010 (including through the 2008 financial crisis/recession) at which point his registration as a veteran was being denied. He notes:

I survived because I had a small consultation [business] although small, I write business plans, proposals, business registration. But it is not enough to buy a house, car or investments, because sometimes I end up taking 3 to 5 months without an income. And in 2008 you can imagine I was not receiving anything because I was fighting to be registered as a veteran (Alberts Transcript 5, p. 5, February 6, 2018).¹¹⁰

Moreover, Alberts also suggests that even after getting registered as a veteran and receiving the monthly gratuity payments there has been no improvement in his personal/family economic situation. He points out that by virtue of his financial situation he cannot afford to own a home and therefore rents. Between 2008 and 2010 he accumulated rental arrears which amounted to several thousand Namibia dollars,

¹¹⁰ Alberts transcript 5, p. 5 (06/02/2018)

consequently when he finally received the N\$50 000 lump sum (part of the financial package for veterans) his rent was in arrears, he notes:

.... That is why when I received the lump sum N\$50 000 I had to pay all the rent arrears. So basically I could not use the money for anything. Right now I do not have anything that I can leave for my children, zero investment (Alberts Transcript 5, p. 5, February 6, 2018).¹¹¹

When I asked Alberts if the monthly gratuity payments had improved his life, he responded by pointing out that the gratuity payments had not improved his life but rather were just sustaining the already mediocre lifestyle he had before he started receiving the benefits. He states that:

...what is going on is we live from hand to mouth with the money we receive from the ministry of veteran affairs. We use it to pay rent, water, electricity and to buy food and it ends there (Alberts Transcript 5, p. 4, February 6, 2018).¹¹²

Alberts economic condition is compounded by the fact that the prospects of him getting a decent job are extremely low considering he is over 63 years, moreover, he has no pension, savings or property to his name. In his own words, he states that:

It's sad to say until now I have not been reintegrated economically....there is no pension to say this is the money I accumulated or this is my savings or pension...I do not have a property of my own, not even in the village where I come from...I am still fighting with the ministry of veteran affairs for my house. I am 63 years already. We were promised that when you reach 60 years old you receive a free house, it's part of the veteran benefits but they now say there is no money...what I fail to understand is in the north, the government built so many houses but they cannot do the same in the East, in Katima. It just does not make sense. Therefore, the government cannot say they do not have money. Also recently the minister of urban and rural development inaugurated houses at the coast for low-income earners. Are we not low-income earners? You neglect us people who fought and sacrificed their lives (Alberts Transcript 5, p. 4, February 6, 2018).¹¹³

¹¹¹ Alberts transcript 5, p. 5 (06/02/2018)

¹¹² Alberts transcript 5, p. 4 (06/02/2018)

¹¹³ Alberts transcript 5, p. 4 (06/02/2018)

As stated above Alberts is of the opinion he does not feel that he has been economically reintegrated. Sadly, this is true to a certain extent especially when compared to other SWAPO exiles (e.g. Ellise and Helvis), Alberts situation is much dire. His life trajectory and his reintegration process has not been linear, as he has struggled to reintegrate in the post-colony due to several limitations as noted above. Of course, his status as a former POW played a role in determining his trajectory much more than any other factors/variables that came into play in the post-colony. In fact, I would argue that from the moment that Alberts had the status of POW, institutions (e.g.NDF) and reintegration policies influenced by patriotic history in the post-colony were bound to react negatively to his POW identity/status. Alberts has had to fight not only for recognition but also to remain relevant in the post-colony. His use of the identity of a war victim appears to be a reconstruction of his identity to steer clear of the controversy surrounding POW's captured by the South Africans.¹¹⁴

As clearly shown, his participation in the liberation struggle (even close to death) and refusal to join SWATF were not enough to get him automatic recognition as a veteran of the liberation struggle (to receive reintegration benefits). Patriotic history, therefore, creates a fuzzy terrain wherein many former SWAPO exiles' status (e.g. Alberts) as "patriots" is ambiguous. Moreover, the POW label was detrimental to Alberts job prospects after Independence, considering that he was never called up to the newly formed NDF or the Development Brigade. His situation was problematized by his limited education which he was not able to improve firstly because he joined PLAN in exile (without completing his secondary education) and secondly because he was

¹¹⁴ The SADF always tried to recruit captured PLAN guerrillas to serve in covert operations against PLAN

captured, imprisoned and went on the run fleeing forced conscription into SWATF. This scenario made it problematic for him to re-join the liberation struggle where educational opportunities could have emerged considering the number of scholarships given to SWAPO exiles during the war (see discussion on education of SWAPO exiles in chapter four). Therefore, Alberts was already disadvantaged and even his eventual recognition as a veteran (in 2010) was not enough to correct his economic reintegration 'deficit'. As evidenced the N\$50 000 lump sum and monthly gratuity payment came 'too late' to correct his downward economic trajectory.

Moreover, Alberts insinuates there being a bias in how reintegration benefits are allocated as he makes a case for why he has not received a government-built house, by referring to how low-cost housing has been built in northern Namibia (Owamboland) and not in East Caprivi where he comes from. Alberts opens up a discussion on possible regional bias in the implementation of veteran policies possibly opening up another front of marginalization within former SWAPO exile ranks. Although Alberts does not say it explicitly, he strongly implies a regional bias in allocation of reintegration benefits such as housing, a benefit that Edson Haufiku (public relations officer at the ministry of veteran affairs, Windhoek) noted as being available for all veterans over 60 years without house ownership. Haufiku noted:

...to get housing is very very easy. You have to meet certain criteria. You have to be living in a deplorable condition. We work with councillors because they are on the ground, they know the actual living conditions. But one of the biggest conditions is you must not have a house and you must have land because we do not provide land. If you have one (a house) it must be a shack that is breaking down or people can tell that you are suffering. You go through the councillor, you apply there, they send to us, we approve and we build a normal three bedroom free standing house for you....most Wambos have land in the north [Owamboland] where they farm their mahangu/sorghum, many will go back there when they retire so it is best just to build for them there. *I have seen*

already the houses that have been built for veterans in the north (Haufiku Transcript 26, pp. 9-10, February 24, 2019). (In italics my emphasis)¹¹⁵

Alberts appears to be pushing against two forces, firstly, his POW status relegated him to being a '2nd class' veteran. This is primarily because patriotic history has created a 'hierarchization' of liberation war heroes with some being more deserving than others. Secondly Alberts life history (according to him) also exposes a more general perception (among non-ethnic Wambo veterans of the liberation struggle) of reintegration programme economic benefits tending to benefit the more dominant tribal Owambo speaking former SWAPO exiles. Edson Haufiku's statement (above) pointing to houses built in (specifically) Owamboland for ethnic Wambo's attests to the concern that Alberts raises. This is a topic that would require an independent study to understand fully, especially within the matrix of reintegration policies in Namibia, but Alberts and other veterans (whose lives will be explored in this thesis) open up the possibility of exploring marginalization in former SWAPO exile ranks based on ethnicity. It is not in itself a new topic as other authors have highlighted how ethnicity became central during the Lubango spy saga in Lubango (e.g. Groth, 1995 and Williams, 2015). However, it would be interesting to map to what extent regionalism and/or tribalism has played a role in the politics of reintegration since (Namibia's) Independence in 1990.

However, it is imperative for us to be cognizant of the role of other variables that may have worked to the detriment of former SWAPO exiles (like Alberts) in their individual reintegration processes. For instance, in Alberts case failure to further his education beyond 'O' Level through his own initiative (in the post-colony), that is, self-reintegration, may have contributed to his stagnant career that peaked at the position of

¹¹⁵ Haufiku Transcript 26, pp. 9-10 (24/02/2019)

a clerk. Moreover, his voluntary resignation in the year 2001 only compounded his financial problems setting him up for a retirement where he now has barely any pension to live off except the veteran's pension. This example points to how personal decisions made by some former SWAPO exiles caused their reintegration processes to be dependent on (patriotic history dominated) reintegration programmes whereas they could have used their agency to chart their own course as was the case for some former SWAPO exiles who did not wait for government reintegration programmes to determine their destinies. This topic of self-reintegration will be explored in-depth in chapter five of this thesis.

Nevertheless, the life histories of Ellise, Helvis and Alberts all highlight the problematic nature of patriotic history's influence on reintegration policy and discourse in post-colonial Namibia. However, it should be noted that not all former SWAPO exiles are critical of Namibia's post-colonial patriotic history influenced reintegration policies. Some former SWAPO exiles like General Shilongo rode on the wave of patriotic history, benefiting immensely from reintegration policies from Independence through retirement. General Shilongo's life is in stark contrast to what we have seen in the other former SWAPO exiles, that is, Ellise, Helvis and Alberts. General Shilongo's life history is illustrative of the social power of former SWAPO exile identities that are 'seamlessly' connected to violent resistance. Moreover, his support of the status quo, that is, the lack of parity in the distribution of reintegration economic benefits (amongst former SWAPO exiles) is informed by his life history of being a PLAN ex-fighter and his desire to see such privileges confined to the elite few former SWAPO exiles, that is, PLAN ex-fighters who were trained and deployed (a sub-group of which he is part

of). Much of this can be attributed to the linear progression of General Shilongo's reintegration progress.¹¹⁶

General Shilongo

However, to understand these perspectives it is important to examine General Shilongo's life history and economic trajectory in order to grasp his stance and viewpoint regarding reintegration in the post-colony. According to General Shilongo, he left Namibia for Zambia in 1974 at the age of 19. At that stage, he was in standard 8 and had not written his final exams. General Shilongo joined PLAN the same year and from December 1974 to July 1975 (eight months) he underwent military training in Zambia. According to General Shilongo, his rise in PLAN was quite rapid, he notes:

Two weeks after joining PLAN in 1975 I became a section commander. Then from 1976, I became a deputy field commander. In 1978 I became a detachment commissar for the soldiers in our mobile unit/base.... In 1980 I was sent to Cuba to be trained as an officer for about 6 months....by then I had made up my mind that the military was now going to become my career (Shilongo transcript 18 p. 2, August 15, 2018).¹¹⁷

General Shilongo became an officer of PLAN barely five years after joining PLAN (in exile) and this was instrumental in how he became valuable to both SWAPO and NDF in the aftermath of repatriation (1989 onwards), as evidenced by his experience after repatriation:

When we came (after repatriation in 1989) everyone was campaigning for the election. SWAPO started establishing centres in all regions. Then one day I met with one of our commanders formerly of intelligence and he appointed me to be a commander of security in Owambo region....after Independence we were just waiting for SWAPO to call us and fortunately in April 1990 I was called to Windhoek to become part of the new NDF. Upon arrival, I was immediately

¹¹⁶ General Shilongo's life trajectory is a textbook example of what Swapo Party assumed would be the trajectories of most SWAPO exiles after Independence. He was employed barely a month after Independence (in April 1990) and his career was on an upward trajectory until his retirement in 2016. He never protested nor demanded for reintegration benefits as he was content with his career.

¹¹⁷ Shilongo transcript 18 p. 2 (15/08/2018)

inducted and given the rank of major (Shilongo transcript 18 p. 3, August 15, 2018).¹¹⁸

In his narration, General Shilongo is clearly aware of his individual value to PLAN. Having been an officer and commander in PLAN put him in front of the queue of joining the newly formed NDF ahead of other potential recruits from PLAN. General Shilongo's life experience is in stark contrast to other PLAN ex-fighters such as Alberts who in the early 1990s found himself destitute with only an Ordinary Level Certificate (which he had obtained through the free education scheme sponsored by Council of Churches in Namibia [CCN]) and was unable to secure a job until 1995 when he got a lowly records clerk job in the Ministry of Home Affairs. The POW label of Alberts coupled with his inferior training as an infantry PLAN combatant was disproportionate to the qualifications and rank of General Shilongo whose resume or *patriotic credentials* were more 'acceptable' as a former officer and commander of PLAN who had *not been captured by the enemy* (italics my emphasis). Indeed one could argue that positioning of some former SWAPO exiles in terms of their career and rank in SWAPO (in exile) was the beginning of class stratification/formations that eventually manifested in the new democratic Namibia in 1990 with some becoming the elite and others being marginalized (Tapscott, 1993). Whilst General Shilongo had to wait for only a month after Independence to get a job and a pay check other former SWAPO exiles had to wait for years before they could get jobs through reintegration initiatives such as the *Peace Project*.¹¹⁹ General Shilongo alluded to the sorry state that most ex-combatants were in the mid-to-late 1990s when they were protesting for jobs and he even thinks his

¹¹⁸ General Shilongo Transcript 18, p. 3 (15/08/2018)

¹¹⁹ The Peace Project was a jobs initiative by the government to provide employment to primarily SWAPO veterans of the liberation struggle although a few ex-SWATF and ex-Koevoet soldiers also benefited from the scheme

unemployed comrades (former SWAPO exiles) were envious of his comfortable life, he states:

....some of them (ex-combatants) were seeing us in government living good lives, moreover some of these guys who protested were Development Brigade dropouts. They now also wanted government jobs. They had no choice so they decided to protest even though that was not the best way to air their grievances (Shilongo transcript 18 p. 4, August 15, 2018).¹²⁰

Moreover, General Shilongo's usage of veteran's monetary benefits such as the N\$50 000 lump sum is also indicative of the lack of (economic) parity amongst former SWAPO exiles in the post colony especially when one observes how different their priorities were in utilising the money. For instance, whilst Helvis and Alberts used the N\$50 000 to pay school fees debts and house rental arrears/debts respectively, General Shilongo had no such burdens and he narrates how he received and utilized the money below:

...My house is 77km south west of Oshakati, there was no network coverage. I saw on my cell phone a notification that N\$50 000 had been deposited into my account. Immediately I went to one of the farmers who has cattle. I asked for a quotation of ten cattle. I then transferred money for eight cattle and the rest I used it for what I wanted (Shilongo transcript 18 p. 6, August 15, 2018).¹²¹

General Shilongo was also critical and unsympathetic to veterans who claimed that the money (N\$50 000 lump sum) had been used up in paying debts as he argued:

...If that money was not there what were you going to do? Those who say they had debt, what were they going to pay their debts with if the money had not come? I think people just wasted money....(Shilongo transcript 18 p. 6, August 15, 2018)¹²²

¹²⁰ General Shilongo Transcript 18, p. 4 (15.08.2018)

¹²¹ General Shilongo Transcript 18, p. 6 (15.08.2018)

¹²² General Shilongo Transcript 18, p. 6 (15.08.2018)

Whilst General Shilongo's argument may be logical if one views it from a general point of view, the same argument becomes flawed when considered from a historical perspective that factors in life histories of other former SWAPO exiles such as Alberts. For instance, General Shilongo is not considerate of the position of privilege that he was set up to be in the post-colony beginning with his training and recruitment as an officer in Cuba (whilst he was in exile) all the way to his retirement in 2016 with the rank of Brigadier General.¹²³ Meanwhile, the likes of Alberts, Helvis and Ellise were not as fortunate as he was both in exile and in the post-colony. Patriotic history has pushed the above-mentioned three to the periphery in the post-colony. General Shilongo's viewpoint (in defence of patriotic history regarding who should get what) also lines up with patriotic history's celebration of direct participants in violent resistance. This is best illustrated by how General Shilongo views the argument of former SWAPO exiles like Ellise and Helvis who felt all former SWAPO exiles should be getting the improvement grant (N\$3000-5000) regardless of whether they were deployed to the front. He argues:

.... The idea that the risk of one in a civilian camp is the same as that of one at the front is not true. Being at the front was a risky business, towards the end of the war one could even be pursued by five Casspir's¹²⁴...Now in terms of distinction between PLAN ex-fighters who were deployed and veterans they should be a clear distinction for example, where they say group, I say platoon, where they say a camp, I say a base. They were in refugee camps and we were in bases.... (Shilongo transcript 18 p. 5, August 15, 2018)¹²⁵

The notion of the heroism of PLAN ex-fighters who were deployed trumping that of former SWAPO exiles who were not deployed is unapologetically emphasized by General Shilongo. Being, of course, part of former SWAPO exile 'elites' he feels

¹²³ Brigadier General is the 3rd highest rank in the Namibian Defense Forces (NDF)

¹²⁴ Casspir is a South African Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle that has been in use in South Africa for over 30 years. It was used in the border war in Angola.

¹²⁵ General Shilongo Transcript 18 p. 5 (15.08.2018)

justified to earn more than other former SWAPO exiles who contributed to the liberation struggle by other means other than the barrel of the gun (Melber, 2005, p. 102).¹²⁶ Furthermore, General Shilongo asserts that even amongst those PLAN fighters deployed, commanders should earn more than foot soldiers, he argues:

....Even as a commander in the liberation war, my grant should be greater than that of a foot soldier. Can you compare a regional commander to a section commander? Their responsibilities are different so the money should be higher.... (Shilongo transcript 18 p. 5, August 15, 2018)¹²⁷

By raising the prospect that even PLAN ex-fighters are not equal and former commanders like him should get more than foot soldiers, General Shilongo raises the notion of ‘hierarchization’ of PLAN ex-fighters who were deployed. This brings to the fore the argument that General Shilongo and other like-minded former SWAPO exiles no longer view the gratuity payments from the Ministry of Veteran Affairs as part of economic reintegration but rather view the payments as a form of reward based on their role in the liberation struggle, that is to say, their role in violent resistance. If so, this goes against former President and founding father of Namibia, Sam Nujoma’s contempt towards ‘rewarding’ former SWAPO exiles for their roles in the liberation struggle. In 2006 at the height of the protests for compensation by former SWAPO exiles he said:

“...Freedom fighters are not mercenaries and this clearly distinguished Swapo Plan ex-combatants from the South West Africa Territorial Force and Koevoet...” (Die Republikein, 26 July 2006)¹²⁸

Although former President Nujoma was articulating patriotic history he was at the same time pushing back at the entitlement mentality that patriotic history had generated amongst former SWAPO exiles, who were now demanding cash payments as

¹²⁶ Melber (2005) highlights points to the problematic notion of Swapo party glorifying the history of liberation warfare and this glorification elevates participants of the liberation struggle like General Shilongo who in this case is dismissive of non-combatant SWAPO exiles’ grievances regarding gratuity payment disparities between PLAN fighters and themselves.

¹²⁷ General Shilongo Transcript 18, p. 5 (15.08.2018)

¹²⁸ Metsola, 2010, p. 595

compensation for time spent fighting for Namibia's liberation (Metsola, 2010, p. 595). This same mentality can be seen in General Shilongo whose view implies that PLAN cadres who fought should be rewarded in the post-colony on the basis of their seniority. It should be noted that this kind of mentality that General Shilongo has is likely to have emerged from the whole idea behind the improvement grant that insinuates that former PLAN fighters who fought at the front deserve more money than former SWAPO exiles who did not go to the front. This arguably sets a precedent for 'justified' inequality in veterans pay based on the role one played in the liberation struggle, which appears to be the premise that General Shilongo uses to question why former commanders of PLAN should be getting the same amount as PLAN foot soldiers under the improvement grant. In the context of patriotic history, this would therefore, imply that commanders who organized and directed violent resistance against colonial forces deserve to be paid more than the foot soldiers who carried out the orders of the commanders. In a similar fashion, all those who participated in violent resistance (PLAN ex-fighters who were deployed) deserve more money than those who did not directly participate in violent resistance. Moreover, the way the improvement grant has been packaged (despite the official logic of the grant) tends to be dismissive of former SWAPO exiles who were never deployed.¹²⁹ For if the grant was for the genuine improvement of former SWAPO exiles' lives then it would have been extended to all former SWAPO exiles who did not get a chance to get an education in exile (regardless of whether they were deployed or not) but yet it is limited to those who were *deployed*,

¹²⁹ According to Edson Haufiku (public relations officer at the ministry of veteran affairs, Windhoek) the rationale behind the improvement grant is to close the gap between those who never went to the front and those who went to the front. Haufiku argues that those SWAPO exiles who went to the front never got a chance to go to school and when they returned to Namibia they could not secure employment whilst those SWAPO exiles who did not go to the front got scholarships to go and study and were able to secure jobs after Independence.

wording that clearly distinguishes between those who fought militarily and those who did not (*italics my emphasis*).

Although this approach (of paying different amounts to war veterans based on roles played in the war) is not new to economic reintegration programmes, where for example in Afghanistan warlords and their senior commanders were paid more than foot soldiers in the form of financial compensation, the same logic for the payment disparity would not apply for Namibia. For instance, in Afghanistan warlords and senior militia commanders were paid more as an incentive to dissuade them from re-entering or remobilizing militia groups (Bhatia & Muggah 2008). Whereas in Namibia's case this whole approach appears to be a by-product of patriotic history which arguably to a large extent informed the logic behind the improvement grant.

As mentioned earlier, General Shilongo's trajectory has generally been linear with an economic upward trajectory. The position of privilege that he is currently in has to some extent clouded his judgment with regards to how he perceives less fortunate former SWAPO exiles. His privilege is evident by his comfortable economic situation, which he was open to disclose. The venue of the interview was at his house in an up-market neighbourhood of Windhoek. Upon inquiring how he got the house, General Shilongo explained that in 1994 after relocating from Grootfontein (located in the north-eastern part of Namibia), he got a government house which the government sold to him at a very minimal price, he explains:

To begin with I began working when I was 35 years old. I did not immediately buy a house. I stayed in a camp and initially I was in Grootfontein. And then I came to Windhoek in 1994 and I got a government house which they sold us

and I bought the house. I was left with just below N\$100 000 to pay, and that was not a problem (Shilongo transcript 18 p. 6, August 15, 2018).¹³⁰

In comparison to other pensioners such as Ellise who had to use a substantial amount of her pension to pay off her house in the high-density suburb of Katutura or Alberts who has no property, General Shilongo is living a much more comfortable life. Moreover, General Shilongo also pointed out how he was allocated a 1 000 hectare farm in the Otjozondjupa Region under the land resettlement programme.¹³¹ In total General Shilongo has three properties, one in rural northern Namibia, the resettlement farm (in Otjozondjupa Region) and his house in Windhoek. Two of the three properties (Windhoek house and the farm in Otjozondjupa Region) he owns were through the facilitation of government. Such preferential treatment of Swapo Party's elite often undeservedly receiving resettlement farms is not new as this has been an ongoing trend since the early 1990s (Sherbourne, 2003 in Melber, 2019, p. 76). Indeed one could argue that he has been reaping the benefits of patriotic history since 1990 (when he was called and inducted into the NDF). In contrast, Ellise had to get a substantial loan of several hundred thousand Namibian dollars to purchase her house which is located in one of the poorest suburbs of Windhoek, that is, (Katutura high density) suburb, eventually using part of her pension money to pay off her loan.¹³² General Shilongo did not experience any such difficulties as noted above, It is therefore, not surprising that General Shilongo declared his undying loyalty to Swapo Party as we concluded the interview after I had asked him how he had ended up working for Swapo Party in retirement. To this he responded:

¹³⁰ General Shilongo Transcript 18, p. 6 (15/08/2018)

¹³¹ Otjozondjupa Region is one of the 14 regions/provinces of Namibia and borders the North-West region part of Botswana and is a thriving agricultural region with both commercial and communal farms specializing in cattle and crop farming

¹³² Ellise transcript 4, p. 4 (05/02/2018)

I grew up in SWAPO, SWAPO knows me very very well. I do not need to go to SWAPO to say give me something to do, I just do it. When SWAPO calls me I go. I will never leave SWAPO, I joined SWAPO in 1974, got employed through SWAPO¹³³ and retired in SWAPO and now I was called to work for SWAPO (Shilongo transcript 18 p. 7, August 15, 2018)¹³⁴

The life history of General Shilongo, particularly his reintegration process is a testament to the fact that patriotic history has uplifted some whilst marginalizing others. Meanwhile Ellise, Helvis and Alberts evidently have been marginalized by patriotic history, these three former SWAPO exiles give a less glowing account of how Swapo Party has helped them nor do they mention their loyalty to Swapo Party. Rather we begin to see a gradual disillusionment and resentment towards Swapo Party's (patriotic history influenced) reintegration policies that have betrayed the egalitarian principles that SWAPO once held in exile. For Helvis a Cassinga survivor and primary school teacher (close to retirement), the resentment towards the Swapo Party led government (patriotic history centred) reintegration policies is clear. The frustration of being a celebrated heroine of the Cassinga massacre with no 'special' benefits is the crux of her narrative. Although patriotic history celebrates Cassinga survivors, it does not compensate/reward them henceforth Helvis's official categorization as an ordinary veteran of the liberation struggle with no extra benefits like the improvement grant which General Shilongo and Alberts are beneficiaries due to their direct role in violent resistance.¹³⁵ Although Alberts is now recognized (since 2010) as a PLAN ex-fighter who was trained and deployed by PLAN he was initially pushed to the periphery by patriotic history. Due to his capture on the battlefield in 1984, he suffered several

¹³³ General Shilongo's referral of SWAPO having given him a job points to the mentality that most SWAPO exiles have that the state, government and Swapo party are one entity.

¹³⁴ General Shilongo Transcript 18, p.7 (15/08/2018)

¹³⁵ The improvement grant is an extra payment (N\$3000 – 5000) given to PLAN ex-fighters who were trained and deployed during the liberation struggle. This amount is given in addition to the basic grant (N\$2200) that all registered veterans of the liberation struggle receive at retirement, if unemployed or if they earn below the tax threshold of N\$ 36000

setbacks in the post-colony that were fuelled by patriotic history centred policies to which he may never recover.¹³⁶ For instance, Alberts was not invited to be part of the NDF like General Shilongo (in 1990) although both of them had participated in the armed struggle as PLAN combatants, this was in part due to his capture which was treated with suspicion as SADF often recruited captured PLAN cadres in SWATF (Bolliger, 2017). As if to confirm this notion, Alberts was subsequently denied veteran status for two years (2008 - 2010) because he did not fulfil the ‘consistency’ requirement of the Veterans Act.¹³⁷ Although this was later reversed in 2010, Alberts life had long been negatively affected by Swapo Party’s patriotic history influenced reintegration policies.

The absence of equality amongst former SWAPO exiles exemplified by the disparity in economic fortunes (e.g. gratuity payments, access to housing, employment and land) of the four former SWAPO exiles whose lives are analysed above is indicative of the extent to which reintegration in Namibia is entangled with patriotic history. This chapter, rather than pointing to who was excluded from reintegration (e.g. ex-SWATF and ex-Koevoet), points to the varying degrees that former SWAPO exiles have benefited from patriotic history (through reintegration policies) based on their direct participation and proximity to violent resistance during the liberation struggle. The differing life trajectories and economic fortunes of these former SWAPO exiles highlights how patriotic history created opportunities for some whilst at the same time

¹³⁶ At 63 years Alberts is still unemployed since 2001, he has no assets of his own, including not having housing ownership and lives from hand to mouth relying on gratuity payment from Veterans Affairs.

¹³⁷ “A veteran is a person who was a member of the liberation forces, provided the person was above 18 years of age on 21 March 1990” or “...consistently and persistently participated.... in furtherance of the liberation struggle.” (Veterans Act 2008, pp.16-17)

https://laws.parliament.na/cms_documents/veterans-ccc664ef50.pdf

constraining/limiting others. This chapter shows how Namibia's liberation war history continues to influence and dictate policies and discourses that have a direct bearing on the economic reintegration of former SWAPO exiles, thirty years after Independence.

Beyond patriotic history, it becomes valuable to engage other variables that influenced and shaped former SWAPO exiles' lives. One such variable is the much lauded role of UNTAG whose operation has often been commended for transitioning Namibia to Independence but yet the actual human impact of the exercise – particularly as it pertains to former SWAPO exiles with various experiences – has not been thoroughly engaged in literature covering UNTAG. Therefore, it is from this vantage point that chapter three departs probing UNTAG's operation through the life histories of former SWAPO exiles.

Chapter 3: Disarmament, Demobilization and Repatriation – The limitations and consequences of UNTAG’s mandate on economic reintegration in Namibia

This chapter will address Namibia’s transition process (and the immediate aftermath) under the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) with particular attention being paid to its mandate for Disarmament Demobilization and repatriation. To fully understand the consequences of UNTAG’s mandate on economic reintegration in Namibia, life histories of former SWAPO exiles will be mapped, particularly during repatriation in 1989 and the period covering early to mid-1990s. These life histories will shed light on the life experiences of former SWAPO exiles and how this period (repatriation) shaped their reintegration processes in the aftermath of Independence. The chapter will also critically engage with the organization Namibians Repatriated in 1989 (NRI 1989) by examining the views of the organizations’ leadership and their overall agenda of demanding recourse from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The chapter will also examine why the group (NRI 1989) emerged more than 25 years after Independence, what led to its formation and what this group’s emergence signifies with regards to Namibia’s reintegration politics, policies and programmes.

3.1 What was UNTAG?

The formation of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG)¹³⁸ was as a result of the Security Council Resolution 435 (1978) (Duggal, 1987, p. 216). UN Resolution 435 (1978) was the culmination of a series of resolutions that had begun in

¹³⁸ UNTAG was created through UN Resolution 632 (1989) on 16 February 1989.

1966 when the UN General Assembly passed UN Resolution 2145 (1966) which revoked South Africa's mandate of ruling over South West Africa as a trusteeship. UN Resolution 435 (1978) therefore, effectively made South West Africa a direct responsibility of the UN (Dzinesa, 2017, p. 98), meaning Namibia's transition to Independence became the primary responsibility of the UN. Namibia, therefore, became "...a genuine and singular case of United Nations concern, manifested also by the creation of the United Nations Council for Namibia and the United Nations Institute for Namibia." (Melber, 2014, p. 8).

