

Facts about Child Soldiers

According to UNICEF:

"A 'child soldier' is defined as any child - boy or girl - under 18 years of age, who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including, but not limited to: cooks, porters, messengers, and anyone accompanying such groups other than family members. It includes girls and boys recruited for sexual purposes and/or forced marriage. The definition, therefore, does not only refer to a child who is carrying, or has carried weapons" (Cape Town Principals, 1997).

- Child soldiers have been used in over 30 countries
- Child soldiers are under the age of 18
- Children are used as soldiers because they are obedient and physically vulnerable
- Children who are poor, orphaned, or refugees are recruited by force or see armed groups as their best chance for survival
- Children become soldiers to seek revenge
- Children fight with weapons such as AK-47s or M-16s
- Child soldiers are used to clear landmines or make and deploy mines
- Child soldiers participate in suicide missions, carry supplies, and act as spies, messengers, cooks, and lookouts
- Girl soldiers are warriors and sex and domestic slaves
- Child soldiers have seen atrocities, including rapes, amputations, beheadings, and people being burned alive
- Child soldiers are often given drugs to make them overcome their fear and reluctance to fight
- Child soldiers become victims of conflict either by being killed, or by becoming disabled, homeless, or psychologically traumatized
- Because educations and opportunities to learn civilian job skills are often denied to them, child soldiers find it difficult to re-join peaceful society. Some turn to crime or become involved in other conflicts
- Children are used in armed conflict throughout the world.
- Children become involved in armed conflict when there isn't a governmental infrastructure in place to protect them.
- Children become involved in armed conflict because they are physically and mentally easy to control.
- The long term effects of children in armed conflict have lasting implications on the individuals, the society, and the world at large.
- Child Soldiers are both victims and victimizers.
- International institutions and documents are in place to protect children's rights.
- International agencies and grassroots organizations are working to combat the use of child soldiers among other issues.
- Children in armed conflict want help.

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Voices Of Young Soldiers

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Africa Central Africa

"I feel so bad about the things that I did. It disturbs me so much that I inflicted death on other people. When I go home I must do some traditional rites because I have killed. I must perform these rites to cleanse myself. I still dream about the boy from my village that I killed. I see him in my dreams, and he is talking to me, saying I killed him for nothing, and I am crying." A 16-year-old girl after demobilization from an armed group (Source: U.S. State Dept. TIP Report 2005)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

"When they came to my village, they asked my older brother whether he was ready to join the militia. He was just 17 and he said no; they shot him in the head. Then they asked me if I was ready to join. I said no, so what could I do - I didn't want to die." A former child soldier taken when he was 13. (BBC report 2006)

"They gave me a uniform and told me that now I was in the army. They even gave me a new name, 'Pisco'. They said that they would come back and kill my parents if I didn't do as they said." Reporter interview with a 17 year old former child soldier in 2006

"Being new, I couldn't perform the very difficult exercises properly and so I was beaten every morning. Two of my friends in the camp died because of the beatings. The soldiers buried them in the latrine. I am still thinking of them". Former child soldier interviewed in 2002.

Sudan

"I joined the SPLA when I was 13. I am from Bahr Al Ghazal. They demobilized me in 2001 and sent me to Rumbek, but I was given no demobilization documents. Now, I am stuck here because my family was killed in a government attack and because the SPLA would re-recruit me. At times I wonder why I am not going back to SPLA, half of my friends have and they seem to be better off than me." Boy interviewed by Coalition staff, southern Sudan, February 2004.

Uganda

"Early on when my brothers and I were captured, the LRA [Lord's Resistance Army] explained to us that all five brothers couldn't serve in the LRA because we would not perform well. So they tied up two younger brothers and invited us to watch. Then they beat them with sticks until two of them died. They told us it would give us strength to fight. My youngest brother was nine years old." Former child soldier, aged 13.

Children's Rights and the use of Child Soldiers

1. Facts about Childrens' rights

- 40 million children live on the streets of the world's cities
- The average age of the homeless in the US is 9 years
- A gun takes the life of a child every 2 hours in the US
- In Liberia, children made up a quarter of all civil war combatants
- Children are tortured by authorities in 11 countries
- More than a million children work in the Asian sex trade
- 4,000 children in the USA were murdered by their parents in 1998
- 2 million girls between 4 and 12 years undergo genital mutilation every year

2. Facts about Child Soldiers

- Child Soldiers are being used in over 36 countries worldwide.
- Today, there are approximately 300,000 child soldiers fighting in armed conflict.
- Child soldiers are under the age of 18.
- Children are used as soldiers because they are easily manipulated and are too young to understand their actions.
- Child soldiers use AK-47s, M-16s and grenades because they are easy to use.
Orphans and refugees sometimes see their only hope for survival is by joining a militia.
- Child soldiers are used to clear landmines and as human shields.
Child soldiers are often given drugs to help them cope with their emotions making it easier for them to kill.
- Girl soldiers are often used as domestic sex slaves.
- Child soldiers carry supplies and act as messengers, cooks and lookouts.
- Child soldiers are sometimes forced to commit atrocities against their own families and villages.
- Many child soldiers are not welcome back home after a conflict ends because of cultural superstition.
- Children are the victims of conflict after witnessing or participating in murder and rape, becoming disabled, homeless or psychologically traumatized.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC NEWS

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"Innocent Voices" Movie Tells Child Soldier's Tale

Stefan Lovgren in Los Angeles
for National Geographic News

January 10, 2005

After the civil war broke out in El Salvador in the early 1980s, Oscar Torres had to lie on his stomach to do his homework to avoid getting struck by stray bullets.

But there was one thing that the 11-year-old Torres feared even more than getting caught in the crossfire: being conscripted into the army.

During the war the government forces routinely rounded up all 12-year-old boys for service. Sometimes younger children were signed up as well.

Torres escaped numerous roundups in his shantytown in Cuscatzingo, El Salvador. Finally, after he turned 12, he joined the guerilla movement known as the FMLN (Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional), which was fighting the government.

It was hardly a voluntary decision.

"Ask any 12-year-old if he wants to join a war and he will say no," Torres, now 33, said recently. "The problem is that many children don't have a choice."

Torres's harrowing story is retold in a graphic new film, *Innocent Voices*, which is Mexico's entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the 2004 Academy Awards. Torres co-wrote the screenplay with the film's director, Luis Mandoki.

The movie, which has yet to be scheduled for U.S. release, spotlights the plight of child soldiers in conflicts around the world.

Though the civil war in El Salvador ended in 1992, the problem of child soldiers remains serious and widespread.

According to a recent report by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers—which includes several leading non-governmental organizations—children (under 18 years) are currently participating as soldiers in nearly every major armed conflict. Dozens of nonstate armies and about ten governments are using child soldiers in more than 20 conflicts around the globe.

Grave Violations

In some countries, such as Afghanistan, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, the situation has improved as conflicts have ended, and children are being demobilized. But in other countries, such as Sudan and the Ivory Coast, additional children have been drawn in as fighters as conflicts have erupted or escalated.

Child soldiers are particularly common in Africa. The Great Lakes region (Rwanda, Burundi, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo) and Uganda are the most affected areas.

According to the findings of the 2004 Child Soldiers Global Report, out of over a hundred thousand children estimated to have been recruited and used as soldiers in Africa between 2001 and 2004, more than half of them are found in the Great Lakes region. There were an estimated 30,000 child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo alone by the end of 2003.

"Due to ongoing conflict in the region for almost a decade, children continue to become victims of recruitment

abductions, sexual abuse, and other grave violations of their rights," said Henri Nzeyimana, the Great Lakes coordinator of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. "Governments and armed groups in the Great Lakes are betraying both children and their own societies and endangering long-term peace and stability in the region," he added.

In northern Uganda—where a rebel group known as the Lord's Resistance Army has waged a 17-year-old war against the Ugandan government—abductions and recruitment of child soldiers escalated dramatically between 2002 and 2004. To date, some 20,000 children have been kidnapped by the LRA to serve as soldiers or sex slaves.

Legal Framework

But the practice persists outside Africa too.

Experts estimate that 20 percent or more of Myanmar's 350,000 soldiers are children under the age of 18. Army recruiters in the Asian country (also called Burma) frequently apprehend boys at bus stations and markets, threatening them with jail if they refuse to join the army.

Most boys are sent to camps where they go through weapons training. Many boys have been beaten to death after trying to run away, according to New York-based Human Rights Watch.

Boys as young as 12 have been forced to commit human rights abuses against civilians in Myanmar, including rounding up villagers for forced labor and carrying out executions.

Experts say that considerable progress has been made toward the establishment of a legal framework for the protection of children in armed conflicts. The countries in central Africa, for example, have signed and ratified the international standards relating to child soldiers. Also, the United Nations has strongly condemned countries whose armies recruit child soldiers.

But real change has been elusive.

"The international community is becoming more aware of the problem, but we still see too little action," said Jo Becker, the Advocacy Director of the Children's Rights Division at the Human Rights Watch in New York. "In most countries commanders recruit children with impunity. Rarely are they brought to justice for these crimes."

One exception, Becker says, is Sierra Leone. There, each of the 11 defendants indicted by a special war crimes court has been charged with recruiting or using children under the age of 15—the court views recruiting minors as a war crime.

"We hope that as some of these defendants are convicted, it will send a strong message to others that they may face serious consequences for their abuse of children," Becker said.

Living Nightmare

Torres, meanwhile, hopes *Innocent Voices* will bring renewed attention to the plight of child soldiers.

"This isn't just a story about me but about all the other kids that are living this nightmare now," he said after a recent Hollywood screening.

Torres eventually escaped to the United States where, six years later, he was reunited with his family. He now works as an actor and writer.

But his past still haunts him.

During the shooting of the movie, the director, Luis Mandoki, said that Torres would sometimes just disappear.

"Later I would find him crouching under a tree, crying," Mandoki said after the screening.

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No boys on the battlefield

The Ottawa Citizen

Friday, June 06, 2008

Of all the wars raging today, there are 17 in which children are soldiers - which is good news, because just a few years ago, there were 27 such conflicts.

This is the news from the latest report of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. But the tone of the report is far from celebratory. The biggest reason for the decline in numbers seems to be that several conflicts have ended, such as those in Liberia or Sierra Leone. As new conflicts arise, there's no guarantee that they won't involve the recruitment of children.

The real good news has little to do with numbers, and more to do with global attitudes. A century ago, even civilized governments thought little of putting boys in uniforms and handing them guns. Now, the list of governments that recruit children is relatively small and, by and large, unsurprising. It includes Chad, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Yemen.

"The most notable offender remains Myanmar (Burma), whose armed forces, engaged in long-running counter-insurgency operations against a range of ethnic armed groups, are believed to contain thousands of children," according to the report. Some of those children are as young as 11.

The nations of the world have collectively condemned the use of child soldiers. Ishmael Beah, a reformed child soldier from Sierra Leone, has told the world his story and has been treated, rightly, as a victim.

The most important trend is the use of the international justice system to deter mass recruitment of children. Charles Taylor, the former president of Liberia, is on trial in The Hague; one count of the indictment is for using child soldiers. The International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant for another notorious mass abuser of children, Joseph Kony of Uganda, and for his cronies.

For the first time in history, warlords face justice for the mass abduction, indoctrination, drugging, torture and rape of children.

The challenge now - and it is a difficult one - is to prevent future recruitment and abduction campaigns. Even criminals have codes of honour; it's possible warlords might one day be convinced to regard the abuse of children as beyond a moral threshold - or at least, not worth the risk. International law might act as a deterrent.

Demobilizing masses of children in existing conflicts has, so far, proven to be nearly impossible. The only real solution, once the children are already involved, is peace: "On the ground, tens of thousands of child soldiers have been released from armies and armed groups since 2004 as long-running conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa have ended," the coalition reports.

Those children will need help, for years to come. So will the babies born of the rape of

Canadians have been watching the case of Omar Khadr, our own child soldier, recruited by his father and on trial now at Guantanamo Bay. Child fighters must be reintroduced to civilian life, or they will remain twisted, ashamed and addicted to violence. No one yet knows how Mr. Khadr's personality has been shaped by his experiences, and by his lack of rehabilitation.

As long as there are madmen and bad men, there will probably always be children who are forced into hellish lives. The challenge for good people is to find ways to punish evil and to undo as much of the damage as we can.

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CLOSE WINDOW

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A Girl's Story

Five years ago, Alice was a happy 14-year-old Ugandan girl growing up with her five sisters and two brothers. On October 14, 1995, Alice was at home with two of her sisters while the rest of her family was working in their field. Suddenly, Alice and her sisters were surrounded by armed men and children, members of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel movement that has been waging war against the Ugandan government since the mid-1980s.

Before she had time to realise what was happening, Alice and her two sisters, ages 12 and 16, found themselves being led away from their home - heading to the LRA training camps just across the border in southern Sudan. At the camps, Alice and the other captured girls were given to LRA soldiers as "wives" and raped repeatedly. Alice's experiences as a child soldier conditioned her to commit acts of unimaginable violence when she was forced to participate in LRA raids.

"I was very hardened, and to kill was no big deal. I took part in over ten killings each week without any sense of guilt. It was a long trek, so many of the children we captured got tired and we had to kill them. We would just club them to death. We killed so many children I lost count."

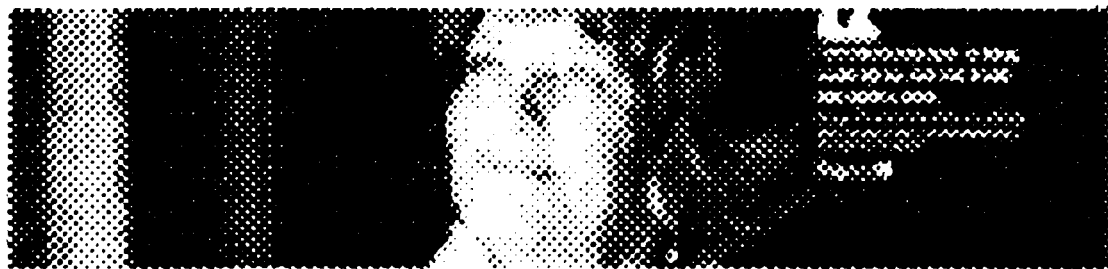
After learning that her younger sister had been killed while on a raid, the fate met by so many child soldiers, Alice could not bear to continue her life in the LRA and became determined to escape. On her next operation, Alice lagged behind and hid silently in the bush for several agonising hours. When she was sure her raiding party had completely disappeared, she walked to the safety of the nearest village.

Alice eventually reunited with her family in an Internally Displaced Person's (IDP) camp - they had fled from their home after repeated attacks by the LRA. But while Alice's family was overjoyed to see her, other members of her community considered her still a member of the LRA and not to be trusted.

In order to give hope to former child soldiers and other displaced children in Uganda, the Children's Unit helped to establish an IRC (International Rescue Committee) skills training course in tailoring in the IDP camp where Alice lives. She was enrolled along with 13 other formerly abducted adolescents who, like Alice, were too old to go back to school. While gaining valuable skills and spending time with the other trainees, Alice began to realize that she was not alone, that there were others who were also haunted by painful memories like hers, and that she could make a valuable contribution to her community.



After having completed her eight-month training in tailoring, Alice graduated first in her class, gaining acceptance from the community in the process. The IRC has given her a sewing machine to start her work as a tailor, and Alice and another graduate plan to set up a business together.



Clothe Your Words

ASOSM



ISHMAEL BLAN ...

Enlarge In

Killings, rapes and bombings became daily occurrences in his once peaceful life.

He also remembers walking into a village where human bones covered the ground, his mother unable to cover his eyes or his siblings'. These were just the beginnings of his exposure to the horrors of war, and he soon learned that "even a mother's fierce love will not protect [him]."

The war eventually took away Jal's mother, and his father, now one of the leaders of the SPLA movement, decided to send him and hundreds of other village boys to school in Ethiopia, where they would be educated. They boarded a boat, chaperoned by adult soldiers, but the ship was over capacity and sank. Only a handful of children survived the sinking and attacks by hippos and crocodiles.

Jal and other survivors continued the journey to Ethiopia. Many died of thirst and hunger, were attacked and eaten by lions; some became too weak to walk and simply settled down and died.

The boys reached Ethiopia to discover that the promise of education was false. They settled in a refugee camp called Pinyudu and, after two years of waiting and tremendous hardship, Jal was recruited into the SPLA. He couldn't wait to take his revenge on the Arabs he had come to hate. During training, he was beaten and dragged through severe ordeals. He learned to put a hold on all emotions in order to stay alive, but soon began to realize that war and revenge were not as romantic and fulfilling as he had thought.

The SPLA's Dinka and the Nuer tribes became suspicious of each other. Jal and some members defected to join their tribal commander. They embarked on a journey that almost turned Jal to cannibalism. Eventually, he left the war and met an English aid worker, Emma, who took him to Kenya and placed him in school. But Emma died in an accident and Jal was left alone again, this time on the streets of Nairobi. With tremendous difficulty, and with memories of the war constantly disturbing him, pushing him to near suicide, Jal pursued his education and later his music, which gained him international fame.

In *First Kill Your Family*, journalist and Africa hand Peter Eichstaedt offers shocking details from the first-hand experiences of people who have participated in the war in northern Uganda as children and adults, those who suffered kidnapping, maiming and other physical and psychological damage, government military officers fighting against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), former top officers of Joseph Kony, the leader of the LRA, and many other direct and indirect actors and victims of the war in Uganda.

The power of this work is not only that it is well researched, but that it derives from Eichstaedt's genuine curiosity to know more about a war that had taken 100,000 lives and displaced more than two million people. His perplexity about why the world doesn't know more about the war, and his desire to change this fact, are illustrated in his presentation of the violence of the LRA, the national army, equally oppressive toward the Acholi people of the northern areas, and former LRA leaders whose opinions are disturbing.

Furthermore, he outlines north and south divisions due to the historical and political development of bloodthirsty leaders from Idi Amin in the 1970s to other regional leaders such as Alice Lakwena, who claimed to have been possessed by a spirit called Lakwena (Messenger) and who in 1986 started the Holy Spirit Mobile Force, incorporated into Joseph Kony's LRA in 1988.

In the opening of the book, we meet a generation of young men and women who have known nothing but war. First is young Richard Opio, 17 in 2000 and a former child soldier of the LRA. His ordeal started when the rebels attacked his home and forced him to crush the skulls of his mother and father with the blunt end of an ax. The rebels told him it was "a sign of courage" to kill his parents. He knew he couldn't resist; those who had been mutilated, losing limbs, lips and ears; some had been clubbed to death. Richard's parents begged him to kill them. It seemed his only chance to survive.

There is 25-year-old Lily Adong, a former wife of Joseph Kony. She was struggling to be accepted into her community and didn't think that Kony was a bad man. Col. Charles Otema, of the Ugandan army in the north, dismissed the seriousness of the LRA and its atrocities by saying that the group was basically finished. "A dying horse kicks harder" than the bands of LRA rebels, he said, and "Northern Uganda is generally peaceful."

This despite the many civilians who had been injured and had escaped from the LRA. They feared the group's return and lived in constant worry in refugee camps only loosely guarded by the government's army. The army imposed curfews on the people, who felt imprisoned. They could not properly farm and their way of life became suspect to the soldiers, who considered them supporters of the LRA.

The fear of witch doctors, witchcraft and unholy ghosts was pervasive. And to bring us perhaps closer to the mindset of Kony himself, there were three former commanders of the LRA who had accepted the government's amnesty. Maj. Jackson Acama said that Kony "talked about two things. First you should have faith in God. And two, we should overthrow the government."

Eichstaedt questioned Acama further and discovered that Kony believed he was doing exactly what God told him to do, and that he, Kony, was a prophet who had been rejected by a generation, and therefore any crime committed against that generation was not a crime. Acama unflinchingly believed that Kony *was* a prophet, and it was difficult to wipe that belief from the mindset of Kony's followers.

Another former LRA commander said Kony wasn't aware of all the atrocities, that only the deployed troops were. "Kony is not crazy but rather a clever man," he said. If these commanders who had left Kony still believed in him, what does that say about the possible conclusion of the war, even if Kony were killed or arrested by the International Criminal Court?

It is my hope that Eichstaedt's work will help overcome our forgetfulness and wake us to see that something can be done, that inaction isn't acceptable. For more of his commentary, see his blog at <http://www.petereichstaedt.com>.

Emmanuel Jal's memoir offers another human face for child soldiers, an experience that may seem far-fetched to many, but believable if we allow ourselves to see the humanity of others. His journey has brought us to see intimately what war does to children, families and societies, and the struggle to recover and - more important - the strength and resilience of children.

The question is whether children used in wars are lost, or if it is our inaction that makes them lost. Jal's story is also an invitation to the power of music, the power of finding meaning in a shattered life. Although I celebrate Jal's survival, I am heartbroken about the possibility of refocusing lives such as his, lives that can add to and deepen our understanding of the power of goodness and the human spirit.

Ishmael Beah is the author of A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier.

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Phillip Crawley, Publisher

Former child soldier gives chilling evidence at Congo war-crimes trial

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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THE HAGUE, Netherlands - A former child soldier calmly recalled in court Tuesday that he killed and mutilated people during a battle at a church school in eastern Congo.

The young man testified at the International Criminal Court that he was abducted while on his way home from school and sent to brutal military training camps run by militia leader Thomas Lubanga. He was about 11 at the time, he told a three-judge panel.

Lubanga, founder and former leader of the Union of Congolese Patriots political movement and its armed wing, has pleaded not guilty to charges of recruiting and using child soldiers in tribal conflicts in 2002-2003.

The witness spoke nearly two weeks after he started testifying and then retracted his evidence, apparently because he was scared of being in the same courtroom with Lubanga.

His identity has not been released and he was shielded from Lubanga in the courtroom by a curtain.

The witness gave a chillingly matter-of-fact account of a battle with fighters from the rival Lendu tribe near a missionary school.

"We went as far as the mission. At the mission we killed those who were there, also the priests," he said through an interpreter.

"We captured some of them, took them hostage," he added. "We cut their mouths off. We would destroy their faces. That's what the Lendu did too."

Prosecutors did not ask him to elaborate on the testimony.

The witness said he passed through Union of Congolese Patriots training camps where he learned how to shoot weapons and was regularly beaten by older soldiers.

"We were told that whoever lost his rifle would be beaten to death," he said.

He said he also was taught to smoke marijuana and drink beer. Prosecutors and rights groups say that armies that use child soldiers often drug them to calm the children's nerves and desensitize them to the horrors of battle.

The witness told judges he saw Lubanga land at an airstrip in a light plane that delivered uniforms and weapons.

Lubanga is the first suspect to face trial at the International Criminal Court, the world's first permanent war crimes tribunal. It was set up in 2002.

The court has only three other suspects in custody, all of them former Congolese warlords.

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Stolen kids turned into terrifying killers

POSTED: 3:00 p.m. EST, February 12, 2007

VIDEO

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[Children flee barbaric horror](#) (5:42)



[Children taught to go to war](#) (3:14)

RELATED LINKS

- There are more than 250,000 child soldiers fighting around the world
- Children are often brainwashed and drugged before they are forced to fight
- Their vulnerability can allow warlords to make them into coldblooded killers
- Child advocates see some signs of progress, but a long way to go

By Ann O'Neill
CNN

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(CNN) -- Warlords are forcing children in conflicts around the world to become killing machines -- nothing more than what one child advocate calls "cannon fodder."

Some children are kidnapped from their schools or their beds, some are recruited after seeing their parents slaughtered, some may even choose to join the militias as their best hope for survival in war-torn countries from Colombia, and across Africa and the Middle East, to south Asia.

Once recruited, many are brainwashed, trained, given drugs and then sent into battle with orders to kill.

There is no escape for what the United Nations and human rights groups estimate are 250,000 child soldiers today. These children, some as young as 8, become fighters, sex slaves, spies and even human shields.

Sometimes their guns are taller than they are. But the child soldiers can be frighteningly cold and effective, according to CNN Africa correspondent Jeff Koinange. ([Audio Slide Show: Koinange describes coming face to face with gun-wielding children](#))

He said they take macho noms de guerre like "Col. Rambo" and "Brig. Chop Them Up."

"The saddest part is we, as adults, had to address them as such," he added. "Otherwise you just never knew what would happen." ([Read: Koinange recalls how child soldiers killed his friend](#))

The children's very vulnerability makes them attractive to the men leading militias, according to Jo Becker, who has interviewed former child soldiers in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Uganda and Myanmar for Human Rights Watch.

They are easy to manipulate and will do the unspeakable without question or protest, partly because their morals and value systems are not yet fully formed, she said. In some cultures, child soldiers -- 40 percent of whom can be girls -- are considered expendable "cannon fodder," she said.

Ordered not to cry

The journey from boy or girl to killing machine follows a horrifying route of indoctrination, including being forced to execute friends and family, international organizations report.

One girl, Angela, 12, told Human Rights Watch she was told to shoot a friend when she joined Colombia's FARC guerrillas. ([Watch children drilled for war in the mud](#))

"I closed my eyes and fired the gun, but I didn't hit her. So I shot again," she said. "I had to bury her and put dirt on top of her. The commander said, 'You'll have to do this many more times, and you'll have to learn not to cry.'"

An indictment against Congolese warlord Thomas Lubanga Dyilo asserts that one of his commanders threatened to shoot a 13-year-old girl unless she tied the testicles of a prisoner with wire. She complied and the captive died.

In Myanmar -- formerly known as Burma -- a boy who was 11 when he was recruited to the national army, had to watch as older soldiers gunned down mothers and then killed their babies. "They swung them by their legs and smashed them against a rock. I saw it," Kim Muang Than told Human Rights Watch.

Changing times

Officials with the United Nations, UNICEF and human rights groups said they are seeing promising signs, 20 years after the United Nations first addressed the issue. ([Watch children flee the horror of militia kidnapers](#))

Child soldiers were on the agenda for a U.N. Security Council working committee Friday. The committee discussed how rebel groups in Nepal and Sri Lanka use children to fight. Action against militias in the Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of Congo was also considered.

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Last week, 58 countries and nongovernmental agencies signed a treaty to do more to free current and potential child soldiers from peril. And, on January 29, the International Criminal Court forged ahead with its first war crimes prosecution, targeting Lubanga on charges of recruiting child soldiers. The act was declared a war crime when the ICC was established in 2002.

"In the past there haven't been consequences against the commanders," said Becker, of Human Rights Watch. "This sends a signal to the groups that the world is paying attention now, you can be jailed for life and your assets can be frozen."

"I think we've come a long way," said Radhika Coomaraswamy, the United Nations' envoy for children and armed conflict. "Ten years ago this was an invisible issue."

Since last summer, groups in Burundi, Ivory Coast, Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and Somalia have been referred to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions.

But there are many, many more. Child soldiers have been used in the past decade in more than 30 countries, according to the United Nations. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, which said young fighters were active in at least 19 countries last year. ([Map: Where children are forced to fight](#))

Coomaraswamy sees the Middle East, Sudan's Darfur and eastern Chad as the new trouble spots. ([Read about Iraq's child soldiers](#))

There are also concerns in Asia, with Human Rights Watch posting reports in January alleging violations by Maoist forces in Nepal and an offshoot of the Tamil Tigers rebel group in Sri Lanka.

"We're no longer just pointing fingers at rebel groups or government armies," said Human Rights Watch's Becker. "Now we're holding individual commanders accountable for their crimes."

U.N. envoy Coomaraswamy is taking an optimistic long view. "I think this is a little bit like the campaign against slavery in the late 19th century," she said. "There's such an abhorrence of it on an international level."

But much remains to be done, she cautioned. Funds must be found and steps taken to restore some sense of normal life for children numbed and hardened by their war experiences. In many cases, she said, their families don't want them and they are shunned by villagers.

Abandoned, they find little to eat, have nothing to do and scant hope for the future, Coomaraswamy said.

Without intervention, they could grow up to become a lost generation of migrant professional killers.

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Child soldiers damaged by war return home

Michelle Faul

WINNIPEG FREE PRESS - 8/03/2009



A former Mai Mai soldier holds his infant niece outside their home in eastern Congo. Hundreds of child soldiers have been returned to their homes in recent weeks. Many are scarred, both physically and emotionally, by their experiences. (CP)

KIWANJA, Congo -- Some beat their heads against the wall until doctors inject them with tranquillizers. Others remain mute for days, their eyes darting around like frightened animals.

In recent weeks, hundreds of child soldiers in eastern Congo's catastrophic war have returned home, sometimes to the same villages where they killed and pillaged. Some have been forced back out with threats of vengeance, and even ostracized by their own families.

These children were kidnapped by rebels and used as fighters, labourers, porters and sex slaves in a war that has torn the mineral-rich region apart for years. Children helped slaughter some 150 civilians in a two-day massacre in Kiwanja in November, one of the latest atrocities in a relentless cycle of ethnic warfare.

But in January, President Joseph Kabila invited troops in from neighbouring Rwanda to help end the conflict. Rebel leader Laurent Nkunda was arrested and his fighters integrated into the army -- and child advocates are seizing upon the relative stability to persuade militias and rebels to let go of those under 18. At least 478 children, including 15 girls, were demobilized in eastern Congo in January and February, according to UNICEF.

Stripped of their camouflage uniforms, guns and machetes, many of the youngsters still have raw aggression programmed into them through years of being pumped up with drugs and thrown into battle. Some have scars on their arms from knife cuts where herbs and other concoctions were rubbed under the skin to convince them that bullets would ricochet off their bodies.

Four former child soldiers told The Associated Press how they willingly joined the Mai-Mai Patriotic Resistance a month before the Kiwanja massacre. The former child fighters say they were between 15 and 17 and were in their fourth year of school.

"Our land was invaded, so we were obliged to fight. We decided to go and fight together," said one, a teenager wearing new white tracksuit pants who taps one knee up and down nervously.

His friend said he was encouraged by his parents to fight.

Joseph N. Giza, who works with the Congolese group Heal Africa, said that was not unusual: "Can you imagine? Sending your children to a war you are busy running away from? The children were used as cannon fodder. We have found some as young as 10 years old."

Aid workers, though, say they have a lot of hope the former child soldiers can be rehabilitated, noting many are able to recover relatively quickly -- returning to normal family life and going back to school. Since 2004, more than 30,000 children across the country have been demobilized and reintegrated with assistance from UNICEF. But it is estimated that around 3,500 children are still with armed groups in Congo. In the final months of 2008, rebels loyal to renegade general Nkunda seized large swaths of eastern Congo, driving out defeated army troops and militias. Nkunda, a Tutsi, initially was fighting perpetrators of Rwanda's 1994 genocide of mainly Tutsis by Hutus who escaped into eastern Congo.

Congolese civilians also formed militias and took up arms against the rebels. Politicians who funded these militias encouraged child recruitment.

"The army was looting and raping instead of defending people, as were the rebels. The people felt absolutely abandoned," Giza said.

A child protection officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals, is helping set up community groups and persuading them to accept back the child fighters.

"Before we reunite the children, we go to the parents and communities," she said. "We explain that these are just children who have been manipulated by adults, that they did not understand what they were doing."

But dozens of youngsters returned home to face death threats. They've fled to a transit home for child soldiers in Goma, run by Concerted Action for Disadvantaged Youth and Children.

-- The Associated Press

Prosecutor says ex-Congolese warlord forced children to fight

Mike Corder, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WINNIPEG FREE PRESS - 26/01/2009

THE HAGUE, Netherlands - Children snatched from Congo's streets were trained to kill and forced to fight in a brutal ethnic war, the International Criminal Court's prosecutor said Monday as the tribunal opened its historic first trial.

Children as young as nine, ripped from their families, were told "their gun was father and mother and would feed and clothe them." Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo told the three-judge panel in the trial of Congolese warlord Thomas Lubanga.

Lubanga's trial has been hailed as a legal landmark by human rights activists because it is the first international criminal prosecution to focus solely on child soldiers and the first to include the participation of witnesses.

It also marks the coming of age for the International Criminal Court, six years after it was set up.

Prosecutors plan to call 34 witnesses, including nine former child soldiers, and hope to wrap up their case in a few months.

Lubanga, wearing a dark suit and red tie, showed no emotion as his lawyer Catherine Mabilie said he pleaded not guilty to using children under age 15 as soldiers in the armed wing of his Union of Congolese Patriots political party in 2002-03.

Lubanga's militia "recruited, trained and used hundreds of young children to kill, pillage and rape. The children still suffer the consequences of Lubanga's crimes," Moreno-Ocampo said.

He said he would seek a sentence close to the maximum, which could be either 30 years or life depending on the severity of his crimes.

Moreno-Ocampo showed judges video of Lubanga addressing recruits - including young men and children dressed in military fatigues or T-shirts and shorts - at a training camp.

Girls were particularly vulnerable, Moreno-Ocampo said.

"As soon as the girls' breasts started to grow, Thomas Lubanga's commanders could select them as their wives," he said. "Wives is the wrong word. They were sexual slaves."

Lubanga, a 48-year-old university graduate, claims he was a patriot fighting to prevent rebels and foreign fighters from plundering the vast mineral wealth of Congo's eastern Ituri region. His lawyer will give her opening statement Tuesday.

The United Nations estimates that up to 250,000 child soldiers still fight in more than a dozen countries.

Param-Preet Singh of Human Rights Watch welcomed the trial but urged prosecutors to pursue more senior suspects.

Lubanga was arrested by Congolese authorities in 2005 and flown to The Hague a year later. He is one of four suspects in the court's custody - all Congolese.

Other judges at the court are close to deciding whether to issue an arrest warrant for Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir on charges of genocide in Darfur province.

Lubanga's trial was originally slated to begin last June but was held up by a dispute between judges and prosecutors over confidential evidence that raised concerns Lubanga might be unable to get a fair trial. It took months of wrangling before judges and defence lawyers were granted access to the evidence.

Ninety-three victims are being represented by eight lawyers and can apply for reparations.

"What my clients expect from the court is, first of all, recognition of the harm they suffered," said lawyer Joseph Keta.

The trial is a key test of the court's ability to hold efficient trials where victim participation could stretch out proceedings.

Judges must take control of the courtroom "so this doesn't become an unruly trial that lasts indefinitely," said Singh.

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Some Facts

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- The problem is most critical in Africa, where children as young as nine have been involved in armed conflicts. Children are also used as soldiers in various Asian countries and in parts of Latin America, Europe and the Middle East.
- The majority of the world's child soldiers are involved in a variety of armed political groups. These include government-backed paramilitary groups, militias and self-defence units operating in many conflict zones. Others include armed groups opposed to central government rule, groups composed of ethnic religious and other minorities and clan-based or factional groups fighting governments and each other to defend territory and resources.
- Most child soldiers are aged between 14 and 18, While many enlist "voluntarily" research shows that such adolescents see few alternatives to involvement in armed conflict. Some enlist as a means of survival in war-torn regions after family, social and economic structures collapse or after seeing family members tortured or killed by government forces or armed groups. Others join up because of poverty and lack of work or educational opportunities. Many girls have reported enlisting to escape domestic servitude, violence and sexual abuse.
- Forcible abductions, sometimes of large numbers of children, continue to occur in some countries. Children as young as nine have been abducted and used in combat.
- Demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) programs specifically aimed at child soldiers have been established in many countries, both during and after armed conflict and have assisted former child soldiers to acquire new skills and return to their communities. However, the programs lack funds and adequate resources. Sustained long-term investment is needed if they are to be effective.
- Despite growing recognition of girls' involvement in armed conflict, girls are often deliberately or inadvertently excluded from DDR programs. Girl soldiers are frequently subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence as well as being involved in combat and other roles. In some cases they are stigmatized by their home communities when they return. DDR programs should be sensitively constructed and designed to respond to the needs of girl soldiers.
- See www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org for lists of countries where child soldiers were recruited and used during the four years 2000-2007.

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Why Children Join

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Children are forcibly recruited into armed groups in many conflicts but the vast majority of child soldiers are adolescents between the age of 14 and 18 who "volunteer" to join up. However, research has shown that a number of factors may be involved in making the decision to actually join an armed conflict and in reality many such adolescents see few alternatives to enlisting. War itself is a major determinant. Economic, social, community and family structures are frequently ravaged by armed conflict and joining the ranks of the fighters is often the only means of survival. Many youths have reported that desire to avenge the killing of relatives or other violence arising from war is an important motive.

Poverty and lack of access to educational or work opportunities are additional factors - with joining up often holding out either the promise or the reality of an income or a means of getting one. Coupled with this may be a desire for power, status or social recognition. Family and peer pressure to join up for ideological or political reasons or to honour family tradition may also be motivating factors. Girl soldiers have reported joining up to escape domestic servitude or enforced marriage or get away from domestic violence, exploitation and abuse.

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Conflict in northern Uganda

Caution, children at war

*For more than 20 years, "the Lord's Resistance Army" (LRA) has been battling the Government of Uganda (GOU). The war has created a **humanitarian disaster**, leaving generations of children in crisis.*

Overview of the crisis

Through decades of conflict, northern Uganda's civilian population has been terrorized by LRA rebels who cut off the hands, ears, or lips of individuals suspected of sympathizing with the government. The LRA also uses spiritual rituals as a weapon to psychologically enslave both abducted children and the targeted population with fear.



Children are abducted and forced to serve as child soldiers.

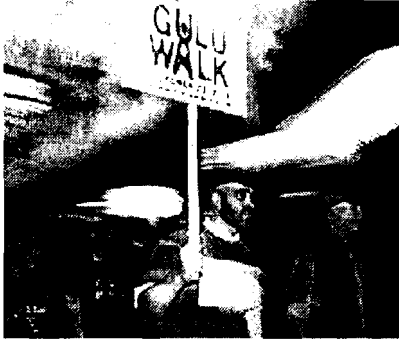
The nature and duration of the conflict have created tremendous humanitarian, social, and economic costs for all of Uganda, particularly for children. The protection of children has not been a priority for governments, despite national and international laws guaranteeing their basic rights.

According to the United Nations, the conflict as resulted in the displacement of an estimated 1.7 million people. Forced into displacement camps, these people are unable to farm due to war and international food assistance is inadequate. Illness is rampant because the country is too insecure for humanitarian aid agencies or the Ugandan government to provide regular health services.

However, according to the U.N. World Food Programme, improved security has allowed 230,000 internally displaced people return near to home in 2006, to re-establish their livelihoods.

Children suffer the most

LRA leader Joseph Kony has created his army primarily through the violent abduction and forced enlistment of children. Nearly 25,000 children have been kidnapped by the LRA, and forced to be laborers, frontline soldiers and, in the case of girls, sexual slaves.



GuluWalk participants took to the streets to urge the world to support peace in northern Uganda. World Vision supports the GuluWalk. This year, the GuluWalk is set to take place on October 20.

To abduct children for their army, the LRA would attack villages and displacement camps. Because the camps are not secure, parents felt that they had no other choice but to send their children to walk ("commute") for several miles to the nearest town, where it may be safer.

The number of night commuters soared to more than 25,000 in 2002. But the count has dropped from 15,000 in May 2006 to less than 500 in March 2007. The decrease is attributed to the improved security situation related to the peace talks.

Peace process stalled

After nearly two years of negotiations, Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leader Joseph Kony has refused to sign a final peace agreement to end the civil war between the LRA and the Ugandan government. Reports of fresh child abductions in Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR) have circulated for several weeks.

Although there are signs of improved security, without a final peace agreement, northern Uganda's people will never be guaranteed a life free of brutal conflict.

World Vision's Work in Uganda



A boy at World Vision's Children of War Center draws a picture of his home the way he remembers it before he was kidnapped.

World Vision began working in Uganda in 1986 to help improve the quality of life for Uganda's most impoverished people. More than 112,000 Ugandan children are sponsored by World Vision supporters around the world.

UN: Strengthen Action to End Use of Child Soldiers

Young people from around the world have joined forces to express their outrage that children are still used to fight wars.

Jo Becker of Human Rights Watch

Ex-Child Soldiers, Other Youth Appeal to Secretary-General on Treaty Anniversary

February 12, 2009

(New York) - Former child soldiers and other youth representing a grassroots campaign from around the world will present thousands of symbolic "red hands" to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today to demand stronger action by international leaders to end the use of child soldiers.

A UN treaty prohibiting the forced recruitment or use of children under the age of 18 in armed conflict, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, has been ratified by 126 countries and entered into force on February 12, 2002, a date commemorated annually as "Red Hand Day." But child soldiers are still being used in 15 countries or territories, including some that have ratified the treaty.

"Young people from around the world have joined forces to express their outrage that children are still used to fight wars," said Jo Becker of Human Rights Watch, an organizer of the campaign. "They want a stronger commitment from world leaders to end this practice."

Young people and others from 101 countries have collected more than 250,000 "red hands" - the symbol of international efforts to end the use of child soldiers - as part of a global "Red Hand Day" campaign. They have made red handprints on paper and banners and inscribed personal messages calling for an end to the use of child soldiers. In the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, where child recruitment has increased dramatically since hostilities escalated in August 2008, children in Uvira and Goma collected over 7,000 red hands. Red hands created by former child soldiers in Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire included messages calling for rehabilitation and reintegration assistance for former child soldiers.

Young people have organized hundreds of events, including marches, petition drives, special exhibitions, public awareness programs at their schools, and other activities to highlight the continued use of child soldiers. Some have delivered red hands to their members of congress or parliament.

"Former child soldiers like me are encouraged to have youth from all over the world standing up for our rights," said Yina Paola Moreno Soto, 20, a former child soldier from Colombia who will participate in the event in New York on February 12. "We hope that world leaders and commanders using child soldiers will pay attention."