According to Duggal (1987), UNTAG was established to assist the work of the United Nations secretary general's special representative.¹³⁹ UNTAG was considered a unique operation at the time consisting of both military and civilian components (p. 216). According to Robert Muggah (2008) UNTAG was the first DDR operation authorized by the UN Security Council (UNSC) (p.5).¹⁴⁰ According to Melber (2014), UNTAG had supervisory powers during the transition process to transition Namibia into an internationally accepted sovereign state (p. 10). Melber (2014) states that UNTAG had about 6,700 members from 109 countries, 4,300 were from the military, 1,500 were police monitors and the remaining 900 were civilians, the total budget allocated by the UNSC for UNTAG to fulfil its mandate was US\$ 373,4 million (p.15). According to Duggal (1987), UNTAG's military and civilian components were all under the overall

¹³⁹ The Special Representative to the UN Secretary General Marthi Attisarhi was to oversee the Namibia's transition to Independence.

¹⁴⁰ It is important to note that at the time DDR as a concept had not been developed and more specifically UNTAG's mandate was limited to disarmament, demobilisation and repatriation (ddr). Therefore reintegration was not part of UNTAG's mandate at the time. However, authors like Muggah (2008) point to the significance of UNTAG being the first UN sanctioned operation that included Disarmament and Demobilization and this gave Namibia international significance. The only other ddr programme similar to Namibia's is Zimbabwe's post-conflict demilitarization in 1980, however this process was managed almost exclusively by the United Kingdom & the Commonwealth, the UN did not have a central role as it did in Namibia.

direction of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Marti Ahtisaari) who reported to the UN Secretary-General who in turn briefed the Security Council on the progress of the transitional process (p. 216). According to Dzinesa (2017) UNTAG had a specific mandate to disarm and demobilize the country's armed groups, as part of the overall strategy to create secure conditions for Namibia's transition to Independence (p. 97). The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) assisted UNTAG through the voluntary repatriation of civilians including disarmed combatants (PLAN fighters) back to Namibia to participate in Namibia's Independence elections (ibid). Dzinesa (2017) argues that the failure of UNTAG's mandate to assist with the long-term reintegration of demobilized combatants meant Namibia's DDR process was not integrated and there would be a gap between DD and R (pp. 97-98). Moreover, UNTAG did not ensure continuity of the DD process to the R through collaboration/cooperation with local bodies (ibid). In essence one could suggest that by UNTAG leaving reintegration as the responsibility of the newly elected Swapo Party led government, the UN missed the opportunity of making reintegration more inclusive in Namibia, that is, the exclusion of former SWATF and Koevoet soldiers from the Namibian governments reintegration policies could have been avoided or at the very least minimized had the UN played a leading or central role in the reintegration of former fighters involved in Namibia's war of Independence.¹⁴¹

Similarly one could also argue that by leaving reintegration to the devices of a Swapo Party led government, UNTAG created fertile conditions by which patriotic history could begin to dictate and influence reintegration policies in post-colonial Namibia, something that is evident through the exclusionary reintegration programmes and

¹⁴¹ PLAN, SWATF and KOEVOET fighters

policies such as the Development Brigade, the *Peace Project* of the late 1990s and the Veterans Act of 2008 which was unambiguously rigid in cementing the “us” versus “them” divide that has dominated Namibia’s political landscape since Independence in 1990.¹⁴² More pertinently, the rapid withdrawal of UNTAG and its minimalist approach of focusing on security over development, that is, its focus on DD meant the most vulnerable group of repatriated Namibians (SWAPO exiles) were left destitute for years whilst the Swapo Party led government was trying to formulate comprehensive reintegration programmes in the early 1990s. Many of the reintegration initiatives the Swapo Party led government introduced in the early 1990s were more on a re-active basis or on trial and error basis, meanwhile, many former SWAPO exiles were desperately trying to make ends meet with limited or no active assistance from the state (Preston, 1997, pp. 463 - 464).¹⁴³ In this regard, UNTAG’s rapid withdrawal had far reaching consequences on reintegration policy in the post-colony and a long-lasting impact on the lives of would-be beneficiaries such as former SWAPO exiles, ex-SWATF and Koevoet fighters. Therefore, it becomes imperative to critically engage the circumstances that led to UNTAG’s minimalist approach to DDR which primarily focused on the two DD’s (Disarmament and Demobilization = security) and not the R (Reintegration = development) consequently leading to UNTAG’s rapid withdrawal once DD had been accomplished. The life histories explored in this chapter were

¹⁴² The “us” versus “them” divide is the notion that the nation is divided into two sides, that is, Swapo party and its supporters on one side and South Africa apartheid regime and local collaborators on the other side.

¹⁴³ After PLAN combatants staged protests in 1991 over their economic woes, the Namibian government responded by paying a once-off severance package of R1 400 each. The process itself was mismanaged, with reports of undeserving individuals receiving this money, meanwhile close to 40% of eligible PLAN ex-fighters did not receive this amount. In comparison in 1991/1992 the South African government paid out a once off payment of 12 000 Namibian dollars (US\$ 2 600) to former Koevoet and SWATF to cushion them in the transition as they looked for employment (Dzinesa, 2017, p.111). Interestingly there is no record of SWAPO exiles who were not in PLAN receiving the once-off severance package. It appears that from the beginning the focus was on PLAN fighters, evidently other programmes launched later like the Development brigade primarily recruited PLAN ex-fighters.

particularly impacted by the vacuum left by UNTAG's minimalist approach, especially as they experienced the consequences of the gap that was there between the UN sanctioned DD process and the eventual reintegration programmes spearheaded by the Namibian government. Considering UNTAG's mandate was directly influenced by the cold war of the 1970s and 1980s (in Southern Africa), that is, Disarmament, Demobilisation and repatriation it becomes imperative to probe the circumstances that led to its minimalistic (security centred) mandate. Therefore, there is no better place to begin interrogating this pertinent matter than the Cold War itself as it shaped and influenced UNTAG's agenda in Namibia's transition to Independence in more ways than one.

3.1.1 How the Cold war influenced UNTAG's priorities

The cold war became a sticking point in the push for Namibia's transition to Independence as the UN now had to navigate carefully in negotiating Namibia's Independence and at the same time protect the interests of the two superpowers (United States of America and USSR) who became heavily invested in the South African – Angola border war (Melber, 2003, p. 14). In fact, Melber (2014) nods in this direction when he alludes to the fact that “...the United Nations was more of a power broker seeking to reconcile the various interests operating also within its own structures” (p. 10). With this in mind, one could argue that Namibia's transition to Independence was in a way hijacked by the Cold War which saw up to 50 000 Cuban troops and Russian military advisors deployed to assist People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FAPLA) and PLAN to fight South Africa and National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola (UNITA) in what effectively became proxy wars of the East versus West

(Cold War).¹⁴⁴ What further complicated the UN's responsibility to transition Namibia to Independence, is the fact that both the USSR and the USA were veto-wielding UN Security Council members. This meant that any decision on Namibia's Independence being implemented (through resolution 435, 1978) had to be mutual as either one of these countries or their other backers in the UN Security Council would veto a deal that there were not in favour of.¹⁴⁵

Whilst in many ways Namibia's backing and support from the USSR and its "boots on the ground" proxy Cuba, potentially exerted pressure on South Africa to eventually withdraw from Namibia, it was at a cost.¹⁴⁶ That is, in the talks and meetings that led to South African withdrawal from Namibia and Cuba's withdrawal from Angola, SWAPO was effectively side-lined from negotiations and this meant that without proper official representation their interests would be pushed to the periphery. For instance, according to Saunders (2011), Angola began to hold secret meetings with South Africa without SWAPO at the behest of Crocker (American Assistant secretary of state, 1981-1989) (p.108). Angola did this in part because it still recognized South Africa as the de facto leader in Namibia and South Africa had the potential to further destabilize its fragile government, which had already been battered by the civil war (ibid). An even more telling incident was the exclusion of SWAPO from the Lusaka Accord of 16 February, 1984 (which became the basis for the implementation of UN resolution 435, 1978).¹⁴⁷ Although the Lusaka Accord (1984) did not materialize it

¹⁴⁴ The cold war pitted the West represented by the United States of America and the communist East represented by USSR

¹⁴⁵ The five permanent members of the UN security council are United States of America , USSR, United Kingdom, France and China

¹⁴⁶ It was FLAPA and Cuba military success at Cuito Cuanavale that paved the way for progress in negotiations that paved the way for Namibia's Independence (Saul, 1991, p. 152)

¹⁴⁷ According to Saunders (2011) at the Lusaka summit diplomats from South Africa, Angola, US Assistant secretary of state and military leaders from FAPLA and SADF agreed to establish a commission that would have monitored the withdrawal of SADF troops from their position 120 miles

however indicated the tendency of how the interests of SWAPO outside of Independence had been shelved in favour of arrangements that suited rivals South Africa and Angola and their American and Soviet backers.¹⁴⁸ This trend continued until 1989, with SWAPO being absent in 26 Angola/Namibia negotiations (meetings) between 1987-88 including the tripartite New York Accords signed by Angola, Cuba and South Africa (December 22, 1988) which paved the way for resolution 435.¹⁴⁹ This, of course, was in part due to the fact that SWAPO's exclusion from the negotiations

in Angola back to the Namibian border whilst in return Angola agreed to stop PLAN from operating in the areas previously held by SADF (p. 115).

¹⁴⁸ The fact that neither SWAPO's political nor military leaders had a seat at the Lusaka summit sums up how SWAPO was considered a 'junior' partner whose Independence agenda and interests could be represented by others.

¹⁴⁹ **Angola/Namibia Negotiations: 1987- 88 Meetings** (1) Brazzaville, April 5-6, 1987 U.S./Angola (2) Luanda, July 14-15, 1987 U.S. / Angola (3) Luanda, September 8-9, 1987 U.S./Angola

(4) Luanda, January 28-29, 1988 U.S./Angola/Cuba (5) Luanda, March 9-11, 16-18, 1988

U.S./Angola/Cuba (6) Geneva, March 14-15, 1988 U.S./South Africa (7) Washington, March 21, 1988

U.S. /U.S.S.R. (8) Washington, March 28- 29, 1988 U.S./South Africa (9) London, April 29, 1988 U.S.

/ U.S.S.R. (10) London, May 3-4, 1988 U.S. / South Africa/Angola/Cuba (11) Brazzaville, May 13,

1988 South Africa/Angola (12) Lisbon, May 18-19, 1988 U.S. / U.S.S.R. (13) Moscow, May 29-June

2, 1988 U.S. /U.S.S.R. (summit) (14) Cairo, June 23-25, 1988 U.S. / South Africa/Angola/Cuba (15)

New York, July 11-13, 1988 U.S./South Africa/Angola/Cuba (16) Sal, Cape Verde, July 22-23, 1988

U.S./South Africa/Angola/Cuba (17) Geneva, July 31-August 1, 1988 U.S./U.S.S.R (18) Geneva,

August 2-5, 1988 U.S./South Africa/Angola/Cuba (19) Brazzaville, August 24-26, 1988 U.S./South

Africa/Angola/Cuba (20) Brazzaville, September 7-8, 1988 U. S. /South Africa/Angola/Cuba (21)

Brazzaville, September 26-29, 1988 U.S./South Africa/Angola/Cuba (22) New York, October 6-9,

1988 U.S./South Africa/Angola/Cuba (23) Geneva, November 10-15, 1988 U.S./South Africa

Angola/Cuba (24) New York, November 22-24, 1988 U.S./South Africa/Angola Cuba (25) Brazzaville,

December 1-4, 1988 U.S./South Africa/Angola/Cuba (26) Brazzaville, December 12-13, 1988

U.S./South Africa/Angola/Cuba (International Legal Materials accessed 09 April 2018)

https://ezproxy.ufs.ac.za:8317/stable/pdf/20693342.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fdefault-

[2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=search%3A50abd02828025e2c87cfffcaedbfc153](https://ezproxy.ufs.ac.za:8317/stable/pdf/20693342.pdf?ab_segments=0%2Fdefault-2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=search%3A50abd02828025e2c87cfffcaedbfc153)

was seen by Crocker as necessary, as it provided an incentive for South Africa to participate in the negotiations as the South African regime did not recognize SWAPO as a legitimate organization.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, Crocker's plan of Namibia attaining Independence was hinged on *linkage*¹⁵¹ which was primarily centred on rewarding South African withdrawal from Namibia with Cuban withdrawal from Angola (Kagan-Guthrie, 2009, p.69). This plan essentially reduced SWAPO to a silent partner which was going to only come in the picture towards Independence. Crocker's linkage was, therefore, a strategy of securing peace on terms that secured the US a cold war victory by undermining Soviet influence in Southern Africa. Meanwhile, PLAN was invisible in the negotiations and it is not surprising that when UN resolution 435 (1978) was eventually implemented in 1989-1990, PLAN fighters were disarmed, demobilized and repatriated as refugees, not as ex-fighters.¹⁵²

Therefore, it is important to understand that UNTAG's implementation was a result of intense negotiations that majored on the geo-political strategic interests of the USA, South Africa, USSR, Angola and Cuba.¹⁵³ With the priority being security

¹⁵⁰ Martti Ahtisaari, revealed in 1992 that there was no "face-to-face" signing of a ceasefire between SWAPO and South Africa because the latter "simply refused to sign a document with SWAPO". However SWAPO and South Africa had signed separately letters to UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar, pledging to abide by Resolution 435, and the cease fire (Dzinesa, 2017, p.100)

¹⁵¹ Crocker's Linkage strategy was to use Namibian Independence as a method of creating leverage to bring about the departure of Cuban troops from Angola. Linkage was the centrepiece of Crocker's diplomacy for the region, and it was designed to fulfill the Reagan administration's overall goal – to undermine Moscow's heavily militarized African diplomacy and re-establish American pre-eminence in Southern Africa.

¹⁵² In fact the massacre of April 1, 1989 was more of a consequence of the consistent absence and sidelining of SWAPO (for almost a decade) at the negotiations that led to the transition to Independence (Melber, 2014, p. 14). This is because it would have been at such platforms that SWAPO would have negotiated directly with South Africa and the UN regarding disarmament and demobilization of troops.

¹⁵³ Other than the U.S, the USSR, Angola and Cuba had a vested interest in DD succeeding in Namibia as it guaranteed the disarming and demobilization of South Africa's armed local forces (SWATF and Koevoet) but also withdrawal of SADF (representing the capitalist ideology) from Namibia, which would potentially cut off potential supply routes for UNITA from South Africa by land and SWAPO likely to lead the next government would secure Angola's southern border.

(demobilization and troop withdrawal), consequentially short-term initiatives to help with refugees resettlement such as comprehensive transitional economic assistance programmes and developmental issues such as reintegration took a back seat as all parties involved wanted to end the war. Henceforth, DD became the primary focus of the superpowers who also happened to be the guarantors of UNTAG, with both the USSR and the United States being veto-wielding members of the UNSC that the UN Secretary-General reported to.

It is therefore pertinent for the reader to understand that DDR programmes such as the Namibian case (where DD was undertaken by UNTAG) often have political undertones that affect their scope and duration. In this case, the cold war played a crucial role in dictating the minimalist approach that dominated Namibia's DDR as security was more pertinent to the political heavyweights involved in the conflict rather than developmental issues, that is, reintegration. Naturally when UNTAG's mandate was approved by the UN Security Council it is not surprising that DD, repatriation and democratic elections became the centre of UNTAG's mandate, and once that had been achieved the UN concluded that the mission was a success and withdrew from Namibia leaving the unenviable task of reintegration to the newly elected Swapo Party government. The lack of integration between DD and R as Dzinesa (2017) notes, complicated Namibia's DDR as compared to Zimbabwe and South Africa whose DDR programmes were integrated and locally driven. Although UNTAG began the process, its minimalist approach of DD meant the R was not only going to lack funding but also the necessary expertise of executing the programme. Moreover, by then the UN and other governments engaged in reintegrating former armed groups (e.g. Zimbabwe) at the time assumed that reintegration was primarily for ex-fighters and failed to realize

that reintegration was in fact a human/social process that all returning displaced people go through as they attempt to reintegrate back into society (Rhea, 2014, p. 19). To fully understand the impact of this oversight it is important to explore the “lived experiences” of all former SWAPO exiles who were repatriated between 1989-1990. Moreover, the short to long-term impact of the lack of integration of DD and R is best exhibited through the life histories of former SWAPO exiles who narrate their experience of UNTAG (repatriation) and life in the aftermath of Independence.

3.2 SWAPO exiles’ individual experiences of repatriation and its aftermath

3.2.1 Repatriation Process

The return of SWAPO exiles was managed by the UNHCR which had oversight for close to 45 000 Namibians who were repatriated back from exile (Tapscott 1992). The majority (but not all) of these refugees were SWAPO exiles, which this thesis has made the object of the study. UNHCR under UNTAG had the mandate to facilitate the return of all refugees back to their home communities in Namibia (Harlech-Jones, 1997, p. 85; Namhila, 1997, pp.149 - 152). This process was bound to be challenging for the exiles, as many had been absent from their home communities for many years. Whilst some exiles were keen to be reunited with their families others were reluctant or hesitant due to various reasons, with uncertainty over their remaining families’ political affiliations being the most frequently mentioned reason from the interviews conducted for this research project (Miettinen et al., 2017, p.15; Namhila, 1997, p 148).¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Some of the SWAPO exiles interviewed mentioned that they were hesitant to return to their families after repatriation as they were not sure whether they were pro-SWAPO or pro-Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) which was closely aligned to the South African apartheid regime

Moreover the communities they left, that is families, friends and neighbours also had to deal with the social and economic realities of accommodating former exiles (Gleichmann, 1994, p. 50). In fact, Rhea (2014) argues that reintegration should be considered as a two way process that involves both ex-fighters and communities, this is because the pace of reintegration of former fighters will to a large extent depend on the ability and readiness of communities to absorb ex-fighters back into society (p. 19).

Meanwhile, the repatriation and transition process itself was highly organized and well resourced. For instance, the UNHCR was supported by several UN agencies including the World Food Programme (WFP)¹⁵⁵, World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF)¹⁵⁶ and the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Dzinesa, 2006, p. 216). In addition to these UN agencies, UNHCR roped in a local partner, that is, the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN) to help with the repatriation process as well as to provide extra manpower as the UNHCR itself was understaffed. Moreover, the Council of Churches of Namibia (CCN) was trusted by SWAPO exiles as it had consistently supported SWAPO throughout the liberation struggle (Dzinesa, 2006, 2017; Wallace 2011).¹⁵⁷ Therefore, on paper UNTAG had a formidable strategy in carrying out its mandate, however, it is pertinent not to get carried away by the ‘preparedness’ of UNTAG in executing its mandate, as the success of UNTAG’s repatriation process can only be

¹⁵⁵ The WFP provided 9 000 tonnes of food (Dzinesa, 2006, p. 216).

¹⁵⁶ UNICEF provided US \$250 000 to the repatriation process (Dzinesa, 2006, p. 2016).

¹⁵⁷ Interestingly, Harlech-Jones (1997) notes that in May 1989 during a United Democratic Front (UDF) meeting, Justus Garoeb (leader of the Damara Council) questioned the neutrality of CCN in the repatriation process as he alleged that it was biased in favour of SWAPO (p. 73).

measured through the life stories of SWAPO exiles rather than reports or articles that asserted or declared the process as a success.¹⁵⁸

One of the limitations of relying on UN reports and research that focused on the major actors (during the transition period) (e.g. Howard, 2002) to gauge the success or failure of a process the size of UNTAG's repatriation process is the fact that the lived experiences of direct participants such as SWAPO exiles are not reflected and often overlooked, missing the opportunity to draw valuable lessons from such experiences that may be invaluable to policymakers and researchers alike. For instance, not much has been written about the minimal support SWAPO exiles received from UNTAG particularly with regards to transitional economic assistance. Transitional economic assistance has been coined as reinsertion package when referring to ex-fighters and reinstallation/cash grant (in more recent times) when referring to refugees. Although these two terminologies "reinsertion package" and "reinstallation/cash grant" emerged in the 1990s for the former and in the 21st century for the latter, the practice of providing transitional economic assistance to ex-fighters and refugees had already been in existence as early as 1980, particularly in neighbouring Zimbabwe.¹⁵⁹ Therefore,

¹⁵⁸ L.M. Howard (2002) (UN Peace Implementation in Namibia: The Causes of Success, International Peacekeeping) argues that UNTAG was a success based on interviews with major actors and unpublished UN reports. Howard also cites Namibia's generally peaceful environment between 1990 and 2001 as an indicator of UNTAG's success story which created conditions that have created the peaceful co-existence between former foes in post-independence Namibia. However, there is no mention of interviews done with refugees who were repatriated in 1989 with regards to what their experience was or what impact the repatriation process had on their individual lives.

¹⁵⁹ In 1980 the Zimbabwean government gave a Z\$400 once-off payment demobilization grant as a form of transitional economic allowance to former exiles who had not qualified or opted not to join the newly minted Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) (Dzinesa, 2017, p. 42). Also at the end of March 1980, in accordance with a proposal made by the Prime Minister-designate of Zimbabwe, the Secretary-General of the United Nations requested the High Commissioner to co-ordinate, for an initial period, a United Nations programme for the rehabilitation of returning refugees and displaced persons within Zimbabwe. A United Nations interagency team, led by UNHCR, travelled to Zimbabwe and, in consultation with the new Government, prepared a programme centring on the **reinstallation** needs for up to 660,000 returnees and internally displaced persons over a 12-month period to April 1981. These needs, including immediate assistance in settlement and agriculture, would cost up to \$110 million. In addition, various food needs were estimated at 113,000 tonnes. On 13 April 1980, the High Commissioner appealed to the international community for resources to make it possible for the Government of Zimbabwe and- the United Nations system to respond to these urgent needs (in bold my emphasis).

although this study transposes these terminologies from modern reintegration literature, the practice itself is not new to reintegration. It is therefore important to understand that reinsertion packages or reinstallation/cash grants are a form of transitional economic assistance meant to cushion (in this case) returnees in the interim, whilst they are looking or waiting for long-term and consistent forms of income e.g jobs or comprehensive reintegration packages from DDR sponsors.¹⁶⁰ According to Baare (2005):

...cash in the form of lump sums, cash installments or vouchers are considered to be an effective form of transitional economic assistance and recent studies have proven this to be true (Baare, 2005, p. 18)

Munive (2006) nods in this direction when he states that:

...capital-centred DDR activities are among the best performing ones. Capital-centric intervention refers to start-up grants, in-kind capital transfers and cash injections. In Burundi, for instance, a reinsertion allowance was offered for eighteen months, with the amount depending on rank. A business start-up grant worth about \$US1200 was also offered. Comparing the results for those who received it with those who did not, researchers found a large reduction in poverty among the former (Munive, 2016, p. 4).

In essence Munive (2016) argues that in the absence of some form of capital-centric intervention (which in this dissertation is referred to as transitional economic assistance) poverty is likely to continue amongst those individuals who are going through the reintegration process. In Namibia's case, this would be referring to SWAPO exiles who were repatriated between 1989-1990. UNHCR's transitional economic assistance has been viewed as having been far from adequate. The process appears to

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 24 September 1980, A/35/12, available at:

<https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae68c380.html> [accessed 11 June 2019]

¹⁶⁰ DDR sponsors could be UNDP, NGO's, donor countries (e.g. Japan) or governments sponsoring their own DDR programmes

have been rushed and not well thought through. Simple basic necessities like the lack of provision of proper clothing for returning SWAPO exiles was already in a way indicative that the UNHCR's priorities were misplaced as it was more interested in transporting and delivering SWAPO exiles back to their home communities than they were of their actual welfare. No one felt this neglect more than SWAPO exiles themselves, it is therefore imperative to delve into the life histories of former SWAPO exiles to get a first-hand account of what really transpired during and after repatriation.

3.2.2 Stories of repatriation and its aftermath

Saki (not real name) left for exile from Ovamboland in 1979 at the age of 13. Upon arrival in Angola, he was classified as a minor and he was sent to Kwanza Sul (where he remained until the age of 15). At Kwanza Sul, he went on to complete his primary school and afterwards in 1981 at the age of fifteen he received a scholarship to go and complete his high school in Czechoslovakia.¹⁶¹ Saki was enrolled into a technical high school and assigned to train as a fitter and turner, which he completed in 1986.¹⁶² Upon obtaining his high school diploma, Saki and three other SWAPO exiles returned to Angola arriving in Luanda in August 1986, he notes:

After arriving back in Luanda in August 1986, I joined Ndilimani [SWAPO traditional music band] as a rhythm guitarist and as a dancer. So we performed in Angola at SWAPO rallies at the camps especially when the president [of SWAPO] is coming to address. We also went to Congo, Kinshasa in 1987. We also went to Congo Brazzaville where we recorded an album. In 1987 August after returning from Congo Brazzaville we were told we would be going for military training. In December 1987 we started our [military] training and six months later we completed the training. I was trained as a communication officer. After training, I was assigned first south of Kunene river and later reassigned east of Ondjiva [in Angola]. We were supposed to monitor enemy

¹⁶¹ Saki transcript 15 p. 2 (18/07/2018)

¹⁶² Saki transcript 15 p. 2 (18/07/2018)

movements from October 1988 to March 1989 (Saki transcript 15 p. 4, July 18, 2018).¹⁶³

Prior to the commencement of implementation of UN Resolution 435 (1978) Saki did not engage in battle with the SADF, however, he notes that he was part of the contingent of PLAN fighters who were attacked by the SADF on April 2, 1989 whilst they were retreating back to Angola.¹⁶⁴ This was his only incident where he engaged in actual combat. After being disarmed and demobilized by the UN in Angola, Saki along with other SWAPO exiles were handed over to UNHCR for repatriation. Having understood Saki's life history prior to repatriation through the above mentioned background, it is imperative to document and analyse his experience of UNTAG's UNHCR's repatriation process and what this entails regarding the notion of UNTAG being considered a UN success story.

Saki laments at the lack of proper basic needs such as decent clothing and the mediocre transitional economic assistance they received from UNHCR that did nothing to prepare them for life in the 'real' world. In fact, Saki believed that UNHCR would take over their welfare needs whilst there were waiting for something more substantial to come through from Swapo Party, Saki narrates:

...we were called and told you are not going back home as soldiers but as refugees...for me that was a disaster, I did not like it...we had questions regarding this scenario but we were told implement first and ask questions later...a day before you go you went to a place where there was a bundle of clothes...unfortunately, I only found a blue T-shirt that was too short and a short (pants) as many of us could not find a trousers...I resorted to nature for a belt, taking the bark of a tree to tie my shorts as we were not allowed to take our military belts (Saki transcript 15 p. 4, July 18, 2018).¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Saki transcript, 15 p. 4 (18/07/2018)

¹⁶⁴ Saki transcript, 15 p. 3 (18/07/2018)

¹⁶⁵ Saki Transcript, 15 p.4 (18/07/2018)

Indeed, the process of repatriation in Angola was a humiliating one for Saki who felt his most basic needs of clothing could have been better provided instead of the somewhat ‘disorganized’ scenario he felt with the clothing situation. Saki like many other SWAPO exiles were at least in the interim expectant that what UNHCR could not do for them would surely be handled by Swapo Party especially economically. Therefore expectation was rife when they were released from the temporary camps.¹⁶⁶ For Saki, after he was released from the camp in Ongwediva into the care of his sisters, he could have cared less about the *paltry transitional economic assistance* he received from UNHCR as he believed that Swapo Party would soon call him, he recalls:

...we were used to the arranged life in camps in exile, so I thought SWAPO would organize something for us. I was expecting the SWAPO government or party to call us to assign us either to school or to work. We knew after Independence we had to work but expected to be called and SWAPO to give us new assignments. I thought since I was trained in communication in the military I would be called to join the new army but that did not happen...(Saki transcript 15 pp. 5-6, July 18, 2018)¹⁶⁷

It becomes evident from Saki’s situation that living in SWAPO’s camps in exile created a certain level of dependency on the part of SWAPO exiles towards SWAPO that incapacitated many exiles like Saki to the point where they could not think independently nor take initiatives.¹⁶⁸ Arguably, with both UNHCR and Swapo Party failing to provide (economically) for the exiles, families and communities of exiles ended up playing that role. At this stage, Saki and other former SWAPO exiles found themselves helpless and eventually began to face a backlash from their families and communities who felt

¹⁶⁶ The temporary camps were reception centres run by CCN on behalf of UNHCR which housed repatriated former SWAPO exiles temporarily whilst they waited for family, relatives or friends to come and take them to their home communities.

¹⁶⁷ Saki Transcript 15, pp.5-6 (18/07/2018)

¹⁶⁸ Thinking independently was discouraged and considered suspicious in exile by SWAPO henceforth the dependency syndrome many SWAPO exiles showed soon after Independence with the phrase “SWAPO will call me” being used by many SWAPO exiles who found themselves unemployed and without an income after repatriation. Akawa (2014) also discusses the notion of how SWAPO created a mentality of dependence that crippled former SWAPO exiles in the post colony (p. 120).

they were a strain on their own limited resources. Based on Rhea's (2014, p. 19) suggestion of reintegration being a two way process between returnees and communities, it becomes apparent that there was a need to have prepared local communities with the required skills and resources to be able to cope with the influx of returnees whom in most cases were unemployed like Saki. For instance there was clearly a lack of adequate economic resources on the part of families of former SWAPO exiles, moreover, rural and urban communities where some of the former SWAPO exiles returned to, lacked sufficient economic activities that could cater for former SWAPO exiles and consequently there was pressure on former SWAPO exiles to move to bigger cities like Windhoek to look for employment. Poverty or economic scarcity was not new to non-white Namibian communities as this was a wider societal problem and a consequence of two centuries of colonial occupation that even the remainers had been battling with throughout South African occupation.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, communities and families of former SWAPO exiles were not equipped (with social skills) by the UNHCR nor its local partner CCN on how to handle former SWAPO exiles who may have experienced war trauma or other war-related issues.¹⁷⁰ Such initiatives would have not necessarily been the responsibility of Swapo Party as it came to power after Independence in March 1990, but rather that of UNHCR (under the ambit of UNTAG) or its local partners such as the Council of Churches of Namibia (CCN). Moreover, even if that had not been the case, normally the transitional economic assistance that SWAPO exiles received from UNHCR camps would have cushioned them at least for

¹⁶⁹ Remainers is a term that is used widely to refer to Namibians that did not go into exile during the liberation struggle.

¹⁷⁰Therefore economic scarcity and the absence of requisite skills to deal with SWAPO exiles led families and communities to quickly lose patience with SWAPO exiles adding to the frustrations that the exiles themselves were already experiencing regarding the slow pace of their economic reintegration in the aftermath of repatriation.

a year.¹⁷¹ However, that was not the case, as the pot, bag of beans, R10, panga and a few food tins distributed at the reception camps/centres could barely sustain them beyond a few weeks. Saki recalls how he felt desponded as his family and community's patience began to wane:

...then it started that we started getting frustrated and our families and community also started getting frustrated at our continued unemployment and hope that SWAPO would come to take us and give us jobs (Saki transcript 15 p. 5, July 18, 2018).¹⁷²

Saki was not alone in having had friends and family who were supporting them beginning to get frustrated at their slow pace of economic reintegration.¹⁷³ Helvis, who was first introduced in chapter two, a Cassinga survivor, also faced economic hardship for the first two years after repatriation. She explains:

When we came in 1989 the UN gave us R10, a hoe, pot without a lid and then we were sent away without a proper reintegration plan...After we were sent away I got help from friends, comrades [who got jobs first] and neighbours. These people eventually got tired and began [derogatory] name calling and accusing us of failing to get jobs... (Helvis transcript 5, pp. 4, 5 & 7, February 23, 2018)¹⁷⁴

Whilst Helvis (above) may have initially had financial and material assistance from friends and family, Ellise (see chapter two) a fellow former SWAPO exile had to endure several months of lack and hardship from the onset after repatriation, her analysis of the attitude of society towards her is summed up in her statement below:

...I did not get any help from anyone after repatriation, people did not even budget for us, *in fact, many assumed that we were already dead*. They were

¹⁷¹ Although the UN provided cash of R10, this amount was negligible falling far short of the cost of living at the time to even have lasted beyond a few days. And cash was particularly important as the food items they received were limited with the cans of food and bag of beans unlikely to last beyond a few weeks.

¹⁷² Saki Transcript 15, p. 5 (18/07/2018)

¹⁷³ The continual unemployment of former SWAPO exiles meant they continued to be economically dependent on family and friends, leading eventually to frustration of these individuals and the subsequent break down of relationships.

¹⁷⁴ Helvis Transcript 5, pp. 4,5&7 (23/02/2018)

avoiding us and they simply did not understand us especially because we came back with nothing and were poor (Ellise transcript 4, p. 6, February 5, 2018).¹⁷⁵ (My emphasis in italics)

These life stories of Helvis, Ellise and Saki raise another crucial subject worth discussing, that is, the absence of a safety net for repatriated SWAPO exiles. A safety net would have ensured that in the interim either a reinsertion/transitional economic package from the UN or a comprehensive reintegration package from the government would have cushioned unemployed SWAPO exiles in the short to long-term.¹⁷⁶ For instance, according to Dzinesa (2017), the Zimbabwean government gave a Z\$400 once-off payment demobilization grant as a form of transitional economic allowance to former exiles who had not qualified or opted not to join the newly minted Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) (p. 42). However, this was not the case in Namibia as although the Swapo Party led government had in the immediate aftermath of Independence moved swiftly to form an integrated Namibian Defence Forces (NDF) (in the spirit of reconciliation) and institutions like the Development Brigade, the majority of former SWAPO exiles (including respondents to this interview) were not recruited into the Development Brigade nor seconded to the NDF.¹⁷⁷ This meant that those who did not get a 'call' from Swapo Party (like General Shilongo, see chapter two) to come and serve in the NDF or Development Brigade would then have had to survive through their own devices without comprehensive transitional economic assistance until they had

¹⁷⁵ Ellise Transcript 4, p. 6 (05/02/2018)

¹⁷⁶ The absence of a safety net in the form of a gratuity payments would have been a life line and rescued former unemployed SWAPO exiles from extreme poverty in the 1990s and 2000s. This safety net arguably only became available through the passing of the Veterans Act of 2008, which for the first time had a provision for gratuity payments to be paid to veterans of the liberation struggle. In spite of the Acts limitations it is a form of safety net that continues to be a life line to the poorest among SWAPO exiles.

¹⁷⁷ From the estimated 45 000 Namibian exiles who returned, only 10 000 (including ex-SWATF and ex-Koevoet were absorbed into the NDF (Metsola, 2010, p. 592). Meanwhile only 4 000 PLAN ex-fighters (mostly men) of the eligible 16 000 had been recruited into the Development Brigade by 1992 (Preston et al., 1993, p. 14; Preston, 1997, p. 465)

secured employment. This has led to former SWAPO exiles apportioning blame to both the UN and Swapo Party for not having done enough during the transitional period and the immediate aftermath. As Helvis (chapter two) reflects on that difficult period she points to whom she blames for her economic woes in those difficult days after repatriation:

...I blame the UN, the government and SWAPO. They were all responsible for our well-being. When we came here we came under the UN. After we arrived here SWAPO had offices, *they were supposed to look after us*, but they never did. All three did not do their job... (Helvis transcript 5, p. 7, February 23, 2018).¹⁷⁸ (In italics my emphasis)¹⁷⁹

This period is likely to have been the most trying period for many former SWAPO exiles, and the life story of Selma (not real name) a former SWAPO exile and PLAN ex-fighter who was also married to another PLAN ex-fighter, Jeremiah (not real name) exemplifies how this repatriation and post-repatriation period led to the untold suffering of many. According to Preston et al. (1993), the majority of former SWAPO exiles found themselves in a hostile economic environment where family and friends could only provide minimal support (p.8).¹⁸⁰

Selma

¹⁷⁸ It is interesting to note that Helvis suggests that Swapo party and the government are the same. This shows the degree to which the lines between political party and the government are blurred, a misconception most likely brought about by the Swapo party's use/adaptation of dominant forms of nationalist histories (e.g. patriotic history) which blur the lines between the two leading to the assumption that 'SWAPO is the government' and the 'government is SWAPO'. In addition Helvis's insistence that Swapo party was supposed to 'take care of them' after repatriation through their local offices points to the expectation that Swapo Party would continue to take care of SWAPO exiles like they did in exile, a sentiment shared by other SWAPO exiles like Saki

¹⁷⁹ Helvis Transcript 5, p. 7 (23/02/2018)

¹⁸⁰ According to McMullin (2013) in the early 1990s unemployment figures of ex-combatants stood at 80% whilst those of the general population were at 35%.

Selma and her husband Jeremiah were one such couple who lived in a very hostile economic environment as described by Preston et al. (1993). Selma is a female PLAN ex-fighter whose life history was mapped for the purposes of this thesis. Selma was born in Ohangwena region and her highest educational qualification prior to going to exile was grade 10. She left Namibia in 1985 for exile in Angola where she received infantry military training at Tobias Hainyeko Training Centre (THTC) and afterwards was trained as a political commissar at Juba military camp before being deployed to the front to fight under PLAN. Prior to repatriation, Selma was able to obtain her grade 12 certificate in Lubango through night school and that was her highest level of education when she returned to Namibia. Selma was repatriated to Namibia on the 14th of July 1989 from Juba military camp in Angola and by then she had a boyfriend (Jeremiah) whom she got married to in September, 1989. Jeremiah also a PLAN ex-fighter was trained in Libya as a pilot for 8 years.

Thereafter, the harsh economic realities of post-colonial Namibia began to dawn on Selma and her husband. According to Selma things became difficult socially and economically after the birth of her first son Lukas (not real name) in 1990, by then her mother-in-law who was accommodating them (in rural Northern Namibia) began to get frustrated at their slow pace of economic reintegration particularly with regards to their continual unemployment or lack of income, she notes:

... My mother in-law was wondering what was wrong with us as we were not able to get jobs like other returnees. Others like my husband's brother got jobs in a very short time as he had been a bodyguard of President Sam Nujoma in exile. This pressure forced us to come to Windhoek to look for jobs (Selma transcript 7 p. 5, May 29, 2018).¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Selma Transcript 7, p.5 (29/05/2018)

Selma's ordeal of facing alienation from close family members and being pushed into isolation and being perceived as a pariah of some sort is similar to what the other respondents mentioned in this chapter (Helvis, Ellise and Saki) went through in the aftermath of Independence. The absence of a safety net for SWAPO exiles who were not fortunate to get jobs meant not only economic hardship for the exiles but it also strained relationships with family members that they were supposed to have been bonding and renewing ties with. Like Ellise noted earlier, Selma laments:

...people did not see us as human beings, or that our lives would become better one day. In fact, I think that people assumed that *we had died in exile and were not coming back*. It played a role in the alienation and suffering we had. There was no communication and we felt they did not understand us and neither did we understand them (Selma transcript 7 p. 5, May 29, 2018).¹⁸² (In italics my emphasis)

The continual poverty of exiles like Selma and Jeremiah ultimately led to ill treatment from family or relatives in whose care the UNHCR had initially released these exiles into. This led to Selma and her family becoming destitute and living like beggars in post-independence Namibia, wiping away the euphoria that had come with liberation. Selma suggested that those years in the immediate aftermath of Independence were more painful than exile. Below she narrates the untold hardship she experienced whilst in Windhoek in the 1990s looking for job opportunities that never really came:

...In fact, I remember the time we were staying in my husband's brother's house after moving from the North where my mother-in-law had become frustrated with us. My brother-in-law and his wife would send me to Hartlief [wholesale butchery] to go and buy meat and I would walk with my child Lukas on my back, only to come back and you eat pap with milk whilst they ate with meat that you went to buy. They would lock the kitchen door to stop you from getting access to food. You would only enter the kitchen when you cook for them, even

¹⁸² Selma transcript 7 p.5 (29/05/2018)

water you had to get it from outside. Eventually, we started stealing food and would eat it at night. *For me, that was more painful than exile*, because we were staying with family members who were ill-treating us (Selma transcript 7 p. 5, May 29, 2018).¹⁸³ (In italics my emphasis).

Moreover, this suffering and deprivation was not limited to just former SWAPO exiles like Selma but it also meant that their children like Lukas would have to bear the brunt of poverty too, having adverse effects on their health due to nutritional challenges.

Selma narrates how they struggled to even feed their infant son Lukas with proper food:

...Once my brother in-law and his wife went to work we would start hunting for food in Windhoek so as to feed our son and ourselves. During one of the trips going around town looking for food, I came across a cousin who was making tombo (Oshiwambo traditional beer). Lukas my son had to drink tombo because of hunger and my cousin out of pity would give me four fat cakes and I would secretly steal two extra just to make sure I had enough to feed my son for the next day (Selma transcript 7 p. 6, May 29, 2018).¹⁸⁴

The life story of Selma exemplifies the painful day to day struggles that unemployed former SWAPO exiles like Selma and her husband had to go through. In Selma's case the untold suffering her family went through continued for five consecutive years after Independence, only getting relief in 1995 when her husband got a job as a messenger at Eros airport. His boss later helped him translate his pilot certificate from Arabic to English eventually landing him a job with the Namibian Air force in 1996. Selma's husband, Jeremiah was not alone in struggling to get his qualifications recognized. Preston et al. (1993) notes that there was widespread dissatisfaction amongst former Namibian exiles over the absence of a rating system of equivalency that could fairly gauge their foreign qualifications (p.15). In many instances, recognition of foreign qualifications was at the employers' discretion (Preston et al., 1993, p. 15).

¹⁸³ Selma Transcript 7 p.5 (29/05/2018)

¹⁸⁴ Selma transcript 7, p.6 (29/05/2018)

Despite the eventual employment of Jeremiah, it is imperative to be cognizant that it took five years before Selma and her husband could get economic independence and stability of some sort. The vacuum left by UNHCR of economically assisting returning SWAPO exiles supposed to have been filled by the Swapo Party led government was never really filled. Programmes and projects such as the Development Brigade or recruitment into NDF were limited to a few SWAPO exiles whilst the majority were expected to “spontaneously” reintegrate. Meanwhile, the reality is, that period was difficult for former SWAPO exiles as they experienced economic hardship with no hope of a ‘rescue’ from the UN, government nor family and friends who began to shun them (Namhila, 1997, p. 183).

Clifton

Even those who had somewhat foresight of anticipating hardship in the aftermath of Independence like Clifton who had even gone to lengths of saving up money were eventually sucked into the vicious cycle of poverty that unemployed former SWAPO exiles found themselves in post-colonial Namibia, this period has certainly not been documented properly especially regarding the circumstances and conditions many exiles had to live through. Unlike the other former SWAPO exiles whose life histories have been reviewed in chapter two and this chapter (three), Clifton did not come back to Namibia directly from Angola or Zambia but was repatriated to Namibia from the United States of America (Boston) where he had been studying under a scholarship

given to SWAPO exiles by the African American Institute.¹⁸⁵ Prior to this, Clifton had served in exile as a nurse at a SWAPO camp outside Lusaka between 1977 and 1982. He also obtained a nursing diploma from nursing school in Namibia (1974-1976) before leaving for exile. Upon his return, Clifton was the classical SWAPO exile that had been prepared to contribute to the new nation of Namibia.¹⁸⁶ In his possession were two masters degrees, Masters in Public Health (1983-1985) and Masters in City Planning (1986-1988) from Boston University. On paper, Clifton did not appear to be the type of exile who would have required transitional economic assistance, but his life story in the aftermath of Independence highlights how even the elite, highly educated exiles were as vulnerable as the rest of former SWAPO exiles in the absence of transitional economic assistance. Although Clifton had siblings, when he returned to Windhoek in 1990 he had nowhere to go, his mother had passed away in 1982 whilst he was in Boston, therefore he turned to a friend who stayed in Katutura to accommodate him whilst he was looking for a job which initially he assumed would have been relatively easy with his two Masters degrees.¹⁸⁷

He notes:

...I had saved up enough money to help me get on my feet when I returned to Namibia...When I came back to Windhoek, I had no relative in Windhoek but a former classmate and friend with whom I stayed with in Katutura. I slept in the living room and when there were more people I slept in the kitchen. In the mornings I would take a taxi and start from one side of the town to the other side asking if there were vacancies. And then I would repeat the same process

¹⁸⁵ African American Institute (AAI) offered higher education scholarship programs in the United States to support African scholars (including SWAPO exiles) in gaining a higher education and skills that could be applied in post-colonial Africa. <https://www.aaionline.org/who-we-are/history/>

¹⁸⁶ There was an expectation from those Namibians who remained, that former SWAPO exiles would obtain gainful employment in the immediate aftermath of Independence. Moreover, there was an expectation from their families that they would take care of them financially once they obtained employment (Preston 1993; Namhila 1997 p.192). Therefore, there was pressure on former SWAPO exiles to obtain employment and to take up the financial responsibility of looking after their extended families.

¹⁸⁷ When Clifton returned to Namibia in 1990 he had three brothers but none of them resided in Windhoek. Two of them resided in Swakopmund, whilst the other resided in Grootfontein. He therefore, had no relative in Windhoek that he could stay with henceforth his decision to stay with a friend in Katutura.

until the little money I had saved whilst in Boston was running out. Then I would take a taxi in the morning and then walk back and it eventually got to a point where I had to walk going and coming back from town...My savings ran out and this friend of mine, this lady, began complaining that I was not contributing to the household, the complains increased over time and it became very uncomfortable staying there such that I had to leave...(Clifton transcript 12, pp. 4-5, June 13, 2018).¹⁸⁸

This snippet from Clifton's life history although brief provides previously undocumented challenges that even the highly educated among SWAPO exiles experienced in the aftermath of Namibia's repatriation and Independence. What is clear is that a vicious cycle of economic hardship began to systematically harm social cohesion through straining relationships that had initially helped former SWAPO exiles with returning back to normalcy. These relationships (that former SWAPO exiles had) with family and friends began to buckle under the pressure of the exiles' economic dependence on the former (e.g Namhila, 1997, p.166). Without any comprehensive transitional economic assistance or the government to provide an alternative source of income, most exiles found themselves alienated and isolated from family and friends who became frustrated with their continual dependence on their limited resources.

3.2.3 SWAPO exiles and the cycle of economic hardship in the early 1990s

According to Tapscott (1994) difficulties of reintegration that returnees face after repatriation is partly because of the limited mandate that repatriation agencies like the UNHCR often have, that is, their mandates typically end with the physical translocation of refugees. In Namibia's case, this would mean UNHCR's mission was considered accomplished once SWAPO exiles were released to family and friends. However, as the life stories of former SWAPO exiles above show, the same families and friends who

¹⁸⁸ Clifton transcript 12, pp. 4-5 (13/06/2018)

jubilantly welcomed and embraced them eventually became frustrated of their unemployment and failure to contribute economically to the households that were hosting them. As cited earlier most of the immediate families, relatives and friends of former SWAPO exiles were barely making ends meet and the continual stay of former SWAPO exiles meant stretching resources which often led to tensions and sometimes complete breakdown of relationships.¹⁸⁹

However, it is pertinent to understand that the majority of former SWAPO exiles were generally naïve as to how their reintegration process would work in the post-colony. For instance, many assumed that because SWAPO had given them assignments in exile, that this would be the case in post-colonial Namibia. For example, Saki points to how he was patiently waiting for Swapo Party to call him and give him a new assignment in the NDF under its communications unit as he had been trained in communications under PLAN, but the call never came. The same case goes for Jeremiah (Selma's husband) a qualified pilot sent to Libya by SWAPO to train as a pilot, the call from the Swapo Party led government never came. These two cases illustrate how it took time for some former SWAPO exiles to become disillusioned with the realities of post-colonial Namibia which required the majority of former SWAPO exiles to take the initiative to reintegrate themselves breaking the cycle of dependence on SWAPO which had begun in exile. Namhila (1997) also points to the same phenomenon when she describes how difficult it was for former SWAPO exiles (in the early 1990s) to break the dependency syndrome, as SWAPO used to take care of their most basic needs which many realized they now had to cater for (themselves) in the post-colony (p. 191).

¹⁸⁹ The life stories of Selma and Saki after repatriation show how relationships with family and friends broke down due to the dependence of the former on the latter

However, it is important to be cognizant of the fact that breaking the dependency syndrome would require former SWAPO exiles to engage in gainful economic activities such as employment (in the public or private sector) or self-employment. This then begs the question, was Namibia's economy ready to accommodate former SWAPO exiles who would have attempted to self-reintegrate?

According to Tapscott (1994), 45-55% of all returnees (including former SWAPO exiles) were unemployed two years after repatriation (in 1991) (p. 254). Unemployment figures amongst PLAN ex-fighters (in the early 1990s) was even much higher, with conservative estimates placing them at 80% in comparison with 35% of the general populace McMullin (2013). Government initiatives that created employment for SWAPO exiles particularly the newly established NDF or the Development Brigade absorbed a limited number of PLAN ex-fighters leaving the rest to look for positions in the public or private sector.¹⁹⁰ The private sector was particularly limited for as Metsola (2006) noted, the Namibian economy is dominated by a capital-intensive private sector that contributes substantial revenue into state treasury but offers very few employment opportunities. Meanwhile even for the jobs that were available, securing those jobs was an uphill task for many former SWAPO exiles as a lot of obstacles stood in their way. For instance, employers were sceptical of former SWAPO exiles' qualifications especially those from socialist countries (e.g. Eastern Europe, Cuba and parts of Africa) which were often non-accredited or accredited by the host country (Tapscott & Mulongeni, 1990). These qualifications were often viewed by employers as mere solidarity qualifications (Preston et al., 1993 p.15). Take for example Helvis (from chapter two) she notes that although she had a teaching diploma qualification from

¹⁹⁰ 13% of SWAPO exiles absorbed into NDF

Zambia (which qualified her to teach from grade one to twelve) officials at the ministry of education insinuated her qualifications were fake, particularly as her diploma was written *basic education training*.¹⁹¹ Moreover, there was also widespread employer (private sector) discrimination against former SWAPO exiles based on their perceived support for Swapo Party (Preston et al., 1993). All these coupled with a global recession that affected Namibia in the early 1990s meant that securing employment for most former SWAPO exiles was bound to be a mammoth task (Preston 1994).

In light of the above facts, it is paramount that we objectively assess the circumstances that the majority of SWAPO exiles faced. What becomes clear is that a pattern of economic hardship emerges which pushed many former SWAPO exiles like Selma and her young family to the brink. For instance, the assumption by UNHCR that SWAPO exiles would be accommodated and taken care of by family members was not true for all SWAPO exiles, as relatives and friends of SWAPO exiles soon became frustrated of their slow economic reintegration process often ill-treating them, verbally abusing them and in some instances even starving them. Selma and Clifton's plight exemplify how this assumption was short-sighted. These scenarios could have potentially been circumvented had a comprehensive transitional economic/reinsertion package been prepared for at least the first two years to allow for a smooth transition. Moreover, the failure of UNTAG's UNHCR to monitor, evaluate and follow up on the welfare of repatriated refugees meant many former SWAPO exiles like Selma who were abused by their families ended up destitute with nowhere to go for assistance.

¹⁹¹ Helvis transcript 5, p. 3 (23/02/2018)

The absence of a comprehensive transitional economic/reinsertion package would have had little impact had the Swapo Party led government been able to provide jobs or alternative income such as gratuity payments to unemployed former SWAPO exiles, but as evidence suggests, public sector jobs were offered to a limited number of former SWAPO exiles, moreover initiatives such as the Development Brigade under the Ministry of Lands, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (MLRR) were not properly managed and provided skills that did not match job markets demands (Preston et al., 1993 p.14; Metsola 2010).¹⁹² Other former SWAPO exiles interviewed like Saki, Ueshitile and Alberts indicated their willingness to go back and finish their education but could not as they mentioned they were no scholarships specifically targeting unemployed former SWAPO exiles like them. All this coupled with lack of family support meant some former SWAPO exiles were pressed from all sides with little or no hope of economic reintegration. Under these circumstances economic hardship was inevitable and eventually these disgruntled former SWAPO exiles took to the streets from the mid-1990s to demand for government employment. The economic uncertainty of those early years delayed the economic reintegration of many former SWAPO exiles as some could not escape the poverty entrapment leaving a lasting impact on their economic reintegration trajectories with the effects still visible today, three decades after repatriation. It is from this vantage point that some disgruntled former SWAPO exiles have over the last decade began to question who was supposed to be responsible for their welfare in the aftermath of repatriation and to what extent the UNHCR or/and the state were complicit to this end.

¹⁹² Preston (1997) notes that many of the former SWAPO exiles who were given land and resettled under the MLRR land resettlement scheme were still living in abject poverty and some still staying in the tents provided by UNHCR during repatriation three years after repatriation due to lack of financial support from the MLRR (p.469)

3.3 Namibians Repatriated in 1989: Confronting past injustice or strategic lobbying?

The economic hardships experienced by former SWAPO exiles in the aftermath of repatriation as exemplified by the life histories narrated above point to the problematic legacy of UNHCR's repatriation process under UNTAG. Consequently, an emerging discourse critical of UNHCR's repatriation process has emerged in the last five years leading to the emergence of at least three groups seeking 'full' compensation from the UN for what they perceive as a poorly executed repatriation process. The groups namely: *Namibian Refugees Repatriated in 1989*; *Concerned Group of Refugees Repatriated in 1989* and *Committee of Refugees Repatriated in 1989* have petitioned the UN to provide answers as to why there was no adequate transitional economic assistance. From these three groups, the largest and most influential is *Namibians Repatriated in 1989* which we will abbreviate NRI 1989 for the purpose of this dissertation. NRI 1989 claims to have registered up to 20 000 members from across the country's thirteen regions.¹⁹³ The group is currently led by Ueshitile Peyolo Shekupe who is also a PLAN ex-fighter. The organization has both PLAN ex-fighters and non-combatant former SWAPO exiles. The inclusion of PLAN ex-fighters into the refugee category (in NRI 1989) would normally not be the case as combatants are usually not labelled as refugees. However, due to the framing of Namibia's cease-fire agreement, PLAN ex-fighters alongside other non-combatant former SWAPO exiles were to be repatriated as refugees, that is, returning to Namibia as civilians under UNHCR. Consequently, all the organization's (NRI 1989) members regardless of whether they fought with PLAN or not identify themselves as refugees.

¹⁹³ Interview transcript 3, p. 11 Angula (Public Relations officer of NRI 1989) (10/02/2018)

NRI 1989 raise a powerful discourse regarding the absence of a comprehensive transitional economic package from UNHCR that they now claim they were supposed to have received in 1989 during repatriation. To understand why NRI 1989 are making these claims today it is imperative to look at how UNHCR handles repatriation currently. The concept of a transitional economic assistance is today used by the UNHCR as a means of helping returning refugees to re-establish themselves when they go back to their home communities after conflict. For instance, it has been reported that between 2016 and 2017, UNHCR distributed a total of US\$1.2 billion (in cash assistance to refugees) in partnership with governments, UN agencies, NGOs and the private sector.¹⁹⁴ Among these cash assistance programmes includes the reinstallation grant. Among those who recently benefited from the reinstallation grant is 47-year-old Mohamed Noor Omar, who fled to Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya after fleeing civil war in his native Somalia in the early 1990s. Mohamed returned to Mogadishu in 2017 and received grants totalling US\$1,600 which he has since used to buy a fishing boat; he makes US\$7 to US\$10 a day depending on the catch, this income is sufficient to meet Mohamed's basic needs (Mwangi and Mutsindikwa 2018).¹⁹⁵ When one compares the reinstallation grants of US\$1,600 that Mohamed received from UNHCR and the R10, pot, blanket, axe and bag of beans that SWAPO exiles received after repatriation, one begins to appreciate why NRI 1989 feel cheated and betrayed by the UN. Chairman of NRI 1989 Ueshitile Shekupe argues:

...What we are asking on the level of refugees is why we were not properly repatriated... the issue is on the UN document on repatriation and resettlement of refugees... UNTAG just dropped us at the camps... A lot of our families were dead by the time we came back. So there was need for assistance... we were supposed to be left self-sustained... what did the UN agree with the South African administration?... what happened to the budget allocation from

¹⁹⁴ <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2018/8/5b6c40f04/cash-assistance-gives-refugees-power-choice.html>

¹⁹⁵ <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2018/8/5b6c40f04/cash-assistance-gives-refugees-power-choice.html>

UNTAG. What was the money allocated to refugees used for ? (Ueshitile transcript 1 p. 5, December 4, 2017)¹⁹⁶

In light of contemporary trends of how UNHCR supports refugees in the 21st century with comprehensive economic packages such as the reinstallation grant, NRI 1989 have found a basis on which they can make demands to the UN. To that end Ueshitile Shekupe notes:

...we are petitioning the UN Secretary-General...we want an audited report of the budget of the repatriation agreed on the ceasefire... we want to see the report which said mission accomplished in Namibia which convinced the Security Council to order the withdrawal of UNTAG (Ueshitile transcript 1 p. 6, December 4, 2017).¹⁹⁷

Similarly, NRI 1989 Public Relations Officer Vaino Angula argues that refugees elsewhere in the world have been treated far better than how SWAPO exiles were treated by UNHCR. The meagre transitional economic assistance SWAPO exile refugees received has become a rallying point which NRI 1989 continues to stand on as they push for compensation. Vaino Angula states:

...refugees in Sudan and Syria who were repatriated under the supervision of the UN received packages and were resettled properly...even though some of us were PLAN fighters we were repatriated as refugees, so the same courtesy of rehabilitation and resettlement that refugees got in South Africa, Angola, Mozambique financially was and is supposed to be extended to us. Are you telling me that if you were sick after repatriation a R10 was going to take you to hospital? – of course not (Angula transcript 3, pp. 10-11, February 10, 2018)¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Ueshitile transcript 1, p.5 (04/12/2017)

¹⁹⁷ Ueshitile transcript 1, p.6 (04/12/2017)

¹⁹⁸ Angula transcript 3, p.10-11 (10/02/2018)



Figure 4: Former SWAPO exiles repatriated in 1989 marching towards UN headquarters to deliver a petition on their dissatisfaction with the 1989 repatriation process. *Courtesy of New Era 2016-11-11, <https://neweralive.na/posts/war-veterans-petition-ban-ki-moon>*

The issue of Resettlement that Angola raises above is linked to the UNHCR's local partner, CCN which set up the Repatriation Resettlement and Reconstruction Committee (RRR Committee) to facilitate and assist with the repatriation process locally. According to Dzinesa (2006) the "...RRR's principal task was the reception and short-term care of returnees prior to their departure for homes or other chosen destinations" (p. 218).¹⁹⁹ One could argue that the words *resettlement* and *reconstruction* within the phrase RRR were to a large extent misleading considering the committee's task was limited to reception and short term care of returnees. Consequently, this has led to organizations like NRI 1989 using these terminologies to

¹⁹⁹ This task included installation of cooking and sanitary facilities, water and electricity supply in reception centres, transportation of returnees from entry points to reception centres and then to their respective homes or special centres run by CCN member churches, as well as provision for special categories including orphans, the elderly and disabled (Dzinesa 2006:218)

justify why UNHCR through their local partner CCN did not complete what they had promised, that is, resettlement and reconstruction for former SWAPO exiles. Another word that has been used by NRI 1989 is rehabilitation. This of course was not used by UNHCR nor its local partner CCN but has been derived from the former Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (MLRR) which had programmes meant to address the long-term need of returnees and internally displaced people (Dzinesa 2006 p. 241).²⁰⁰ Although it is difficult to quantify the impact of this ministry, research suggests it had minimal impact on former SWAPO exiles, with only a few thousand PLAN ex-fighters initially benefiting from programmes such as the Development Brigade Corporation (DBC) or from the land resettlement programme (Preston et al., 1993; Preston 1997; McMullin 2013; Metsola 2006; Dzinesa 2006, 2017).²⁰¹ Surprisingly NRI 1989 has steered clear from targeting the Namibian government nor MLRR's programmes as they argued their contention is with UNTAG on the repatriation process of which Swapo Party was not yet in power at the time.²⁰² To that end, NRI 1989 chairman states:

We do not want the Namibian government involved. We told the government we do not want them involved as we do not want this to become a political issue, *because it is an international issue* (Ueshitile transcript 1 p. 6, December 4, 2017) (in italics my emphasis).²⁰³

The emphasis by NRI 1989 chairperson Ueshitile Shekupe that their petition is an international issue is a strategy meant to further side-line the Swapo Party led

²⁰⁰ Also falling under MLRR was the Development Brigade later called Development Brigade cooperation (DBC) a skills training programme which recruited unemployed ex-fighters equipping them with skills in preparation for the job market.