Former child soldiers from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Colombia, and youth activists from Germany and the United States will present red hands to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at 5 p.m. at UNICEF headquarters, 3 United Nations Plaza (44th and 1st Avenue) in New York. On behalf of the campaign, they are calling for:

- Stronger UN action against governments and armed groups using child soldiers, including Security Council arms embargoes and other sanctions against persistent violators;
- Prosecution of military leaders who recruit or use child soldiers;
- Universal ratification and enforcement of the optional protocol; and
- Increased support for the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child soldiers.

Public events will also take place in other countries:

- In Germany, campaign participants will deliver tens of thousands of red hands to German president Horst Köhler at the Palace Bellevue on February 12;
- In California, students are asking city councils to adopt resolutions declaring February 12 "Red Hand Day" in their cities;
- In Belgium, activists on February 5 presented "red hands" to the Belgian vice prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, Karel De Gucht, at a special event at the Palais des Académies in Brussels;
- In India, where 35,000 red hands were collected from across the country, activists held a press conference in Pune, near Mumbai.

Red Hand Day Campaign activities have taken place in: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Cambodia, Canada, China, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, France, Germany, Guinea, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxemburg, Madagascar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, Sierra Leone, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, and the United States.

Currently, child soldiers are fighting in at least 15 countries and territories, including: Afghanistan, Burma (Myanmar), Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), India, Iraq, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand, and Uganda. Eight governments - Burma (Myanmar), Chad, DRC, India, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Uganda - have signed the treaty, but still use children in their armed forces or support armed groups that recruit children in their territories or neighboring states.

For photos of Red Hand Day Campaign activities, please visit:

<http://www.hrwnews.org/redhandphotos/>

Strengthening the Security Council's Response to Sexual Violence and Attacks on Education in Armed Conflict

April 20, 2009

For a full decade, the UN Security Council has addressed the severe abuses that children experience in armed conflict. Its response has included a series of six resolutions (1261, 1314, 1379, 1460, 1539, and 1612), the creation of a specialized working group, and the initiation of a monitoring and reporting mechanism on violations against children in armed conflict. The working group has now been functioning for 3 years, issuing 20 sets of conclusions on 11 country situations. The monitoring and reporting mechanism is now active in 13 countries. The Special Representative to the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict has followed up on the working group's conclusions by making regular field visits to engage with parties to armed conflict that remain responsible for violations against children.

These efforts have yielded some significant successes with regards to the use of child soldiers:

- five parties to the armed conflict in Cote d'Ivoire ended their use of child soldiers after agreeing to action plans to end the practice;
- the government of Uganda has been "de-listed" from the Secretary-General's list of violators after removing children from the Uganda People's Defense Forces and local defense units associated with the government;
- several non-state armed groups in Burma (Myanmar) have signed voluntary "deeds of commitment" committing to ending their use of child soldiers, and submitting to independent verification;
- as follow-up to the Security Council working group conclusions, the SRSG on children and armed conflict has secured commitments from parties to armed conflict in the Philippines, Nepal, Chad, Central Africa Republic and elsewhere to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers and/or to release children from their forces;
- some actors have agreed to action plans to demobilize child soldiers, although they have yet to be implemented fully.

The Security Council's efforts over the past decade have achieved positive results. However, children continue to be recruited and used in armed conflicts in at least 15 countries, and other grave violations also need urgent and focused attention.

Expanding and strengthening the Security Council's scope:

Although the Security Council has identified six grave violations against children in armed conflict, to date it has focused primarily on the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Other violations affect much larger numbers of children, and result in terrible and long-lasting consequences, but have not received the same focused international response.

Although all violations against children in armed conflict deserve greater attention, this paper focuses particularly on ways that the Security Council can enhance its response to sexual violence and attacks on education.

Sexual violence: Over the past 20 years, rape and other sexual violence has been documented in at least 50 conflicts, affecting millions of individuals, predominantly girls and women. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) alone, tens of thousands of women and girls have been subject to sexual violence since the war began in 1996 with no sign that this violence is decreasing. Children represent nearly one-third of those brutalized by rape. Between June 2007 and June 2008, the UN recorded 5,517 cases of sexual violence against children in the conflict areas of Ituri, and North and South Kivu, representing 31 percent of all sexual violence victims. In Darfur, rape and other forms of sexual violence remain endemic, and feature prominently in the government's "ethnic cleansing" campaign.

Combatants from armed groups and government soldiers are frequently the perpetrators, but very few have ever been prosecuted and fewer still convicted of these crimes. In dozens of ongoing armed conflicts, sexual violence continues to threaten the safety of women and girls on a daily basis.

Attacks on education: Of the approximately 115 million children of primary school age who are not attending school, an estimated 43 million live in conflict-affected countries.[1] In many of these countries, escalating attacks on education have included killings of students, teachers, and bombings and burnings of schools.

According to UNESCO, the number of attacks on schools, teachers and students has been rising since 2000, and increased six-fold between 2003 and 2006.[2] It states that in some countries, attacks on education offices and targeted killing of teachers and academics have become the "favored tactics" of fighting groups. These attacks not only cost students and teachers their lives, but have also led to dramatic decreases in school attendance rates, leaving millions of children without an education and the chance for a better life.

In Afghanistan, for example, roughly 570 schools remained closed as of March 2009 following such attacks, resulting in hundreds of thousands of students being denied an education, according to the country's ministry of education. In southern Thailand at least 92 educational personnel have been killed and 88 injured, more than 280 schools have been burned, teachers have been threatened or harassed, and many other schools have been closed down as of January 2009.

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Known Child Recruiters Promoted to Key Government, Military Posts

April 28, 2009

(New York) - The United Nations Security Council should impose sanctions on governments and armed groups for using child soldiers, sexual violence against children, and attacks on schools, and should promote effective prosecution of the commanders responsible, Human Rights Watch said today. The Security Council will hold an open debate on children and armed conflict on Wednesday, April 29, 2009.

On April 22, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon identified 56 governments and armed groups from 14 countries that are violating international laws prohibiting the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Sixteen of these parties have been included in each of the lists published by the secretary-general since he began making the names of violators public in 2002.

"The Security Council has said that it will consider sanctions against governments and armed groups that refuse to end their use of child soldiers," said Jo Becker, children's rights advocate at Human Rights Watch. "Instead, it has allowed these crimes against children to continue for years."

Governments that have been listed in six consecutive reports from the secretary-general to the Security Council include the government forces of Burma, Chad, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the armed groups include the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) in Colombia, and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda.

Human Rights Watch highlighted several cases in which military commanders in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sri Lanka who are well-known for their use of child soldiers are now in government or senior military positions.

- In Congo, Jean-Pierre Biyoyo was recently appointed a colonel in the Congolese army despite being convicted by a military court in March 2006 of recruiting children as soldiers while a leader of the Mudundu 40 militia. He was sentenced to five years in prison, but escaped three months later, in June 2006.
- Bosco Ntaganda was made a general in the Congolese army in January, despite being wanted on an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for the war crime of enlisting child soldiers and using them in hostilities. In addition to the ICC charges, Ntaganda has been accused of commanding troops that massacred 150 civilians at Kiwanja in North Kivu province in November 2008.
- In Sri Lanka, Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan (known as Colonel Karuna) became the minister of national integration and reconciliation in April. Prior to April 2004, he was the commander of the LTTE's eastern division and was responsible for recruiting thousands of children into LTTE ranks. He subsequently

broke with the LTTE and formed an armed force known as the Karuna Group, which allied with the government and then abducted hundreds of children for use as soldiers under Karuna's command.

"For a state to appoint a known child recruiter to a senior government or military position is simply outrageous," said Becker. "Governments should be prosecuting these individuals for war crimes, not rewarding them."

Human Rights Watch called on the Security Council to impose sanctions, including arms embargoes, travel bans, and asset freezes against individuals and parties that have persistently recruited and used child soldiers in violation of international law. It also called for criminal prosecution of individual child recruiters by national courts or through referral to the ICC, which has jurisdiction to try individuals who have enlisted children under 15 years old or used them in hostilities for war crimes. To date, seven individuals have been issued arrest warrants by the court for such crimes.

Human Rights Watch also called on the Security Council to take stronger action to stop sexual violence against children and attacks affecting education. In Congo alone, tens of thousands of women and girls have been subject to sexual violence since the war began in 1996, with no sign this violence is decreasing. Nearly one-third of those brutalized by rape are children.

According to UNESCO, the number of attacks on schools, teachers, and students increased sixfold between 2003 and 2006. In Afghanistan, roughly 600 schools remained closed as of March following attacks by anti-government forces. In southern Thailand, insurgents have burned down more than 280 schools.

An assessment by Human Rights Watch found that in 2008 the Security Council's working group on children and armed conflict issued 83 recommendations related to the use of child soldiers, but only 13 related to sexual violence and only three regarding attacks affecting education.

"Children who have been raped or are denied an education because of attacks on schools also deserve strong Security Council action," Becker said.

On April 22, 62 nongovernmental organizations representing parents in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo appealed to the Security Council in a letter to end abuses against children in the conflict. The groups cited continued killings, rape and sexual violence, attacks on schools, and recruitment of child soldiers in the conflict areas of eastern Congo.

"We deplore the guilty silence that has prevailed until now among our leaders and the international community," the groups stated. "All of these crimes, whose perpetrators are often well-known, take place in a context of total impunity."

The organizations called on the Security Council to impose sanctions on perpetrators, develop an action plan for Congo that addresses sexual violence and violence affecting education, and strengthen efforts to demobilize child soldiers and reintegrate them into their communities.

The Security Council has required the UN to negotiate action plans with governments and armed groups to end their use of child soldiers. Human Rights Watch called on the Security Council to expand these action plans to address sexual violence against children and attacks on education. It also called for the Security Council to impose targeted sanctions against perpetrators of these crimes.

Good site for putting faces to child soldiers, though not much actual information:
http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/features/north_kivu/child_soldiers_congo.html

Stories from children associated with fighting forces:

"I remember the day I decided to join the mayi-mayi. It was after an attack on my village. My parents, and also my grand-father were killed and I was running. I was so scared. I lost everyone; I had nowhere to go and no food to eat. In the mayi-mayi I thought I would be protected, but it was hard. I would see others die in front of me. I was hungry very often, and I was scared. Sometimes they would whip me, sometimes very hard. They used to say that it would make me a better fighter. One day, they whipped my [11-year-old] friend to death because he had not killed the enemy. Also, what I did not like is to hear the girls, our friends, crying because the soldiers would rape them. "

-Jacques, from DRC, was recruited into an insurgent group (mayi-mayi) when he was 10 years old (From AI Report: Democratic Republic of Congo: Children at War, creating hope for the future)

"They recruit in the market place. One of my friends joined up. He was ten. He banged the drums when someone had died. He said it was very scary in the camp. He held a grenade and had a gun on his shoulder."

-A young Tamil boy, interviewed in 1998, describes the recruitment of his friend by an armed opposition group in Sri Lanka some three years earlier.

"I was working on the farm and heard that soldiers were coming, so my father told me to hide. But I was caught. The soldiers tied me and beat me and took me to a barracks in Lofa County. There were many small boys in Lofa, more than the adults. Many were killed by bullets and rockets. They gave me an arm and told me how to use it... I used an AK 47; the adults used RPGs and other bigger weapons. I fired the gun but am not sure if I killed people. On the road enemy soldiers came and I tried to run away but a rocket hit my leg. Four people were wounded and some others died in the attack. Government soldiers came and took me to Phebe hospital. After a week and two days an ambulance from JFK hospital came to pick me up. At JFK they amputated my leg. The soldiers gave me a little money while I was in hospital so I paid my way to come to 'Titanic' [a center housing former government militia] from JFK. I want to go to school and start a small business."

- J.K., a 14-year-old boy from Bong County, Liberia, was captured by former government forces in June 2003 (From AI Report: Liberia: The promises of peace for 21,000 child soldiers)

"They took us as wives straightaway. We had to cook for them. If a cow was killed, we had to cook it...When they came back, they would eat and drink, then they would call for you. They were so many. It was so painful...If they went to attack somewhere or to loot, there was always someone who stayed behind. Then he'd call you. If you refused, they used sticks to whip you...We mostly stayed in the forest but sometimes we had to go with them and carry what they looted...They all raped me. I wasn't even the youngest. Some girls were even younger than me. Even the commanders called for you. You couldn't refuse...They said they'd kill you if you ran away. Some people fled and didn't come back. We didn't know if they'd got away or had been killed."

-Following an attack on her colline [local administrative division] in Gitega province, Burundi, in 2001, F., then aged 13, was forced to accompany a group of around 30 combatants. (From AI Report: Burundi: Child soldiers-the challenge of demobilization)

"When the mayi-mayi attacked my village, we all ran away. ..the soldiers captured all the girls, even the very young. Once with the soldiers, you were forced to "marry" one of the soldiers...If you refused, they would kill you...They would slaughter people like chickens... Wherever we were fighting, along the way, they would take the women and girls working in the fields...They would take young girls... and then would rape them...My "husband" did not beat me too often. ..But one day, he was killed in an attack. I felt I was in danger and I should leave. On the way, as I was pregnant, I had my baby. I was alone in the bush, without medication. I still have pain from this. Then I went to the village of my "husband", but his parents rejected me and my child, after taking all my belongings. They blamed me for his death. I wanted to go to my home, but it is so far away, I was afraid the mayi-mayi would find me and capture me again."

-Jasime, from DRC, was recruited in June 2002 by an insurgent group (mayi-mayi) in South-Kivu, when she was 12. She is now 16 and has a four-month-old baby. (From AI Report: Democratic Republic of Congo: Children at War, creating hope for the future)

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/print.php>

Horror in Uganda

Terrorized by rebels, youths huddle in cities and the displaced languish in wretched camps.

Photographs by Francine Orr
Times Staff Writer

June 5, 2005

As dusk falls across northern Uganda, scores of children begin their nightly trek into the centers of remote provincial towns. They sleep in doorways, on verandas and at drafty bus stations, hospitals and schools. They are known as "night commuters," and they make the hike from their desolate rural homes because they are afraid.



For almost two decades, a notorious rebel group that calls itself the Lord's Resistance Army, or LRA, has been terrorizing villagers. It kidnaps adults to haul heavy loads over long distances. But it also steals children, some as young as 8. The LRA forces the boys to become soldiers; the girls become sex slaves.

It also compels its victims to victimize others. Reports abound of youngsters torturing or killing peers who had tried to escape or displeased their captors. Hundreds of youths have shared details of their ordeals with aid workers who have set up live-in trauma counseling centers.

The LRA is led by Joseph Kony, who claims to be acting under divine instruction. It says it is fighting for political recognition, and it denies brutality toward civilians. In one day last month, however, the rebels hacked at least 16 people to death with the victims' own farming tools. The government of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has tried to conduct negotiations with Kony, but there have been no firm results. Officials say that Kony is nothing more than a bandit and that it would be out of the question to give him either amnesty or a political office.

So the cruelty persists. International aid groups estimate that 30,000 children have been abducted in the slow-burning conflict. Although hundreds have escaped, they rarely find peace.

Villages across northern Uganda have been uprooted. The former residents languish in camps, which are cramped and unsanitary. Food, clean water and medical care are scarce. Malnutrition and diseases such as malaria, scabies and tuberculosis afflict many. Those who leave camp to look for work, firewood or edible plants risk being attacked by the rebels, captured in shootouts or blown up by mines that litter the landscape. The rebels often storm the camps to loot supplies and kidnap more victims.

Times photographer Francine Orr reported from the troubled region in September 2003 and April of this year. These are her images from Uganda.

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The Child Soldiers

By HANNAH BEECH FARKHAR Sunday, Nov 04, 2001

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Mukhtar is an infantryman in Afghanistan's rebel army. He can shoot a man in the beard from a standing position at 200 m or point out camouflaged Taliban bunkers through miles of dust. His platoon leader says the green-eyed soldier is the finest he has ever commanded, and Mukhtar takes the compliment with a shrug of his skinny shoulders. "I have been in the army for a long time," he says. "So I should be good at my job." Indeed, Mukhtar is a four-year veteran of Afghanistan's draining desert war. But he is only 15 years old.

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hardest time adjusting to a place where people don't resolve political squabbles with the pull of a trigger. "One of the most difficult things to change in our country is the younger generation's mind-set," says Abdullah Farazi, who helps feed orphans living in a refugee camp near the frontline town of Dast-e-Qale. "How can we convince them that this thing called peace is better than the guns they carry everywhere?"

Even for child soldiers, bloodlust runs deep. Nearly five years ago, while Mukhtar was out fetching water from a stream, his parents were killed by Taliban rockets. His three brothers, two sisters and the family camel died, too. When Mukhtar returned home, the only creature left in the village was a dog, which sat in the dust coughing up blood. The boy used his father's rifle to put the animal out of its misery. It was the first time he had used a firearm, and it took him four shots. Three months later, Mukhtar joined the rebel Northern Alliance army to learn how to use a Kalashnikov. "My life is dedicated to killing the Taliban," he says, his reedy voice untouched by adulthood. "I will spend the rest

Afghanistan's youth have never known peace. For two decades, their country has been at war, first with the Soviets and then among homegrown factions. So many children wander the streets with firearms that, after a while, scenes of 12-year-olds skipping along with Kalashnikovs slung over their shoulders seem almost normal. If Afghanistan is ever to settle into peace, these children will have the



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of my life finding the people who killed my family."

The Northern Alliance swears it inducts no soldiers younger than 18 years old. But a visit to the trenches proves that rule unenforced. Zulmai leans against a rusty Russian tank on a hill overlooking the Taliban-controlled city of Taloqan. He is 18 but joined the mujahedin at 15, just as his four brothers did. One brother has already been killed, and Zulmai falters when asked if children should be fighting an adult's war. A Northern Alliance Foreign Ministry official named Musadiqallah steps in: "Our cause is so great that even our children want to join us in fighting the enemy."

In truth, most kids join the army because there's little else to do and to keep their bellies filled. In a country with limited electricity or running water and few roads, many boys must forgo school to make money any way they can, even following cows with upturned palms to catch excrement to sell as fuel. Joining the army guarantees free food, clothes and cigarettes plus the chance to swagger. "When you fight for your people, you become a man," says Shukrullah, 12, who strolls the mountainous streets of Farkhar with a loaded, unlocked Kalashnikov. For these youngsters, it doesn't matter that most soldiers have not received their \$25 monthly salary for three months. "This is a very good life," says baby-faced teenager Safaullah, sitting in a trench in Dast-e-Qale. "I can eat good rice, play chess with my friends and fire many interesting weapons."

On the opposite side of the front lines, the Taliban also profits from young guns. Taken from their homes before their teens, these kids are steeped in battle tactics and religious fanaticism. War orphans are especially prized by the Taliban because they have no home to which they can escape. By the time they reach adulthood, the mullahs and commanders of the Taliban have become their family. The Taliban insists the extreme measures of jihad require extreme schooling. "Children are innocent, so they are the best tools against dark forces," says a Pakistani Taliban fighter, who was captured by the Northern Alliance last month near Dast-e-Qale.

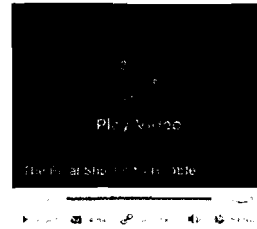
Najibullah, a 10-year-old refugee from Taliban-controlled Kunduz province, lives crammed in a ragged tent with his parents and four siblings. Already, he knows how to fire a Kalashnikov from daily target practice with his family firearm. When he is older, he hopes to fire a rocket-propelled grenade. "I am small now," he says, squaring his tiny shoulders. "But I will be big when I shoot the Taliban who killed my aunt and uncle." By avenging their deaths, Najibullah is carrying on family custom. His father tracked down the Soviet platoon that killed relatives in the 1980s and lobbed fatal grenades at their encampment. "If I am murdered by the Taliban, then my sons will honor my name by killing the enemy," says the prepubescent Najibullah. Despite hopes for peace, some Afghan traditions may be impossible to break.

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Quotes of the Day »



"I had a Rip van Winkle moment, as if I had fallen asleep in 1977 and woke up this morning."

HENRY J. AARON, a health economist at the Brookings Institution, responding to health insurance companies volunteering \$2 trillion in cost reductions over 10 years. A similar pledge was made during the Carter administration

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Exclusive: Child Soldiers Recall Learning Lessons of War Instead of the Classroom

Former Child Soldiers Give Testimonials in Footage Shown to ABC News

By JERIKA RICHARDSON and LARA SETRAKIAN, ABC News Law & Justice Unit

Dec. 7, 2006 —

This holiday season, children across America will unwrap presents of virtual combat -- best-selling video games that simulate battle, with names like "Gears of War" and "Far Cry Vengeance."

But elsewhere, other children will play real war games.

Across Asia, Africa and Latin America, children as young as 6 years old are being forced into life as child soldiers.

Children you'd expect to see in a classroom are carrying AK-47s instead of books. Adult instructors are teaching their tiny pupils how to shoot to kill, instead of arithmetic.

The film "Blood Diamond," which stars Leonardo DiCaprio and will open nationwide in theaters Friday, follows the story of a Sierra Leone man who loses his young son to war funded by the sale of diamonds.

In reality, life as a child soldier is just as horrifying and perhaps more brutal than the story depicted in the DiCaprio film, as illustrated in footage of real child soldiers shown exclusively to ABC News.

"They'd whip us as punishment. If you made a mistake, they'd whip you up to 70 or even 120 times," said one child soldier in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"They captured us as we were fleeing. If you refused [to join the soldiers,] they'd shoot you dead," said another child in the Congo who was interviewed by Amnesty International.

Under international law, the recruitment and use of soldiers younger than 18 years old is prohibited.

The recruitment and use of children younger than 15 is considered a war crime.

Yet in several countries -- particularly Sri Lanka, the Congo, the Ivory Coast, Colombia and Afghanistan -- the use of child soldiers is widespread.

According to the U.N. Children's Fund, roughly 300,000 child soldiers worldwide are participating in 30 armed conflicts.

Why Children?

Jimmie Briggs, author of "Innocents Lost: When Child Soldiers Go to War," said child soldiers were often used instead of adults because they were usually immature, very pliable, and had fewer inhibitions.

"[Their] moral conscious is not as developed as an older person's," Briggs said to ABC News. "You can turn a child into a soldier very easily."

One might assume that child soldiers would have problems maneuvering modern weapons, but Briggs offered a different view.

"AK-47s and hand guns are simple enough and light enough that a child can load it effectively," he said. "I've seen it firsthand in Colombia, Africa and Asia."

An administrator at one Congolese demobilization camp that reintegrates child soldiers to civilian village life concurs.

"[Children] ask for nothing and are considered excellent fighters," he said on the footage shown to ABC News. "They are not scared by dangers. & They're prepared to do anything."

Recruits Without Choice

Larry Cox Executive Director of Amnesty International, told ABC News that most children involved in these conflicts were pawns who did not join national armies or guerrilla forces willingly.

"They fight because often they have no choice," he said. "They're abducted. They're seized by armed groups that break them down."

Child soldiers, Cox said, are often taken to intensive training camps, where they are "drugged and forced to perform horrendous acts. & Killing people they know, sometimes their own parents."

"You can imagine the psychological trauma of that," he said. "They no longer have any ties to anyone other than the people who've made them do this. They have no choice but to remain loyal."

A Checkered Rehabilitation

If there is hope for child soldiers, it is because many of them want to go back to a normal life.

They want an education and a future.

"I'm not a thief or a killer anymore. I want to have a good life and return home and live well," said one child. "I don't want to walk by people who are afraid of me and say: 'There's the soldier, the killer.' I want to get help. & I just want to return home and for everything to be OK."

But lack of opportunity holds them back from recovery.

Poverty and the destruction of war mean that many children who leave the army find a home with little food and no access to education.

In extreme cases where the immediate need of food, clothes and shelter cannot be met, war is sometimes the relatively better option for a young child.

"If I return from the army, I have nothing to eat and we don't have any means at home. I'll go back to the army," said one former soldier.

Most international organizations only operate on the outskirts of cities, said one aid official who assists child soldiers.

In more isolated communities, their safety is not assured.

Some villages have a hard time welcoming child soldiers back. They may be children, but because of their time spent fighting and pillaging they tend to be looked upon as predators. And for that, they are often denied forgiveness.

Once child soldiers are out of the combat zone, the risk of re-recruitment is high.

When asked whether he had considered rejoining the army, one child soldier said he had thought about it often.

"Some people came looking for former soldiers, for child soldiers. & It had been my intention to return to the army," he said. "Even if my mother and family could take me back, they don't have the means to send me back to school. Here, the only thing I can do is steal. & All I can do is roam around the streets."

Another Congolese child echoed that same sentiment.

"I'd rather fight for my country than stay home with no food," he said.

Facing abject poverty and the rule of the gun, parents can find themselves unable to help their own children.

"If he stayed with us, the soldiers would come for him and beat us up. So we were afraid and we chased him [her son] away," said one child's mother.

"I'm not financially able, and I'm alone," said the father of a different child soldier. "And I'm afraid of the mentality he [his son] may have acquired in the army. I'm not sure whether he can change and go back to being a regular person."

In addition to the psychological traces left behind by the experience of being a young soldier, the physical effects on a child can be lasting and devastating.

Many girls abducted into combat life are sexually abused and placed at very high risk of contracting venereal disease and HIV/AIDS, said Amnesty's Cox.

"Often the armies who've taken these young women treat them as if they are sexual slaves," he said. "They're very reluctant to give them up."

What You Can Do to Help

While the problem of child soldiers has no easy solution, there are ways an individual American can have impact.

So what can you do to help?

Nongovernmental organizations like [Amnesty International](#), [Global Witness](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), and [UNICEF](#) all offer opportunities for involvement.

You can also contact your elected officials to voice your opinion on the issue.

Find your U.S. senator at http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm or your representative in Congress at <http://www.house.gov/writerep/>.

Purchasing jewelry made with non-conflict-related diamonds also can help by cutting off financing for wars that employ child soldiers.

Ask your jewelry store whether the merchandise it sells uses nonconflict diamonds. Follow this [link](#) to learn more information about how you can take action.

ABC News' Lauren Pearle contributed to this report.

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Former child soldier urges UN action

Edith M. Lederer, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WINNIPEG FREE PRESS - 29/04/2009

UNITED NATIONS - A young woman abducted and repeatedly raped by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda told the Security Council on Wednesday how she became a rifle-toting child soldier. She urged the UN's most powerful body to stop the suffering of children in wars.

"I still wait for some of my friends to return," Grace Akallo said, "and I hope that everyone here will be committed to bring people like my friends home."

Council members responded to the plea from the former child soldier - now a graduate student in the United States - with rare sustained applause. Many, including U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice, assured her that her message had been heard.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon strongly supported Akallo's appeal, telling the council: "You must respond to her courage and resilience with action."

The council held an open meeting on Ban's latest report on children in armed conflict, which names 56 parties - both governments and rebel groups - in 20 countries that recruited child soldiers and committed other grave violations against youngsters during a 15-month period ending Dec. 31. He said 19 parties have been listed for more than four years and are "persistent violators."

Since 1998, the Security Council has adopted six resolutions aimed at stopping the recruitment of child soldiers, the killing, maiming, rape and abduction of children in armed conflicts, and attacks on schools and hospitals. In 2005, the council established a group to monitor and report on countries and groups carrying out these acts.

Ban said more must be done. "I urge the council to consider action to strike a blow against this impunity, and stop these violators from continuing to victimize children," the secretary general said.

He recommended that the council, at a minimum, expand its reporting to include parties that commit rape and sexual violence against children in armed conflict.

Ban also called on the council to take steps against "persistent perpetrators." The council said in the 2005 resolution that it would consider imposing targeted sanctions such as arms embargoes, travel bans and financial restrictions against parties that continue violating the rights of children in armed conflict.

That resolution also directed the UN to talk to parties identified as recruiting child soldiers and exploiting children in war zones with a goal of preparing and implementing action plans

to end the violations. It threatened action against those who didn't comply, and Ban called on the council "to take measures" against them.

Akallo told the council that she was speaking "on behalf of all the children in armed conflict who have to face and survive the atrocities of war, who suffer through the abuses of being used as child soldiers and raped and sexually abused."

She described how she and 137 other girls were abducted at gunpoint from St. Mary's college, a high school in Aboke, Uganda, in October 1996 by rebels from the Lord's Resistance Army, which has been waging a brutal insurgency for more than 20 years.

The nun managed to win the release of 109 girls, but Akallo said, "I was not one of the lucky ones." She was 16 at the time.

After a month of wandering in the forest, the children were marched to southern Sudan. Those who couldn't walk were killed. The survivors were given AK-47 assault rifles when they arrived and were sent into battle against the Sudan People's Liberation Army, Akallo said.

In addition to fighting, the girls were distributed to rebel commanders.

"We were forced to kill those girls who tried to escape or refused their husbands," Akallo said. "I was repeatedly raped by an LRA commander on countless occasions."

After seven months in captivity, Akallo said she escaped during an attack by the Sudanese rebels and walked for two weeks without food, surviving on wild leaves, soil and dew. She was rescued by villagers from southern Sudan and handed to Ugandan government soldiers.

She returned to St. Mary's, then went to college and now, at age 29, is attending a graduate program in international development at Clark University in Massachusetts.

"The stories you have not heard are thousands-fold," Akallo told the council. "There are dozens of armies and rebel groups who continue to ruin the lives of children in the same ways around the world. I'm here to remind you of the very real suffering of these children who are hoping for you to act."

Use of child soldiers still a problem

Published: May 21, 2008 at 7:37 AM

Recruitment of child soldiers hasn't stopped and the military-controlled Myanmar is the worst offender, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers says.

The group in its 2008 Child Soldiers Global Report said, despite some progress, "efforts to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers are too little and too late for many children."

The report said the number of armed conflicts in which children are involved was down from 27 in 2004 to 17 in 2007. However, tens of thousands of children remain in the ranks of non-state armed groups in 24 countries.

Myanmar's armed forces, engaged in long-running counterinsurgency operations, has thousands of children, some as young as 11 years old, the report said. Children were also used by government forces in Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, and Yemen, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers said.

In Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and the Palestinian territories, teenagers have been used in suicide attacks, the coalition's report said.

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers claimed Palestinian children have been used as human shields by the Israeli army, while a few British under-18s were deployed in Iraq up to mid-2005.

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May 22, 2008

Fewer Conflicts Involve Child Soldiers, Report Finds

By LYDIA POLGREEN

DAKAR, Senegal — The number of conflicts in which children are used as soldiers has dropped sharply in the past four years, to 17 from 27, according to a research report released this week by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers.

The report, the first since 2004, in some ways reflects the now nearly universal consensus that children should not be used in combat. The concept has seeped into the consciousness of even the most hardened militias as international justice has singled out notorious figures who have abused children, like Charles Taylor of Liberia and Joseph Kony of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda.

But it also reflects the reality that when conflict breaks out, particularly in fragile states, children are quickly swept up. As countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone, in which thousands of children were forced to fight, have ended their brutal wars in the last five years, newer conflicts in the Darfur region of Sudan and the Central African Republic have ensnared others.

In Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, children continue to be used as combatants, the report said.

"This downward trend is more the result of conflicts ending than the impact of initiatives to end child soldier recruitment and use," the report concludes. "Indeed, where armed conflict does exist, child soldiers will almost certainly be involved."

The report also found that a handful of stubborn governments — including those in Myanmar, Chad, Congo, Somalia and Uganda — continued to use children in their armed forces and paramilitaries.

The report estimates that in Chad alone, 7,000 to 10,000 children were press-ganged into fighting in 2006 and 2007, with much of the recruitment taking place on the eastern border with Sudan. Chad has been fighting rebels based in the troubled Sudanese province of Darfur, a region whose five-year conflict has metastasized into Chad and the Central African Republic.

As one Chadian Army commander put it in an interview with Human Rights Watch, "Child soldiers are ideal because they don't complain, they don't expect to be paid and if you tell them to kill, they kill."

The report also found major shortcomings in programs to reintegrate child combatants after conflicts end. International donors have spent millions to ease fighters back into civilian life, but children are often left out. In the Central African Republic, where a civil war raged in 2002 and 2003, some 7,500 fighters were demobilized and given cash and training to start new lives. Only 26 children participated even though

children were believed to make up a large portion of the fighters.

In Congo, where a brutal regional war killed more people than any other conflict since World War II, some 30,000 children are believed to have fought, but 11,000 of them received no help as money for the demobilization program ran dry, according to the report.

Girls caught up as fighters, cooks and sex slaves are even less likely to get assistance, either because they are ashamed or because they have no weapons to turn in at the end of the war and thus are ineligible for the help due child combatants. One 13-year-old Liberian girl quoted in the report who had cooked and washed clothes for government soldiers for nine months said she could not disarm "because I didn't have any ammunition."

International justice has begun to catch up with those who recruit children as soldiers. Last year the Special Court for Sierra Leone convicted three commanders on charges related to child recruitment, and Thomas Lubanga, a Congolese warlord, faces similar charges at the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

These high-level prosecutions are important, said Victoria Forbes Adam, director of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, a London-based group.

"It is also really important that national law criminalize recruitment and that recruiters face consequences," Ms. Forbes Adam added.

In most countries, the people who recruit child soldiers are never prosecuted. Jo Becker, child rights advocacy director at Human Rights Watch, said that in Myanmar, one of the worst offenders cited in the report, "recruiters are not only not sanctioned, they get incentives."

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Special Court Convicts 3 of Sierra Leone War Crimes

By Clarence Roy-Macauley
Associated Press
Thursday, June 21, 2007; A16

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone, June 20 -- Three former military leaders in Sierra Leone were found guilty of war crimes Wednesday by a U.N.-backed court, the first verdicts stemming from the country's 10-year civil war.

The ruling also marks the first conviction in an international court for the conscription of child soldiers -- a practice made notorious by images of drugged elementary-school-age boys wielding automatic weapons in the regional conflict.

The court found the three defendants, Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu, guilty of 11 of 14 charges, including terrorism, using child soldiers, enslavement, rape and murder.

The three were acquitted of charges of sexual slavery, "other inhumane acts" related to physical violence and acts related to sexual violence, said Peter Andersen, spokesman for the Sierra Leone Special Court.

The tribunal was set up after the end of fighting in 2002 to prosecute the worst offenders in a war that ravaged the small West African country and also consumed neighboring Liberia. The court has indicted 12 people, including former Liberian president Charles Taylor, who is accused of backing Sierra Leonean rebels.

Charges against the three men convicted Wednesday in Freetown linked them to fighters who raped women, burned villages, conscripted thousands of child soldiers and forced others to work as laborers in diamond mines.

The three were indicted in 2003 as the alleged leaders of the junta, called the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. The group of former military officers toppled Sierra Leone's government in 1997 and then teamed up with rebels to control the country until 1998, according to the indictment.

Sentencing is scheduled for July 16.

David Crane, the founding prosecutor of the Sierra Leone Special Court, called the ruling a watershed moment for human rights.

"This particular judgment sets the cornerstone forever -- those who recruit children into an armed force are criminally liable," Crane said.

Although children have been used in wars throughout history, experts say the recruitment and conscription of children reached a new level in Sierra Leone and Liberia. In Liberia, Taylor's men are accused of organizing the so-called Small Boys Unit, which conscripted youngsters, armed them with machine guns and baptized them with names like Babykiller.

About a half-million people were victims of killings, systematic mutilation and other atrocities in Sierra Leone's conflict, which was fueled by illicit diamond sales.

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ZERO FORCE – CHILD SOLDIER FACTS & RESOURCES

WHAT IS A CHILD SOLDIER?

- Although there are no exact figures, hundreds of thousands of children under the age of 18 serve in government forces or armed rebel groups. Some are as young as eight years old. (4)
- Both girls and boys are used as child soldiers. In some countries, like Nepal, Sri Lanka and Uganda, a third or more of the child soldiers were reported to be girls. (4)
- The majority of the world's child soldiers are involved in a variety of armed political groups. These include government-backed paramilitary groups, militias and self-defence units operating in many conflict zones. Others include armed groups opposed to central government rule, groups composed of ethnic religious and other minorities and clan-based or factional groups fighting governments and each other to defend territory and resources. (2)
- DEFINITION: "A child soldier is any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members. The definition includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriage. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms." [(6) - see *Definitions* section in report]

WHAT ARE CHILD SOLDIERS USED FOR?

- Children are pressed into combat, where they may be forced to the front lines or sent into minefields ahead of older troops. Some children have been used for suicide missions. (4)
- Children may also serve as porters or cooks, guards, messengers or spies. (4)
- In some conflicts, girls may be raped, or given to military commanders as "wives." (4)
- Children are sometimes forced to commit atrocities against their own family or neighbors. Such practices help ensure that the child is "stigmatized" and unable to return to his or her home community. (4)

WHERE ARE CHILD SOLDIERS CURRENTLY BEING USED?

- The problem is most critical in Africa. Children are also used as soldiers in various Asian countries and in parts of Latin America, Europe and the Middle East. (2)
- The countries where children were actively involved in armed conflict from April 2004-October 2007 were: Afghanistan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the DRC, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand and Uganda... Peace agreements brought an end to internal conflicts in Aceh/Indonesia in 2005 and in Nepal in 2006. (5)
- New to the annexes of the [2010] report on violations against children for recruitment are, the Afghan National Police, the Convention des Patriotes pour la Justice et la Paix in the Central African Republic and Hizbul Islam in Somalia. (5)

WHY MIGHT CHILD SOLDIERS BE USED?

- Children are uniquely vulnerable to military recruitment because of their emotional and physical immaturity. They are easily manipulated and can be drawn into violence that they are too young to resist or understand. (4)
- Technological advances in weaponry and the proliferation of small arms have contributed to the increased use of child soldiers. Lightweight automatic weapons are simple to operate, often easily accessible, and can be used by children as easily as adults. (4)

WHAT ARE REASONS FOR BECOMING A CHILD SOLDIER?

- Children are most likely to become child soldiers if they are poor, separated from their families, displaced from their homes, living in a combat zone or have limited access to education. (4)
- Many girls have reported enlisting to escape domestic servitude, violence and sexual abuse. (2)
- While many enlist "voluntarily" research shows that such adolescents see few alternatives to involvement in armed conflict. Some enlist as a means of survival in war-torn regions after family, social and economic structures collapse or after seeing family members tortured or killed by government forces or armed groups. (2)
- Other children are forcibly recruited, "press-ganged" or abducted by armed groups. (4)

WHAT IS BEING DONE LEGALLY TO STOP THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS?

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989 to protect the rights of children, is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. It encompasses civil rights and freedoms, family environment, basic health and welfare, education, leisure and cultural activities and special protection measures for children. (1)
- In 2000, the United Nations adopted an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The protocol prohibits the forced recruitment of children under the age of 18 or their use in hostilities. To date, it has been ratified by more than 110 countries. (4)
- The ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor prohibits the forced or compulsory recruitment of children under the age of 18 for use in armed conflict. It has been ratified by over 150 countries. (4)
- For the first time the Annual Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict (A/64/742--S/2010/181) includes a list of the most persistent violators for recruiting and using children—those who have been in the annexes of in the Secretary-General's report for at least five years. (5)
- Another breakthrough of the 2010 Annual report is the listing of state and non-state parties to conflict who have killed and maimed and raped and used sexual violence against children. (5)

WHAT IS BEING DONE TO ASSIST CURRENT AND EX-CHILD SOLDIERS IN THE FIELD?

- In some countries, former child soldiers have access to rehabilitation programs to help them locate their families, get back into school, receive vocational training, and re-enter civilian life. However, many children have no access to such programs. They may have no way to support themselves and are at risk of re-recruitment. (4)
- In the last 10 years, the majority of DDR programs have taken place in sub-Saharan Africa with support from peacekeeping operations. (3) p.27
- DDR efforts are overall inadequate, and many children have not received the assistance needed to successfully return to their families and communities. (3) p.27
- Even though girl soldiers have been present in almost every non-international conflict, reports from national DDR programs show very low girl participation, with average levels between 8-15%. For example, in Liberia about 3,000 girls were demobilized in a DDR process that ended in 2004. However, 8,000 girls were excluded, did not register, and received no support. (3) p.28

- More attention is needed on resources directed at community-based programs which are sensitive to the needs of returning child soldiers but are also designed to benefit all conflict-affected children.” (3) p.31
- Girls are often deliberately or inadvertently excluded from DDR programs. Girl soldiers are frequently subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence as well as being involved in combat and other roles. In some cases they are stigmatized by their home communities when they return. DDR programs should be sensitively constructed and designed to respond to the needs of girl soldiers. (2)
- Gender specific outreach programs are need to give attention to the babies and children of girl soldiers (3) p.31

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- e) *Teaching Materials. Lessons 1-7.*
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Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (Report 2008) Pg. 3 & 4

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FACTSHEET: CHILD SOLDIERS

The facts

It is estimated that some 300,000 children – boys and girls under the age of 18 – are today involved in more than 30 conflicts worldwide. Children are used as combatants, messengers, porters and cooks and for forced sexual services. Some are abducted or forcibly recruited, others are driven to join by poverty, abuse and discrimination, or to seek revenge for violence enacted against them or their families.

Children are more likely to become child soldiers if they are separated from their families, displaced from their homes, living in combat zones or have limited access to education. Children may join armed groups as the only way to guarantee daily food and survival.

In some situations, the involvement of children in conflicts as soldiers may even be accepted or encouraged. Children may ‘voluntarily’ take part in warfare, not realizing the dangers and abuses they will be subjected to. Most likely these children are responding to economic, cultural, social and political pressures.