²⁰¹ None of the PLAN ex-fighters interviewed for this project were recruited into the Development Brigade or its successor the Development Brigade Corporation (DBC)

²⁰² Ueshitile transcript 1 p. 6 (04/12/2017)

²⁰³ Ueshitile transcript 1 p. 6 (04/12/2017)

government, which they suspect wants to block their bid for compensation and in the event they receive the compensation, would attempt to administrate the compensation. Such deep mistrust is the result of widespread speculation amongst the NRI 1989 members that Swapo Party may have received funding from UNHCR for their reintegration (in 1989) and misused the funds. Meanwhile in 2016, in response to NRI 1989's petitions, the UNHCR has categorically denied retaining any funds from the 1989 repatriation process and ironically have referred NRI 1989 back to the government arguing it was and still is governments responsibility to integrate them into society.²⁰⁴

In light of the above facts, it is imperative to understand the complex case of NRI 1989. In many ways the group represents a disadvantaged demographic of former SWAPO exiles with its ranks swelled by the unemployed, low income earners and retirees that had low income jobs.²⁰⁵ The majority of the economically disadvantaged former SWAPO exiles who were interviewed for this research project registered to be members of this group, whilst the economically better off former SWAPO exiles also interviewed for this research project showed little interest or dismissed the organization's cause. For instance, Lovisa (not real name) a former SWAPO exile and manager at a local bank suggested NRI 1989 was a lost cause, she argued:

I think that money was never there. In fact when you properly interrogate these people they have no real argument. It's just like the struggle kids, someone is using them for political mileage. For me I don't go with the crowd, I reason. For me NRI 1989 or RRR is a lost cause, they are wasting their energy they should rather ask the government to give them what belongs to them. The UN era is over, Martti Ahtisaari probably forgot [she chuckles]. They should ask for help from their government (Lovisa Transcript 8 p. 9, April 22, 2018) .²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ <https://www.leramobile.com/content/65493/UN-says-no-funds-for-Namibian-returnees-from-Angola/>

²⁰⁵ Ueshitile Shekupe states that the majority of NRI 1989 members are impoverished former SWAPO exiles (Ueshetile transcript 1 p 6 (04/12/2017).

²⁰⁶ Lovisa Transcript 8 p. 9 (22/04/2018)

In many ways the economically thriving former SWAPO exiles view their comrades in NRI 1989 as opportunists rather than having a genuine cause. For Lovisa, this group represents former SWAPO exiles who failed to make it in life and are desperate to get something substantial for retirement. While this view could be dismissed as mere bourgeoisie talk coming from someone detached from reality, they may be some credence to this view. For example, the insistence on the group to label themselves refugees after more than 25 years after Independence is questionable. This is because some of the members of this group conveniently switch between identifying themselves as refugees, PLAN ex-fighters and freedom fighters. The argument being when making demands to the government they are PLAN ex-fighters or freedom fighters but when in NRI 1989 they conveniently switch to becoming refugees. This contradiction puts their motive into question, prompting the likes of Lovisa to be dismissive of their cause. However, Ranger (1994) in assessing the identity shifts that returnees had in Zimbabwe suggests returnees' fluid identities are mechanisms they use for 'integration' (p.289). In light of Ranger's assertion it would therefore, not be far-fetched to consider NRI 1989 members fluid identities as an innovative mechanism they have adopted for reintegration purposes in the post colony. In this way, one could view former SWAPO exiles' shifting identities as coping mechanisms, especially when one is cognizant of the dire economic conditions of most of the exiles. As pointed out earlier many of the former SWAPO exiles interviewed who are part of NRI 1989 are the very same group that suffered economic marginalization in the early 1990s with most of them entrapped in economic hardship/poverty in the first decade after Namibia's Independence. Although UNTAG withdrew in 1990 it is important to realize that the same group of SWAPO exiles that they assumed would spontaneously reintegrate into society are still

economically disadvantaged today. In other words, this group of former SWAPO exiles (NRI 1989) represents the returnees that never really caught up with the rest of the Namibian society economically. This notion is best summed up with the words of Ueshitile Shekupe who states that:

...when I left the country I was a contract labourer and I fled the poverty, but yet 28 years after Independence I am still in poverty (Ueshitile transcript 1 p. 6, December 4, 2017).²⁰⁷

Therefore it appears that former SWAPO exiles in NRI 1989 have been pushed by decades of marginalization as well as the limitations of reintegration programmes that have proven to be not as comprehensive as they would have liked. The notion of still living in poverty after 28 years as noted by Ueshitile Shekupe is arguably more of a reflection on government's reintegration, politics, programmes and the state of the national economy over the last three decades than it is of UNTAG (McMullin 2004).²⁰⁸ These three factors are more likely to have pushed members of this group to shift their focus from government to the UN with the hope of obtaining restitution that can arguably do for them what the Namibian government has failed to do.

In conclusion, NRI 1989, regardless of their opportunistic tendencies are a manifestation of what appears to have been a rushed repatriation process culminating from a compromised mandate that had been dictated to suit the major powers embroiled in the Cold War. Very little attention was given to the actual needs of SWAPO exiles. The minimalist approach of DD by UNTAG was bound to have a negative impact on the thousands of SWAPO exiles repatriated by the UNHCR. However, by understanding the current trends and practices employed by UNHCR in-terms of

²⁰⁷ Ueshitile transcript 1 p. 6 (04/12/2017)

²⁰⁸ McMullin (2004) is noted for the notion of "reintegration back into basic poverty"

reintegration of refugees (e.g. reinstallation grants), NRI 1989 have created a platform on which a conversation can be held regarding what happened during repatriation and its aftermath. The life histories that have been explored present us with the grim reality of the untold suffering many former SWAPO exiles experienced in the aftermath of repatriation and presents us with an alternative narrative of UNTAG's mission in Namibia. By comparing themselves to other refugees in different parts of the world, NRI 1989 are demanding recognition of how they were wronged by an international organization they entrusted their lives with and perhaps the notion that UNTAG accomplished its mission needs to be reconsidered.

Nevertheless, as I have suggested, UNTAG's minimalist approach to Namibia's political transition impacted far more on some former SWAPO exiles than others. One of the significant variables shaping UNTAG's impact is the human and social capital that various Namibians acquired in exile. Chapter four draws attention to former exiles who, to differing degrees, were able to get gainful employment in the immediate aftermath of repatriation due to their human and social capital. UNTAG's limited mandate that drove some former SWAPO exiles towards destitution had minimal impact on most of the life histories that will be explored in chapter four, thereby further cementing the notion that there is no single narrative to life experiences in the aftermath of repatriation nor to economic reintegration in Namibia. Moreover most of the life histories explored in the next chapter show that what may have constrained some former SWAPO exiles was an opportunity for others to become financially/economically independent.

Chapter 4: SWAPO's human capital Investment in Exile: how class distinctions in post-colonial Namibia were unwittingly carved out in Exile

4.1 Human Capital and Social Capital

Human capital has been defined as the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic wellbeing (OECD).²⁰⁹ Human capital is an integral part for the overall success of human development. According to Amartya Sen (1997), human capital is pertinent to human development and is key to unlocking economic improvement through increased productivity which leads to economic growth (p.1959).²¹⁰ Sen argues that although humans have many capabilities or qualities that can be used as 'capital' in production, education tends to be viewed more favourably as it not only makes a person more efficient in production but may also lead to a higher income to the individual who acquires it (Ibid). Moreover, education may in some instances lead to a person being taken more seriously, that is, a certain level of respect is given to individuals who have undergone some level of educational training as opposed to those who have not (ibid).²¹¹

SWAPO's human capital investment in exile, particularly post-secondary education is worth exploring to understand how careers in the post-colony were shaped in exile. SWAPO was quite aggressive in its pursuit of educating and training SWAPO exiles in

²⁰⁹ <https://www.oecd.org/insights/37967294.pdf>

²¹⁰ Other forms of capital include financial capital, natural capital, social capital and physical capital

²¹¹ Ellis (2000), also points to how human capital can also be increased through investment in education, training and through skills acquired by pursuing specific profession(s) (pp. 33-34)

anticipation of using that human capital in post-independence Namibia to build the new nation. Therefore, in this respect, it is important to gauge to what extent post-secondary education obtained in exile played a role in enhancing the economic prospects of SWAPO exiles in the post-colony by clearly linking education acquired in exile and the career paths of former SWAPO exiles in the post-colony. Previously published literature has tended to address the significance of post-secondary education in a generalized way, citing how former SWAPO exiles educated in exile had greater chances of securing employment in the post-colony albeit the challenges they faced of recognition of some of their qualifications (Tapscott 1994; Preston et al. 1993). Other more detailed accounts of former SWAPO exiles' exile education and their subsequent career paths in the post-colony have tended to be personal biographies (e.g. Namhila, 1997), which by nature are limited to the experiences of an individual. Therefore, there is a need to present the life histories of former SWAPO exiles from different backgrounds and the significance (or the lack thereof) of their post-secondary educational qualifications (acquired in exile) in the post-colony.

Equally important to note is the importance of social capital, particularly social networks that former SWAPO exiles developed in exile. Pierre Bourdieu (1986) has defined social capital as "...the aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). This understanding of social capital is particularly relevant to former SWAPO exiles who have social networks dating back to their time in exile

during the liberation struggle.²¹² It is important to note that many of the personal relationships/social networks formed in exile extended well into the post-colonial era and were integral in the reintegration processes of former SWAPO exiles (Miettinen et al., 2017, p.16-17). In the post-colony these networks forged in exile often replaced networks based on kin (ibid). Based on this understanding the chapter will highlight the role that social networks played in assisting and facilitating the economic reintegration of former SWAPO exiles particularly in how these (social) networks shaped employment opportunities in the post-colony.

Sen's (1997) human development theory and Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory are particularly insightful with regards to mapping individual trajectories of former SWAPO exiles, as these theories assess development on an individual basis as opposed to measuring development on a national scale. In the context of this thesis, national scale would be assessing development of former SWAPO exiles as a collective as opposed to assessing the development of individual former SWAPO exiles. Although this thesis does not use the human development theory as an analytical framework (as this is a much broader concept that would require an independent study), this chapter will borrow the terminologies of human and social capital in order to get a better understanding of how these forms of capital (or the lack thereof) acquired during the liberation struggle influenced the economic trajectories and individual economic development of former SWAPO exiles in the post colony.²¹³

²¹² Most of these networks are buttressed in former SWAPO exiles' shared experiences in exile, in a way these comrades consider themselves as being part of a broader group of former SWAPO exiles.

²¹³ Other DDR scholars have borrowed the concept of human capital (e.g Rhea, 2014; Torjesen, 2013; Devon et al., 2012; Gjelsvik, 2009)

SWAPO was particularly ‘obsessed’ with developing human capital that would eventually spur economic development in post-independence Namibia, however not all received opportunities and even among those who acquired human capital, not all ended up with the desired education and skills set due to the military-style set up in SWAPO camps where individuals were often dictated to which studies or skills there were to receive, that is, what they were to study, when and where. Therefore, this chapter will also critically engage with the exile context in which people accessed education and received degrees and how this has impacted former SWAPO exiles individual professional development in the post-colony. Furthermore, imperatively this chapter in part generates knowledge that pushes the notion that war is not always a place of, misery, dearth and inactivity but rather it can be a place where social networks are established, new skills are acquired, talents discovered, nurtured and where professions are birthed. This has become an important subject lately, as DDR scholars try to understand the true impact of different forms of capital in the reintegration processes of former combatants (Torjesen, 2013, p. 3).

4.1.1 Human and social capital in reintegration studies

There is a growing literature that suggests that ex-combatants in many cases do not always see themselves as victims as often presented in the dominant DDR narrative (Alexander & McGregor, 2004). According to Keen (2000) in Torjesen (2013), war creates a particular set of assets and opportunities for combatants (e.g. Torjesen, 2013; Devon et al., 2012; Gjelsvik, 2009) which they did not have prior to joining the war. For instance, some combatants and commanders travel widely and acquire skills that are useful in the post-war period. In the case of PLAN ex-fighters, some travelled to the eastern bloc to receive military training in various fields (Williams, 2015; Wallace,

2011) and after Independence, some of those skills may have given them an advantage as far as securing a sustainable livelihood. Similarly, former SWAPO exiles who also went into exile benefited immensely from human capital skills they received in exile particularly educational opportunities that they received through various scholarship programmes extended to former SWAPO exiles under SWAPO, one would also assume that such skills would have aided their ability to gain a meaningful livelihood in post-independence Namibia as noted above earlier. Scholars like Dzinesa (2017) have noted that in general “civilian” returnees ended up having an advantage over PLAN ex-fighters as they had ample time to pursue educational (non-military) opportunities as compared to their PLAN comrades who either obtained human capital skills linked to military training or did not get a chance to pursue educational opportunities at all as they spent most of their years in exile at the front fighting (pp. 110-111). The exception was of course those PLAN ex-fighters cum civilian returnees who initially were PLAN ex-fighters but were later reassigned (by SWAPO) to serve in civilian roles in exile, which often afforded them the opportunity to pursue other (non-military) educational opportunities. The downside of PLAN ex-fighters receiving militarily biased human capital was that in post-colonial Namibia these skills were limited to the NDF and in the case that such individuals (PLAN ex-fighters) were not recruited (as was the case with the majority of PLAN ex-fighters) then these skills would become redundant with the alternative being lowly paid (barely minimum wage) jobs such as becoming security guards (if they were fortunate enough to get such a job). It therefore becomes imperative to identify the transferability and applicability of skills from war to peace, as not all human capital acquired in exile translated into an economic advantage in post-colonial Namibia. Moreover, it is equally important also to identify former SWAPO exiles who did not obtain comprehensive post-secondary education

from exile and how that impacted their economic reintegration in post-colonial Namibia.

In addition, it is also imperative to acknowledge that war is an environment that facilitates the building of social networks that sometimes can contribute positively to reintegration processes of individuals in the post-conflict era.²¹⁴ Therefore, it is pertinent to map the significance of former SWAPO exiles' social capital acquired from war, especially personal connections and networks with SWAPO officials. What is key will be to identify to what extent former SWAPO exiles were able to leverage their social networks towards economic results (Rhea, 2014, p. 75).²¹⁵ This is particularly important in a society like Namibia, governed by a single liberation movement/party and with a government dominated economy. Therefore, given the aforementioned points on human and social capital particularly with regards to Namibia's former SWAPO exiles, it will not be far-fetched to assume that many of them benefited immensely whilst in exile, often accessing opportunities (education) and being part of social networks that aided their reintegration processes in the post-colony. Many educational and professional development opportunities some former SWAPO exiles received, they would not have necessarily got, had they not gone to join the liberation struggle in exile.

²¹⁴ The opposite is true in some instances where networks from war can be the cause of remobilization. This is particularly true in cases where militias are disbanded in fragile states and close networks remain between former combatants in post-war era.

²¹⁵ Rhea (2014) makes the point of social capital's ability to be leveraged towards economic outcomes by both individuals and communities in ex-combatants reintegration processes in the Great Lakes Region (GLR).

4.2.2 SWAPO's Investment in Human Capital in exile

SWAPO and several other Southern African liberation movements were globally recognized as nations in exile. As a result, they had unique opportunities and incentives to educate their members. Pro-liberation sentiments in some friendly Scandinavian countries such as Sweden led to scholarships being extended to refugee students from Southern Africa from as early as 1964 (Sellstrom, 1999). Sweden in particular extended support to all liberation movements in Southern Africa particularly from 1969 when the Swedish parliament approved a policy of direct official humanitarian assistance to Southern African liberation movements, that is FRELIMO (Mozambique), (SWAPO) Namibia, ANC (South Africa) and ZANU/ZAPU (Zimbabwe) (Sellstrom, 1999, pp. 18-19).²¹⁶ The total budget of humanitarian assistance (from the Swedish government) to these liberation movements by the time of South Africa's Independence in 1994 was around 4 billion Swedish kroner (Sellstrom, 1999, p. 19). Included in this humanitarian aid were scholarships that saw a steady stream of refugees mostly affiliated with these liberation movements studying in Sweden and elsewhere in the world. Even as early as 1962 a number of SWAPO and South West Africa National Union (SWANU) students had begun to get scholarships to study in other European countries (including Sweden) and the United States of America through UN scholarships allocated to Namibians (Williams, 2017, p. 128). Over time more scholarships became available to Namibians for post-secondary education, most notably was the Commonwealth Secretariat's Fellowship and Training Programme (FTP) which by 1989 had provided support to over 1500 Namibians (Akawa, 2014, pp. 164-165). Other donors included governments

²¹⁶ Sellstrom (1999) notes that as early as 1964 funding for refugee students from Southern Africa was already in place (p. 73 -74)

from the Netherlands, Austria, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Cuba, German Democratic Republic (GDR), Cuba, USSR, China and several NGO's.

For many Namibians particularly in the 1960s, education dominated exile discourse and many left with the intention of getting an education in exile (Williams, 2017, p. 139). In fact, Williams (2017) suggests SWAPO officials who wanted to recruit new members for SWAPO in exile lured Namibians through the prospect of them being awarded scholarships once they joined SWAPO in exile (p. 139). Metsola (2001) nods in this direction when he alludes to the fact that two distinct groups of Namibians left during the liberation struggle, that is, the “militants” whose main aim was to participate in the liberation struggle and “educationalists” who were seeking better education with the hope of getting better employment after Independence (p. 116).

Besides international scholarships for post-secondary education, SWAPO also made efforts to educate refugees under its care particularly at the primary school level. For instance, primary school education was offered as early as 1973 at Old Farm in Zambia (Akawa, 2014, p 160). Meanwhile, from the 1960s the UNDP facilitated scholarships for Namibians who had not completed secondary education (and in some cases university education) to go and study in friendly countries such as Congo, Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia, Ghana, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Mauritius, Senegal and The Gambia (Akawa, 2014, p. 161; Namhila, 1997, p. 59).²¹⁷

²¹⁷ With the assistance of friendly countries such as Cuba, SWAPO established upper secondary schools in Cuba, such as the Hendrick Witbooi School (1978) and the Hosea Kutako School (1984). With financial and technical support of Norway, SWAPO also established the Namibia Secondary Technical School in Loudima, southern Congo in 1986.

The establishment of the United Nations Institute for Namibia (UNIN) in 1976 reaffirmed the UN's commitment to Namibia's liberation cause (Melber, 2014, p.8). This institute was key in boosting post-secondary training of Namibians (UNIN, 1986; Akawa, 2014). It was reported by UNIN that by 1985 over 1200 Namibians had attended the institute UNIN (1986). More importantly, the training of Namibians in post-secondary education (in exile), including university and technical studies was viewed by SWAPO as being crucial to prepare Namibians to take over professions previously held by the minority white community.²¹⁸ The institution offered five year courses with special focus on lower and middle level of administration and management (Akawa, 2014, p. 162). Some of the UNIN graduates went on to get scholarships through the UN and enrolled in universities abroad. The significance of UNIN cannot be over-emphasised particularly in terms of the number of Namibian graduates it produced and its symbolism as an institution that was preparing Namibians for self-rule in the post-independence era.

4.3 SWAPO exiles' trajectories: From Exile to Independence

Despite the massive investment of SWAPO in post-secondary education in exile, not all exiles were able to access or benefit from the educational opportunities (e.g. scholarships and bursaries). According to Tapscott (1994), only a small fraction (about 15%) of the 40 000 - 45 000 returnees who were in exile accessed comprehensive post-secondary training. In fact, Tapscott alleges that most SWAPO exiles' training was mainly military related and/or elementary artisanal and agricultural skills taught in the camps especially in Angola (ibid).

²¹⁸ And often these jobs required post-secondary education and training.

In spite of this, the few SWAPO exiles who benefited from post-secondary education and training in exile are generally better off economically (in post-independence Namibia) than their comrades who did not get comprehensive post-secondary training (in exile). Tapscott (1995) affirms this when he suggests that access to training of SWAPO exiles in exile led to social differentiation in the post-colony particularly in employment opportunities that were available for the educated (SWAPO exiles who had post-secondary qualifications) in comparison to those who lacked post-secondary qualifications (p.162). These disparities can only be explored through the individual life histories of SWAPO exiles. Whilst statistics give us an idea of the level and extent of educational training of SWAPO exiles in exile, only life histories can give us details regarding the transferability, relevance and ability of those skills to translate to economic value that aided the economic reintegration of former SWAPO exiles. Moreover, life histories will also push beyond statistical measures for different exile categories and allow for analysis of social capital of individual former SWAPO exiles.

Hilya

As I embarked on my interviews, I began to notice a pattern of how rapid economic reintegration appeared to be synonymous with advanced post-secondary education amongst my interviewees. Although it is not absolute as a trend, it certainly does require attention, as it became a recurring trend. One of the former SWAPO exiles who gave me some insight into this was Hilya (not real name). I met Hilya around mid-April 2018. She currently holds the position of deputy director in the Ministry of Agriculture. Hilya professed that she was 'born into politics', her father having been one of the co-

founders of SWAPO. She notes that their house was like SWAPO's headquarters (HQ) in Windhoek during the liberation struggle. By the time that she left for exile in 1974, Hilya was heavily politicized and at that stage at the age of 13, she was already a card-carrying member of SWAPO. However, Hilya notes that her motivation to go into exile was not to fight, she narrates: "My main purpose was actually to go to school" (Hilya transcript 10 p. 1, April 15, 2018).²¹⁹ Hilya's desire to become educated in anticipation of a better livelihood than she had seen her parents live through was a burning desire that many young people at the time felt.²²⁰ In fact, Tapscott (1995) states:

It is noteworthy that many of the young people who went into exile were motivated as much by a desire for better education to improve their social standing as by the drive to take up arms in the struggle (Tapscott, 1995, p. 161).

Moreover, the opening of the Namibian-Angolan border in 1974 (due to the coup in Portugal that saw the new Portuguese government grant Independence to Portuguese colonies) saw a lot of primarily literate Oshiwambo speaking youth take the journey into exile (Wallace, 2011, pp. 279- 280; Namhila, 2013, p. 62).²²¹ Wallace (2011) estimates around 6 000 left between June 1974 and early 1975, with many young people leaving because of opposition to South African occupation and the desire to get better educational opportunities in exile (p. 280). Therefore, Hilya was not alone in having education as the main determinant to go into exile. With her father being a known SWAPO political activist as noted above, Hilya went along with him into exile to

²¹⁹ Hilya transcript 10, p. 1 (15/04/2018)

²²⁰ Hilya mentions that her family situation prior to her leaving for exile in 1974 was quite bad. Her father was in and out of jail so many times such that he could not take care of the family anymore. Meanwhile, her mother had to get two jobs to feed and take care of the family (Hilya transcript 10, p. 6, 15/04/2018)

²²¹ Wallace (2011) notes that elderly people were also part of that wave of 6 000 that left between 1974 and 1975 although they were in the minority (p. 280). Namhila (2013) notes how Mukwahepo described how there was an exodus of many Namibians going to Zambia (p. 62)

Zambia arriving the same year in 1974. Thereafter Hilya highlighted how she was sent for self-defence military training at Shatotwa camp (Zambia). Hilya noted that:

...the training was to make you combat ready if the enemy struck [attacked]. However, they realized that we were too young so we were sent to school in Lusaka at another camp [Old Farm] (Hilya transcript 10 p. 1, April 15, 2018).²²²

It is at Old Farm that Hilya's journey towards higher education truly began. Hilya mentions that she began with primary education at Old Farm with her teachers including the likes of Nahas Angula and Nangolo Mbumba.²²³ Hilya continued with her education in a linear fashion, completing her primary school and earning a scholarship to undertake her secondary education, that is, form 3 in Mauritius, she notes:²²⁴

...we were sent in groups to various countries for secondary school. Some were sent to Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone but I was sent to Mauritius until form 3. The security was tricky because the South Africans used to come. We reported to the UN and they returned us to Zambia. We were moved from Old Farm to another camp, I think its Nyango, before going to Angola...I was sent to Germany [German Democratic Republic, GDR] after Mauritius and there I completed my form 5 and did my 'A' level in Germany, so I speak fluent German...I then went to university in Germany ...I studied agriculture in Germany, I am an agronomist... I studied in Germany all the way up to Masters...When I returned from Germany in 1986, I was immediately sent to India for a six month training course on agricultural research...(Hilya transcript 10 pp. 1-2, April 15, 2018)²²⁵

Hilya did not only gain human capital from the German university she attended but she was able to gain practical experience whilst in the camps as well. According to Hilya, from Luanda she was deployed to Kwanza Sul, where she was appointed as production

²²² Hilya transcript 10, p. 1 (15/04/2018)

²²³ Nahas Angula served as prime minister of Namibia between 2005 and 2012, whilst Nangolo Mbumba is the current vice president of Namibia since February 2018. Both politicians served in SWAPO's leadership in exile.

²²⁴ While primary and junior secondary education became accessible to young SWAPO exiles coming from South West Africa in the 1970s (after the introduction of Old Farm in Zambia and later on several camps in Angola like Kwanza Sul), transitioning to senior secondary and post-secondary education was not always automatic as by that age a lot of exiles who had attended primary school and junior secondary school would have reached 18 years which was the age that SWAPO recruited young people into PLAN.

²²⁵ Hilya transcript 10, pp. 1-2 (15/04/2018)

manager to manage several agricultural projects that SWAPO had geared towards providing food security at the camp.²²⁶ Hilya's life history also portrays to some extent the important role that social networks played in setting her up for a job and eventual economic reintegration in the post-colony. This scenario of the intervention of her social networks is no better illustrated by two incidences that she describes that took place in exile, she notes:

...When I returned from Germany, I went to Luanda and they were deciding whether to send me to the front with all that education...they were already people in place for various things so if your expertise was not needed you were sent to the front...so I met Toivo Ya Toivo, he was my father's friend and when he saw my name he said "no, this child is not going", so I was lucky he took me out of that list and I stayed in the transit camp in Luanda (Hilya transcript 10 pp. 2-3, April 15, 2018).²²⁷

This intervention was a remarkable one and not only did it steer Hilya clear from the fighting (at the battlefield) but it led to her becoming an important administrative figure at Kwanza Sul where she became a production manager in charge of food security. Hilya does not mention directly how her scholarship to Germany, (that saw her study from lower secondary to Masters level) came about, but there is reason to believe that her influential father's connections could have led to her being "lucky" (the word that she uses when she describes Toivo ya Toivo's intervention that saved her from being deployed to the front). Despite her reluctance to acknowledge the social power her father's social networks had in shaping her destiny, Hilya's employment trajectory in the post-colony was once again facilitated by another intervention, only this time it was the president of the republic, she narrates the following story about how she landed a full time position at the Ministry of Agriculture:

...for me when I came back I did not have a job, I had to look for a job and could not find one even with my master's degree. The time when we came in

²²⁶ Hilya Transcript 10, p. 3 (15/04/2018)

²²⁷ Hilya transcript 10, pp.2-3 (15/04/2018)

the Boers were still in the system [occupying government jobs], so it was difficult to penetrate into the system. My friends and I, who studied agriculture, sent our applications for positions in agriculture at the ministry. When we returned to inquire about our applications 2-3 days later, we found our applications thrown into dustbins. The only person who intervened was the President, Sam Nujoma, who also knew we had studied agriculture and only at that request were we given jobs....(Hilya transcript 10 p. 4, April 15, 2018)²²⁸

Hilya's story of seeking employment is not different from the rest of former SWAPO exiles particularly educated ones who returned to exile with high expectations that they would easily obtain jobs, however this was not to be, as in most cases they found the majority of civil service jobs were occupied by the minority white community (Tapscott, 1995). For Hilya and her friends who studied agriculture, it took the intervention of President Sam Nujoma at the time for her to obtain a job, most likely due to her father's social networks, which she capitalized on both in exile and in the post-colony. Social networks were highly regarded by former SWAPO exiles as having them was key to one's ability to use their networks to improve their socio-economic standing in society especially for most former SWAPO exiles, who came back from exile with no financial or material wealth. In fact, Bourdieu (1986) argues that the volume of social capital that an individual has is dependent on the sum total of the volume of capital (one can effectively mobilise) each of their connections have (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249). In Hilya's case, it becomes apparent that her social capital was particularly significant as she was connected to the President who simply gave a directive for Hilya and her friends to get employment. Having such levels of social capital means Hilya was not your average former SWAPO exile, as although many former SWAPO exiles had social networks, few had networks that could command attention from Namibia's presidium. Therefore in a way, one could argue that for former SWAPO exiles in the post-colony,

²²⁸ Hilya transcript 10, p. 4 (15/04/2018)

it mattered whom your social networks (from exile) were and what influence they could command.