The particular situation of girls in conflicts continues to require further attention. The potential risk of sexual violence, abuse and exploitation of children and women increase during armed conflicts, and specific measures must be taken to ensure their security and to strengthen their decision-making abilities. Still, in many instances, programmes to demobilize and reintegrate child soldiers fail to identify appropriate strategies for gaining access to these girls and young women. Ways must also be found to address the needs of girls abducted during war to serve as sexual slaves and who may have no alternative to remaining under the custody of their abductors.

Building a protective environment for children

Ending the use of child soldiers can be extremely challenging, particularly when children are enlisted for combat by armed, non-governmental groups. In addition, modern conflicts are characterized by governmental breakdown, making it difficult to identify and influence those recruiting and using children as soldiers.

Elements already in place

Legislation: In 2002 the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict entered into force. It outlaws the involvement of children under age 18 in hostilities, raising the previous standard of age (15 years) set by the Convention and the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their 1977 Additional Protocols. As well as requiring States to raise the age for compulsory recruitment and direct participation in conflict to 18, the Optional Protocol requires State parties to raise the minimum age for voluntary recruitment beyond the current minimum of 15.

Another milestone was set in July 2002 when the Statute of the International Criminal Court entered into force, making the conscription, enlistment or use of children under 15 in hostilities by national armed forces or armed groups a war crime.

Monitoring: Violations of the laws of war that affect children need to be properly monitored and reported, so that perpetrators can be held accountable before tribunals or other truth and reconciliation mechanisms. This applies to the recruitment and use of children as soldiers, particularly in light of the provision in the Statute of the International Criminal Court. Adequate monitoring will also promote better understanding of and data on the numbers and situation of child soldiers.

Capacity: During conflict, the capacity of families and communities to protect and care for children is undermined. Nonetheless, their efforts to ensure that their children do not become involved in violence are important and must be supported. The protection of children by families and communities is the frontline in the war against recruiting children into armed groups. Capacity also involves focusing efforts and resources on the most underserved regions and population groups, including displaced populations, to guarantee equal access to quality services, in particular education.

UNICEF's response

Attitudes, customs and behaviours, and practices: A protective environment for demobilized child soldiers must include strategies to prevent their re-recruitment. It should also lay the groundwork for the eventual return to their families and communities.

Governmental and non-governmental commitment: This includes advocacy on behalf of children at the international, national and community level. This could include, for example, promoting ratification of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and advocating for national law reform and sensitization campaigns. It could also mean engaging in dialogue with non-governmental armed groups to uphold international standards for child protection and securing their commitment to end the recruitment and use of children in hostilities.

Children's life skills and participation: Giving children a voice – and listening to them – will allow children to have a say in their own protection and in the life of their community and country.

Services for victims of abuse: This includes providing protection to former child soldiers during demobilization and social reintegration programmes (education and vocational training) and providing psychosocial support (peer-to peer support, community-based support and psychosocial counselling). It also means promoting family reunification as a key factor for social reintegration and ensuring follow-up care for demobilized children, focusing on long-term social reintegration.

UNICEF in action

Since the mid-1980s, UNICEF has played a key role in advocating and securing the release of children from armed forces and other combatant groups in Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Uganda. UNICEF and its NGO partners have also provided care, technical guidance and, at

times, financial support for the successful implementation of national programmes for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

In **Angola**, following the signing of a ceasefire agreement in April 2002, a wide process of demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants was initiated. However, an estimated 8,000 children recruited during the civil war were released without going through a formal demobilization exercise. UNICEF is now working to build support for their reintegration into communities, in particular to provide them with health care and schooling. Current initiatives include setting-up child-friendly spaces in demobilization camps, and providing psychosocial counselling and appropriate education and vocational training opportunities.

In the **Great Lakes region of Africa**, UNICEF is working in partnership with the World Bank, other UN agencies, donor governments and the countries concerned to develop a multi-country demobilization and reintegration programme for combatants, including former child soldiers. In Rwanda, UNICEF has worked alongside Save the Children and the International Committee of the Red Cross for the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers following rebel incursions in May and June of 2001 in the Gisenyi and Ruhengeri Provinces. Over 2,000 rebels were either captured by or surrendered to the Rwandan Patriotic Army. Among them were more than 350 children who had been forcibly recruited by rebel forces. All these children and a small number of others who returned to the country afterwards benefited from a transitional period in a rehabilitation centre and reintegration back into their communities of origin.

In **Sierra Leone**, UNICEF was the lead agency for child protection during the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process for child soldiers from 1998 to 2002. Demobilized children were transferred to interim care centres supported by UNICEF where they were provided with health care and psychosocial counselling. They also participated in educational and recreational activities while family tracing and reunification was in progress. Almost all of 6,800 former child soldiers who have been demobilized since October 1999 are now reunited with their families. Access to education and family- and community-support programmes has been key to their successful reintegration.

Since the ceasefire agreement in **Sri Lanka** in February 2002, a significant decrease in child recruitment by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has been reported, and a number of children have been released and returned to their families. UNICEF is now working with LTTE to help develop an action plan for the social reintegration of children still with them, including providing assistance for returning the children to school and accessing vocational training, as called for in the peace negotiations. UNICEF and the LTTE have also agreed to develop procedures for monitoring and preventing child recruitment in the future.

In southern **Sudan**, more than 3,500 child soldiers were demobilized in phase one of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, which began in February 2001. These children are receiving reintegration support through community centres. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army has continued to demobilize child soldiers, with UNICEF assistance, since October 2001.

Data is being collected on abducted children in **Uganda**, as a tool to advocate for the release of child soldiers. The registration of abducted persons started in 1997, following the intensification of abductions by the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda. The main purpose of the registration exercise is to support international and national

advocacy for an end to abductions and for the return of abducted children. The data also supports the implementation of tracing and reunification, as well as psychosocial support and advocacy activities.

Definition

For the purposes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, UNICEF defines a 'child soldier' as any child – boy or girl – under 18 years of age, who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including, but not limited to: cooks, porters, messengers, and anyone accompanying such groups other than family members. It includes girls and boys recruited for forced sexual purposes and/or forced marriage. The definition, therefore, does not only refer to a child who is carrying, or has carried, weapons. (Based on the 'Cape Town Principles', 1997)



COALITION TO STOP THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS

Facts & Figures on Child Soldiers

The number of child soldiers globally

Although it is impossible to accurately calculate the number of children involved in armed forces and groups, it is clear that there are many tens of thousands of child soldiers. Child soldiers exist in all regions of the world and, almost inevitably, wherever there is armed conflict.

It is likely that the number of child soldiers is fewer than in 2004 when the Coalition published its last Child Soldiers Global Report. Since then, tens of thousands of child soldiers have been released from fighting forces following peace agreements and demobilization programs in Afghanistan, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, Southern Sudan and elsewhere. However, in the meantime, conflicts in countries such as Central African Republic, Chad, Iraq, Somalia and Sudan (Darfur) have broken out, reignited or intensified and child recruitment there increased.

Where child soldiers were involved in armed conflicts

Children were actively involved in armed conflict in government forces or non-state armed groups in 19 countries or territories between April 2004 and October 2007. These were: **Afghanistan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the DRC, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand and Uganda.**

Peace agreements brought an end to internal conflicts in Aceh/Indonesia in 2005 and in Nepal in 2006. As a result the use of children in hostilities ended in both situations, although child soldiers with the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) had not been formally discharged.

Government armed forces which used children in armed conflicts

The number of governments that used children in armed conflict only marginally declined – down from 10 in the period 2001-2004 to nine in 2004-2007.

In **Myanmar** boys below the age of 18 continued to be forcibly recruited into the army in large numbers and were used in active combat as well as other roles. Children also took direct part in hostilities in government armed forces in **Chad, the DRC, Somalia, Sudan/Southern Sudan and Uganda.** In addition, there were reports that

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers unites national, regional and international organizations and Coalitions in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. Its Steering Committee member organizations are Amnesty International, Defence for Children International, Human Rights Watch, International Federation Terre des Hommes, International Save the Children Alliance, Jesuit Refugee Service, and the Quaker United Nations Office-Geneva.



the **Yemeni** armed forces used children in fighting against a militia in early 2007. The **Israeli** defence forces used Palestinian children as human shields on several occasions. A number of under-18s were deployed to Iraq by the **British** armed forces between 2003 and 2005, although most were removed from the theatre of war within a week of their arrival.

At least 14 governments also recruited, and in some cases used in hostilities, children in auxiliary forces, civilian defence groups or in illegal militias and armed groups acting as proxies for official armed forces. These included **Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the DRC, India, Iran, Libya, Myanmar, Peru, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Uganda** and **Zimbabwe**. In **Burundi, Colombia, the DRC, India, Indonesia, Israel, Nepal** and **Uganda** children – often captured, surrendered or escaped from armed groups - were also used as spies, informants or messengers.

The recruitment and use of children by non-state armed groups

The vast majority of child soldiers are in the ranks of non-state armed groups. Dozens of armed groups in at least 24 countries have recruited under-18s and many have used them in hostilities.

Armed groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) in **Colombia**, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in **Sri Lanka**, and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in **Uganda** are well known for having recruited and used children over many years. Others receive less international attention. In southern **Thailand** the separatist group National Revolution Front-Coordinate (BRN-C) recruits under-18s and uses them in various roles including propaganda and in support of military operations. In **India**, child recruitment by Maoist groups is reported to have increased since 2005 and there were persistent reports of child soldier use by groups in Jammu and Kashmir and northeastern states. In the **Philippines** and **Myanmar** children are associated with armed groups involved in protracted low-level conflicts with state forces.

In countries such as **Central African Republic** and **Chad** there are numerous irregular groups which are characterized by unclear, shifting alliances and activities that are often more criminal than political. In situations such as **Kenya** and **Nigeria** criminal groups involving children have been used for political purposes. In **Afghanistan, Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territory** and **Pakistan**, children were used by armed groups in suicide attacks.

The challenge of releasing and reintegrating child soldiers

Tens of thousands of children have left armed forces and groups since 2004 as long-running conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa drew to a close. Although many thousands were demobilized through official disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs, many more child soldiers self-demobilized.

Lessons learned about the priorities and needs of children during official DDR processes were often ignored by planners and implementers. Fear of stigmatization



and other obstacles prevented tens of thousands of children from registering for DDR programs. The long-term financial and political support needed to successfully reintegrate former child soldiers was frequently lacking and community programs – known to provide the best chance for recovery of war affected children including child soldiers – have not been well supported. Inadequate provision for long-term reintegration of former child soldiers was reported from **Afghanistan, Burundi, Côte d’Ivoire, the DRC, Guinea, Liberia and Southern Sudan.**

In some cases official DDR programs made no provision for children or otherwise discourage their participation. In **Indonesia** only adults associated with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) benefited from DDR packages that followed the 2005 peace agreement. In the **Central African Republic**, out of the 7,500 combatants that went through the official DDR program following armed conflict in 2002-03, only 26 were children. In **Colombia**, restrictive criteria for accessing the government-run DDR program effectively excluded many child soldiers. In other situations, such as **India, Myanmar and Thailand**, no arrangements existed to facilitate the release of children from armed groups or to assist their reintegration.

The fate of girl soldiers

Girls continued to be involved in fighting forces in combat and non-combat roles in countries including **Central African Republic, Chad, Nepal, Philippines and Sri Lanka**. Armed groups in **Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, the DRC and Uganda** were among those known to have subjected girl soldiers to rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Girls associated with armed forces or groups have been widely excluded from DDR programs. Figures from national DDR programs reflect extraordinarily low figures for girls’ participation. In **Liberia**, 3,000 girls were officially demobilized through the formal DDR process that ended in November 2004. Around another 8,000 did not take part. In the **DRC**, just 3,000 or just 15 per cent of the total number of girls estimated to have been involved in the conflict were officially demobilized by the end of 2006 when the national DDR program drew to a close.

Justice initiatives

The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants against members of the LRA in **Uganda** in 2005 and subsequently against three members of Ituri-based armed groups in the **DRC**. The warrants included charges relating to the enlistment, conscription and direct use in hostilities of children under the age of 15.¹ The first ever ICC trial, that of former Congolese armed group leader Thomas Lubanga Dyilo who is charged with child recruitment and use, is due to begin in June. In **Sierra Leone**, the guilty verdicts in 2007 by the Special Court for Sierra Leone against three members of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and one member of the government-backed Civilian Defence Forces (CDF) represented the first ever

¹ An arrest warrant containing charges of recruiting and using children against a fourth member of an Ituri-based armed group was unsealed by the ICC in April 2008.



convictions by an international court on charges relating to the recruitment and use of children.

With the exception of two cases in the DRC, no one is known to have been prosecuted by national-level courts for recruiting and using children.

Truth commissions in **Sierra Leone**, **Timor-Leste** and **Liberia** have addressed the issue of child soldiers and former child soldiers have participated in their proceedings.

Child soldiers in detention

In a number of countries children suspected of involvement in armed groups have been arbitrarily detained and some were reported to have been subjected to ill-treatment or torture. In **Burundi**, scores of children, some as young as nine years old have been detained for alleged links to the National Liberation Forces (FNL) for prolonged periods and some were severely beaten. In **India**, there was evidence that in areas of armed conflict children were detained, often in violation of national legislation designed to protect children. In **Israel**, hundreds of Palestinian children have been held under military provisions: incidents of ill-treatment and torture were reportedly common. In **Iraq** there were reports of abuse in facilities run by the Multi-National Force-Iraq where hundreds of children accused of security offences were detained. In the **Philippines**, detailed policies on the treatment of children captured, surrendered or escaped from armed groups have been ignored by the military and children held beyond officially sanctioned time-limits and in some cases ill-treated. In the **USA**, a detainee facing trial before a military commission, who was captured in Afghanistan in 2002 when he was 15-years old, alleged that he was ill-treated in US custody both in Afghanistan and in the US Naval Base in Guantánamo Bay.

In the **DRC** and **Myanmar** child soldiers have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment for desertion from the armed forces. In the DRC several children convicted of military offences remained in prison under sentence of death.

The trend towards a “straight-18” standard for military recruitment

Of the 120 states that have ratified the Optional Protocol, almost two thirds have committed themselves to setting a minimum voluntary recruitment age at 18 or higher. In the past four years, the minimum age for voluntary recruitment into the armed forces has been raised to 18 in **Chile, Italy, Jordan, the Maldives, Sierra Leone, Slovenia** and **South Korea**.

Sixty-three countries permitted the voluntary recruitment of under-18s by their armed forces. In **Australia, New Zealand** and the **United Kingdom** calls to raise the minimum recruitment age to 18 have been resisted on the grounds of manpower requirements. In the **USA**, following a dramatic number of under-18s joining the military, and general recruitment bonuses, increased enlistment bonuses were introduced and educational standards for recruits lowered.



Elsewhere, safeguards to ensure that minimum recruitment ages were respected were undermined by inadequate measures to determine the age of recruits. In countries such as **Bangladesh, Botswana, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Guinea, India, Kenya** and **Zambia**, the risk of inadvertent underage recruitment was created by low birth registration levels. In **Paraguay**, lack of birth registration facilitated forced conscription of children as young as twelve years old. In countries such as **Afghanistan** and **Yemen**, inadequate verification procedures to determine the age of new recruits meant that under-age soldiers were likely to be serving in security forces.



When children affected by war go home Lessons learned from Liberia

SUMMARY



This is a summary of a report that was written and researched by Krijn Peters with Edwin Dorbor (interpreter and research assistant) and Sophie Laws (research adviser) in 2000, and edited by Bridget Pettit and Celia Petty. The research included three months of fieldwork in Liberia, and was guided by project advisory teams in the UK and Liberia and by the expert advice of Dr Patrick Bracken. A number of Save the Children staff provided information for the research, most significantly Jane Gibreel, Bart Witteveen, Una McCauley and Cornelius Williams. Several other organisations also assisted with the research, allowing the author to visit their programmes or have discussions with staff members. These organisations were Don Bosco Liberia, Children's Assistance Programme, and Calvary Chapel Liberia. It is with thanks to all these people and most importantly the young people of Liberia, their families and communities, who agreed to share their experiences, that this report was made possible.

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When Children Affected by War Go Home: Lessons learned from Liberia

Summary

Introduction

The official disarmament, demobilisation and rehabilitation (DDR) process in Liberia took place over a 2_ month period starting in late 1996. In 2000, Save the Children UK undertook a study that tracked a group of children associated with armed forces following the DDR process.

To date there have been very few attempts to look at the experiences of children associated with armed conflict following a DDR process. This research in Liberia sought to help fill this gap by asking of a relatively small group of children and others 'who fared best and why?' Two groups of young people were involved in the research. First, there were those who had been through the official DDR process and had been involved in the Save the Children UK rehabilitation and reunification programme, which included a stay at a Save the Children UK transit centre. Second, there were those children and young people who had self-demobilised and had not received assistance from official programmes. The research took place a year after the last Save the Children UK transit centre closed.

Definition

'Children associated with armed forces' is the term preferred by Save the Children UK in referring to any child under 18 years of age who is a part of, or is attached to, any kind of armed force, whether or not there is an armed conflict. This definition is not limited to children who are carrying or have carried arms, but includes those involved in any other capacity, such as cooks, domestic workers, porters, messengers, spies, decoys, couriers, guards, and those accompanying such groups other than purely as family members. It includes girls as well as boys, and children recruited for sexual purposes and forced 'marriage'. It applies to all children in armed forces, regardless of whether they have been forced to join, or appear to have done so voluntarily, and applies equally to governmental and non-government forces. This definition is consistent with the Cape Town Principles as set down in the Cape Town Plan of Action (1997).

Research method

The research involved a literature review, in-depth interviews with 43 ex-child soldiers, and eight group discussions with ex-child soldiers, their families, community and spiritual leaders, community children, teachers, former commanders, Save the Children UK staff and other related programmes. The main emphasis of the research was on learning directly from the young people who went through the Save the Children UK transit centres, though considerable additional fieldwork was used.

This study therefore focuses on the experiences of a relatively small group of children associated with armed forces, and the information collected is qualitative. It is hoped that the study provides a useful contribution to better defining priorities for programming in similar situations. The research also provides a contribution to wider policy issues relating to:

disarmament and demobilisation; resettlement packages; transit centres; features of the transit centres such as education, vocational training, counselling and staff; reunification with families; changed social relationships; and girl child soldiers.

General context

This study took place in 2000, three years after the DDR process had been completed, at a time when Liberia seemed to be at relative peace. However, the economy had been devastated by the war and the situation has not improved in the subsequent years. In 2002, approximately three-quarters of the population were living on less than US\$1 per day, with an estimated 52 per cent of the population living in extreme poverty on less than US\$0.50 per day. Liberia remains one of the most 'food insecure' countries in the world with an estimated 35 per cent of the population undernourished (OCHA, 2003).

The process of demobilisation, disarmament and rehabilitation

The disarmament and demobilisation process took place over a period of 2_ months and involved more than 20,000 soldiers, more than 4,000 of whom were child soldiers. Many of the young people in the research had found the DDR process confusing. They had been misinformed or under-informed by their commanders, and in many cases the children who could have benefited from transit care did not make themselves known to the appropriate people.

Map of Liberia showing Save the Children UK's transit centres



Young people's views on transit centres

The young people interviewed liked the education, vocational training and recreation elements of the Save the Children UK transit centres the best. They also liked being able to talk to their carers. The things the young people did not like included fighting, bullying and disappointments with the resettlement packages. There were two key issues for Save the Children UK staff running the centres. The first was how to strike a balance between providing adequately for the children's needs without them seeming well-off in comparison

with the local communities, and particularly in comparison with the family homes to which it was hoped they would return. The other issue was ensuring the education and vocational training curriculum remained appropriate once it became apparent that many of the residents were staying for longer periods than originally planned.

Family tracing, reunification and reintegration

Family tracing and reunification were the basic goals of the Save the Children UK programme. Some of the children interviewed had been reluctant to be reunited with their families. The reasons for this were that they preferred the conditions in the centre, feared returning to their communities where they had committed atrocities or were afraid of who was controlling their home area. In the end the majority of young people did go home. This paper looks at the issues related to this, such as parents' and children's preparation for the reunion, resettlement packages, the lack of planned follow-up visits and what happened to those young people it was not possible to reunite with any family.

Using several indicators it was established that the majority of young people did feel accepted back into their communities, though a minority felt obliged to hide their identities as ex-soldiers for fear of being rejected. The majority of practitioners and parents interviewed were positive about the integration of most children. On the whole, though, they felt children – both ex-soldier and community children – were more challenging since the war. Elders, chiefs and teachers all felt young people's attitudes had changed since the war. Most of the ex-child soldiers interviewed felt they had wasted their time being in a faction and aspired towards further education.