Hilya's appointment into the ministry of agriculture catapulted her into the middle class, leaving behind many of her SWAPO exile comrades who either remained unemployed or got jobs that had much lower income. Indeed one could argue that Hilya's human capital in exile, including the opportunities she received to study in Germany until master's level, aided her ability of gaining employment in the post-colony. Moreover, her role as production manager at a well-known SWAPO camp like Kwanza Sul meant that she became more visible most likely interacting with important people like President Sam Nujoma, coupled with her claims of her father being a co-founder of SWAPO this meant that Hilya's chances of succeeding in the post-colony were far higher than the average former SWAPO exile. This puts the spotlight on the importance of social networks that date back to the liberation struggle, relationships with particularly influential people who had the ability to facilitate the transformation of former SWAPO exiles' human capital into economic gain. Hilya's story of how social networks worked to her advantage is similar to General Shilongo whom we explored in chapter two. Upon General Shilongo's return from exile, because of his affiliations with a former commander, he was roped in during the 1989 election campaign to be head of security of SWAPO in Ovamboland region. And this led to him being later on called to Windhoek and to be inducted into the NDF in April 1989. Therefore, just like Hilya, General Shilongo's, social capital/networks facilitated his transition into economically gainful employment in the post-colony.

What we begin to see, in Hilya's case, as well as General Shilongo's case is an emerging economic gap between them and the rest of former SWAPO exiles, class formations that began in exile begin to take shape and form aided by their individual social networks. However, we should not be biased or assume that post-secondary education obtained in exile guaranteed a job in the post-colony, rather what we do notice is social networks became extremely important in obtaining a job early on after Independence. Cases of former SWAPO exiles who had advanced post-secondary education but failed to get a job primarily due to the absence of strong social networks have been highlighted before in this thesis. For instance, Jeremiah (Selma's husband), a qualified pilot (trained in Lybia) was jobless for 5 years, only obtaining employment as a messenger at Eros airport in 1995 and a job as a pilot in the NDF in 1996.²²⁹ In this case, Hilya's strong social networks as compared to Jeremiah's weak social networks was key in the former obtaining employment earlier than the latter.²³⁰

Often once individuals like Hilya got in the 'system' (became a civil servant), the sky became the limit in terms of upward mobility. Hilya narrates how her career has been on an upward trajectory from the time that she joined the Ministry of Agriculture:

...the ministry of agriculture gave me my first job in Rundu, Kavango, thereafter I got transferred through a forestry project in Windhoek. Afterwards, I applied and was promoted to extension officer, then senior agricultural training officer. Thereafter I became chief, I stayed in that position for 4 years before

²²⁹ Jeremiah's employer at Eros airport who gave him a job as a messenger in 1995, is the one who assisted him in translating his pilot certificate from Arabic to English, eventually aiding in his hiring by the Namibian Air force in 1996. Once again even in this case we see how social networks played a pivotal role in securing employment.

²³⁰ Moreover it is also important to note that the discipline that one got their qualifications and where they got their qualification also mattered. For instance, Jeremiah's pilot qualifications faced more scrutiny having been trained in Libya, in addition his pilot qualification certificate was in Arabic making it much more difficult for interpretation of the equivalency of his qualification to the Namibian one. In contrast Hilya received her qualification in agronomy from the GDR and her qualifications were likely to be less scrutinised and more acceptable to the minority white population (some of which are German speaking Namibians) that dominated the private sector and senior civil service/government positions.

eventually becoming deputy director, which is my current position (Hilya transcript 10 p. 4, April 15, 2018).²³¹

Securing a job earlier in government also meant that Hilya was going to benefit from government benefits such as free housing and eventually buying such properties at low prices. She narrates how she acquired a house

...For me I handled my things differently, when I started working I started saving, I was lucky because I was staying in a government house...so when the time came that government house, meanwhile I was saving. So when the time came that government houses were to be sold, preference was given to me as the tenant, this was in 2012...I paid for the house cash...when I received my N\$50 000 lump sum, I saved it and used it together with a small personal loan to buy the house cash from the government...by the time I retire, I will be done paying back the bank...(Hilya transcript 10 p. 7, April 15, 2018)²³²

Hilya's opportunity of having free housing and also being able to purchase the house at minimal cost is reminiscent of how General Shilongo received the same opportunity being a civil servant (see chapter two). Such opportunities carved out the likes of Hilya and General Shilongo belonging to a higher class than their comrades who did not receive comprehensive post-secondary education or received lower post-secondary education, such as Helvis and Ellise.²³³ Tapscott (1995) nods in this direction when he points to how the Swapo Party led government maintained existing employment benefits including general housing, car, medical and pension allowances (p. 164).

However, despite having had these advantages which at the surface appear to have elevated Hilya economically far above other former SWAPO exiles like Alberts, Ellise, Helvis and Saki, economic progress came at a cost. Getting a stable well paid job meant she was now the primary breadwinner for her larger extended family members. In other

²³¹ Hilya transcript 10, p. 4 (15/04/2018).

²³² Hilya transcript 10, p.7 (15/04/2018)

²³³ Helvis and Ellise are primary school teachers

words, the financial resources that she had were stretched thin. Hilya states that her mother and brothers were sick at the time and being a single mother with a daughter at the time meant that the financial burden (of taking care of her siblings and mother) was overwhelming to the point that she relied on food aid from CCN to supplement her salary. The CCN/RRR committee run programme issued food rations to all Namibian returnees who had opted to take the food distribution card at the time of repatriation (at the reception centres) (Nat J Colletta et al., 1996).²³⁴ The programme which was funded by UNHCR was limited in scope and entitled returnees (with the food distribution card) to 12 months of food rations starting from July 1989 (Colletta et al., 1996).²³⁵ It is this programme that Hilya refers to below. She notes:

I remember vividly that CCN used to give monthly ration to exiles – I had a child at the time...they gave 5 kg of maize meal per person, 2kg beans and 5 litres cooking oil. So these rations used to contribute [supplement] the money that I was earning as a salary to sustain my daughter and my family (Hilya transcript 10 pp. 4-5, April 15, 2018) ²³⁶

Therefore, it is imperative to understand that although former SWAPO exiles like Hilya who received comprehensive post-secondary education in exile (and had significant social networks) may have secured employment earlier on in the aftermath of Independence this did not shield them from dealing with the colonial legacies of inequality that had caused widespread inequality in Namibia. Hilya now had to bear the brunt of financially supporting her less fortunate family members. The case of Hilya

²³⁴ The food came courtesy of the World Food Programme (WFP). The food was transported by ship to Walvis Bay and then given to CCN/RRR (UNHCR's local partner) in Windhoek, which in turn transported the food to some 70 distribution centres across Namibia (Colletta et al 1996).

²³⁵ It is important to highlight that Hilya was the only respondent (from the interviews) who mentioned that she participated in the food ration programme. The programme was limited in scope, providing limited food rations and lasted for only 12 months from the the time of repatriation, which means by 1990 the programme had ended. Moreover, the programme did not give any cash benefits.

²³⁶ Hilya Transcript 10, pp. 4-5 (15/04/2018)

demonstrates the limitations of human and social capital and how these forms of capital did not free her from the pressures of her impoverished family members.

However, it is also important to understand that, the mentalities of former SWAPO exiles who stayed in exile is such that they had hopes and dreams of replicating the lifestyles they had seen in exile particularly those who studied and stayed in Europe and the United States of America (Tapscott, 1995, p. 162). For instance, Hilya mentions how her life in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) was very comfortable with her receiving a living stipend for both her time in senior secondary school as well as for her university education up until the completion of her master's degree.²³⁷ In light of this it is arguable that the referral to life being difficult by former SWAPO exiles like Hilya who obtained jobs early is partly because she could not replicate the lifestyle that she had observed whilst she was studying in the German Democratic Republic as she now had the added burden of providing for her mother and siblings who had not gone to exile.²³⁸ In contrast former SWAPO exiles like Selma (see chapter three) would have been content with a roof over her head and food on her table from a 'living wage', for she had not been accustomed nor seen any better lifestyle than that which she had seen in exile (SWAPO camps) in Angola henceforth her observation that life in exile (in the SWAPO camps in Angola) was better than what she had to go through (suffering) in the aftermath of Independence.²³⁹ Therefore when one juxtaposes what Hilya refers to as suffering in

²³⁷ Hilya was in Germany for several years and in the process learnt to speak fluent German and probably adapted to the western life style she was exposed to.

²³⁸ Hilya talks about how her salary was not enough and how life was tough even though she obtained employment at the ministry of agriculture that came with free accommodation from government – Hilya transcript 10, (15/04/2018)

²³⁹ Selma pointed out that she and her husband could not get employment for the first five years preceding Independence, and she had to endure emotional abuse from family members as well as face starvation, leading her to conclude that the suffering that she experienced in the aftermath of Independence was worse than life in SWAPO camps were at least she had food and was not constantly emotionally abused - reference to Selma Transcript 7, p.5 (29/05/2018), see also chapter three.

the aftermath of Independence and that of Selma, the conclusion would be that economic challenges and the perception of them by former SWAPO exiles is subjective and based on one's lived history. This is not surprising especially when one considers their different life histories and trajectories from exile to Independence.

Lovisa

Lovisa (not real name) is also one such former SWAPO exile who benefited from both human and social networks that stemmed from her father's affiliation with SWAPO. Lovisa grew up in Windhoek, her father was a senior member of SWAPO within Namibia at the time and at one point was acting President of SWAPO in Namibia. In 1974 at the age of 13, Lovisa decided to go to exile with her older sisters. She reckons that although she and her sisters were politicized at the time due to their exposure to their father's political activities they went to Zambia with the primary aim of getting a better education.²⁴⁰ At the time that Lovisa left for Zambia in 1974, her level of education was standard six and she was thirteen years old. Thereafter, after undergoing basic military training in Zambia, Lovisa was given a scholarship to go to Ghana to complete her secondary school, that is, from 1975 through 1979.²⁴¹

After completing her form four in Ghana (1979), Lovisa's professional career began to take shape as she was sent to Zambia by SWAPO to study journalism for a year at the

²⁴⁰ Lovisa mentions how she was motivated to go to Zambia with her sisters after she heard them talk about how they were better educational opportunities in Zambia. So she went with them and at the time her highest qualification was standard six –reference to Lovisa Transcript 8, p. 1 (22/04/2018)

²⁴¹ After receiving basic military training Lovisa was still too young to be drafted into PLAN, consequently a scholarship was arranged for her to go and study in Ghana.

African Literature Centre, soon after that, she was deployed to Voice of Namibia (VON) to work as a journalist. Again in 1981, Lovisa was sent to the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) to study Radio broadcast. Thereafter, Lovisa gained vast work experience in the journalism profession as she worked for VON in at least four countries across the African continent, that is, Angola, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Ethiopia. Even after all this exposure SWAPO once again organized a scholarship for Lovisa to study further, she notes:

...Then in 1987-1990, I was sent to Harare Polytechnic [Zimbabwe] to study mass communication. It was a national diploma in mass communication...when we came back in 1989, it was just to vote in the elections and then I had to go back to school. I only completed my diploma in 1990...I got a job soon after returning in July 1990 so it was not as tough as it was for other exiles...So in 1990 we are the ones who transformed South West Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SWABC) into Namibia Broadcasting Corporation (NBC)...(Lovisa transcript 8 pp. 2-3, April 22, 2018).²⁴²

What becomes apparent is that Lovisa's life story shows us a career trajectory that was shaped in exile, the human capital she gained during the liberation struggle particularly education and work experience set her up to not only getting a job immediately after Independence but also to joining the middle class and later on the upper middle class of Namibian society. She acknowledges this when she states:

...SWAPO indeed provided me with a professional foundation, it made a difference...despite my issues with how they treat veterans, I cannot fault them on that one (Lovisa transcript 8 p. 6, April 22, 2018).²⁴³

Lovisa's early economic stability was also aided by the fact that her husband Nahas (not real name) was drafted into the NDF soon after its formation in 1990 meaning they had two salaries that they could rely on. Moreover, Lovisa and her husband did not have the

²⁴² Lovisa transcript 8, pp. 2-3 (22/04/2018)

²⁴³ Lovisa transcript 8, p. 6 (22/04/2018)

added burden of looking after family members that had not gone into exile, instead, when she needed financial aid she turned to her father for support:

...I am very grateful. When I look at others [SWAPO exiles] I am so grateful. When I came back from exile my father became a parliamentarian [for SWAPO in the national assembly], I could easily ask for N\$3000 and he would give me. I don't know how others survived, maybe its because for other veterans their parents were not politically connected (Lovisa transcript 8 pp. 6, April 22, 2018).²⁴⁴

While Lovisa did not mention to what extent her influential politically connected father influenced her trajectory, it is clear that she acknowledges that life was easier in the aftermath of Independence for those who had social capital through parents, relatives or friends who were politically connected. Once again this scenario demonstrates how social networks leveraged and aided careers of those former SWAPO exiles that already had human capital from exile. The absence of such connections did not mean one with human capital (from exile) would never find a job, but it often meant delayed employment and subsequently delayed their economic reintegration. For instance, Clifton whose mother was a maid in Windhoek and had no political significance within SWAPO, struggled to get a job even though he had significant human capital (two Masters degrees from Boston University (see chapter three)).²⁴⁵ Similarly Selma and Jeremiah's weak social capital led to a 5-year delay in their economic reintegration. Therefore, the importance of social networks in leveraging human capital in the post-colony cannot be understated as evidenced by the life histories of former SWAPO exiles like Lovisa and Hilya.

²⁴⁴ Lovisa transcript 8, p. 6 (22/04/2018).

²⁴⁵ Clifton's mother died whilst he was in exile in 1982.

As was the case with Hilya, Lovisa's economic trajectory was on an upward trajectory since she joined the NBC, at the height of her journalism career in NBC in the late 1990s and early 2000s she was head of news and current affairs, and at one time Acting Director General for three months. Lovisa left the NBC in 2003 but by then as she notes, she had "...vast working experience and charisma too".²⁴⁶ Several job opportunities opened up for her as she notes:

...I became a free-lance journalist, then went to work for the global fund-ministry of health as the national coordinator TB program until 2014, then I went to work for a mine, went back to the ministry and now I work for Nedbank as a manager (Lovisa transcript 8 pp. 5, April 22, 2018).²⁴⁷

Lovisa's quality of life was also further bolstered by her husband Nahas (a senior military officer in the NDF) who was at one time posted as a military attaché/diplomat to Angola by the NDF. With regards to her current economic situation she states:

..economically I am in a far better position than my comrades...for me I don't have a problem [economically]...Look at the car that I drive [Volkswagen Touareg] outside. I have a house in Olympia, one of the most affluent suburbs in Windhoek...Last year [2017] we got a farm from government under the land resettlement programme. We have cattle and sometimes we slaughter because money is never enough. I don't want to come out as greedy. I am grateful (Lovisa transcript 8 pp 4, 5 & 6 April 22, 2018).²⁴⁸

Gaining, comprehensive post-secondary education from exile plus work experience under SWAPO meant that former SWAPO exiles like Lovisa and Hilya were a step ahead of the other exiles who had human capital and no work experience (e.g. Clifton) or those that had substantially lower or irrelevant human capital (e.g. Alberts and Saki)²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Transcript 8, p. 6 (22/04/2018)

²⁴⁷ Transcript 8, p. 5 (22/04/2018)

²⁴⁸ Transcript 8, pp. 4,5&6 (22/04/2018)

²⁴⁹ The military training and skills that Alberts and Saki received in exile under PLAN were not considered relevant in the post-colony as the new NDF availed limited positions which tended to favour PLAN officers. Moreover, both Alberts and Saki did not have any post-secondary academic qualifications, which proved quintessential with regards to obtaining employment in the post-colony.

Although one needs to be cognizant of the several variables that contributed towards Lovisa's seemingly successful life economically in the post-colony, much of this success has to do with the human capital she received in exile which formed a foundation upon which she built her career. Moreover, it is from the experience that she gained through journalism at VON and later NBC that she could delve into different career paths.²⁵⁰ Lovisa's close comrade whom she referred me to was also equally keen to tell me about his successful career trajectory that also had its foundations in exile, his name is Dr. Charles.

Dr Charles

I met Dr. Charles at the Swapo Party school campus in Windhoek West in April 2018. He introduced himself as the principal of the school. I learnt that he had worked together with Lovisa at VON in exile, and I became curious to find out how he had ended up the principal of Swapo Party school and how human capital from exile had aided his career development in the post-colony.

According to Dr. Charles the introduction of white teachers in 1973 who were also soldiers and who taught Bantu education and the random arrests of students at the hostel he was staying was among other things the key factors that led him to leave for exile in mid-1974 from his home town of Katima Mulilo (Gleichmann, 1994, pp. 76 – 77; Miettinen et al., 2017, p. 8; Williams 2009, p. 119; Williams, 2012). His primary motive

²⁵⁰ After leaving NBC in 2003 Lovisa worked as a free-lance journalist, in public relations for a mine, for an NGO and finally in her current role as a banker.

to go into exile was to fight, as he wanted Namibia to be liberated from the injustices that had come with South African occupation, he notes:

My motivation to go into exile was to fight. When I went I was about 16 years old...when I left for exile I was in form one, the equivalent of grade 9 I think... On arrival in Lusaka, we were told if you are less than 18 [years] you will be sent to school, if you are 18 and above you go for military training. So I changed my years and added 3 years, a scenario I have not corrected to this day (Charles transcript 9, p.1, April 28, 2018).²⁵¹

According to Dr. Charles, he was trained in Kongwa, (close to Dodoma) central Tanzania between 1975 and 1976. The first six months of his training included basic combat training and the remaining three months saw him getting specialized training in reconnaissance, spying and engineering (land mines and explosives). Thereafter, he was sent to the front from 1976. Up until then, it appears that Dr. Charles would have returned to Namibia in 1989 with the human capital he had acquired in the military had his trajectory remained unaltered until Independence. However, as he noted, he was recalled from the front in 1978 to join the VON in Lusaka, Zambia. From then on he went through several phases of post-secondary training beginning with courses in telecommunications at Ndola Zambia and later on more courses on mass communications in Zambia as well. In 1985 Dr. Charles was sent to East Germany for a six-month course from his then station of VON in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Between 1988 and 1989 he was sent to Harare Polytechnic to study two diplomas, that is, print media and electronic media. Dr. Charles notes that “After joining VON, I never went back to the battlefield. The only time I went back was to record songs at the front”.²⁵² The opportunities that Dr. Charles got that increased his human capital through post-secondary education were primarily because he left the battlefield. If he had not been recalled from the front, he could have remained

²⁵¹ Charles transcript 9, p.1 (28/04/2018)

²⁵² Charles Transcript 9, p.2 (28/04/2018)

with his military skills, which as highlighted earlier would have likely become redundant, in post-independence Namibia, considering that only a small fraction of former PLAN ex-fighters were inducted into the NDF.²⁵³ Therefore, the transition from PLAN to VON was an important milestone in his life, as his life in the post-colony will show. Moreover, this also demonstrates to some extent that PLAN ex-fighters cum non-combatant SWAPO exiles had an immense advantage over those PLAN ex-fighters that remained at the front for the duration of the liberation struggle. However what remains of interest is understanding the actual process of how one was recalled from the front (with the exception of the injured and female PLAN fighters who fell pregnant), that is, who decided whom was to be recalled and why? It is important, however, to note that such decisions were often heavily centralised and most likely prone to manipulation by SWAPO officials and often benefited those who were in their favour (Williams, 2015, p. 80).²⁵⁴ Nevertheless, within the ambit of reintegration studies in Namibia, it is an area that would require independent research since such recalls often shaped SWAPO exiles' economic trajectory and reintegration processes in the post-colony.

The aspect of having not only human capital but also extensive work experience in media and journalism from SWAPO's VON at that time meant that Dr. Charles (like Lovisa)

²⁵³ Between 1989 and 1990 during the transition to Independence, 25 000 former SWATF and Koevoet fighters and approximately 50 000 Namibian returnees/exiles and ex-combatants of SWAPO's military wing PLAN were demobilized and only 10000 from the combined total of 75 000 were absorbed into the new integrated security forces, that is, the Namibian Defense Force (NDF). The percentage of those drafted into the new NDF from both PLAN, SWATF and Koevoet was 13%. The total percentage of PLAN fighters alone is likely to have been far less since the new NDF was constituted with forces from both sides of the former rival armies.

²⁵⁴ Williams (2015) narrates the story of Silas Shikongo at SWAPO's Kongwa camp in Tanzania who was unfairly blocked from assessing educational opportunities/scholarships by Tobias Hainyeko commander of South West Africa Liberation Army (SWALA) a high ranking SWAPO official at the time (Williams, 2015, p. 80). Hainyeko supposedly blocked Shikongo due to the fact that his family back in Namibia were collaborators with the South African government (Williams, 2015, p. 80). This excerpt from Williams (2015) shows the degree to which SWAPO officials had control over who got scholarships where and when.

found himself at the forefront of the newly minted NBC in 1990 thus separating him from the likes of Saki and Alberts whose military skills were not considered critical considering the number of PLAN ex-fighters who had been militarily trained.²⁵⁵ Below Dr. Charles narrates how he ended up with a management position at NBC as his first job in post-colonial Namibia:

In 1989 September we came back for the elections and then I had to go back immediately after the elections because I had exams in June in Harare [at Harare Polytechnic, Zimbabwe]...I only returned [to Windhoek] in July 1990...When I arrived we went to Lovisa's house since her husband was already housed in Suiderhof [low-density suburb in Windhoek]. We stayed there for a few days and then moved in with another friend. But after two weeks we went to Swapo Party offices to report ourselves that we had returned. Then I was assigned in August 1990 to become Editor of the television station and transform it from SWABC to NBC...I was the first black editor. One of the first jobs I had was to hire black news readers (Charles transcript 9, pp. 2-3, April 28, 2018).²⁵⁶

Dr. Charles's case reinforces the argument that it was not enough for one to just have human capital but rather what type of skills constituted one's human capital. Journalism and particularly those who had worked for VON in exile clearly found it easier in the post-colony, to the extent that the likes of Dr. Charles landed a management position at NBC as his first paid job in the post-colony. The odds of him attaining a similar senior position (in the post-colony) had he remained in PLAN at the front are far less. Moreover, having begun his career in such a senior position paved the way for his rapid professional upward mobility in the post-colony, below is an extract from his narration on his career progression:

I was Editor of Television and then we moved to the new [NBC] complex in 1992, where I established Current Affairs, then I became Editor of Current Affairs, then General Manager for news, General Manager for marketing, General Manager television new and then General Manager for news and current affairs...in between these positions NBC sent me in September 1994 to do a

²⁵⁵ Dr. Charles was particularly fortunate to have human capital related to media and journalism as Swapo Party was keen to have the new broadcasting authority Namibia Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) and black professionals replace the white dominated South West Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SWABC)

²⁵⁶ Charles transcript 9, pp. 2-3 (28/04/2018)

Master's degree in Media management in the United Kingdom until the end of 1995. I was with NBC until I resigned in 2002...I went back to Swapo Party office where I was assistant to the presidential candidate Pohamba. I was his advisor and speechwriter; I was also his election campaign manager. Once he was elected then I went to statehouse that was in 2005. At statehouse, I was the President's speechwriter and government policy analyst (Charles transcript 9, p. 4, April 28, 2018).²⁵⁷

Dr. Charles's impressive professional development was bolstered by a fully funded scholarship that allowed him to go and study a Master's degree in Media management in the United Kingdom. Such opportunities were not readily available to other former SWAPO exiles especially those that did not get a job or senior positions in a government ministry or state owned enterprises such as NBC. For the majority of former SWAPO exiles, any further post-secondary education (after Independence) would have required them to use their own means which would have been difficult especially for low income earners such as Ellise, Helvis and Saki or unemployed former SWAPO exiles like Alberts.²⁵⁸ Instead what we see is how former SWAPO exiles like Dr. Charles and General Shilongo (chapter two) who already had opportunities to study in exile getting more opportunities to further their education in the post-colony whilst the door was shut on former SWAPO exiles that had received minimal education in exile (e.g. Ellise, Helvis, Saki) or no education at all like Alberts who had spent his entire time in exile fighting at the front and as a prisoner of war (see chapter two).²⁵⁹ Consequently, beneficiaries of such scholarships (in the post-colony) had more upward mobility in their

²⁵⁷ Charles transcript 9, p. 4 (28/04/2018)

²⁵⁸ Saki had no post-secondary training in exile and failed to obtain employment in government due to lack of proper qualifications, it is only in 2015, 25 years after Independence that he was able to save enough (of his own money) to register for a bachelor in political science at the university of Namibia which to date (2019) he is still studying

²⁵⁹ Albert's only managed to complete his 'O' levels (1988-1992) through the CCN after his release from Ondangwa prison. However, he never had the opportunity to get any post-secondary education, consequently when he obtained a job in 1995 at the ministry of home affairs he could only work as a clerk, a position that came with extremely low pay and no privileges like educational grants.

careers, thereby increasing their income through several promotions. In turn, this has widened the economic gap amongst former SWAPO exiles in the post-colony, with the most disadvantaged group being PLAN ex-fighters (who spent most of their time at the front) and non-combatant former SWAPO exiles who received minimal or no post-secondary training in exile.

The ascent of Dr. Charles to the statehouse did not end there as his work experience at the statehouse availed to him yet another opportunity in late 2006 as he was seconded to join the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as secretariat manager for media, publications and public affairs for ten years until late 2017 when his term of office ended. Whilst at SADC he was also able to attain his PhD by research in International Relations from the University of Southern California in 2011.

When one juxtaposes the life trajectories of Dr. Charles and Alberts, (both who joined PLAN with barely having completed junior secondary education) one can clearly see the disparity in their economic fortunes in the post-colony. Especially when one comes to terms with the fact that because of access (or the lack thereof) to post-secondary education in exile, Dr. Charles reached the peak of his career, with him becoming a regional diplomat (at SADC) whilst Alberts highest professional appointment was that of a clerk in the local government. Moreover, even in retirement Dr. Charles's human capital is considered extremely valuable, as Swapo Party appointed him principal of Swapo Party School upon his retirement in 2017 from SADC.²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ Interestingly after Alberts resigned from his job as a clerk (at the ministry of home affairs) in 2001 (at age 46) he could not find employment anywhere else even up to the time that he reached the retirement age of 60 in 2015. Reference – Alberts Transcript 5, p. 6 (06/02/2018)

Nevertheless, despite the highly successful career of Dr. Charles stemming from a solid pre-independence human capital foundation, he still feels disadvantaged, as there are variables that were beyond his control in the post-colony. Like in Hilya's case we see the limitations of human capital as a mechanism that is meant to bolster economic reintegration amongst SWAPO exiles.²⁶¹ Below is Dr Charles's response after I asked him, whether he was economically secure considering his successful career trajectory:

...I wish I could say I was on the better side, the struggle continued and still continues [for me]. Yes, I have a house [in Windhoek] which I am paying off, I have N\$60 000 left and hopefully I will be done paying it off by the end of the year [2018]. I applied for land under the land resettlement program to get land. I am one of those people whose land where we grew up was taken away by the Boers...my family was forcibly removed by the South African army from our land in an area just outside Katima Mulilo at a place called Wenela, this happened around 1971... But today it is government land, so where do I stay? Even when I go to my brothers and sisters back home [Katima Mulilo] they stay in the location [township], renting, these are people who had a home. I applied for land [under the land resettlement program] and I still have not got any land and the Katima Town Council 4 years ago agreed to sell me land but for N\$ 1,5 million. Where do I get N\$1, 5 million from? They say you cannot build on this land until you have done the statutory procedures, surveying, demarcations etc. That is all extra money. It's not easy, I am struggling, they might even take it back any time from now (Charles transcript 9, pp. 1 & 6, April 28, 2018) . (In bold my emphasis)²⁶²

Although Dr. Charles acknowledges having house ownership (in Windhoek) and being on the verge of paying off the bank, he laments at the loss of his family's land in Katima Mulilo and the exorbitant price of purchasing land from the Katima Town Council which he currently cannot afford. Initially, when one learns of Dr. Charles's predicament with regards to his desire of obtaining land in his home town of Katima Mulilo, one may be drawn to sympathize with him especially when one is cognizant of how his family was dispossessed from their ancestral land in the early 1970s as he narrated above. However,

²⁶¹ Although Hilya (an agronomist with a Masters degree from Germany obtained in exile) was able to obtain employment in the ministry of agriculture soon after Independence, she had to financially support her mother and siblings and her own daughter, stretching her financial resources thin to the point that she had to rely on food Aid from CCN to supplement her salary.

²⁶² Charles Transcript 9, p.1 & 6 (28/04/2018)

when one puts his ‘challenges’ in the wider context of the challenges of the economically deprived former SWAPO exiles, one would be tempted to think Dr. Charles’s land ‘challenge’ is a problem of former SWAPO exile’s ‘bourgeoisie’ class. In contrast other former SWAPO exiles struggled just to secure a single property often using much of their pension lump sum to pay off their home mortgage debt upon retirement (e.g. Ellise see chapter two) or in some cases do not even own a single property and are still renting even in retirement (e.g. Alberts). From this perspective, Dr. Charles ‘challenge’ of desiring a second property exposes the disconnect and economic gap between him and the economically deprived former SWAPO exiles.²⁶³

In light of the above discussion, it becomes imperative that we map the life histories of economically deprived former SWAPO exiles, reconciling their human capital and career trajectories in the post-colony. Although the study has highlighted inequality amongst former SWAPO exiles in chapter two and three, it is worthwhile to explore the lives of other former SWAPO exiles in similar circumstances to better understand the income/wealth inequality between the “haves” and the “have not’s”.

Ueshitile

²⁶³ The desire for a second property especially a farm is not something that is unique to Dr. Charles. As noted earlier, Lovisa, confessed how she and her husband obtained a farm through government from the land resettlement program, the same can also be said of General Shilongo (chapter two) who also obtained a farm from government’s land resettlement programme. Henceforth it appears that it is the economically well off ‘educated’ former SWAPO exiles who seem to have an appetite for owning multiple properties in the post-colony especially when one compares them to the economically deprived former SWAPO exiles who can barely maintain a single property. The roots of such disparities can be traced all the way back to exile (were most of them obtained post-secondary education) but also in the post-colony were they have political connections (social networks) that likely fast-track their applications to get farms under the land resettlement programme.

I met Ueshitile Shekupe popularly known among his peers as “Banana” at his now former workplace, College of Arts in Windhoek around early December 2017. Ueshitile left for Zambia in 1974 and was immediately drafted into PLAN. Ueshitile was trained militarily by the Chinese in Kongwa Tanzania for nearly two years and was combat ready by 1976. Thereafter, he was deployed to Zambia to fight for PLAN. Ueshitile’s human capital accumulation saw him acquire medical skills as a medic for PLAN and as a musician, this all happened after he was discharged from PLAN in 1981. He narrates:

...I fell ill whilst in PLAN... I was operated on my throat and was discharged from the war in 1981...by that time Zambia had pushed us out and we were operating from Lubango, Angola...after being discharged I became a medic and I also did music...I was a member of PLAN’s music band...I had learnt music whilst we were based in Zambia from the Zambian defence forces band at the front (Ueshitile transcript 1, p. 3, December 4, 2017).²⁶⁴

By the year 1989 when Ueshitile was repatriated from Lubango (Angola) to Windhoek (Dobra camp)²⁶⁵ he expected that his military or at the very least his musical skills from exile would have been recognized and utilized in the post-colony, but he was quickly disillusioned with the economic environment of the post-colony that did not accommodate those without comprehensive post-secondary education. At this he laments:

The lack of being trained academically led us to be disadvantaged upon our return. We were only trained militarily which was nice at the time but it was not valid after the ceasefire. It was not counted as academic training in order for one to get a proper job after arrival back in Namibia. That affected most of us who put our whole energy in fighting without having gone to school. We did not get that opportunity to come back home with academic credentials. When we came back they were asking for academic qualifications, which we did not have. And when we came back for those who got jobs, we could not get promoted because of lack of these academic qualifications which we did not have(Ueshitile transcript 1 pp. 1-2, December 4, 2017) .²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ Ueshitile transcript 1, p.3 (04/12/2017)

²⁶⁵ Dobra is a settlement outside Windhoek about 36 km north-east of Windhoek

²⁶⁶ Ueshitile transcript 1, pp. 1-2 (04/12/2017)

Ueshitile's failure to acquire in-demand human capital from exile could have been mitigated had opportunities been availed for SWAPO exiles (in the post-colony), particularly PLAN ex-fighters who did not get a chance to pursue post-secondary education in exile. However, government funded initiatives such as the Development Brigade (and later Development Brigade Corporation) meant to address this challenge were often disorganized with places limited and the program accommodating only a fraction of PLAN ex-fighters (Preston, 1993, p.14). Moreover, there was no scholarship programme that specifically targeted this disadvantaged group of former SWAPO exiles and this created an uneven field in terms of their competitiveness (in the job market) when compared with educated SWAPO exiles and educated Namibians (who had not gone into exile) in the post-colony. In stark contrast when compared with the likes of Dr. Charles, what becomes apparent is the immense disadvantage Ueshitile had with regards to educational opportunities. For instance Dr. Charles who returned to Namibia (from exile) with work experience from VON and in possession of a diploma and a plethora of short courses from around the world was given a fully funded scholarship to go and study for a master's degree in the UK (in 1994) which further enhanced his educational portfolio but also simultaneously fortified the wealth and income gap between him and the likes of Ueshitile who found himself with no possibility of recourse but to take his own initiative to educate himself to better his chances of employment in the post-colony.

In light of these constraints, Ueshitile had to take self-initiatives to improve his employability; he did this by volunteering at the National Theatre of Arts of Namibia where he was not paid. Eventually, in 1993 four years after repatriation, they began to pay him a salary of N\$1000 per month. Ueshitile laments how he has been living from hand to mouth ever since that point:

...I have never saved or had any savings in my lifetime...when the salary comes in I have to divide it over food, transport and the kids...I was and am surviving on cash loans, pay back and get another one...sometimes I was lucky and would get a little money from doing arts productions for example when I went on tour through arts to Europe (Ueshitile transcript 1 p. 4, December 4, 2017)²⁶⁷

Despite the above mentioned challenges Ueshitile notes that he was able to buy a house in Greenwell Matongo, Katutura (high density suburb in Windhoek)²⁶⁸ however due to the fact that he only qualified for a house mortgage later in his life, he is still paying off the house even past retirement, consequently when he retired in 2016, he asked to be employed on one year fixed-term contracts at the college for Arts so that he could continue paying off the house loan to avoid the bank seizing the house in the case that he would have failed to pay his monthly instalments.²⁶⁹ When considered from a general point of view one could assume that because Ueshitile eventually obtained a job and a house means that he cannot necessarily be considered as a disadvantaged SWAPO exile, however, if one is cognizant of his living conditions, that is, living from hand to mouth when compared to Dr. Charles, Hilya or Lovisa it becomes apparent that it is not a question of whether one has a job or not but also what type of job one has in terms of remuneration. Such disparities in the form of employment, income and living conditions between Ueshitile and other former SWAPO exiles mentioned above (Dr. Charles, Hilya or Lovisa) point to post-colonial inequality amongst former SWAPO exiles that were in

²⁶⁷ Ueshitile transcript 1, p. 4 (04/12/2017)

²⁶⁸ Katutura high density suburb is located in Windhoek and generally the majority of people who stay there are low income earners. The houses in Katutura are considered relatively cheap in comparison to the more affluent suburbs of Windhoek, like Olympia where Lovisa bought a house or Siderrof where General Shilongo also purchased a house.

²⁶⁹ After Ueshitile's return from Zimbabwe in 1995 where he obtained a 2 year diploma in ethno musicology, he was employed as a Lecturer College of the Arts in Windhoek. With that low but steady income Ueshitile was able to purchase a house in the high density suburb of Katutura where most low income earners live. To supplement his income Ueshitile notes that he participated in musicals sometime touring Europe and the America's, as well as a little bit of professional acting in local Namibian film productions. These opportunities were however, not consistent nor was the financial compensation substantial, in his view this did not really make a difference to his overall economic situation (Ueshitile transcript 1, p. 3, 04/12/2017)

more ways than one shaped by the educational opportunities that former SWAPO exiles were afforded (or not afforded) in exile.²⁷⁰ Ueshitile feels that had SWAPO afforded him the opportunity to advance his education (to post-secondary level) in exile like the party did to other SWAPO exiles, his economic situation would have been different.²⁷¹ Consequently, with the conviction that higher education would translate to higher income and in a desperate attempt to improve his income, Ueshitile decided to go and pursue a bachelor's degree at the age of 57, he narrates:

..I did my bachelors in Film in Johannesburg from 2013 to 2016 through an external scholarship from South Africa, but I also retired in 2016, you see the problem is that I gave more time to war [liberation struggle] and neglected my academics. I did my bachelor's degree to get a better salary in order to get a better pension and my bachelor's degree was all in vain. It's so painful in my life and I can never recover that lost time (Ueshitile Transcript 1 pp. 3-4, December 4, 2017).²⁷²

The life history of Ueshitile although subject to other variables²⁷³ is a good example of how former SWAPO exiles who did not gain relevant human capital have tended to be left behind in the post-colony.²⁷⁴ Human capital relevance becomes imperative when analysing former SWAPO exiles. In fact, one could argue that former SWAPO exiles

²⁷⁰ Such inequality has contributed to several protests (in the 1990s and 2000s) by some former SWAPO exiles who were discontent with their economic conditions in comparison to their former comrades in senior civil service positions who were enjoying the "fruits of independence" (Metsola 2010). Metsola (2010) notes that PLAN ex-fighters staged several demonstrations in the 1990s, with protesters from the mid-1990s demanding for jobs (p. 592). In the 2000s protests by the Committee on Welfare of Ex-combatants/War Veterans demanded for compensation and this eventually led to the Veterans Act of 2008 which among other things entitled registered veterans of the liberation struggle to N\$ 2000 monthly gratuities (Metsola 2010, pp. 594 – 597)

²⁷¹ Interestingly Namhila (2013) notes how Mukwahepo expressed regret for not having got the chance to go to school in exile and like Ueshitile wishes that SWAPO had given her the chance. Mukwahepo expressed these sentiments as she realised how her comrades who were educated had found jobs and left her behind (p. 132).

²⁷² Ueshitile transcript 1, pp. 3-4 (04/12/2017)

²⁷³ Ueshitile is widowed and the sole bread winner of his house hold and all financial responsibility rests on him.

²⁷⁴ Former SWAPO exiles like Ueshitile compare their economic circumstances with other wealthier former SWAPO exiles and not with the general Namibian populace. Therefore, inequality between them (marginalised former SWAPO exiles and wealthier former SWAPO exiles) appears to be their major grievance and arguably the cause of the discontent that has swelled former SWAPO exile ranks over almost three decades. Their anger has always been directed towards government where elected Swapo Party officials and many former SWAPO exiles who have senior positions work especially as they see the visible wealth their comrades in government have amassed over the years.

like Ueshitile have been constantly attempting to catch-up to the likes of Dr. Charles, Lovisa and Hilya who obtained relevant human capital in exile. As observed earlier, gaining human capital in journalism from exile, for example, proved crucial and invaluable (in the immediate aftermath of Independence) as SWABC transitioned to NBC guaranteeing the likes of Dr. Charles and Lovisa senior posts and presumably high incomes in post-independence Namibia. Moreover, easier access to funding for postgraduate studies for former SWAPO exiles in senior positions in government meant that exiles like Ueshitile were further left behind in terms of post-secondary training. For instance whilst Ueshitile only obtained a bachelor degree in 2016 at the age of 60 (his year of retirement), Hilya obtained her Master's degree in her youth around 1986 and Dr. Charles obtained his Master's degree in 1994 earlier on in his career. The effect of these disparities, which manifest through class stratifications and standard of living, has led those former SWAPO exiles that felt disadvantaged or 'left behind' in the post-colony to look for recourse through putting blame on their predicament squarely on the United Nations for not having catered for former SWAPO exiles' educational needs in the immediate aftermath of repatriation. It is not surprising that Ueshitile who also happens to be the chairperson of Namibians Repatriated in 1989 (NRI 1989) argues:

...the issue is the United Nations document on repatriation and resettlement of refugees...the right to education...we were supposed to be sent to schools to pursue academic studies, not just to be left like that. We were supposed to be left self-sustained....(Ueshitile transcript 1 p 5, December 4, 2017).²⁷⁵

In light of Ueshitile's argument above, the UN left a vacuum that could not be immediately filled by the new government with regards to post-secondary training of former SWAPO exiles, moreover recent reintegration policies unveiled through the Veterans Act of 2008 (almost 20 years after repatriation) targeting former SWAPO

²⁷⁵ Ueshitile transcript 1, p. 5 (04/12/2017)

exiles (and veterans of the liberation struggle who fought within Namibia and did not go into exile) have failed to comprehensively address this challenge nor make a real difference.²⁷⁶ The ministry of veteran affairs educational grant for veterans of the liberation struggle (a provision under the Veterans Act of 2008) already had a false start, with the fund being hit by recent budget cuts.²⁷⁷ According to Edson Haufiku (public relations officer for the ministry of veteran affairs) limited funding from the government led to new applications being suspended for the last three financial years, to this he states:

...Currently we are not giving new grants, we are paying for those who were already in the system. For the last three financial years, we did not take new applications because of the limited funding (Haufiku transcript 26, p.6, February 24, 2019).²⁷⁸

An obvious consequence of such delays is that former SWAPO exiles who would have wanted to study through this grant would be getting more and more advanced in age, meaning many would eventually abandon the notion of studying as they would be past retirement by the time funding is restored, making any such post-secondary education obtained at that stage futile in-terms of improving their economic circumstances.

²⁷⁶ Tapscott (1995) argues that after Independence in 1990 'remainers' were generally speaking in far better economic conditions than returnees affiliated with SWAPO in exile (p.165). This became embarrassing for families of returnees affiliated with SWAPO particularly as the 'remainers' (that had more or less collaborated with the South Africans) were doing better economically than former SWAPO exiles who had returned victoriously to Namibia in 1989. (Tapscott, 1995, p. 165). This is not surprising as many Namibians who did not go into exile, although (many) not having comprehensive post-secondary education had employment of some sort during the colonial period and accumulated assets in the same period (e.g . Maria's brother in chapter five). Most of these Namibians retained their employment after Independence giving them an edge economically especially with former SWAPO exiles who could not get employment after Independence (for similar stories see the life story of Moses Mbango and Ester Kambalala in Becker 2005 pp.124 – 129) . Moreover unemployment figures of PLAN ex-fighters for example were more than twice as high as those of the general Namibian populace. McMullin, notes unemployment figures were 80% for PLAN ex-fighters whilst they stood at 35% for the general Namibian populace.

²⁷⁷ Since 2016, the government has cut spending on the public sector, affecting government ministries like veteran affairs, consequently a lot programs have been put on hold until indefinitely.

²⁷⁸ Haufiku transcript 26, p.6 (24/02/2019)

In conclusion, it is clear from the discussion above that human capital obtained in exile was crucial for an easier transition in terms of economic reintegration for most former SWAPO exiles but more importantly, as highlighted earlier such human capital had to be relevant to the Namibian job market. Dr. Charles and Lovisa found themselves with relevant human capital that saw them soar into management at NBC in the early 1990s. Other former SWAPO exiles like Hilya although having significant human capital that came in the form of a Masters's degree and work experience as an agriculture production manager at Kwanza Sul (SWAPO civilian camp in Angola) still needed leverage from her social networks (social capital) to secure herself a job. Hilya's case highlights the importance of social capital and how former SWAPO exiles used their social networks dating back to the liberation struggle to position themselves favourably when they sought employment in the aftermath of Independence. On the other hand, the life history of Ueshitile portrays the harsh reality of how former SWAPO exiles who had inadequate or irrelevant human capital struggled in the aftermath of Independence. Coupled with the absence of strong social networks the likes of Ueshitile became economically disadvantaged with his limited accumulated assets and debt being a constant reminder of what he referred to as "lost time" spent in exile.²⁷⁹

However, it is imperative that the reader is cognizant that several variables beyond human capital influenced all four of the above mapped life histories. For instance by having a working spouse from the onset meant Lovisa was in a far better position than Hilya who was the sole breadwinner of her household. Moreover, the fact that Lovisa's

²⁷⁹ Ueshitile, only has a relatively small modest house in the high-density suburb of Katutura (which he still owes money to the bank even after retirement), has no life savings and accumulated a meager pension for the few years he worked. Ueshitile is convinced that had he obtained post-secondary education in exile his life would have been remarkably far better economically (in the post-colony) henceforth, his insistence that time spent in exile were "lost years".

husband was a senior military figure has afforded them an affluent lifestyle exemplified by the house they own (in Windhoek's most affluent suburb), the ability to have cattle and maintain a farm. Meanwhile for Hilya, having an extended family that was dependent on her meant her financial resources were often stretched leading her to supplement her income through food Aid from CCN (in the early 1990s) even though she had obtained employment earlier in 1991. Dr. Charles's high profile jobs in NBC, state house or SADC did not shield him from the consequences of past of land dispossession that took place in 1971, which until the time of the interview (April 2018) he was still trying to replace by buying land (in his home town of Katima Mulilo) which he admitted he cannot afford and would strain him financially. All these factors point to the uniqueness of each veterans life and how important it is to map individual trajectories when exploring reintegration of former SWAPO exiles in order to identify the finer details such as the above mentioned variables that would have otherwise have gone unnoticed if former SWAPO exiles' lives are assessed as a collective.

However, despite the role of the above-mentioned variables in the life histories of Hilya, Lovisa and Dr. Charles it becomes imperative to acknowledge that human capital (or the lack thereof) from exile was crucial in shaping career destinies of SWAPO exiles in the post-colony. Class stratifications that emerged in post-independence Namibia amongst former SWAPO exiles were inextricably linked to the human capital former SWAPO exiles obtained in exile, with those who received comprehensive post-secondary education often being economically well off in comparison to those who received limited or no post-secondary education. Indeed, by SWAPO choosing who received what education, where and when they were unwittingly carving out future social classes that

would manifest and reinforce the status quo (Tapscott 1995)²⁸⁰ in the post-colony creating a real economic divide amongst former SWAPO exiles that has proven almost impossible to correct. Moreover, the economic disparities amongst former SWAPO exiles are a reflection of a much wider societal problem in Namibia, where inequality continues to grow between the rich and poor, a colonial legacy which SWAPO has failed to reverse despite being in power for almost three decades.²⁸¹

This chapter has highlighted in great detail the critical role of human and social capital in the economic reintegration processes of former SWAPO exiles. In doing so, the chapter has established that having post-secondary education and strong durable social networks from exile created opportunities for some (Hilya, Lovisa and Charles) whilst those who lacked or had minimal forms of these two capitals (Ueshetile) found themselves at the fringes of society. Meanwhile, chapter five turns the lens to focus on former SWAPO exiles' individual agency, particularly, those who are reintegrating outside, or at the fringes of, programmes and institutions. The chapter pays particular attention to what alternative avenues/possibilities were there in the Namibian economy beyond government employment and reintegration programmes for former SWAPO

²⁸⁰ Economic inequality was a hallmark of the apartheid system in South West Africa, only this time, a new black elite emerged which SWAPO had unwittingly forged in exile at the expense of other (uneducated) SWAPO exiles who came back to Namibia with nothing to show after spending many years in exile.

²⁸¹ Melber in his book *Understanding Namibia* (2014) points to how the Namibian governments first fifteen state budgets did not prioritize the poor, but instead appeared to be becoming more rather than less inequitable with far less being spent on the poor (p. 146). However, in 2015 the ministry of poverty eradication and social welfare was created by President Hage Geingob to address the growing inequality, however, little progress has been made to date especially with the continued high unemployment. The 2018/2019 budget saw the ministry of poverty eradication receive almost N\$ 3, 6 billion, however, it remains to be seen what other reforms will be done by the government to stem the tide of inequality. (see page 27 in link below)
<http://www.mict.gov.na/documents/32978/329831/2019++Final+Budget+Statement+Republic+of+Namibia-2.pdf/649f4367-f052-4916-b651-0e0169f6e563>

exiles to (economically) self-reintegrate. The author does this through carefully conceptualising and contextualising the notion of self-reintegration.

Chapter 5: Exploring limitations of DDR through ‘self’ reintegration – Life histories of PLAN ex-fighters & SWAPO exiles who defied the odds

5.1 Conceptualizing and contextualizing self-reintegration of SWAPO exiles

Reintegration as a concept can be best explored as exemplified in the previous chapters (chapter 2, 3 and 4) through mapping of life trajectories. Torjesen (2013) argues that the time between combatants’ departure from an armed group until their return to a civilian²⁸² life often involves very complex patterns of movement (p. 4).²⁸³

Self-reintegration is one such concept that helps us to understand the complex patterns of movement that PLAN ex-fighters and other former SWAPO exiles followed following their repatriation to Namibia. As other DDR scholars have suggested (e.g. Rhea, 2014), many combatants find ways of reintegrating into society irrespective of whether they participate, or participate consistently, in formal reintegration programmes. If we understand reintegration as a human process that transcends any formal programmes, it follows that every individual (‘removed’ or displaced from their home society by war) undergoes some form of reintegration upon their return from ‘exile’.²⁸⁴ It therefore becomes imperative to explore how combatants, in this case,

²⁸² The phrase *return to civilian life* should be taken with caution, for instance, it has already been established that some PLAN ex-fighters like General Shilongo and others were recruited into the newly established NDF in 1990 after repatriation, meaning they remained soldiers and continued to lead a non-civilian life until their retirement, in the case of General Shilongo this was in 2016 (see chapter two)

²⁸³ Although Torjesen’s context was primarily referring to ex-combatants, the same can be said of SWAPO exiles which includes both PLAN combatants and civilians that served and were under the jurisdiction of PLAN in exile.

²⁸⁴ According to Rhea (2014) reintegration should not only be perceived as a programme but should also be viewed as a process. Rhea (2014) defines reintegration process as “...the social and economic processes by which individual ex-combatants return to communities, build economic livelihoods, perhaps more importantly, rebuild social connections the community- reshaping their self-identity in the eyes of society from one of soldier to civilian with or without assistance from reintegration programming” (p.14) .

former SWAPO exiles, can actually reintegrate ‘outside’ the institutionalized formal reintegration programmes and initiatives that have been framed as reintegration projects/programmes (e.g. Development Brigade, Peace Project and Veterans Act of 2008).²⁸⁵

Self-reintegration has been defined as when individuals reinsert themselves into society without, ‘actively’ enrolling in government or internationally run reintegration programmes (e.g. Torjesen, 2013, p. 4). However, for the purposes of this chapter, the concept of self-reintegration will focus on the individual agency of former SWAPO exiles in their reintegration processes. This is particularly important in the Namibian context where being part of a reintegration programme does not necessarily entail immediate or even consistent benefits. Take for instance the Veterans Act of 2008, the main benefits, that is, the monthly gratuity payments are conditional and can only be accessed upon retirement (age 60) or if one earns below the tax threshold (N\$ 36 000 per annum).²⁸⁶ In many cases, the period between registration and retirement requires many former SWAPO exiles to figure out for themselves how to improve their economic well-being, henceforth the need to focus on individual agency. Moreover, it is also important to note that the way in which reintegration programmes were rolled out in the early 1990s (in Namibia) was such that it was limited and to some extent exclusionary, meaning many former SWAPO exiles (including those interviewed) were not beneficiaries of earlier reintegration focused programmes such as the Development

²⁸⁵ The Peace Project was a government programme that registered SWAPO exiles as veterans of the liberation struggle and awarded them jobs in public sector, primarily in the Namibian Defence Forces (NDF), Namibia police (Nampol) and Namibian Correctional Services (NCS) previously known as Namibian Prison Services (NPS).

²⁸⁶ The exception to this is the N\$ 20 000 - 50 000 once off lump sum that registered veterans get soon after registration and the N\$ 200 000 project money which is also subject to several conditions (Haufiku transcript 26, pp. 3-4, 24/02/2019)

Brigade and the Peace project, all of which took place in the 1990s, therefore, this period will be crucial in enlightening our understanding of self-reintegration amongst former SWAPO exiles.²⁸⁷ On the other end, the 2nd wave of reintegration programming that took place in 2008 through the Veterans Act of 2008, that is, the most comprehensive reintegration policy to date, saw thousands of former SWAPO exiles including the previously excluded ones become registered from 2008 onwards.²⁸⁸ However, as noted above even though many previously excluded former SWAPO exiles were registered from 2008 onwards, most will only truly benefit either upon retirement, if they are unemployed or are earning below the tax threshold (N\$ 36 000 per annum).²⁸⁹ Therefore, given the aforementioned complexities, there is need to thoroughly engage the significance of individual agency in former SWAPO exiles' reintegration processes.

In order to circumvent the above mentioned complexities, (for the purposes of this chapter) the author will map or focus on the parts of former SWAPO exiles' life histories where self-reintegration took place with special attention being paid to the former (SWAPO) exiles' lived experiences. This means the focus will be on former SWAPO exiles' reintegration processes that were not a direct result or directly

²⁸⁷ Firstly the reintegration programmes were exclusionary because although the policy of national reconciliation was in place after Independence, some exiles who were considered to have betrayed the liberation struggle (e.g. the ex-detainees from Lubango) were excluded from such programmes, meaning these exiles would have had to self-reintegrate into society without direct institutional support from government. Secondly the programmes were limited in nature, that is, the Development Brigade and the Peace Project because they took in a limited number of SWAPO exiles which meant the majority were still left without assistance until 2008 when the Veterans Act was established. The exception amongst my interviewees was Maria (chapter 5), who got a job through the Peace Project in 1999

²⁸⁸ It is important to note that not all Namibian exiles were affiliated to SWAPO in exiles (e.g. Harlech-Jones 1997, p.73), whilst some who were affiliated did not benefit from some of these programmes (e.g. see Alberts in chapter two and Selma in chapter three.

influenced by reintegration programmes. This will also allow us to better understand reintegration processes as a distinct concept from reintegration programming (Rhea, 2014, p. 15). The previous chapters (chapter one and two) focused on the impact of reintegration policy/programmes on individual SWAPO exiles' reintegration processes whereas this chapter will attempt to 'isolate' reintegration processes from reintegration programmes by focusing on the life history facets or periods of former SWAPO exiles' lives where individual agency rather than reintegration programming facilitated reintegration, making reintegration processes through individual agency the focal point of analysis.²⁹⁰ This approach significantly departs from Metsola's work (Metsola's 2010) which focuses on how (veterans) lives are crafted around reintegration discourses, whereas this chapter focuses on the *individual agency* of former SWAPO exiles irrespective of the public (reintegration) programmes or the discourses around these programmes (in italics, my emphasis).

5.1.1 The Limitations of reintegration programming in Namibia

DDR, particularly reintegration programmes have often been overrated in terms of their impact. In Namibia, reintegration as a concept is synonymous with state sponsored/formal reintegration programmes. However, as Muggah (2008) points out, critics of DDR point out that by nature DDR programmes are imposed from above and often do not reflect the economic, social and political realities on the ground (p.2).²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ Nevertheless it is important to acknowledge that reintegration processes and reintegration programmes often overlap as shown in chapter one and two.

²⁹¹ The Namibian Swapo party led government took the lead in crafting and implementing the reintegration processes of both PLAN ex-fighters and non-combatant SWAPO exiles from the early 1990s. Most of the policies that included reintegration programmes did not address the socio-economic challenges of SWAPO exiles. For instance, it has been suggested that the Development Brigade (which eventually became defunct by the early 1990s) trained and equipped PLAN ex-fighters with skills that did not translate into job opportunities (Metsola 2010). This was likely a result of the ill-defined assumptions of what would work in-terms of economically reintegrating SWAPO exiles (Munive 2016)

Muggah's (2008) assertion is particularly relevant to Namibia as most of the post-colonial reintegration programmes advanced by the Swapo Party led government particularly in the early 1990s did not address pertinent socio-economic challenges of former SWAPO exiles due to several factors that are discussed below. For instance, in the 1990s, the Development Brigade and later the Development Brigade Corporation gave vocational skills training to PLAN ex-fighters without having done a feasibility study of what skills were required by employers at the time (Dzinesa, 2017, p. 110). Consequently, PLAN ex-fighters were up in arms with the state as they soon realized that the skills they received could not translate into job opportunities (Tapscott, 1994; Devon, et al., 2012).²⁹² This of course came from the narrow DDR assumption that training/equipping ex-combatants with vocational skills will translate into them getting gainful employment in the post-colony (Munive 2016).²⁹³ Munive (2016) attributes such policy failures to ill-defined assumptions of how reintegration programmes can bring change.²⁹⁴ Another shortcoming of DDR programmes is how they tend to propagate the discourse and policy priorities of donors and national governments (Muggah, 2008, p. 2). These policies are sometimes shrouded by political agendas, especially reintegration programmes run by national governments as in Namibia's case. This is because national governments who craft and formulate reintegration legislation and policies such as Swapo Party are not apolitical. Often there are underlying political agendas that drive these policies. In Namibia's case reintegration programmes have been politicised often being framed in a way that reflects the prevailing political

²⁹² African countries emerging from conflict tend to be the most vulnerable in this regard, particularly as they often have weak economies that provide a significantly low employment opportunities.

²⁹³ The *Peace Project* although giving jobs to combatants, awarded mostly positions in the Namibian Defence Forces (NDF), Namibian Police (NAMPOL) and Namibian Correctional Services (NCS), whilst those exiles with inadequate formal education were given menial entry-level positions (e.g. cleaners) in government ministries (Metsola 2010, pp. 592 – 593)

²⁹⁴ In a way these programmes limited the individual agency of former SWAPO exiles.

discourses (e.g patriotic history) as exemplified in chapter two. Take for instance Alberts in chapter two, he was marginalised by reintegration policy for three decades due to suspicions he had co-operated with the enemy after his capture by the SADF in 1984. When one looks at (Alberts) his dire economic circumstances he was in fact amongst former SWAPO exiles who needed reintegration assistance and yet he was denied any form of assistance for three decades until 2010 when he was finally registered as a veteran (after being initially denied registration in 2008 when registration began). Similarly, former ex-detainees affiliated with SWAPO in exile were also denied access to reintegration programmes for almost three decades due to their alleged role of having been spies for the SADF during the liberation struggle. This group (ex-detainees) only got registered as veterans in 2009 (Kornes, 2013, pp. 18 -19). Another case that exemplifies the limitations of reintegration programmes implemented from above is that of ex-SWATF and ex-Koevoet fighters. The politically charged binary perception of “us” versus “them” was used to justify their marginalisation or exclusion from most reintegration programmes, especially the Veterans Act of 2008 (Bolliger, 2017; Metsola, 2010). Moreover, as shown in chapter two, due to political interferences, reintegration benefits even amongst beneficiaries can easily be skewed in favour of some at the expense of others. Take for instance the notion of the improvement grant in Namibia’s reintegration policy, where direct participants of violent resistance/armed struggle are paid over 200% more than those who did not participate in the armed struggle.²⁹⁵ The above examples speak to the limitations of reintegration programmes, where political agenda’s (e.g. patriotic history) dictate the frame and scope of policies rather than the actual needs of deserving recipients.

²⁹⁵ PLAN ex- fighters who were trained and deployed in total receive up to N\$ 7200 per month whilst those who were trained and not deployed and the rest of other eligible former SWAPO exiles who fought the war by other means receive a maximum gratuity of N\$ 2200 per month.