Economic reintegration is also looked at in some detail. All but one of the young people interviewed had had some form of work or apprenticeship since their demobilisation. The paper looks at the type of work the young people were engaged in, how they had secured the work, and how they spent the money they earned. It was found that many were making considerable economic contributions to their families. The education prospects for young people are also explored.

Girls' experiences

While for practical reasons the paper concentrates on boys, the paper also comments on the role and impact of the war on girls. Up to 20,000 child soldiers were involved in the war, and while the total number of girls who took up arms is thought to be small in comparison with boys, it has been estimated that numbers could have been as high as 5,000. However, hardly any girls demobilised and that is the main reason why they were not included in the follow up. It was found that girls faced greater barriers to going through the official demobilisation process and greater difficulties related to reunification. Many people interviewed felt girls were vulnerable to exclusion and prostitution. Practitioners and young people gave recommendations on how to access girls to provide them with the support they need.

Key learning points

The disarmament process must respond to children's special needs and rights.

- The provision of transport is important to allow children to return home.
- Links with commanders must be broken as soon as possible.
- It is vital that accurate information on the DDR process reaches children.

- At demobilisation camps there is a need for highly visible social workers with the time to build up a rapport with children to establish their individual needs.
- Strenuous efforts need to be made to ensure that girls associated with armed forces are informed and included in the DDR process.

The demobilisation package is very important to children.

- The demobilisation package was controversial and led to great disappointments.
- When demobilisation packages were not delivered as promised there was great bitterness several years later.
- Whether to give the package to the child or their family on reunification needs to be decided early and clearly explained.

Many children stayed at the transit centres longer than originally planned for.

- Children valued the transit centres for the protection they offered.
- The overall package of education, accommodation and recreation worked well.
- Longer stays had repercussions in terms of provision of education and vocational training.
- It was difficult to get the balance right in terms of providing for basic needs and maintaining conditions similar to those most of the children would be returning home to.
- There was a need to plan better for those children who, for various reasons, cannot easily be reunited with family.

Transit centres would have benefited from greater local community involvement.

- The transit centres were set up rapidly in an emergency situation. Some of the longer-term difficulties could have been addressed at the beginning through greater local community involvement, greater community liaison and clearer exit strategies.
- Longer-term alternatives such as foster care and group homes needed to be explored for some children.

Following up children after they left a transit centre proved very difficult.

- It became clear that logistically the level of follow-up planned for was impossible and as a consequence some families felt very let down.
- It is unrealistic to expect children with serious problems be sent home and for their families to keep them without some form of economic and other support.

Following the war there was no 'normal' situation for young people to reintegrate into.

- There were no substantial differences between those young people who had been through a transit centre and those who had not.
- Based on the criteria established during the research the majority of young men interviewed were successfully reintegrated.
- Most respondents had some form of employment, most were doing agricultural work.
- Most of the young people interviewed felt accepted back into their community.
- Adults in the community perceived young people as having less respect for their elders.

There were significant problems in supporting girl associated with armed forces.

- Girls were harder to access and very few went through the disarmament and demobilisation process.
- Very few girls went to the transit centres.
- Girls were seen as more difficult to re-integrate and more vulnerable if they were unable to return home.

Recommendations

This research and further programming experience in Liberia and elsewhere has led Save the Children UK to identify a number of key issues which must be further explored and better addressed if the international community is to effectively assist children associated with armed forces, and their communities, to truly achieve re-integration following conflict.

- **A broader definition of children associated with armed forces needs to be more consistently adopted.** It is important that an integrated approach should be taken to programming for children associated with armed forces. The needs of all conflict-affected children need to be addressed within a broad child protection framework.
- **Girls associated with armed forces require specific efforts to identify and support them.** Special attention must be paid to documenting and responding to the specific needs of girls and the specific threats facing them. Their particular needs include greater difficulty in persuading armed forces to release them, and the psychological, physical and social consequences of sexual and physical abuse, forced marriage, and pregnancies. Reintegration is also more difficult for girls, who may be stigmatised as a result of their association with armed forces. Special attention must also be paid to responding to the needs of children conceived or born to girls in armed forces, as well as the particular situation that these mothers face. As recent research suggests that more girls than previously thought are involved in armed groups, it becomes even more important that their specific needs are identified and catered for in programmes to support children associated with armed forces.
- **Long-term commitment is required from the international community.** The needs of young people and their communities do not end with demobilisation and reunification. The process of reintegration and rebuilding shattered communities is one that takes many years. There are no quick fixes and external agencies offering support in terms of programmes and funding must recognise this and respond appropriately.
- All interventions for children associated with armed forces need to be based on a thorough understanding of the **political, socio-economic and cultural context**. Where possible, interventions should be **community-based**, supporting existing protection mechanisms and capacities. A **livelihoods-based** approach is important to ensure the needs of the young people are explored and supported in a holistic way.

- All interventions should take into account the necessity for children to **participate meaningfully** in all stages of programme planning, and in particular in decision-making on issues that will directly affect them.
- The Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) was a major achievement in terms of preventing the use of children in conflict by armed groups. This has been signed by 115 States and ratified by 63, which shows progress but also that there is still a considerable way to go. For those States that have signed there is **a need for the international community to hold them accountable** for the undertaking they have made.

Reference

OCHA (2003) *Liberia Mid-Year Review*, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

When Children Affected by War Go Home looks at young people in Liberia who were associated with armed forces – whether as fighters, porters, cooks, guides, or for sexual purposes. It explores what happened to these young people after they returned home following the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DMR) process that took place from 1996–97. Through in-depth interviews with young people who had been associated with armed forces, as well as interviews with their families and communities, this research addresses the question, ‘Who fared best in the DMR process and why?’

Copies of the full report *When Children Affected by War Go Home* (hard copy or .pdf file) are available from Save the Children’s West Africa Desk, tel +44 (0)20 7703 5400, or email enquiries@scfuk.org.uk

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CHILD LABOR MODULE SERIES



UI CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
CHILD LABOR RESEARCH INITIATIVE



**CHILD
SOLDIERS**

**BY
HELEN A. FINKEN**

OCTOBER 2004

SERIES EDITORS

GREGORY HAMOT, CHIVY SOK, CAROL BROWN

Children have no place in war and deserve the highest level of international protection to keep them from being used as child soldiers.

OLARA OTUNNU

Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict

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Opinions expressed in this module are the sole responsibility of the author.

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We gratefully single out U.S. Senator Tom Harkin for his unwavering support of the global effort to eradicate child labor and for making it possible for us to develop this module.

And last, but never least, we must honor Professor Burns H. Weston, Bessie Dutton Murray Distinguished Professor of Law Emeritus and the founding Director of The University of Iowa Center for Human Rights. It was his passion for and deep commitment to human rights education, especially education about child labor that breathed life into the Child Labor Research Initiative. For his life-time commitment to international human rights, we honor him by providing this useful educational tool to enable teachers across the nation to multiply knowledge about child labor and to inspire their students to change the world.

Child Labor Module Team
September 2004
Iowa City, Iowa

About the Child Labor Research Initiative



According to the latest report of the International Labor Organization (ILO), 246 million children between the ages of 5-17 engage in child labor. The majority of the world's 211 million working children between the ages of 5-14 are found in Asia (127.3 million or 60%), Africa (48 million or 23%), Latin America and the Caribbean (17.4 million or 8%), and the Middle East and North Africa (13.4 million or 6%). The rest can be found in both transitional and developed economies. Asia has the highest number of child workers, but Sub-Saharan Africa has the *highest proportion* of working children relative to population.

The international community, which includes intergovernmental organizations such as the ILO, other UN agencies, the World Bank, national governments, and civil society organizations across the globe, have rallied worldwide to combat the most abusive and exploitative forms of child labor.

The University of Iowa Center for Human Rights (UICHR) joined this global effort in September 2001 when, with the kind help of Senator Tom Harkin (an honorary member of the UICHR's Executive Council), it received financial support from the US Department of Labor to implement the UICHR's Child Labor Research Initiative (CLRI), \$1,2 million to date. The initiative includes the following projects:

- Child labor legislative database of 31 countries
- Child labor essay collection
- Pre-collegiate modules on child labor
- College-level course on child labor
- Child labor public education program
- Colloquium on "Using the Human Rights Framework to Combat Abusive and Exploitative Child Labor"
- Child labor occasional paper series

Complete details of the specific projects being undertaken as part of the initiative can be found in the UICHR's website at www.uichr.org.

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A note from the author

This module does not touch on general child labor problems. The lesson plans are designed specifically to introduce secondary school students to a specific form of child labor – child soldiers. If teachers are interested in learning about general child labor problems, please consult a separate handout designed specifically for teachers. See “Teaching Child Labor: Issues in the Classroom” (appendix) written by Robin Clark-Bennet and Jennifer Sherer for the Child Labor Research Initiative.

Although there are five lesson plans in this module, each lesson is designed with great flexibility to allow teachers to pick and choose depending on time availability. For example, some teachers may choose to use only Lesson 1 and Lesson 2 to get insights into the lives of child soldiers through testimonials and stories. Others may choose to combine Lesson 1 with Lesson 4, which will allow students to be introduced to the concept of child soldiers and learn about the strategies by both inter-governmental organizations as well as non-governmental organizations to eliminate the use of child soldiers. Or teachers may choose to combine Lesson 1 and Lesson 5, which offers their students opportunities to become familiar with the problem and to meet an inspirational group of children of their age group who took the initiatives to start a movement for peace by children. The effort of this group of children resulted in a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize.

A few words on statistics

As you will discover, it is hard to find accurate statistics. I have reviewed many reports and studies to understand this issue and have encountered different figures depending on sources and authors. I encourage you to review the latest publication on child labor statistics, *Every Child Counts: New Global Estimates on Child Labor*, published in 2002 by the International Labor Office in Geneva. This report will give you insights into the big picture of child labor as well as provide some useful statistics on various forms of child slavery, including children in bondage, trafficking, and in armed conflicts. I have also included sources and citations I have used in these lessons for further investigation.

There is a real international consensus to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. To do so, there is a great need to raise awareness. I hope that this module will contribute to this global effort by educating young people about the use of children as soldiers.

Module Overview and Goals



According to the 2002 Report *Child Soldiers 1379* by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (CSC), governments and armed groups in more than 87 countries recruit children as soldiers. Children are actively fighting in 41 countries. An estimated 300,000 youths under the age of 18 are engaged in warfare. About half a million children from around the world have been pressed into military service and are involved as combatants, spies, servants, or sex slaves. The CSC defines a child soldier as “any person under 18 years of age who is a member of or attached to the armed forces or an armed group, whether or not there is an armed conflict” (p. 7). Furthermore, child soldiers “may perform tasks ranging from direct participation in combat; military activities such as scouting, spying, sabotage, acting as decoys, couriers or guards; training, drill and other preparations; support functions such as portering and domestic tasks; sexual slavery and forced labor (p. 7). The International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182 has identified “forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict” as one of the worst forms of child labor. The ILO, the United Nations, and many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are actively working to eliminate this problem.

In this module, students will learn the scope and impact of the forced recruitment of child soldiers and the actions being taken by individuals and organizations to eliminate this practice. Students will analyze primary and secondary sources, debate, create maps, discuss, design individual action plans, conduct Internet research, and write reflectively as they learn about child soldiers.

MAJOR QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

- What is the nature and extent of the use of child soldiers in armed conflicts?
- What are some of the motivations for using children as soldiers?
- What is the impact of warfare on child soldiers?
- What actions have been taken by the world community to eliminate the use of child soldiers?
- How are youths around the world promoting peace?

CONVENTIONS THAT APPLY TO THIS MODULE ARE

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (concluded 20 November 1989 and entered into force on 2 September 1990), specifically Articles 21, 38 and 39
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts (concluded 25 May 2000 and entered into force on 12 February 2002)
- ILO Convention 182 Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (concluded on 17 June 1999 and entered into force on 19 November 2000)

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

The Curriculum Standards for Social Studies referred to below were developed by a Task Force of the National Council on Social Studies (NCSS) and approved by the NCSS Board of Directors in April 1994.

- V. Individuals, groups, and institutions
- VI. Power, authority, and governance
- X. Global connections
- XI. Civic Ideals and practices

Child Labor Module Series
Child Soldiers

LESSON 1

Children as Soldiers

LESSON 1



Children as Soldiers

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson presents an overview of where, why, and how children are used as soldiers. Students examine a slide show, listen to audio reports, and create a map as they learn where child soldiers are used.

OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to:

- ✎ Define a child soldier
- ✎ Identify where, when, why and how children are used as soldiers
- ✎ Analyze photographs, print and audio sources to gather information about child soldiers
- ✎ Map data about child soldiers
- ✎ Evaluate the extent of the use of child soldiers today

CONCEPTS

Conflict, revolution, power, civil war, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), poverty

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- ➔ What is a child soldier?
- ➔ In what types of activities do child soldiers participate?
- ➔ Where, why, when and how are child soldiers involved in combat?
- ➔ To what extent is the use of child soldiers a problem today?

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

- ☑ Overhead transparency and marker
- ☑ Computer and LCD projector
- ☑ Handout #1: Mapping Child Soldiers
- ☑ Blank world political outline map (<http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/world.html>)
- ☑ World atlases
- ☑ Handout # 2: Child Soldiers' Testimonies

SUGGESTED DURATION

2 class periods

COURSE CONNECTIONS

American History, World History, Government, Global Studies, Current Events

SPECIAL NOTE TO TEACHERS

Some of the testimonials in Handout #2 of this lesson are graphic and might be of concern to some parents. Please use your professional judgment to evaluate the appropriateness of these testimonials for your students.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING THE LESSON

Activity 1

1. Give students the definition of a child soldier.

According to the *Child Soldiers 1379* Report, the CSC defines a child soldier as:

“...any person under 18 years of age who is a member of or attached to the armed forces or an armed group, whether or not there is an armed conflict. Child soldiers may perform tasks ranging from direct participation in combat; military activities such as scouting, spying, sabotage, acting as decoys, couriers or guards; training, drill and other preparations; support functions such as portering and domestic tasks; sexual slavery and forced labor.” (p. 7).

According to the 1997 Cape Town Principles:

”Child soldier... means any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers, and those accompanying such groups, other than purely as family members. It includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms.”

2. Ask children what types of activities soldiers conduct (cook, clean, build structures, act as porters, provide electrical wiring, operate computers, drive, wash clothes, maintain warehouses, act as officers, nurses, doctors etc).

Activity 2

- 1) Discuss: How big a problem is the use of child soldiers today?
- 2) Explain that students will examine several sources to find information about the use of child soldiers. As students examine each source, they are to collect data that helps them determine the extent of the problem.
- 3) Using an LCD projector and computer, view the MSNBC slide show *Children at War* and listen to the accompanying audio recording available at <http://www.msnbc.com/news/747688.asp>. (MSNBC, "Children at War," MSNBC, May 4, 2002.)
- 4) Note where children are involved in combat, the extent to which they are involved, and the reasons they are involved.
- 5) Listen to one or both of the National Public Radio (NPR) reports on Child Soldiers located at <http://www.npr.org>. (Search the NPR archives to locate the programs. Use RealPlayer to play the reports in class.) 1) "Fighting Child Soldiers," *All Things Considered*, aired April 10, 2002, features an interview with Peter Warren Singer of the Brookings Institution conducted by Robert Siegel (5 min.); 2) "Child Soldiers," *All Things Considered*, aired June 12, 2001, features an interview with Jo Becker, Children's Rights Advocacy director for Human Rights Watch, conducted by Linda Wertheimer (5 min.).
- 6) Compare the information in the audio reports to the data in the MSNBC slide show. Do the slide show and audio reports contradict one another? Explain the point of view conveyed in the audio reports. What are the similarities and differences between the information in the audio reports and the data in the MSNBC show? (Students can chart similarities and differences.)

Activity 3

Present these additional background facts about child soldiers to students as a handout on transparency. Human Rights Watch, a highly respected NGO based in New York City, has useful resources on child soldiers. Visit: <http://hrw.org/campaigns/crp/index.htm> to obtain the following information:

- Child soldiers have been used in over 30 countries
- Child soldiers are under the age of 18
- Children are used as soldiers because they are obedient and physically vulnerable
- Children who are poor, orphaned, or refugees are recruited by force or see armed groups as their best chance for survival
- Children become soldiers to seek revenge
- Children fight with weapons such as AK-47s or M-16s
- Child soldiers are used to clear landmines or make and deploy mines

- Child soldiers participate in suicide missions, carry supplies, and act as spies, messengers, cooks, and lookouts
- Girl soldiers are warriors and sex and domestic slaves
- Child soldiers have seen atrocities, including rapes, amputations, beheadings, and people being burned alive
- Child soldiers are often given drugs to make them overcome their fear and reluctance to fight
- Child soldiers become victims of conflict either by being killed, or by becoming disabled, homeless, or psychologically traumatized
- Because educations and opportunities to learn civilian job skills are often denied to them, child soldiers find it difficult to re-join peaceful society. Some turn to crime or become involved in other conflicts

Activity 4

Pinpoint the countries in which child soldiers are used on a blank map of the world by using the data provided on Handout #1. Use different colors for different continents. What do the maps reveal about the extent to which child soldiers are used in combat? Why are child soldiers found in some countries but not in others?

Activity 5

Have students read first-hand testimonials of child soldiers (Handout # 2) from various geographical regions to help students understand how some children end up as soldiers. Discuss some of these reasons based on testimonies. Expected answers include forced recruitment, poverty, indoctrination, lack of alternatives, lack of access to power or status etc.

EVALUATION

Write a response to the lesson's focus question: How big a problem is the use of child soldiers today? Answers should include findings about:

- 1) geographic distribution
- 2) numbers of children involved
- 3) the number of conflicts in which children participate
- 4) activities child soldiers are expected to do
- 5) the increased use of child soldiers

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXTENDING THE LESSON

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers uses a red hand with a white silhouette of a soldier to symbolize child soldiers. Create a bulletin board about child soldiers by tracing handprints on red construction paper, cutting them out, and writing a fact discovered in Activity 3 about child soldiers on each one. Add these facts to the bulletin board as students learn new information during the module lessons.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WEBSITES

Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

<http://www.child-soldiers.org/>

This site contains several articles such as "A Child Labor Issue " and "A Growing Phenomenon" as well as Themed Reports ("Girls With Guns") that provide additional information about the use of child soldiers.

Human Rights Watch (Children's Rights Division)

<http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/crp/index.htm>

This site provides an overview of the use of child soldiers.

ARTICLES, REPORTS, BOOKS, ETC.

Graça, Machel. "Children at Both Ends of the Gun." In *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*. United Nations/Unicef, 1996. <http://www.unicef.org/graca/>.

Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. *Child Soldiers 1379 Report (CSC Report)*. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2002. <http://www.child-soldiers.org/>.

This report by the CSC evaluates criteria laid out in UN Security Council Resolution (UNSC) 1379, paragraph 16, which was adopted in November 2001 to address the international problem of recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Click on <http://www.child-soldiers.org/>, enter site, then click on "CSC Publications."

Kruger, Franz. "Child Soldiers Active in 41 Countries." *Radio Netherlands*, June 12, 2001.

<http://www.rnw.nl/hotspots/html/childsoldiers010612.html>.

This article from the English language version of the Radio Netherlands website provides statistics about the extent of the use and recruitment of child soldiers, as well as introductions to the concepts of recruitment, sex slavery, lighter weapons, and UN protocol. It also includes a first-person testimony from a former child slave.

Child Soldiers Around the World

Using an atlas and a blank outline map of the world, map the following data. The title of the map is "Child Soldiers Fighting in Recent and Ongoing Conflicts."

Data are provided by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers *Global Report, 2001*.

<p>THE AMERICAS Colombia Mexico Peru</p> <p>EUROPE Russian Federation Turkey Yugoslavia (former Rep. of)</p> <p>AFRICA Algeria Angola Burundi Chad Republic of Congo Dem. Rep. of the Congo Eritrea Ethiopia Rwanda Sierra Leone Somalia Sudan Uganda</p>	<p>MIDDLE EAST Iran Iraq Israel and Occupied Territories Lebanon</p> <p>ASIA Afghanistan** India Indonesia Myanmar Nepal Pakistan Philippines Solomon Islands Sri Lanka East Timor Tajikistan Papua New Guinea Uzbekistan</p> <p>**Note: The interim government has made a public commitment to stop the use of children.</p>
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Child Soldiers' Testimonials

When Ishmael Beah was 14, he was recruited into the Sierra Leone Army. He remained a soldier for almost three years. In his testimony, read today by Samkelo Mokhine, he described his first experience at the front line. He is now studying in the U.S.

"When we got there we were in an ambush, the rebels were attacking where we were in the bush. I did not shoot my gun at first, but when you looked around and saw your schoolmates, some younger than you, crying while they were dying with their blood spilling all over you, there was no option but to start pulling the trigger. The sight stays with you. I was just pulling the trigger. I lost my parents during the war, they told us to join the army to avenge our parents."