The effectiveness of reintegration programmes can also be affected by economic discourses with historical roots, especially in a country like Namibia where inequality between the white minority and the black majority populace was institutionalised (apartheid). With Namibia ranked amongst the most unequal countries in the world, the majority of black people continue to live in poverty as they struggle to make ends meet even in the post-colony (Williams, 2015, p.215). These economic realities are not just experienced by former Swapo exiles but also by the rest of the Namibian populace. The reality is Independence has not brought any substantial material benefits as was anticipated by the black majority (Williams, 2015, p. 215; Namhila, 1997, pp. 189 – 191).²⁹⁶ Consequently, many perceive reintegration of former SWAPO exiles as preferential treatment as most Namibians face more or less the same economic challenges that they face. Yet gratuity payments former SWAPO exiles receive are in themselves far from adequate and fail to meet the most basic needs of former SWAPO exiles. If this is the case the question would be how have former SWAPO exiles navigated these harsh economic conditions whereby even the economic assistance they are entitled to, does not suffice. For surely one cannot be reintegrated by a meagre N\$ 2 200 – 7 200 monthly gratuity.²⁹⁷ This is true particularly for former Swapo exiles

²⁹⁶ Moreover, state driven reintegration programmes (e.g. Namibia and Zimbabwe) are only as successful as the economic development of the nation. This means that long-term economic reintegration is sustainable for as long as there is sufficient economic growth that creates job opportunities (in the public and private sector) in the country. This is because reintegration programmes are crafted and implemented in an existing national economy that often has to accommodate ex-combatants. For instance, the spells of subdued economic growth in recent years (2008-2010 and 2016-2019) has led to budgetary constraints which in turn affected the ability of the Namibian government to address the economic challenges of former SWAPO exiles including the need to increase gratuity payments (on a year on year inflation basis) that have remained largely unchanged since their inception in 2008.

²⁹⁷ The basic veterans grant (N\$2 200) that all registered veterans are entitled to receive if they fulfil the conditions (unemployed, retired or earning below the tax threshold) has only been adjusted once with a 10% increase (from N\$ 2000 to N\$2200) in the last decade meaning gratuity payments have increased roughly on an average of 1% per year over the last 10 years, that is, 2008 through 2018.

who are urban dwellers where the cost of living in cities like Windhoek has been steadily rising over the years.²⁹⁸ In light of the above discussion, it is therefore important to explore how some former SWAPO exiles through self-reintegration/individual agency have managed to navigate the harsh economic conditions of the post-colony in the midst of reintegration policy limitations.

5.2 An Analysis of SWAPO exiles' self-reintegration stories

Angula

As I explored the concept of self-reintegration amongst my respondents, the life story of Vaino Angula stands out as one of the most interesting ones. Angula as he prefers to be known, is a PLAN ex-fighter in his late 50s who is a retired correctional officer from Namibia Correctional Services (NCS), he is also the Public Relations Officer of NRI 1989, an organization which according to him he joined so as to advocate for the rights of former Namibian refugees repatriated in 1989 (see chapter three regarding his viewpoint on that subject matter). I met Angula at his modest, three-bedroom house in Katutura in early February 2018. According to Angula, he left Namibia for exile (to Angola) in 1977, at the time he was around eighteen years old. Angula went to exile accompanied by PLAN ex-fighters who had been operating within Namibia at the time. Angula was motivated to go into exile because of the politicization that he received whilst in rural northern Namibia from PLAN ex-fighters that regularly entered Namibia, he notes:

We were mobilised by the politicisation that took place in Namibia at the time, that is, by SWAPO and by PLAN fighters carrying guns, who told us that this was our land and it had been occupied by the South Africans...although I was

²⁹⁸ These figures (N\$2200 – 7 200) are in fact at par with what the lower/poor class are paid monthly in Namibia e.g. domestic workers, service station attendants and supermarket cashiers.

young this issue touched me very much...so I went back to Angola with PLAN fighters and when we arrived in Angola they handed me over to SWAPO (Angula transcript 3, p. 1, February 10, 2018).²⁹⁹

After arrival in Angola, he was transferred by plane to Zambia where he was put at a SWAPO camp. Whilst at the camp in Zambia, Angula completed his secondary education, that is, until grade 12. Afterwards, he received a Commonwealth scholarship that enabled him to go and study for a diploma in mechanical engineering in Sweden for 5 years, that is, from 1980 through 1985. Upon his return in 1985, Angula was sent to Lubango the same year for military training and by the end of 1986, he was combat ready. According to him, thereafter he joined PLAN's mechanized division, after which he was sent for his first assignment, to this he notes:

In 1986 that is the time PLAN, MPLA and the Cubans in Cuito Cuanavale needed help to repair vehicles. A number of us were sent there, we were repairing PLAN, MPLA and Cuban vehicles (Angula transcript 3, p. 2, February 10, 2018).³⁰⁰

Angula continued serving under PLAN's mechanized division until repatriation in 1989. After repatriation, Angula was inducted into the NDF to serve in its mechanized division. However, as he notes he did not stay there for too long as he applied to Namibia Correctional Services (NSC) as he wanted to help rehabilitate offenders. As he states:

I then applied to the ministry of correctional services to go and teach offenders in prisons so that they can be reintegrated into society. So I was teaching them mechanical engineering in prisons. This was in 1995 when I changed jobs, so I was at NDF from 1990 until 1995 (Angula transcript 3, p. 3, February 10, 2018).³⁰¹

²⁹⁹ Angula transcript 3, p. 1 (10/02/2018)

³⁰⁰ Angula transcript 3, p.2 (10/02/2018)

³⁰¹ Angula transcript 3, p. 3 (10/02/2018)

Whilst working for the NDF in the early 1990s, Angula states that he began thinking about what would sustain him economically in the event that he lost his job or even after retirement as he wanted to be self-sufficient and not be entirely dependent on the government for his long-term economic needs. According to Angula he decided to purchase land in Onayena, Oshikoto region which he planned to practice mixed farming, that is, rearing animals and also cash crop farming, he wanted to eventually live off the land instead of relying on a government salary. According to him, he purchased the farmland using money that he had saved for almost two years. He states:

I bought this land in Onayena, Oshikoto region...I got this land in 1992...it is 16,5 hectares, I have a certificate of deeds [title deeds] registered with the ministry of lands...I had foresight about the future (Angula transcript 3, pp. 3 & 7, February 10, 2018).³⁰²

Angula's insistence about having had foresight for the future, points to his desire to have not wanted to entirely depend (financially) on the government nor his formal employment at the NDF and later at the NCS where he was a correctional officer from 1995 onwards. There was a deliberate effort on his part to save and invest for his long-term economic reintegration outside of the provisions of institutional reintegration programming from which he only truly benefited in 2015 when he took early retirement.³⁰³ According to him in 2015 he decided to take early retirement in order to pursue farming on a full time basis. For Angula government employment is not the solution to address the economic challenges of former SWAPO exiles but rather self-employment through business and farming activities. Angula laments the dependency syndrome that former SWAPO exiles have exhibited since Independence and argues

³⁰² Angula Transcript 3, pp. 3 & 7 (10/02/2018)

³⁰³ Other than the N\$50 000 lump sum that all registered veterans received in 2010, Angula only began receiving gratuity payments in 2015, as the rules that govern the gratuity payments for veterans state that veterans who are employed can only receive gratuity payments when they are retired. However, veterans who are unemployed or earn below the tax threshold (N\$36 000 per annum) qualify to receive gratuity payments (Haufiku transcript 26, p. 1).

that the continual poverty amongst former SWAPO exiles is not entirely the government's fault but is also due to the inability of former SWAPO exiles to seize and capitalize on economic opportunities in post-independence Namibia. As he argues:

We had a slogan in SWAPO which said SWAPO has won, now its [time for] hard work. So now its hard work, it does not mean hard work through [government] employment. You see you have to meet the government halfway, you must do something...with my fellow comrades I have come to realize they are very lazy. This is because in SWAPO in exile we were just fighting and eating from the [camp] kitchen. Now after Independence we still want to be fed like it was in exile. No, this is the time to take initiatives, to engage in projects, businesses etc. Some do all this whilst they still have full time jobs so that they have something to do after retirement. Our ex-fighters are very lazy, they don't want to hear anything about farming...but yet they have the ability to do so [farming] (Angula transcript 3, pp. 7-8, February 10, 2018).³⁰⁴

What Angula appears to be advocating is that (government) employment in itself may be inadequate or insufficient to cater for the long-term economic needs of some former SWAPO exiles, and he steers the conversation away from gratuity payments towards former SWAPO exiles becoming pro-active and self-sufficient, that is, utilising their individual agency for self (economic) improvement.³⁰⁵ Therefore, in a way Angula is appealing to his comrades to learn from his life experience/journey of self-reintegration, which saw him become a successful farmer, financially stable and independent. To this end he highlights how he was able to achieve financial stability to date:

Financial stability only comes if you are hardworking especially in farming. The cattle produce manure, which I put into the field where I grow beans and mahangu to sell...In addition to the cattle, I also have goats. I take them [cattle and goats] to the auction, sell, breed the others and do the same process again...that is why I said financial stability comes with hard work (Angula transcript 3, p. 7, February 10, 2018).³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Angula transcript 3, pp. 7-8 (10/02/2018)

³⁰⁵ What Angula is suggesting is not entirely a new approach in terms of reintegrating former fighters through self employment endeavours such as farming and other business activities. In fact Munive (2014) in his work on reintegration of ex-combatants (from 2011 onwards) in South Sudan discusses how small businesses that were set up by ex-combatants tended to provide a more sustainable source of income in the long-term, becoming a more viable option for the long-term economic reintegration of ex-combatants (p. 344).

³⁰⁶ Angula Transcript 3, p. 7 (10/02/2018)

Angula's farming prowess was also recognized and featured during a Namibia Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) programme *Green Horizon* that interviewed Angula at his plot in Onayena (Oshikoto region) and showcased his farm produce to the whole country through the television programme in 2017.³⁰⁷ It is therefore, beyond dispute that Angula has managed to create a sustainable livelihood through his farming and business endeavours. In addition to farming, Angula was able to do what many former SWAPO exiles were not able to achieve (including those who went through the Development Brigades skills training programme), that is, to transform and transfer their human capital from war (and from the post-independence era) into an entrepreneurial enterprise (Keen, 2000; Gjelsvik, 2010; Miettinen et al., 2017; Namhila, 1997).³⁰⁸ Angula was able to use his mechanical engineering skills to generate extra income for himself and his family.³⁰⁹ He explains:

I have now three cars and a tractor. I don't take my car to the garage, I fix it and service it myself...Apart from my own vehicles I also fix vehicles for other people...For my tractor I even plough for my neighbours for a fee, that is, N\$400 per hour. So someone might ask me to plough for eight hours. I also have a seven-seat vehicle that transports people between Oshakati and Omthiya. So my skill has become a business. I also have a plot in Nkurenkuru [Kavango West Region] in Northern Namibia which I am financing through the bank to set up a mechanical workshop there. That is why I took early retirement, I know what I am doing (Angula transcript 3, p. 8, February 10, 2018).³¹⁰

Angula's life history is an example of how one can utilize and capitalize on the opportunities/resources they have to wean themselves from depending on the state to

³⁰⁷ Angula transcript 3, p. 9 (10/02/2018)

³⁰⁸ Namibia's liberation struggle like many other wars led to human capital accumulation amongst many SWAPO exiles as well as other Namibian exiles not affiliated to SWAPO in exile. Most of these individuals were able to use those skills to obtain employment in the post-colony

³⁰⁹ Angula obtained a four year diploma from Sweden in mechanical engineering (Angula transcript 3 p. 2)

³¹⁰ Angula transcript 3, p. 8 (10/02/2018)

sustain their long-term economic reintegration. For instance, Angula was able to use the human capital he obtained from exile (his training in mechanical engineering from Sweden) to generate income through repairing neighbours vehicles whilst simultaneously saving money (by reducing vehicle maintenance costs) through repairing and servicing his own vehicles. In terms of financial resources (financial capital), Angula was able to save money from his salary as a mechanic in the NDF in the early 1990s and within two years he was able to purchase 16,5 hectares of land, which has become a self-sustaining entity in terms of income.³¹¹ In essence, Angula's life history and way of thinking/mindset challenge Alberts, Helvis, Ellise and Ueshitile's narratives regarding their failure to become economically independent in the post-colony (Metsola, 2010, pp. 598, 602).³¹² Angula's life therefore, dispels the notion that a series of programmatic interventions dubbed as 'reintegration policy' are the antidote to solving reintegration challenges of former SWAPO exiles. Instead what we see is that it becomes possible for one to use their individual agency through consolidation of one's human, social and financial capital to improve their economic well-being without the direct assistance of formal reintegration programmes.

However, it is imperative to recognize that other variables contributed to Angula's ability to marshal his resources and forge a path for himself in the midst of the

³¹¹ As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter self-reintegration can be as a result of indirect assistance from the state. In Angula's case he was able to save part of his salary which he then used to buy land in 1992. Now the government did not directly assist in buying his land as his salary was for the services he rendered as a mechanic at the NDF. However, the fact that the salary came from the government means that the contribution of the government was indirect towards Angula. This is of course in contrast to the Individual Veterans Project Money IVP's where the ministry of veteran affairs gives N\$200 000 to eligible veterans to start a self-sustaining project which is a direct contribution by the government towards SWAPO exiles long-term reintegration efforts.

³¹² Metsola (2010) presents the story of Mandume and Pine both PLAN ex-fighters whose mind set is that they expected Swapo party to provide them jobs (which they received in the Special Field Force). In addition Mandume wanted compensation from the government especially when he compared himself with the elite of Swapo Party that had benefited. This mindset is similar to that of Alberts, Helvis and Ellise (see chapter 2) and Ueshitile (see chapter 4)

limitations of Namibia's post-colonial reintegration policies. For example, Angula's prudent financial management abilities meant he could save from his income consistently until he could purchase land in 1992. Moreover, his creditworthiness which speaks to him having been a 'good' borrower to lenders (in the past) meant he could be trusted by the bank to get a loan to build a workshop in Nkurenkuru (located in Kavango west region in northern Namibia).³¹³ In both instances, we see the application of financial knowledge by Angula to enhance and ensure his economic security. Such financial knowledge can be designated as a form of cultural capital that has enhanced Angula's upward mobility and position in society (Bourdieu, 1986).³¹⁴ In light of this, it also becomes necessary to acknowledge that it is not commonplace for cultural capital of this nature (financial management skills) to be amongst former SWAPO exiles especially the marginalised ones (e.g. Alberts, Helvis, Ellise in chapter 2 and Ueshitile in chapter 4). In fact, Angula's financial knowledge appears to be something that he most likely acquired either from exile or in the post-colony. Although Angula does not specify these details, life histories explored thus far in this thesis show how former SWAPO exiles' trajectories differ remarkably from individual to individual and that many of their life experiences in exile shaped their trajectories (socially, economically and politically) in the post-colony. Therefore, such variables cannot be ignored, especially when one juxtaposes Angula with other former SWAPO exiles (who are struggling economically in the post-colony) who had different life trajectories. Nevertheless, the importance of financial prudence in reintegration discourse cannot be overstated especially in Namibia's case where gratuity payments and other financial benefits are part of reintegration packages. Take for instance how most former SWAPO

³¹³ Angula transcript 3, p. 8 (10/02/2018)

³¹⁴ Due to his economic advancement Angula is far from being considered an ordinary former SWAPO exile for he has forged a path for himself that has earned him the right to be recognized as a farmer and businessman in the same breadth

exiles (interviewed) handled the N\$50 000 and N\$20 000 lump sum once off payments. Most of them referred to the money as “peanuts” and the prevailing trend was all the money was spent on “debts” and other needs and none of them saved or invested this money to accumulate interest or bought an asset that would accrue value over time (see Helvis and Alberts explanation of how they spent their N\$50 000 lump sum in chapter 2).³¹⁵ Arguably rather than their ‘dire’ economic condition being the only problem, the absence of financial literacy/management skills appears to be a contributing factor in this case. In such cases where there is lack of financial management skills, it becomes counter-productive when the government gives financial grants to ex-combatants as the money will most likely be misused often leading to an unsustainable reintegration process (Dzinesa, 2017, p. 146). Therefore, one could allude to the fact that by not equipping former SWAPO exiles with financial management skills, the Namibian government and the Ministry of Veteran Affairs were sabotaging the potential successful reintegration processes of the most vulnerable of former SWAPO exiles, especially those with low human capital. As financial literacy would have reduced the dependency of disadvantaged former SWAPO exiles on the government (through good money management/investment strategies that are self-sustaining), thereby lowering government’s expenditure in the long run.³¹⁶

³¹⁵ See Alberts and Helvis chapter two.

³¹⁶ Returning to Dzinesa’s (2017 p.146) argument on financial literacy, if for instance SWAPO exiles had received financial literacy prior to receiving the once off lump sum amounts of N\$ 50 000 and N\$20 000 (prior to disbursement) it is possible to speculate that many would have invested the money in such a way that they would be reaping the returns even today, which in turn would have reduced their dependency on the government and on their monthly gratuity payments.

Maria

Maria (not real name) is a PLAN ex-fighter who did not have the advantages that other former SWAPO exiles and PLAN ex-fighters (e.g. Angula) had particularly with regards to human capital. Maria left for exile to Zambia around 1975, the trip was facilitated by SWAPO. After a brief period staying at the former President Sam Nujoma's house in Zambia, Maria was moved to Shatotwa camp (Zambia) where she received full combat training with specialized training as a medic. Thereafter, Maria was deployed to the front in early 1976. According to her, she spent the most part of 1976 at the front.

Meanwhile, Maria met her husband in Angola and got married there, thereafter she had to withdraw from fighting as she fell pregnant and now had to take care of her child. Although Maria did not (or would not be drawn to) narrate the finer details of what happened after she fell pregnant and was withdrawn from the front, she was keen to tell her story of the challenges that she experienced in the post-colony which she found extremely difficult to cope with.

Maria's minimal human capital undermined her prospects for employment as she only had a grade 10 qualifications and a diploma in pre-school teaching that she obtained in 1983. She obtained both qualifications in Angola through attending night school.³¹⁷

Below Maria notes the challenges she faced in the immediate aftermath of the repatriation transitional process:

³¹⁷ According to Maria, SWAPO kept her grade 10th certificate which she had obtained in Angola as was their custom, however, upon her return they did not give her the certificate and she had to get a letter from the ministry of education which stated that she had gone to school until grade 10 in Angola to use as an alternative to the missing grade 10 transcript

Economically it was so bad...coming back here [Namibia] jobs were hard [to find], we had no work experience, we did not even have a reference that an employer can check with. It was very difficult...meanwhile, we had to be content with the R10 that the United Nations [UNHCR] gave us... (Maria transcript 17, pp. 2 & 3, July 16, 2018).³¹⁸

With her exclusion from formal reintegration programmes such as the Development Brigade and failure to be recalled and recruited into the NDF, Maria had to rely on her brother for both financial and material support. Maria's brother can be regarded as part of her social network (social capital) that dates back to before she left for exile. Her brother provided for her and her children economically in the transitional period prior to her obtaining employment, she notes:

...One has to appreciate the people we found home who supported us...my brother bought a second house for himself in Windhoek, but he allowed us to stay there for free. He paid for everything including municipal bills. He also gave me an allowance of R1000 to use every three months (Maria transcript 17, pp. 2, July 16, 2018).³¹⁹

Although Maria received help from her brother in the period after repatriation, she could not rely on her brother in the long-term as he could no longer afford to support them financially. Maria's job search eventually paid off when she got a job in September 1990 at the Catholic pre-school in Windhoek as a pre-school teacher. Although she got a job, Maria was still renting and did not have a house of her own and with a salary of a meagre N\$1 300 per month and three children to feed, it appeared impossible for her to be able to afford a house. Maria mentions that the expectations that she had when coming back to Namibia that she would have been able to live a

³¹⁸ Maria transcript 17, pp. 2 & 3 (16/07/2018)

³¹⁹ Maria Transcript 17, p. 2 (16/07/2018)

comfortable life did not become a reality (Namhila, 1997, pp. 189 – 191; Williams, 2015, p.215).³²⁰ She notes:

What we found in Namibia was not what we expected. We used to sing Namibia is free and rich in diamonds and gold...it was a dream betrayed. We found our [former] classmates [who did not go to exile] already ahead in life, they were laughing at us...(Maria transcript 17, pp. 2, July 16, 2018).³²¹

Despite the slow start to her life Maria was determined to at least purchase an asset even though her salary was low at the time. She then identified a house that was for sale in Katutura (through a newspaper advert) which at the time cost N\$20 000. Although she did not have money in her savings, she was determined to find the money to buy the house. That determination led her to approach the head of the catholic pre-school who was also a catholic priest. Through working at the pre-school, and interacting with the priest at a professional level, she had built enough rapport with the priest to ask him to extend a loan so that she could purchase the house cash from the seller. The priest then agreed to extend to her a loan totalling the full amount of the house, that is, N\$20 000 which she would pay back in monthly instalments of N\$400 deducted from her monthly wage of N\$1 300. However, this meant Maria and her children would have to live off N\$900 every month and that amount was insufficient to support a household that had three children.³²² To supplement her low income, Maria notes "...I had to sell beer, sweets, chips and lollipops just to be able to even just buy bread".³²³

³²⁰ Namhila 1997, pp. 189 – 191 narrates how her expectations (and those of many former SWAPO exiles) of Independence was that there would politically and economically independent. But it soon became clear that economic political Independence did not mean economic Independence.

³²¹ Maria Transcript 17, p. 2 (16/07/2018)

³²² Maria notes that her husband whom she had married in Angola passed away leaving her widowed and the sole bread winner of her house hold. Maria does not divulge the circumstances surrounding his death or what role he played economically in the household prior to his death. However, what is clear is Maria presents herself in the narrative as the primary breadwinner from the point she returns from exile, her husband remains in the background.

³²³ Maria Transcript 17, p. 3 (16/07/2018)

Maria's reliance on social networks is particularly key in both her initial transitional phase soon after repatriation when she relied on her brother's goodwill to provide for her basic needs including housing and financial assistance and in her pursuit of owning a house. In the latter instance, Maria was able to capitalise on the healthy professional relationship she had formed with the priest in order for her to purchase the house through a no interest loan from her employer. Although she paid back the money, accessing it that easily without interest added shows the extent to which social networks proved valuable for some former SWAPO exiles in the aftermath of Independence in a harsh economic climate. The ability of former SWAPO exiles to utilise old social networks (from the colonial era and exile) and to build new social networks (post-colony) often ended up being the means by which they were able to reintegrate in society especially in the midst of highly politicised and limited reintegration policies. What Maria showed, was her ability to adapt to the harsh economic environment she found herself in, in the post-colony. This ability to adapt is also exemplified by how she was able to participate in the informal economy through being a vendor to supplement her N\$900 salary that was reduced due to the house loan she owed. In light of Maria's story, it becomes imperative to acknowledge the significance and potential that the informal sector has in reintegration discourse as in some cases it can be a viable route through which individuals apply their individual agency to reintegrate back into society. Munive (2014) notes that small income generating activities in the informal economy (e.g Maria's street vendor business) often fall outside the gaze of DDR practitioners and arguably scholars as well (p. 346).³²⁴ Consequently, Maria's

³²⁴ Such ingenuity of becoming a vendor and supplementing her income, is a phenomenon that Munive, (2014, p.346) also noticed among South Sudanese female ex-combatants who 'outside' of formal

small business enterprise as a street vendor is 'invisible' yet it has and continues to play an integral part in her reintegration process. Arguably Maria's life history, particularly her self-reintegration endeavours, point to the need for a reassessment of reintegration discourse in Namibia with a particular focus on the contribution and role of the informal economy in the reintegration processes of former SWAPO exiles. In stark contrast, Angula's business enterprise that falls more under the formal economy has received national recognition as a success story of a former PLAN ex-fighter-cum-farmer (through NBC's green horizon television programme that highlights successful Namibian farmers) and as such his self-reintegration process is more likely to be recognized and acknowledged as compared to Maria whose life history of self-reintegration remains largely 'invisible'. Such biases are to be expected especially if one considers the lack of recognition of the role of the informal sector in the Namibian economy yet to a large extent many so called 'unemployed' Namibians earn a living in the informal sector.

Nevertheless, the significance of Maria's business as a street vendor should not be underestimated especially when one contrasts her economic achievements (in the 1990s) with other former SWAPO exiles. For instance, Alberts got a job in 1995 as a clerk but was unable at the time to even consider the notion of purchasing a house as he insisted the money was too little. Moreover, he was unable to sustainably supplement the income he was receiving at the time as Maria was able to do with her street vendor business.³²⁵ What becomes apparent is that the major difference between Maria and Alberts is that Maria had social capital (through her relationship with the catholic priest)

reintegration carried out income generating projects such as brewing and selling alcohol to sustain their families economically.

³²⁵ See Alberts life history in chapter two .

and determination exhibited through her ability to improvise (or adapt) to supplement her income and not rely or wait for the government to intervene through formal reintegration programmes. Whereas Alberts only worked for six years (1995-2001) for the ministry of home affairs and retired sighting the low salary and lack of housing allowance. Consequently, the inability of Alberts to take initiatives to improve his life like Maria means today in retirement there is more 'normalcy' in Maria's life as she has a house where she continues to be a vendor selling sweets, chips etc to supplement her pension and gratuity payments from the ministry of veteran affairs.³²⁶ In contrast, Alberts who is also past retirement age (63 years) is still renting in Katutura, the same suburb Maria owns a home.³²⁷ And almost three decades after Independence Alberts is in no more a better position than he was (in terms of house ownership) when he was repatriated in 1989. Maria's ability to purchase a house despite being a low income earner is a considerable feat especially amongst the majority (low income) former SWAPO exiles, many who have failed to secure housing due to the prohibitively high land and housing prices in urban areas (Ndjadila, 2016, p. 87).³²⁸

However, it is important to note that the early strides that Maria was able to make in the early 1990s were not replicated in the period after 1999 as she encountered several

³²⁶ As noted earlier former SWAPO exiles had expectations that when they returned to Namibia they would have jobs houses, cars etc. Firstly in a way their expectations had been shaped by their desire to have what the white people had during the colonial era. Secondly many had observed and experienced a glimpse of what Independence would be like whilst in exile especially those who travelled abroad to Europe and America for education. Finally with compensation being paid to Zimbabwe's war veterans, former SWAPO exiles' understanding of reintegration was informed by such. Therefore, several factors have over the years shaped and informed what former SWAPO exiles and the Namibian government understand as reintegration.

³²⁷ Katutura is a high density suburb in Windhoek dominated by low-income earners.

³²⁸ In fact UN agencies such as the ILO consider housing as being one of the key indicators of stability during the reintegration process of ex-combatants in the post-conflict era.
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_141276.pdf

limitations after she joined the Namibian government's formal reintegration programmes. Therefore, it becomes imperative to explore Maria's life history post-1999 to ascertain these limitations and to what extent they impacted her reintegration process in the post-colony.

In response to mounting protests from veterans of the liberation struggle, the government introduced the *Peace Project* in the latter part of 1998 where veterans of the liberation struggle were registered and all those able-bodied were offered government employment (Metsola 2006 p. 1122). According to Maria, she left the catholic pre-primary school to get a government job through the *Peace Project* as the catholic pre-school had no medical aid or pension plan both of which she would receive if she was employed by the government. She notes:

...I went to register for the Peace project in order to get another job as at the catholic pre-school I was not getting any pension or medical Aid...so first I went to the ministry of education where I received a letter which stated I had gone up to grade 10, for as you know SWAPO took and kept all our school certificates when we completed school in exile. [Afterwards] I went to the ministry of health to submit my documents. In my heart I wanted to become a nurse but my age was too old, so they made me a porter at the hospital and I remained at the hospital [as a porter] until I retired at 60 years (Maria transcript 17, p. 3, July 16, 2018).³²⁹

The realities of most former SWAPO exiles even amongst those that took steps to improve their livelihoods without formal reintegration programme assistance in the 1990s is such that they took those initiatives (to improve their economic well-being) out of necessity rather than by choice, consequently once opportunities to participate or enrol in formal reintegration programmes became available such as the *Peace Project*, former SWAPO exiles like Maria were more than keen to participate. However, the

³²⁹ Maria Transcript 17, p. 3 (16/07/2018)

limitation of such programmes (e.g. Peace Project) meant that they had to conform to the formal requirements, which often limited their dreams and aspirations. For instance, although Maria wanted to become a nurse, she had to settle or accept to becoming a lowly porter (at a hospital) as her age was already advanced (at the time) and that was the only job she was eligible for (under the Peace project).³³⁰ Again this is one of the challenges of reintegration programming as it confines and limits the opportunities of individuals participating in programmes often defining what they can do or not do based on ‘rules’ and ‘regulations’ that govern such programmes. In stark contrast, we see how Angula was able to dictate his own ‘destiny’ by engaging in income generating projects (through farming) that were largely independent of reintegration programming giving him the flexibility to take an early retirement too. As for Maria although she was able to purchase a house prior to joining reintegration programmes, her life story afterwards was largely dependent on reintegration programming which limited the extent to which she could make certain life choices. For instance, after Maria’s retirement (in 2015) she received the Individual Veterans Project (IVP) grant (N\$ 200 000). However due to the rules that govern those funds that state that the money is not paid in cash but is paid directly to a supplier for the purchase of materials related to the income generating project, she ended up purchasing a taxi with the whole amount whereas she had wanted to put some money aside to build a rural home for herself in rural northern Namibia (in her village of birth).³³¹ To this end she states:

I also got the project money [IVP] and I bought a taxi. But SWAPO was supposed to give us cash. I am 63 years old, I wanted to use that money to build a house in the north [rural northern Namibia]. The taxi is expensive [to

³³⁰ Maria was born in 1955, which meant she was 44 years in 1999. Maria Transcript 17, p. 1 (16/07/2018)

³³¹ Veterans who receive the IVP grant are not given the money directly but the money is paid to the supplier of the goods that they would need for their individual project (Hafiku Transcript 26, p. 4 - public relations officer- ministry of veteran affairs)

maintain], I cannot maintain it anymore, now I don't even have a business. They should have given me cash. Plus when the money came, in my case, I only received N\$170 000 [instead of N\$200 000], the rest of the money was taken by bank interests, [that is] it was given to the Boers [Bankers]. Now the money all went into the car. If they had given me cash I would have bought a cheaper [used Japanese] export one [car] for a taxi and the rest I would have built my house in the north (Maria transcript 17, p. 4, July 16, 2018).³³²

In light of Maria's critical view on the IVP programme, what becomes clear is her frustration at the lack of freedom to determine and make choices regarding her economic wellbeing. While Maria could not determine how much she could spend on her taxi project, Angula could, on the other hand, determine which project he wanted to work on, starting with his farming venture in 1992, to his latest venture, that is, the mechanical workshop he is currently setting up in Nkurenkuru (Kavango west region of northern Namibia) through financing from a local bank.³³³ Although Maria views the rules governing the IVP as restrictive, the ministry of veteran affairs sees this as a mechanism that will ensure veterans will not misuse (or divert) funds meant for projects that are supposed to generate income for them (former SWAPO exiles) in the long-term.³³⁴

Having begun with a promising phase of self-reintegration, which saw Maria being able to purchase a house through ingenuity and sheer hard work, she became confined and arguably less 'creative' in her pursuit of economic well-being once she joined reintegration programming through the *Peace Project*. It is arguable that Maria's life could have turned out to be different had she not joined DDR programming. However, the reality is that many former SWAPO exiles that did not participate in the DDR programmes of the early 1990s were excluded rather than chose not to be in such

³³² Maria transcript 17, p. 4 (16/07/2018)

³³³ Angula transcript 3 ,p. 8 (10/02/2018)

³³⁴ Haufiku transcript 26, p. 4 (24/02/2019)

programmes (Preston et al., 1993, p. 14).³³⁵ Moreover, Namibia's high levels of inequality and lack of opportunities made it almost impossible for 'ordinary' former SWAPO exiles with low human capital such as Maria to have longevity in their self-reintegration processes outside of formal reintegration programmes.³³⁶ Nevertheless, although Angula now enjoys the dual benefits of veteran's gratuity payments and his flourishing farming and car repair enterprises, his life underlines the freedom that self-reintegration provides, that is, it gives one the space to map, define and determine one's life trajectory.³³⁷

Selma

Although Selma's life was explored in chapter three it is important to delve back into Selma's life history in order to bring some context to the current discussion on self-reintegration. Selma who is a PLAN ex-fighter fought and served as a political commissar in Angola between 1986 and 1989. She was repatriated to Namibia on the 14th of July 1989.³³⁸ Upon her return, Selma got married to her boyfriend Jeremiah (whom she met in exile) in September 1989 and had their first child Lukas in 1990.