Source: Franz Kruger, "Child Soldiers Active in 41 Countries," *Radio Netherlands*, June 12, 2001, <http://www.rnw.nl/hotspots/html/childsoldiers010612.html>.

In Uganda, children are caught in the battle between Uganda's People's Defense Force (UPDF) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel force, which is committed to overthrowing the Ugandan government and to this end rounds up children from villages it raids and forces them to join with them. One 16-year-old girl, testified to the cruelties she endured when a boy tried to escape:

"One boy tried to escape, but he was caught. They made him eat a mouthful of red pepper, and five people were beating him. His hands were tied, and then they made us, the other new captives, kill him with a stick. I felt sick. I knew this boy from before. We were from the same village. I refused to kill him, and they told me they would shoot me. They pointed a gun at me, so I had to do it. The boy was asking me, "Why are you doing this?" I said I had no choice. After we killed him, they made us smear his blood on our arms. I felt dizzy. There was another dead body nearby, and I could smell the body. I felt so sick. They said we had to do this so we would not fear death, and so we would not try to escape."

-Susan, 16

Source: Human Rights Watch, *The Scars of Death: Children Abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda*, Human Rights Watch Report, 1997, <http://www.hrw.org/reports97/uganda/lra.htm>.

"The first time I went into battle I was afraid. But after two or three days they forced us to start using cocaine, and then I lost my fear. When I was taking drugs, I never felt bad on the front. Human blood was the first thing I would have every morning. It was my coffee in the morning...every morning."

-Ibrahim, 16

Source: Youth Ambassadors for Peace, *Voices and Stories*, Free the Children, 2001, <http://www.freethechildren.org/peace/voices.html>.

"I was in the front lines the whole time I was with the [opposition force]. I used to be assigned to plant mines in areas the enemy passed through. They used us for reconnaissance and other things like that because if you're a child the enemy doesn't notice you much; nor do the villagers."

-former child soldier from
Burma/Myanmar

Source: Former child soldier from Burma/Myanmar, interview by Human Rights Watch, Liberia, April 1994, in Human Rights Watch, *The Voices of Child Soldiers*, Human Rights Watch, 2004, http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/crp/voices.htm#N_4_.

"They beat all the people there, old and young, they killed them all, nearly 10 people... like dogs they killed them... I didn't kill anyone, but I saw them killing... the children who were with them killed too... with weapons... they made us drink the blood of people, we took blood from the dead into a bowl and they made us drink... then when they killed the people they made us eat their liver, their heart, which they took out and sliced and fried.... And they made us little ones eat."

-Peruvian woman, recruited by the
Shining Path at age 11

Source: Peruvian woman, interview by R. Brett and M. McCallin, in Rachel Brett and Margaret McCallin, *Children: The Invisible Soldiers*, (Stockholm: Rädda Barnen, 1996),127.

Zaw Tun's story:

“I was recruited by force, against my will. One evening while we were watching a video show in my village three army sergeants came. They checked whether we had identification cards and asked if we wanted to join the army. We explained that we were under age and hadn't got identification cards. But one of my friends said he wanted to join. I said no and came back home that evening but an army recruitment unit arrived next morning at my village and demanded two new recruits. Those who could not pay 3000 kyats had to join the army, they said. I (my parent) could not pay, so altogether 19 of us were recruited in that way and sent to Mingladon (an army training centre).”

Source: BBC World Service, “Zaw Tun’s Story,” in *Children of Conflict: A Human Rights Issue*, BBC World Service, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/childrensrighs/childrenofconflict/>.

Jean Paul’s Story

“I joined the army to get food for my mother, my brother, and sisters,” says Jean Paul, 15. Jean Paul is one of 4,500 Rwandan children, aged 10-18, who was in the military during the country’s brutal civil war. Wearing ragged soiled clothing and running barefoot on the jagged lava rock, Jean Paul looks like any other refugee boy. Jean Paul now lives in a refugee camp near Goma, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where he is one of 630 demobilised child soldiers in an UNICEF-funded reintegration project, which provides schooling, job skills and activities aimed at promoting self esteem.”

Source: Global March Against Child Labor, *The Voices of Former Child Soldiers*, Global March Against Child Labor, <http://www.globalmarch.org/childsoldier/voices.php3>.

Child Labor Module Series
Child Soldiers

LESSON 2

Child Soldiers Stories

LESSON 2



Child Soldiers' Stories

LESSON OVERVIEW

Using oral histories, students will identify the physical and emotional challenges faced by child soldiers and how they cope with those challenges. Students will attempt to evaluate the morality of using child soldiers by responding to a quote by Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa.

OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to:

- ✎ Identify the physical and emotional challenges faced by child soldiers
- ✎ Describe the strategies child soldiers use to cope with combat
- ✎ Evaluate the morality of using children as soldiers
- ✎ Form an opinion about whether child soldiers are victimizers or victims

CONCEPTS

Power, exploitation, atrocities

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- ➔ How do child soldiers' lives change once they become warriors?
- ➔ What physical challenges do they face?
- ➔ What emotional challenges are related to being a child soldier?
- ➔ How do child soldiers cope with physical and emotional challenges?
- ➔ What do you think a society loses when children are used as soldiers?

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

- ☑ Reading #1: Tom Masland, "Voices of the Children," *Newsweek*, May 13, 2002, 24.
- ☑ Web site: BBC World Service, *Children of Conflict*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/childrensrights/childrenofconflict/>. (Additional articles are available by searching for "child soldiers" at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi.html>)
- ☑ Website: Eric Beauchemin, "Child Soldiers of Liberia," Radio Netherlands, <http://www.rnw.nl/en/liberia>.
- ☑ Website: MSNBC, "Children at War," MSNBC, May 45, 2002, <http://www.msnbc.com/news/747688.asp>.

- Computer with internet
- Handout #1: Child Soldiers' Stories

SUGGESTED DURATION

1 class period

COURSE CONNECTIONS

American History, World History, Government, Global Studies, Current Events

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING THE LESSON

1) Locate Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Burma (Myanmar) on a world map. Give a brief overview of the civil wars in each country. Background reports from National Public Radio's program, *All Things Considered*, are available at <http://www.npr.org>. "Burma's Rebels" aired on May 22, 2001. "Sierra Leone's Election" aired on May 14, 2002. Background information about Liberia is located at Radio Netherlands <http://www.rnw.nl/en/liberia>. The U.S. Department of State's 2002 Human Rights Reports will also provide helpful background. The most recent reports can be found at the following sites:

Burma (Myanmar): <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18237pf.htm>

Liberia: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18211pf.htm>

Sierra Leone: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18225pf.htm>

2) The British Broadcasting Corporation, Radio Netherlands, MSNBC Web sites and *Newsweek* (Reading #1) sources present child soldiers' stories. Using data from one or more of the sources, students will complete Handout #1: Child Soldiers' Stories. Encourage students to play the audio reports on the BBC and Radio Netherlands sites as part of their investigation.

EVALUATION

Using evidence from the child soldier oral histories, write a response to South African Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu's statement:

"It is immoral that adults should want children to fight their wars for them. ...There is simply no excuse, no acceptable argument for arming children."

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXTENDING THE LESSON

- 1) Research the use of child soldiers in the American Revolution, Civil War, WWI, WWII, Vietnam, Korea and the Gulf War. How are the circumstances of their participation similar and/or different from the child soldiers in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Burma?
- 2) Research the use of child soldiers in other contemporary conflicts, such as Afghanistan, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Colombia.
- 3) The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts bars ratifying countries from using force to recruit children under 18 into government armed forces. It further recommends that these countries take steps to ensure that the children under 18 and already in the government armed forces not participate in direct hostilities (see Articles 1, 2, 3). In the U.S., some high schools sponsor Junior Reserve Officer Training Courses (JROTC). Research and debate the value of offering JROTC at the high school level for individuals and the country. The Web site for America's Defense Monitor, <http://www.cdi.org/adm/838/transcript.html>, has a transcript of a 1995 radio program that presents the pros/cons of JROTC. Students can use the transcript to prepare their debate or role-play the program.
- 4) View the film *Soldier Boy*. 5 min., Danmarks Radio (TV)/UNICEF, 1997. *Soldier Boy* was co-produced by Danmarks Radio (TV), the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' agency for international development and co-operation (DANIDA) and UNICEF. Videocassette available at <http://www.unicef.org/broadcast/vidcat.htm>.
- 5) Analyze a poem, "Child Soldiers," by Isabelle Balot. How does her imagery evoke the reality of being a child soldier?
- 6) Have the class read a humanitarian novel *Marie: In the Shadow of the Lion* by Jerry Piaseki (New York: United Nations Publications, 2001) and write a reaction to explore the lives of these children caught in armed conflict situations in an unspecified African country. As a class project, students may wish to stage a vignette based on this novel. It is a terrific way to raise greater awareness within their community.

Child Soldiers

by
Isabelle Balot

Awash in the sun of timeless Africa
The beast-king goes robed in light
A murderous heat stirs in his thighs
As he crouches in the brush or bed of a creek.

In the fire of noon when all seems dead
When everything sleeps in the saffron haze
This warrior lurks in the deep bush grass
A glint at play in his lambent eye.

A sudden surge, and a great, tawny blur
Flashes up and descends in a fantastic bound
Strikes and crushes the prey to the ground,
Kills in one blow of sovereign power.

I know of other kings under African skies
They, of all hope and royalty bereft,
Warriors without helmets, armor or heft,
Ragged and shoeless, with leathery skin.

Nomads without pity at the bend of a road
- Fatality writ in their dark eye's depth
As in a crypt where shadows drift
They come to sow death, grenade in hand.

Behold the child soldier, the murdered child,
Sent in battalions into the sun-scorched light
For diamonds, for ivory, black gold or white!
Pencil in hand, he would sketch only death.

Under stubborn brow and crown of black hair
What memories cling from the days of innocence
that balm that pours from the flask of infancy
Form a thread too fine for a mind to retrace.

In combat, there's nothing can thwart his will;
This more than a child, this man not yet,
Is a god and a king, an unripened adult
Who thinks he is immortal, lives only to kill.

When the combat is over, he sits in ashes;
With a rifle smeared with blood and sweat
He tortures a golden or silvery cricket
Idly crushes a salamander or scarab.

Sprawled on a cartridge sack what does he see
Behind wide open eyes, the sleeping warrior,
What does he hear when he dies under fire,
In the mortar's blast and the buzzing of flies?

Drugged, drunk, stunned by the sun,
Does he dream of lagoons and a glittering source,
Does his forehead feel a mother's kiss
Through his final sleep, what images run?

Pardon, Lord, but when this battered Africa
Wants to bind up its wounds and begin to yearn
For peace that sinks deep through its dark domain,
When the altars light up at the hour of prayer,

When peace is promised and even celebrated
I see amidst glittering constellations,
In spite of myself, a lion-god of diamonds
Whose fierce pagan eyes laugh from the dark.

Poem © 2004 by Isabelle Balot

This poem is available for download at:

http://www.un.org/spanish/special-rep/children-armed-conflict/fsoldiers_files/poemEngBgrd.doc

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

REPORTS

UNICEF. *The State of the World's Children 1996: Children in War*. UNICEF. <http://www.unicef.org/sowc96/childwar.htm>. See also:

UNICEF. *The State of the World's Children 200: Leadership*. UNICEF, 2001. http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_7344.html.

These reports provide additional information about the impact of war on child soldiers.

NEWS ARTICLES

Several stories about child soldiers can be located by searching the BBC News home page: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi.html>

Voices of the Child Soldiers

Tom Masland, "Voices of the Child Soldiers," *Newsweek*, May 13, 2002, 24. It is also available at <http://bulletin.ninemsn.com.au/bulletin/EdDesk.nsf/0/04f33cd07b62458bca256bb10015ab12?OpenDocument>.

The four boys at St. Francis Primary School don't stand out much. They're just a bit bigger than other fourth and fifth graders crowded onto rough benches in the otherwise bare classrooms. And teachers at St. Francis say the four are doing well--eager to learn, more disciplined than their younger classmates. But look closely, and you see that the four are different from their fellow students in other ways. Their knees are battered from crawling through the West African bush, and they have ugly welts from incisions once stuffed with heroin and cocaine. The letters RUF--for Revolutionary United Front--are carved across the chest of one boy. And the external marks only hint at the scars within--at the horrors the boys suffered, and perpetrated, as forced conscripts in an unimaginably brutal civil war.

The four boys from Makeni, Sierra Leone, won't be among child delegates joining more than 60 heads of state at United Nations headquarters in New York this week. They've barely thought about one of the main issues involved in the U.N. Special Session on Children--how the international community can roll back the growing exploitation of children in war. Experts say soldiers under the age of 15 have fought in more than half of the world's 55 ongoing or just-ended wars. Children are easy to recruit, low cost and malleable. From the "little bees" of Colombia to the "baby brigades" of Sri Lanka, they have become the cannon fodder of choice.

In a world absorbed with the "war on terror," with headlines blaring about terrified Americans and terrorized Israelis or Palestinians, the atrocities committed against some of these children almost demand a new language to encompass a further extreme of horror. The kids of the Mideast get more attention, either as disciples of terror or as victims of occupation. But nobody has been more exploited than the kids of Sierra Leone. They may not come from a strategically important country, or a place that, for now anyway, represents a danger to the world's rich nations. But the growing use of children has changed the dynamics of warfare, and must be treated as a new security threat. The question before the United Nations this week will be how to muster the will to enforce longstanding international conventions and three new resolutions on children and armed conflict. The latest protocols on children's rights took force in February, and condemned the use of child soldiers and their sexual exploitation.

Some may dismiss teenage ex-combatants as war criminals who don't have much to contribute to a debate on human rights. Indeed, these boys say they can now look only to God for forgiveness. Yet they are, in a very intimate way, the world's leading experts on child warfare. And their eyewitness accounts--shocking as they are--convey the unthinkable inhumanity of those who coerced them into combat. To that end, NEWSWEEK recently spent three days debriefing these four young veterans, selected from among 25 ex-combatants who attend the 1,023-student primary school in Makeni, a rundown market town 90 miles northeast of the capital, Freetown. All lost close relatives in the war; two stammer uncontrollably. Abdul Rahman Kamera, 15, still lives with the rebel commander who nicknamed him "Go Easy"; he can find no living relative. Zakaria Turay, 14, whose war name was "Ranger," and Abbas Fofanah, 16, who

went by "G-Pox," live with aunts. Only Alieu Bangura, 14, called "Major" by his fellow warriors, has been reunited with his mother. All are destitute, barely getting enough to eat. Their stories:

Before the War

Abdul Rahman: I remember that my grandmother used to prepare cooked food to sell. Early in the morning she used to take food to where she was selling it. I would go and collect the dishes. After school I would go to the house, get drinking water, wash my uniform and go to my companions to play football. I liked to play defense. In the house, we played a board game with seeds, called Tin Tan Ton. When the moon was full we used to take our mats outside and tell stories and then sing. We would swim in a stream. The older ones would dunk us. My favorite time was when I came home from school and my grandmother was still selling. I would go and eat, and she would put in a lot of extra meat for me.

Abbas: In the morning my mother would ask me to sweep and clean. My father drove a big truck. When the moon was full I would play with my companions. We would bounce a ball and play hide-and-seek in the moonlight. We lived in Bo, near where the Makeni vehicles used to park. My grandmother sent word from Burkina Faso that she had no child to play with. I was sent to Burkina. I used to sell for my grandmother. She gave me palm oil and onions to go and sell.

Alieu: In the morning I would sweep under our mango tree, then wash my face and go to school. At night we used to tell stories in the moonlight. My father was the superintendent of our district [in Makeni]. On weekends I would go with my father to his farm. I carried water for him.

Forced Into Service

Alieu: I was abducted during Operation Pay Yourself, in 1998. I was 9 years old. Six rebels came through our yard. They went to loot for food. It's called *jaja*--"get food." They said, "We want to bring a small boy like you--we like you." My mother didn't comment; she just cried. My father objected. They threatened to kill him. They argued with him at the back of the house. I heard a gunshot. One of them told me, "Let's go, they've killed your father." A woman rebel grabbed my hand roughly and took me along. I saw my father lying dead as we passed.

Abdul Rahman: I was in class, second grade. I was 8 years old. They threatened to kill us. In front of us, they brought a grown-up man, going gray. They put his hand on a stump and amputated it. They gave me a gun and I refused it. They fired between my feet. I took the gun.

Abbas: I was on my way to the market when a rebel demanded I come with him. The commander said to move ahead with him. My grandmother argued with him. He shot her twice. I said he should kill me, too. They tied my elbows behind my back. At the base, they locked me in the toilet for two days. When they let me out, they carved the letters RUF across my chest. They tied me so I wouldn't rub it until it was healed.

Zakaria: I was captured in Freetown on May 25, 1997. I was carrying pans in the street. A rebel told me, "Put your pans down and come carry our load."

We walked all the way to Makeni.

The Drug Factor

Aliou: We smoked jamba [marijuana] all the time. They told us it would ward off disease in the bush. Before a battle, they would make a shallow cut here [on the temple, beside his right eye] and put powder in, and cover it with a plaster. Afterward I did not see anything having any value. I didn't see any human being having any value. I felt light.

Zakaria: My missions included diamond mining near Kono, drug purchasing, collecting ammunition in Liberia, looting villages and capturing civilians. I used to buy drugs at the Liberian border from a man called Papi. They forced us to take them. This is where they would cut and put the "brown-brown" [heroin]. [He shows a raised welt on his left pectoral.] We would then inhale cocaine. During operations, I sometimes would take it two or three times a day. I felt strong and powerful. I felt no fear. When I was demobilized I felt weak and cold and had no appetite for three weeks.

Abbas: They gave me injections in the leg [shows track marks] and cut the back of my head to put in cocaine [shows scar]. The smaller ones are the ones who stand in front, the elder ones behind. So they give the boys the injections. It happened any time we were going on the attack--more than 25 times.

Atrocities Up Close

Aliou: The first time I killed anybody was during my first battle, at Lunsar. We captured 10 civilians. The CO [commanding officer] was asking them where the government soldiers were, and they refused to say. The CO told me to kill one of them, or he would shoot me. I shot [the civilian] in the chest... After Lunsar, I was a small-boy commander. I commanded 10 boys, aged 10 to 16.

Abbas: When we caught kamajors [pro-government militiamen] we would mutilate them by parts and display them in the streets. When villagers refused to clear out of an area we would strip them naked and burn them to death. Sometimes we used plastic and sometimes a tire. Sometimes they would partially sever a person's neck, then leave him on the road to die slowly. I saw a pregnant woman split open to see what the baby's sex was. We had met her on the streets of Kabala. Two officers, "O5" and "Savage," argued over it and made a bet. Savage's boys opened the woman. It was a girl. The baby lived.

In Kabala I was forced to do amputations. We had a cutlass, an ax and a big log. We called the villagers out and let them stand in line. You ask [the victims] whether they want a long hand or a short hand [the amputation at the wrist or elbow]. The long hand you put in a different bag from the short hand. If you have a large number of amputated hands in the bag, the promotion will be automatic, to various ranks.

We gang-raped women, sometimes six people at a time. I didn't feel much because I was drugged and I was just there for sex. One of my friends was having sex with a girl when she

complained she was tired. He took out his pistol and shot into her vagina. But usually we would let them stagger and go.

I remember one tough operation. We were dressed all in black, we were the ones they called the cobras. We killed people, we cooked them, we ate them and then we broke their pots.

Zakaria: I remember when I was manning the heavy machine gun. No one dared stand in front of me. I killed when I said, "You! If you leave I will kill you!" We were the men who amputated hands and used the same cut hand to slap the victim. We beat and killed people, not even afraid of the consequences. We were ready to commit any crimes. We were the rough ones.

Abdul Rahman: My schoolmates and I met our old teacher, and we knocked him down. We killed the teacher and we took his books and burned them, and then we took some of the papers to the toilet to wipe ourselves.

Zakaria: They [older rebels] would [impale people] when the drugs had taken hold and they wanted to play wicked games. They want to see blood. Some of them drink blood. Especially on the war fronts, where there's no food, no water, when we killed civilians we would cut a hole on the top of the arm, above the wrist, and press on the arm, and drink.

And Now, the Aftershocks

Abbas: Sometimes I feel dizzy, and I feel like doing bad things. I go in the house and lie down... Three months ago a friend insulted me, called me a rebel who killed so many people and destroyed the whole world. I said, "You won't make remarks like that again." I met a woman slicing potato leaves. I snatched the knife from her and stabbed her. I ripped his skin... When I see a pretty woman passing I think of the times in the bush when we were raping women, when I could just call her and say, "Come here, let's go."

Aliou: If someone offends me, I think back: if I had been in the bush, how I would have dealt with him. I feel ashamed of myself... I dream about what happened. Sometimes I feel scared, because I've killed, I've drunk blood, I've smoked jambaa--I worry that these things will take over, that they'll lead me to do bad things again. The drugs we took made me feel very light. I worry that I'm not as intelligent as I was before.