³³⁵ The Development Brigade only initially admitted a fraction of PLAN ex-fighters, that is, 4000 PLAN ex-fighters according to Preston et.al.(1993, p. 14)

³³⁶ Maria's primary reason of resigning from the catholic-primary school in 1999, that is, the absence of a pension and medical Aid show the inequalities that prevailed at the time that left many SWAPO exiles with few options other than to turn to DDR programmes such as the Peace Project that provided jobs that had job security, health, pensions etc. For even her informal sector street vendor business could not create the kind of wealth that would provide a pension and medical aid/insurance.

³³⁷ Needless to mention that although Angula receives gratuity payments from the ministry of veteran affairs on a monthly basis, he would have still managed to live off his farming investments which include a plethora of income avenues, that is, livestock rearing (buying and selling), cash crops, leasing of tractor to plough for a fee and servicing and repairing vehicles of neighbouring farmers and the wider community.

³³⁸ Selma was trained in infantry at Tobias Hainyeko (1985) and later appointed political commissar at Juba (a SWAPO camp in Angola) (Selma Transcript 7, p. 2 – (29/05/2018)

Although Jeremiah was a trained pilot from Libya he could not get a job until 1995.³³⁹ Therefore, Selma and her husband were relying on relatives for shelter and food, in the period 1990 -1995. As narrated earlier in (chapter three), Selma and her family were emotionally abused by relatives particularly her brother in-law and his wife who also systematically starved them during their stay with them.³⁴⁰ They were shunned (by relatives) for failing to get jobs and received no assistance to the point that Selma sometimes had to feed her toddler (Lukas) ‘Tombo’ (a traditional Ovambo beer) to drink. Such suffering which she described as being “...more painful than exile”³⁴¹ was arguably instrumental in prompting Selma’s desire to become self-sufficient through securing employment. Her determination for self-improvement warrants attention as she did not wait to benefit from government job schemes (e.g. *Peace Project*) for veterans (of the liberation struggle) but was pro-active and persistent to better herself even though her husband had secured stable employment in 1996. Her life history including her journey from being a mere housewife with a (barely recognized) grade 12 certificate from Lubango to a manager (at the heroes acre) is a startling example of how some former SWAPO exiles used their individual agency to self-reintegrate economically in the post-colony.

To begin with, Selma’s struggle to get employment (in the 1990s) was not unique to her alone as it generally proved to be quite difficult for many former SWAPO exiles to get employment in the aftermath of Independence especially for those with few skills or without post-secondary education (Preston et al., 1993, p. 17). Selma was among the

³³⁹ In 1995 Jeremiah got a job as messenger at Eros airport. Afterwards his employer helped translate his pilot certificate (from Libya) from Arabic to English, thereafter he was employed by the Namibian Air force in 1996.

³⁴⁰ Selma transcript 7, p. 5 (29/05/2018)

³⁴¹ Selma transcript 7, p. 5 (29/05/2018)

many former SWAPO exiles with low human capital as she did not have post-secondary education, with her highest qualification being a grade 12 certificate that she had obtained in Lubango during the liberation struggle. Despite having a grade 12 certificate, Selma could not find a job as employers refused to recognize the certificate.³⁴² This was not uncommon, particularly as many employers at the time were suspicious of foreign qualifications former Namibian exiles brought from exile (Preston et al., 1993). Consequently, Selma went back to school to repeat her grade 12 (in 1996), she states:

I received my grade 12 in Lubango, but I felt the Namibian system would not accept it as I had been looking for a job and I could not get it. So after getting my third child, I started going to Augustinium secondary school to do evening classes of grade 12. I registered for three subjects and I passed all of them (Selma transcript 7, p. 5, May 29, 2018).³⁴³

The willingness of Selma to re-do her grade 12 shows the determination that she had, even if it meant that she had to conform to the minimum educational requirements which at the time in her opinion was to have a Namibian qualification of some sort. This effort was duly rewarded when she finally got a job as a government security guard in 1997.³⁴⁴ Although Selma showed great determination by going back to school to re-do her grade 12, it is imperative to note that in addition to her determination, Selma's was also helped by her socio-economic circumstances which had improved substantially prior to her enrolling for grade 12. This is because by then (1996) her husband (Jeremiah) was employed by the Namibian Airforce as a pilot, in addition, she also now had a house and had some form of stability both economically and socially

³⁴² Preston (1993) notes that certificates from socialist countries that exiles brought back to Namibia after repatriation were not viewed favorably by local employers, with many employers seeing them as no more than solidarity qualifications (p.15).

³⁴³ Selma transcript 7, p. 7 (29/05/2018)

³⁴⁴ Selma transcript 7, p. 7 (29/05/2018)

that she did not have between 1989 and 1995.³⁴⁵ All these factors cannot be ignored as one analyses Selma's life history, as they shape the social context in which we observe her self-reintegration process. This is particularly imperative when one juxtaposes her situation to other former SWAPO exiles whose social contexts were much worse, for example those who had no secondary education or the means/finances to pursue further studies. This is not to be dismissive of her (Selma's) achievements but rather points to the different socio-economic circumstances former SWAPO exiles found themselves (in the post-colony) and the limits of what they could or could not do within those environments. It is therefore, not surprising that with two salaries now supporting her household (including her security guard salary), Selma was able to further pursue a secretarial diploma part-time (whilst still working as a security guard), which eventually paved way for her upward mobility to becoming a site manager at the Heroes Acre (in Windhoek). She narrates:

...one lady helped to push [encourage] me until I got a secretarial diploma...afterwards, I became a private secretary at the ministry of basic education...I also did numerous short courses in this period...then the Permanent secretary for basic education said they were promoting me to go and become a caretaker at the national heritage council...eventually, a new director at the national heritage council sent me for training for 2 years in preparation of appointing me site manager at the Heroes Acre in Windhoek...In those two years, I also spent considerable time at Polytechnic where my English language skills were improved...(Selma transcript 7, p. 7, May 29, 2018).³⁴⁶

In conclusion, there appear to be two schools of thought amongst former SWAPO exiles in the post-colony. The first is best exemplified by Alberts, Helvis, Ellise (from chapter 2) and Ueshitile (from chapter 4) whose perception of reintegration is narrowly focused on the programmatic policies of the government whereas former SWAPO exiles like Angula and Selma are more pro-active and view reintegration as a process where one's

³⁴⁵ Selma noted that the same month her husband got a job in 1996, they decided they wanted to buy a house. transcript 7 p. 6 (29/05/2018)

³⁴⁶ Selma transcript 7, p. 7 (29/05/2018)

individual agency has a much more important role in the reintegration process than reintegration programmes. These two competing perspectives/mindsets dominate reintegration discourse in Namibia. It is therefore not surprising that former SWAPO exiles that have a narrow perception of reintegration as being limited to programmes also tend to be the same individuals who have a dependency ‘syndrome’ (dating back to the liberation struggle). This group of former SWAPO exiles are constantly seeking programmatic solutions to their economic reintegration challenges in the post-colony. Evidently, organizations like NRI 1989 (see chapter three) are a manifestation of such mentalities as the organization seeks economic compensation from UNHCR which they would want in the form of financial grants, that is, in a programmatic format.³⁴⁷ Therefore, there is a constant search for reintegration programmatic solutions regardless of whether there are from government or other NGO’s such as UNHCR without due consideration whether they are effective or not. The lives of Angula, Selma and Maria on the other hand, show that self-reintegration as a process is a viable alternative for former SWAPO exiles to economically reintegrate. Moreover, the life history of Angula also suggests that it is possible for former SWAPO exiles’ self-reintegration processes to take place concurrently with formal reintegration programmes especially in Namibia’s context where formal reintegration programmes are often limited in scope and in resources and often require one to carve out alternative paths to secure long-term economic reintegration.

³⁴⁷ It is imperative to understand that the dependency syndrome that many former SWAPO exiles developed in exile towards Swapo party is also mirrored in the organisation NRI 1989, as they perceive the UNHCR as an alternative to body that can meet their demands. The core of their demands presented to the UNHCR is no different from what they have been demanding from Swapo party over the last three decades.

The chapter through life histories demonstrates possibilities of economic reintegration beyond formal reintegration programmes whilst hinting at the limits to this in post-colonial Namibia.³⁴⁸ More importantly this chapter re-emphasises the notion that there is no single narrative to economic reintegration in Namibia. For instance where some former SWAPO exiles such as Alberts (from chapter two) saw limitations (due to his low income) with regards to purchasing a house, others like Maria in this chapter was able through ingenuity to overcome her low-income limitation and purchase a house in the 1990s despite the difficult odds staked against her. What was a constraint to Alberts is in fact overcome by Maria through individual agency³⁴⁹ Therefore, once again the uniqueness of each individual's story disrupts singular collective narratives that generalise former SWAPO exiles' post-colonial reintegration processes/experiences.

³⁴⁸ Chapter two, three and four all highlight possibilities and constraints within formal reintegration that shaped former SWAPO exiles' economic reintegration.

³⁴⁹ Alberts points to the low income he received as a clerk in the ministry of Home Affairs as the reason he could not purchase a home yet Maria who also had a low income as a kindergarten teacher was able to find creative ways to overcome that hurdle and be a home owner within ten years after repatriation.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis uses two approaches to explore economic reintegration in post-colonial Namibia. Firstly, the thesis assesses the economic circumstances of individual former SWAPO exiles through life trajectory mapping which arguably is one of the most practical approaches to gauging economic reintegration of ex-combatants (Torjesen, 2013, p 4). To the best of my knowledge, this approach has not been used with regards to assessing the economic trajectories of former SWAPO exiles especially over a lengthy period of close to thirty years. This is particularly important with regards to assessing former SWAPO exiles' reintegration processes, which are the social and economic processes by which former SWAPO exiles reintegrate into society. These reintegration processes take place regardless of whether individuals are part of or not part of reintegration programmes (e.g. chapter three, four and five).

Secondly, this thesis also assesses reintegration as part of DDR programming and policy (e.g. chapter two). This is the more traditional approach wherein the author assesses Namibia's post-colonial reintegration programmes and policies (e.g. McMullin, 2013; Dzinesa, 2006, 2017). In this approach, the author focuses on the politics behind reintegration programmes/benefits and policies (e.g. patriotic history) and the extent to which these factors have impacted the economic trajectories of individual former SWAPO exiles.³⁵⁰ Although both approaches (reintegration concepts) are analytically different, in reality there are often intertwined as shown in the thesis (Rhea, 2014, p. 15). Both these approaches generate valuable 'new'

³⁵⁰ Metsola (2006, 2010, 2015) also examines veteran benefits and the politics behind such policies behind.

knowledge, therefore, it becomes imperative to outline and weigh the significance of the ‘new’ knowledge generated through these two approaches.

6.1 New dimensions of post-colonial marginalisation

The entanglement of patriotic history with Namibia’s reintegration discourse and policy has had far reaching consequences on the lives of former SWAPO exiles. As the life histories have shown, glorification of the armed struggle in Namibia’s nationalist history has not been beneficial to all veterans of the liberation struggle. Policies such as the Veterans Act of 2008 created a clear distinction of who really mattered in Namibia’s liberation struggle narrative, that is, it ‘rewarded’(most but not all) direct participants of violent resistance, that is, PLAN ex-fighters who were *trained* and *deployed* through the controversial improvement grant.³⁵¹ The premise of categorizing and rewarding former SWAPO exiles on the basis of the extent to which they participated in the armed struggle is arguably at the core of new dimensions of post-colonial marginalization as has been highlighted in chapter two. In this regard, our understanding of reintegration as outlined in DDR literature and the United Nations Integrated Disarmament Demobilisation Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) (see chapter one) is challenged by the Namibian context. The entanglement of patriotic history with reintegration policies (e.g. Veterans Act of 2008) has blurred the whole notion of reintegration to the point where one is only eligible to receive the full reintegration benefits (inclusive of the improvement grant) if they meet the requirements of having

³⁵¹ However, it is imperative to note that patriotic history not only distinguishes between Namibians who were trained and deployed and those who were not, but also between the patriotic credentials of a range of people as defined by SWAPO elites. Its social impact, therefore, is quite complex and requires a nuanced understanding of Namibians’ experiences in exile.

been a true patriot during the armed struggle (Ranger 2004).³⁵² In this case, only PLAN ex-fighters who fought consistently and persistently without wavering can be accorded the full benefits.³⁵³ One can argue that both reintegration discourse and policies in Namibia have wandered off from DDR international norms and expectations where the logic has shifted from economic assistance to incentivise ex-fighters to return to a civilian life to rewards based on one's consistent participation in violent resistance (Bhatia and Muggah 2008).³⁵⁴ Therefore it is not surprising that former SWAPO exiles who did not participate directly in the armed struggle (e.g Helvis and Ellise see chapter two) are considered ineligible to receive the improvement grant despite the fact, on the basis of their economic circumstances, they in fact appear more deserving than some people who directly participated in the armed (e.g. General Shilongo see chapter two).³⁵⁵

This brings us to the question to what extent patriotic history has shaped the economic trajectories of former SWAPO exiles in the post-colony. The life histories explored in

³⁵² Other former SWAPO exiles who participated in the liberation struggle but were (trained and) not deployed or those who had civilian roles only receive partial benefits. That is they qualify for the monthly basic grant (N\$2 200) and not the improvement grant (N\$3000-5000). PLAN ex-fighters, however qualify for both the basic grant and the improvement grant on the premise of their participation in the armed struggle.

³⁵³ PLAN ex-fighters who wavered would include deserters, those captured by the SADF and were suspected of having collaborated with SADF and any other individual whose armed struggle credentials would be considered as questionable by the veterans committee responsible for approving applications at the Ministry of Veteran Affairs

³⁵⁴ Bhatia and Muggah (2008) point to how Afghan war Lords and militia commanders were given more cash incentives to dissuade them from returning to armed violence and to encourage them to return to a civilian life. However, in Namibia veteran reintegration policies have tended to reward participants of violent resistance.

³⁵⁵ The complexity of patriotic history is such that even direct participants of violent resistance like Alberts who have a "chequered" past not of their own making are treated with suspicion. Alberts capture by the SADF whilst fighting for PLAN in 1984 tainted his worthiness as a patriot as there was a general perception by SWAPO that those captured by SADF could have betrayed the SWAPO in exile. Such was the air of suspicion especially after the Cassinga massacre (May 4, 1978) that even when the Veterans Act of 2008 was drafted the 'consistency' clause in the Act was used to disqualify PLAN ex-fighters captured by the SADF in combat from receiving gratuity payments as they did not consistently participate in the liberation struggle. Although Alberts was finally registered as a veteran in 2010 the stigma of having the label of a prisoner of war (POW) to the SADF had already done much harm to his economic trajectory.

chapter two show clearly a link between the positioning of former SWAPO exiles in Swapo Party's patriotic history and their economic fortunes in the post-colony, where those who fit the mould of what a hero/heroine is have utilized the recognition to benefit economically whilst those that do not fit into the mould neatly have found themselves at the margins. Unsurprisingly as research participants narrated their stories there was a tendency by marginalized former SWAPO exiles to routinely tailor their life histories to identify with violent resistance (during the liberation struggle) arguably to remain relevant in the conversations regarding reintegration. It is therefore important to realise that Swapo Party's patriotic history is concerned with neither the security nor developmental agenda of DDR (e.g Muggah, 2008, p. 8) but rather buttressing its own legitimacy in the post-colony.³⁵⁶ Having understood the wider implications of patriotic history on reintegration in Namibia, it becomes imperative to question whether the newly elected Swapo Party led government was the right institution to have undertaken DDR (from 1990 onwards) considering how the whole process was politicised and the ongoing repercussions of marginalization within SWAPO exile ranks that appear to have no end in sight having been enshrined in the country's legislation (e.g. Veterans Act of 2008). More importantly Namibia's example of politicisation of reintegration programmes and the problems and challenges that have resulted from this is a timely lesson to DDR donor countries and agencies such as the UN of the dangers of security centred DDR approaches that focus on Disarmament and Demobilisation whilst leaving

³⁵⁶ Metsola highlights the problematic nature of Namibia's reintegration when he highlights how remobilization of PLAN ex-fighters essentially took place through the establishment of the Special Field Force which recruited PLAN ex-fighters and deployed them to border regions including crushing the Caprivi Cessionists and during UNITA's border incursions during the Angola civil war.

reintegration to the host nations that often lack resources and expertise to oversee such programmes.³⁵⁷

6.2 The vacuum UNTAG left

UNTAG's role in the Disarmament, Demobilization and Repatriation of SWAPO exiles and other Namibians not necessarily affiliated to SWAPO in 1989 is considered to have been a success (e.g. Howard, 2002, 2007 ; Dzinesa, 2004; Muggah, 2008). Yet life histories explored in chapter three have put this view into question. The author attempts to offer a different perspective on the role and legacy of UNTAG in Namibia beyond the discussions on the role it played regarding Disarmament and Demobilization during the transition period (1989 – 1990). Although UNTAG's mandate did not precisely name reintegration, the author argues that more could have been done to prepare Namibian refugees (most but not all of whom were also SWAPO exiles) for the challenges that awaited them in the aftermath of repatriation.³⁵⁸ To highlight these limitations, the author transposes UNHCR's (the UN agency responsible for repatriation in 1989) current concept of reinstallation grants juxtaposing it with the package that all refugees (including SWAPO exiles) received upon repatriation in 1989

³⁵⁷ History has shown that politicised reintegration programmes have often failed to reintegrate former fighters. One example is that of the spectacular failure of Zimbabwe's 2nd policy of demobilisation and reintegration of 1997 (Mazarire and Rupiya, 2000, p. 69 - 80). Zimbabwe's 2nd policy of demobilisation and reintegration failed to achieve its goal of reintegrating ZANLA and ZIPRA cadres who were highly politicised to the extent that in the year 2000 they remobilized to carry out the now infamous farm invasions under the so called banner of the 3rd chimurenga/ 3rd revolutionary war. Interestingly it is from Zimbabwe's highly politicised and narrow history that Terrence Ranger coined the term patriotic history, which scholars have transposed to explain Namibia's version of patriotic history.

³⁵⁸ UNHCR, the responsible agency for the repatriation of Namibians, repatriated all SWAPO exiles as refugees regardless of whether some of them were PLAN ex-fighters or not.

(see chapter three).³⁵⁹ The difference is apparent when one considers that today the UNHCR offers as much as US\$1,600 to refugees in comparison to the equivalent of N\$10 that UNHCR gave Namibian refugees during repatriation (1989 – 1990). It is from such comparisons that organisations like NRI 1989 (see chapter three) have raised a powerful discourse regarding the shortcomings of UNTAG and are demanding restitution for what they perceive as unfair treatment by UNHCR. The emergence of NRI 1989 is a manifestation of the limited humanitarian nature of UNTAG's mission and beckons us to reconsider how in some instances humanitarian missions in the 1980s could have done harm despite having noble agendas. Therefore, in retrospect it becomes clear that UNTAG's mandate was skewed towards security issues and was less concerned with the well-being of the refugees it was repatriating. Of course the fact that there was no precedent (in the 1980s) for reintegration that UNTAG could emulate is important to note.³⁶⁰ However, this does not negate the fact that there was no comprehensive humanitarian assistance that was made available to cater for the socio-economic needs of Namibian refugees beyond the transition period (1989-1990), especially with the prospect of a new government that lacked resources and expertise to resettle former refugees.³⁶¹ The question would be how and why was UNTAG's mandate minimalistic or security centred more than it was on humanitarian needs? The author comes to the conclusion that one of the primary causes of this was due to the complexities brought upon Namibia's liberation struggle by the Cold war. Having been essentially sidelined from negotiations leading up to Independence, SWAPO and the

³⁵⁹The repatriation package in 1989 consisted of N\$10, hoe, 2 litre cooking oil, pot, mattress and a blanket. Although the items may differ slightly from the narration of one SWAPO exile to the next, there is a general consensus that the N\$10 and a few food items were part of the paltry package

³⁶⁰ However, it is important to note that at the time of Resolution 435, there was no precedent for approaches to reintegration that the UN could look to like those advanced in the 1990s.

³⁶¹ The flawed and ineffective reintegration programmes of the Namibian government in the early 1990s (e.g Development Brigade) and the inability of the responsible ministry (MLRR) at the time to expedite and facilitate the resettlement and rehabilitation of refugees proves the aforementioned argument.

Namibian people's needs became secondary (Saunders, 2011, p.108). The result was a deal that reflected less the interests and the well-being of SWAPO and the Namibian people but addressed the concerns of the major powers involved in the conflict, that is, the US, USSR, Cuba, South Africa and Angola (Melber, 2014). It is therefore understandable (with this historical background in mind) why the UN poured enormous financial and human resources into UNTAG's DD mandate while delegating its local partner CCN to assist with the reinsertion process of refugees which clearly (judging from the paltry reinsertion package returning refugees were offered) received minimal financial support. From this vantage point one can then appreciate the notion in the thesis that UNHCR left a vacuum in the immediate aftermath of repatriation and Independence that neither local NGO's nor the government could fill (in the short-term) and to contextualise this scenario, life stories of former SWAPO exiles are presented and analysed which affirm this notion.

Drawing from life stories of former SWAPO exiles during repatriation and its aftermath one of the consequences of UNHCR's shortcomings which is important to point out is how destitution became prevalent in the early years after Independence. Destitution manifests as having been a common trend amongst particularly urban dwelling (Windhoek) former SWAPO exiles whose family and friends could simply not afford to support them in the transitional period (after repatriation by UNTAG) whilst they were waiting to obtain gainful employment. This difficult transitional period I argue, could have been less problematic for former SWAPO exiles had the UNHCR and its local partners played a more critical role as they currently do in the 21st century when assisting returning refugees to settle down. This subject could potentially be explored as part of future research regarding UNTAG. For instance scholars could explore other

dimensions of the complex aftermath of UNTAG through life history mapping focused on repatriation experiences of former SWAPO exiles who went to rural Namibia. This is particularly important as the challenges one experiences in urban settings (like Windhoek) may not necessarily be the same with rural settings. Such studies would then help paint a clearer picture of the overall impact (on former SWAPO exiles at a national level) of the vacuum left by UNTAG. It has become clearer with this study (chapter three) that there is still much to be researched regarding UNTAG, particularly UNHCR's role in the repatriation and transition period. Much of the world became fixated with UNTAG's achievement of delivering Independence (to Namibia), forgetting the thousands of Namibians that had been in exile and had to return to Namibia to restart their lives with often very limited institutional support.

6.3 Limits to DDR as an analytical framework

This study also takes a critical look at the notion of DDR. The author invites the reader to consider the limitations of DDR as an analytical framework. In undertaking this study the author was keenly aware that beyond reintegration programming issues (chapter 2) and UNTAG's minimalistic mandate (chapter 3) there are other variables that influenced the reintegration and life histories of former SWAPO exiles. Chapter four and chapter five particularly explore these variables that is, social capital, human capital and the notion of self-reintegration. The life histories explored in these two chapters are indicative of the notion that DDR programmes are not in themselves the only mechanism by which former SWAPO exiles reintegrated. This becomes apparent when one considers the fact that several former SWAPO exiles interviewed in both chapter four and five utilised their social and human capital to obtain gainful employment

without the assistance of government reintegration employment schemes.³⁶² Take for instance, Maria's (see chapter five) first job as a pre-school teacher and her subsequent achievements including purchasing a house (in the 1990s) had nothing to do with any reintegration programme but her ability to build social networks and maximise her human capital. Equally of note is Hilya (chapter four), who leveraged her social networks with Swapo Party leadership (that dated back to the liberation struggle) to get a job soon after Independence, did so outside the official reintegration programmes.³⁶³ In fact based on the life histories assessed in chapter four and five one could argue that many former SWAPO exiles particularly the ones that received post-secondary education in exile showed that in order to reintegrate they did not necessarily need reintegration programming assistance. Therefore, reintegration is presented in chapter four and chapter five as a social process (e.g. Rhea, 2014; Torjesen, 2013) that takes place through a process of socialisation. This process of socialisation as presented in chapter four and five entailed class formation that was enabled by capital (human and social) that former SWAPO exiles accumulated in exile. In other words reintegration has more to do with an individual's ability to adapt to society. For the most part many of the former SWAPO exiles interviewed in Windhoek for this study have found forms of gainful employment – irrespective of how they figure in Namibian reintegration policies and patriotic history.³⁶⁴ This perspective challenges the narratives of former SWAPO exiles (e.g. Alberts in chapter 2) who continue to insist that there are not yet reintegrated and cite insufficient support from reintegration programmes as the reason why they have not reintegrated. In light of Alberts reasoning citing reintegration

³⁶² The exception in this scenario are PLAN ex-fighters who were inducted into the NDF upon Independence and those that were employed under the Peace Project from 1998 onwards

³⁶³ The Development Brigade was one such programme, but it almost exclusively recruited a limited number of PLAN ex-fighters (Preston et al., 1993)

³⁶⁴ http://www.unndr.org/what-is-ddr/introduction_1.aspx

programming inadequacies as the reason for his “failed” reintegration, it becomes imperative to consider the possibility that reintegration programming may in fact be an obstacle of reintegration as a social process. If so it means to a large extent the Swapo Party led government’s reintegration programming stifled reintegration as a social process, fostered a culture of dependency (which dates back to the liberation struggle) ultimately creating a sense of entitlement amongst former SWAPO exiles. This is possibly the reason why benefits associated with reintegration programmes and policies are never enough for some former SWAPO exiles. There is always a constant return to the government and to Swapo Party for more, as former SWAPO exiles have over the years become used to the notion that reintegration can only be through a programme. Meanwhile, Swapo Party because of patriotic history, arguably needs former SWAPO exiles to continue to believe that their successful reintegration in the post-colony hinges on the Swapo Party led government’s ability to roll out successive reintegration programmes. This of course is arguably believable to former SWAPO exiles especially when one considers the fact that government is the largest employer in the country. This manipulation of former SWAPO exiles by Swapo Party has hindered former SWAPO exiles from seeing the possibilities of reintegrating in postcolonial Namibia outside the ambit of government programmes.³⁶⁵ As shown in the interviews many former SWAPO exiles are convinced reintegration is limited to programmes. This mind-set has led most of them to believe that they are yet to be reintegrated into society almost thirty years after Independence, despite the opposite being true for many of those interviewed for this study.

³⁶⁵ Life histories of former SWAPO exiles interviewed in chapter five demonstrate that it was and is still possible to reintegrate outside the ambit of government programmes in post-colonial.

Finally it is important to note that the concept of (trajectory) mapping life histories through an economic lens (over a thirty-year period) allowed the author to gain new insights into the reintegration realities of former SWAPO exiles.³⁶⁶ The unique “lived experiences” of exiles challenge the militant agency of former SWAPO exiles as a collective as often portrayed by the media and researchers alike. Besides gaining insight into specificities regarding economic circumstances of former SWAPO exiles the study demystifies former SWAPO exiles by presenting them as people who experience real life challenges and are simply trying to make-ends meet. The study humanizes the person behind the label ex-fighter, freedom fighter, revolutionary, POW or Cassinga survivor exposing their, thoughts, frustrations, challenges and triumphs. Through life history mapping the study also de-mystifies and deconstructs reintegration as a concept presenting it instead as an on-going social process that has more to do with former SWAPO exiles’ ability to adapt back into society than it has to do with programmes and policies.

³⁶⁶ This is clearly highlighted through the economic circumstances of former SWAPO exiles gauging their economic well-being through an analysis of their human capital, social capital, assets, income, employment (type of employment), retirement preparedness and overall economic wellbeing over a period of nearly thirty years.

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