Zakaria: Most times I dream, I have a gun, I'm firing, I'm killing, cutting, amputating. I feel afraid, thinking perhaps that these things will happen to me again. Sometimes I cry... When I see a woman I'm afraid of her. I've been bad with women; now I fear that if I go near one she'll hit me. Perhaps she will kill me.

Facing the Future

Abdul Rahman: The only thing I'm thinking about is to go further with my schooling, and let me reap the benefits. That's all I pray for. We're all human beings, and you [foreigners] sat and watched this country being destroyed. You have the money and you will not help.

Abbas: Right now I want to be a doctor or teacher. I want to go to America to learn a very powerful job. Let me be able to do something for my people.

Aliou: After I have finished my university I want to be a doctor or a teacher. Father God, I have a future plan for this country that will make this country develop. I thank God that I have survived; they did not kill me in the bush. They used to punish me, do all kinds of bad things to me, but they did not kill me... Please support us. Right now we don't have books, we don't have pens, we don't even have uniforms. Let them send some things for us.

Zakaria: I am praying for forgiveness so that more fruitful things can come our way, praying that God will help us to become good people.

Protecting Others

Abbas: We need a leader who would take good care of this country. The rebellion started because of bad leadership. God must forgive boys like us. It was not our fault. It was the fault of the elders. Those who committed the highest crimes should be punished.

Aliou: The guilty can be prosecuted. They should be taken to court, and let them explain what happened. Thinking about the part I've played, I'm thinking I may be liable to appear in court.

Zakaria: Right now, the war is over, but what happened to us should not repeat itself with our children. With only small things to compensate us for what we've been through, we will be able to pick ourselves up.

The task of prosecuting those who exploited such children is monumental. In West Africa, Liberia's Charles Taylor pioneered the use of "small-boy units" during his drive for power in the 1990s. Security analysts estimate that he and others used 15,000 children as combatants in that war, and now Taylor is Liberia's president--and fending off a new rebellion. Neighboring Sierra Leone's war was an extension of Liberia's brutal conflict. The RUF gained control of the country's rich diamond fields, selling through Liberia. Sierra Leonean commanders who had served under Taylor took an estimated 10,000 children as combatants during the decadelong conflict, which the United Nations officially declared finished only this year.

At least the world will try to punish the boys' bosses. Last month U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed a U.S. Defense Department lawyer as chief prosecutor for the U.N.'s Sierra Leone War Crimes Tribunal. David Crane will head prosecutions at a court charged with trying violations of Sierra Leonean and international humanitarian law since Nov. 30, 1996—the date when rebels signed a peace accord that later collapsed. RUF rebel leader Foday Sankoh will be among the first to go to trial. He has been jailed since May 2000.

But many of the big fish may wriggle free. The rebels didn't keep good records. Unlike the Balkans, where war-crimes cases are succeeding, none of Sierra Leone's neighbors supports prosecutions; these countries are all implicated. The biggest fish of all is Taylor, who has no interest in cooperating. If the West hopes to extract pledges of support from other countries in the region, it will have to condition aid on their compliance. Finally, the victimized societies need to look inward, to ask themselves hard questions about what they have done to encourage

the treatment of people as commodities. A nation like Sierra Leone will cheat itself if it expects foreigners alone to deliver a cure. Child warriors everywhere need elders to look up to.

©Newsweek, 2002

Child Soldiers' Stories

Read and listen to the stories of child soldiers in *Newsweek* and on the Radio Netherlands and BBC World Service Web sites. Use specific examples to answer these questions:

1. How do child soldiers' lives change once they become warriors?
2. What physical abuses do they face?
3. What emotional hardships are related to being a child soldier?
4. How do child soldiers cope with physical and emotional exploitation?
5. When a government allows the use of child soldiers what is lost by the country, the society and individuals?
6. What war crimes have child soldiers committed? Should child soldiers be considered criminals or victims?
7. What dreams do child soldiers have for the future?

Child Labor Module Series
Child Soldiers

LESSON 3

Taking Aim at Small Arms

LESSON 3



Taking Aim at Small Arms

LESSON OVERVIEW

One of the contributing factors to the growing use of child soldiers is the availability of small arms. This lesson examines the use of small arms, their impact, and the actions being taken to eliminate their use. Students will use an Internet exhibit by UNICEF as the basis for creating a presentation about the interrelationship between small arms and child soldiers.

OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to:

- ✎ Describe the interrelationship between small arms and child soldiers
- ✎ Design and conduct a classroom presentation about the use of small arms using Internet resources.

CONCEPTS

Technology, conflict, socialization, mass production, recruitment, demobilization

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- What are small arms? How and where are they manufactured?
- What is the interrelationship between the availability of small arms and child soldiers?
- How have small arms impacted the participation of children in warfare?
- What actions are being taken to keep small arms out of the hands of children?
- What actions are being taken to eliminate the use of child soldiers in combat?

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

- ☑ Computers with Internet access
- ☑ LCD projector
- ☑ UNICEF Internet exhibit, “Taking Aim at Small Arms,” at <http://www.unicef.org/smallarms/exhibit/>.
- ☑ Handout #1 for Lesson 3

SUGGESTED DURATION

2 class periods

COURSE CONNECTIONS

American History, World History, Government, Global Studies, Current Events

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING THE LESSON

1) Introduce the interrelationship between small arms and the increased use of child soldiers by viewing the introduction to “Taking aim at small arms,” at <http://www.unicef.org/smallarms/exhibit>. Using the facts presented in the introduction, have students label the facts on Handout #1 as “CAUSES” and “EFFECTS.” Discuss the nature and extent of the problem of small arms.

2) Divide the class into five groups. Each group will use segments of the “Taking aim at small arms” exhibit to design a presentation. Suggested group segments:

Group 1: What are small arms? (2 sub-sections) & Small arms, small victims (2 sub-sections)

Group 2: Children as soldiers (4 sub-sections)

Group 3: The arms trade (4 sub-sections)

Group 4: Call to action (5 sub-sections)

Group 5: Healing Through Art – found in “The Gallery”

Groups 1-4 should locate the photographs in The Gallery’s Photo Exhibit that correlate with their presentation topic.

3) The text portions of the “Taking aim at small arms” segments can be printed from the Web site for use during presentation planning.

4) Students are to take notes as presentations are made in order to complete the evaluation task.

EVALUATION

Using data from the group presentations, students will create a graphic organizer, such as a ‘web,’ showing the interrelationship between small arms and child soldiers. (A ‘web’ is constructed by placing a circle in the center of a piece of paper and writing “Small arms/child soldiers” in the circle. Students draw connecting circles that show the major ideas and situations related to the topic. Sub-topics are shown as spokes leading from the connecting circles.) After completing the graphic organizer, students will write a summary of the interrelationship between manufacturing and sale of small arms and child soldiers.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXTENDING THE LESSON

Debate this question:

If small arms were unavailable to combatants, would the use of child soldiers decrease?

Use data from “Taking aim at small arms” to build arguments for each side of the issue.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Boutwell, Jeffery and Michael T. Klare. “A Scourge of Small Arms.” *Scientific American*, June, 2000, 48-54.

Lesson 3

Handout #1

These facts come from the introduction to “Taking Aim at Small Arms” found at <http://www.unicef.org/smallarms/exhibit>. Label each fact as a CAUSE or EFFECT of the use of small arms by child soldiers:

_____ One half billion light weapons are circulating throughout the world.

_____ Children are often forced to become fighters, human shields, spies, porters or sex slaves.

_____ As many as 90 percent of the casualties are civilians caught in the crossfire. The majority are women and children.

_____ In early 2001, some 600 factories in more than 95 countries throughout the world were legally producing small arms and light weapons.

_____ In societies destabilized by the use of small arms and light weapons, children are denied many of their human rights.

_____ “It is immoral that adults should want children to fight their wars for them..
...There is simply no excuse, no acceptable argument for arming children.”
– Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu

_____ The light weight and small size of these weapons has made it possible for combatants to exploit children as soldiers.

_____ When a country is in the throes of such violent turmoil, its children pay a heavy price.

_____ “For the United Nations, there is no higher goal, no deeper commitment and no greater ambition than preventing armed conflict.” – Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Child Labor Module Series
Child Soldiers

LESSON 4

*Strategies to Eliminate
Child Soldiers*

LESSON 4



Strategies to Eliminate Child Soldiers

LESSON OVERVIEW

Students will study the efforts by the international community to stop the use of child soldiers and to reintegrate former child soldiers into their communities. Students will become familiar with two major inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), namely the ILO-IPEC and UNICEF and some key international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to eliminate the use of child soldiers.

OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to:

- ✎ Learn how two inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) work to combat child soldiers.
- ✎ Learn about major non-governmental (NGO) organizations' work to contribute to the global effort to combat child soldiers

CONCEPTS

IGOs, NGOs, civil society, international cooperation and collaboration

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- How are international organizations working to end the use of child soldiers?
- What international standards and protocols address the use of child soldiers?
- What have governments been doing to eliminate the use of child soldiers?
- What are civil society organizations, or NGOs doing to contribute to the effort to eliminate the use of child soldiers?

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

- ☑ Reading #1: United Nations, *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict*, United Nations, 2002. ("The Child Soldiers Protocol"). Available at <http://hrw.org/campaigns/crp/protocol.htm>.
- ☑ Computers with Internet access

SUGGESTED DURATION

2-3 class periods

COURSE CONNECTIONS

American History, World History, Government, Global Studies, Current Events

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING THE LESSON

This lesson focuses on the attempts of organizations and governments to end the recruitment/use of child soldiers. The importance of studying such attempts is well stated by Walt Werner:

One cannot live in this media-rich culture without feeling some unease about the future. Weekly we encounter disturbing images of urgent proportions. A litany of enormous challenges - including poverty and famine, human rights abuses and repression, desertification and ecological stress, social chaos and international debts - confronts our increasingly interdependent world....

Anyone who is a teacher is necessarily an optimist. Our working with young people represents a commitment to the future. We are teaching for hope. . . Essential to hope is a knowledgeable and reflective confidence in the future and a willingness to engage it. The future, whether one's own or that of a larger group, is seen as open, having possibilities rather than foreclosed or predetermined. This belief entails confidence that current problems and worrisome trends can be addressed in response to care and effort, that good planning and strategic action taken today can have significant consequences. In short, hope expresses itself as a "Yes" to tomorrow....

Our goal is to encourage the development of those abilities and dispositions that allow young people to engage in appropriate personal, social and political action. Hope is indistinguishable from a belief that individuals and groups influence and shape their futures through action. A strong sense of personal efficacy is a driving force behind any achievement. Without it there is little open-mindedness to new ideas, willingness to reflect on one's own plans, or motivation and confidence in becoming proactive. To paraphrase Saul Alinsky, "There can be no darker or more devastating tragedy than the death of people's faith in themselves and in their power to direct their future. Denial of the opportunity for participation is the denial of human dignity. . ." Students need to understand why they are not powerless to make a contribution at some level.

Fostering efficacy is not an add-on to studies of global issues, but should be part and parcel of the ongoing discussions:

- *focus on the worldwide extent of agencies, partnerships and networks engaged in problem solving. Young people are not aware of the range of groups - whether governments, international institutions, non-governmental organizations, grassroots community initiatives, or the private sector - committed to action and*

what they are doing. The important understanding here is that the difficulties facing our interdependent globe are being worked on by many people in various ways.

- *infuse good news stories about the successes that individuals, groups and institutions are having in their actions. Elicit examples of actions that have been and are being taken to solve problems.*
- *encourage discussion of personal actions that could be taken at home and in the school or community...*

The complexity of issues and problems does not preclude consideration of meaningful action: What can I personally do? Is there collective action that we should plan?

Depending upon the age and circumstances of students, activities may involve letter writing, changing one's consumer habits, attending a seminar for further information, joining the work of a community organization, or forming a school club. Appropriate action is not only a way to apply what is learned, but also a means for understanding issues better and strengthening efficacy.

Walt Werner, "Teaching for Hope," in Roland Case and Penny Clark eds., *The Canadian Anthology of Social Studies* (Pacific Educational Press, Vancouver, CA: 1999) 249-253.

Activity 1

- 1) Ask students what actions the world community might take in order to reduce the forced recruitment of children. Chart student ideas on the board or a transparency.
- 2) Examine the actions of the world community by reading the protocols about child soldiers that have been passed. Discuss Reading #1 (Child Soldiers Protocol), which is a summary of the features of the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The full text of the Optional Protocol is available at (<http://www.unicef.org/crc/annex1.htm>). In article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, governments are urged to ensure that children are not involved in hostilities. The Optional Protocol specifies additional criteria for meeting this goal.
- 3) Discuss why states would or would not be willing to ratify the Optional Protocol.
- 4) Check to see which countries have ratified the Optional Protocol at <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/crp/ratifications.htm>. Discuss why some countries have not signed the Optional Protocol.
- 5) Explain that on March 13, 2003, the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the child on the involvement of children in armed conflict came into force with 109 countries signing and 51 countries ratifying the Optional Protocol.

Activity 2

Examine the actions of three inter-governmental organizations, particularly the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Office of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

1) ILO-IPEC

Through the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC), the ILO works to combat child labor in general and child soldiers specifically. Research IPEC's website to learn about the ILO-IPEC's programs and strategies. Visit: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/index.htm>. If you have trouble accessing this page, visit www.ilo.org and click on "Child Labor: IPEC." The ILO encourages the ratification of Convention No 182. It calls for immediate action to ban the worst forms of child labor, which include forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict. The full text of the Convention can be found at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/ratification/convention/text.htm>. Juan Somavia, Director General of the ILO, says this about the convention:

Very simply, it defines the worst forms of child labor and asks all governments to ban them. Make sure everyone knows about them. Pass new laws if needed. Monitor and enforce them. Be creative in wiping out the root causes. Plug leaky borders by working together with other governments and citizens to make the agreement hold water. I pledge our maximum effort to make this happen. We are campaigning. We are working in every country that invites us in (now some 60) on action strategies to take girls and boys out of this exploitation. And we are continually learning, gathering facts, analyzing patterns of what works and what doesn't, aiming to work smarter and more effectively each day.

As of September 23, 2003, 144 countries have ratified Convention 182. Check the progress of the ratification on the map at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/ratification/map/index.htm>.

Compare the ratifying countries with those that have signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Why might a country ratify one and not the other?

2) UNICEF

UNICEF, an agency of the United Nations, has been working to promote children's welfare for over 50 years. The agency's current work is guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Have students visit UNICEF's *Voices of Youth* Website and click Explore to read about children's views and experiences of war, http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/rights/explore_151.html. Instruct them to research UNICEF's agenda and strategies to combat the use of child soldiers.

Share UNICEF's mission statement with students and discuss what it means to them and how it can benefit the international community's effort to stop the use of child soldiers.

Have students read the mission statement out loud. Get them to focus on the paragraph that is most relevant to child soldiers and children in war (see paragraph in bold).

UNICEF's mission statement

UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children.

UNICEF insists that the survival, protection and development of children are universal development imperatives that are integral to human progress.

UNICEF mobilizes political will and material resources to help countries, particularly developing countries, ensure a "first call for children" and to build their capacity to form appropriate policies and deliver services for children and their families.

UNICEF is committed to ensuring special protection for the most disadvantaged children - victims of war, disasters, extreme poverty, all forms of violence and exploitation and those with disabilities.

UNICEF responds in emergencies to protect the rights of children. In coordination with United Nations partners and humanitarian agencies, UNICEF makes its unique facilities for rapid response available to its partners to relieve the suffering of children and those who provide their care.

UNICEF is non-partisan and its cooperation is free of discrimination. In everything it does, the most disadvantaged children and the countries in greatest need have priority.

UNICEF aims, through its country programmes, to promote the equal rights of women and girls and to support their full participation in the political, social, and economic development of their communities.

UNICEF works with all its partners towards the attainment of the sustainable human development goals adopted by the world community and the realization of the vision of peace and social progress enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

(http://www.unicef.org/about/who/index_mission.html)

Ask students: "Can you relate UNICEF's mission statement to child soldiers? Can you suggest some strategies to help realize this mission?" Break students into small groups and ask them to address these questions.

3) Office of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict

<http://www.un.org/special-rep/children-armed-conflict/>

The Secretary-General appointed Mr. Olara A. Otunnu as his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in September 1997. In announcing the appointment, the Secretary-General underscored the urgent need for a public advocate and moral voice on behalf of children whose rights and well-being have been and are being violated in the context of armed conflict.

The role of the Special Representative is to act as:

- **Advocate**- building awareness of the needs of war-affected children
- **Catalyst** - proposing ideas and approaches to enhance the protection of children in war
- **Convenor** - bringing together key actors within and outside the UN to promote more concerted and effective responses, and
- **Facilitator** - undertaking humanitarian and diplomatic initiatives to unblock difficult political situations

Key elements of the mandate:

- **Assess** progress achieved and difficulties encountered in strengthening the protection of children in situations of armed conflict
- **Raise Awareness** and promote the collection of information about the plight of children affected by conflict
- **Encourage the development of networking and foster international cooperation** to ensure the protection and rehabilitation of children affected by conflict

Ask students to come up with ways they might assist the Special Representative to achieve his mandate. Break students into small groups and have them come up with their ideas. Then chart these ideas on the board.

Activity 3

Research and report about the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are working to end the use of child soldiers. Below are some of the many NGOs engaged in the global effort to eliminate the use of child soldiers. Have students research each site to identify the organization's agenda and strategies.

The International Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

<http://www.child-soldier.org>

The U.S. Campaign to Ban the Use of Child Soldiers

<http://www.us-childsoldiers.org>

Human Rights Watch

<http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/crp/index.htm>

Scroll down to “Global Issues” and click on “Children’s Rights” to learn about Human Rights Watch’s efforts to eliminate the use of child soldiers.

Kids Can Free the Children

<http://www.freethechildren.org/>

Visit “Youth in Action” and click on “War-Affected Children” to learn more about Free the Children’s work on children in armed conflicts. Direct link is: http://www.freethechildren.com/youthinaction/war_affected_children.htm.

The United Students Association for Action Against the Use of Child Soldiers

(USA4Action) is a network of college and university students supporting the current US campaign to stop the use of child soldiers. E-mail: usa4action@hotmail.com

Amnesty International – Child Soldiers

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/children/soldiers/>

One World

http://www.oneworld.org/child_rights/ch_war.html

EVALUATION

After reviewing the work of IGOs and NGOs, students should have an idea of how these organizations function. They should be able to form their own student group to contribute to the global effort to stop the use of child soldiers. Have them come up with a name of their own organization. Then break them up into small groups (5 groups of 5) and have them come up with the following:

- 1) Their group’s mandate and mission statement
- 2) Programs (for short and long-term goals)
- 3) Education and Outreach activities
- 4) Identify other partners to collaborate (IGOs and NGOs they have learned about and others they may have found on their own)
- 5) Come up with publicity campaign to inform the public about their organization

Note: Teachers can decide to limit the number of activities based on class size.

Have students select a presenter from each group and present the result of each group’s discussion to the entire class.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXTENDING THE LESSON

Strategies to stop the use of child soldiers include demobilizing and reintegrating children into society. Both are extremely complex issues that involve coordination at the community level, counseling, education, job/skills training, locating family members and ensuring safe transport and return of children, etc. There is also an additional complication when attempting to reach child soldiers belonging to armed opposition groups as opposed to government forces. Such complexities are also opportunities for students to deepen their understanding of the issue.

1. Discuss how a country could demobilize and reintegrate its child soldiers. What challenges would that task present? Instruct students to listen to internet audio recordings, or read about two countries that are demobilizing child soldiers. They should write a comparison of the two accounts that include the goals, strategies and outcomes of each effort.

Internet Audio Resources

- A. BBC News, "Child Soldiers to Be Disarmed," BBC News, May 25, 2000
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/764230.stm>
- B. BBC News, "Child Soldiers to Swap guns for PCs," BBC News, May 25, 2002
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1886248.stm>
- C. BBC News, "Congo Demobilises Child soldiers," BBC News, December 18, 2001
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/world/africa/1718545.stm>
- D. BBC News, "Rehabilitating Sudan's Boy Soldiers," BBC News, May 4, 2001
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1313271.stm>
- E. Kenneth Walker, "Child Soldier Rehab," National Public Radio, July 6, 2000
<http://www.npr.org> (Open archives and type in program title)
- F. Ivan Watson, "Child Soldiers of Sierra Leone," National Public Radio, July 11, 2001
<http://www.npr.org> (Open archives and type in program title)

Print Resources

- A. Accounts of the reintegration of child soldiers into society have been published by the *Christian Science Monitor*. They can be found on electronic periodical services (such as EBSCO Host) or in public libraries. They can also be purchased from *Christian Science Monitor's* archives (<http://www.csmonitor.com>). These two stories are recommended:

- 1) Christian Science Monitor, "Aid Agencies help to Rid Child Soldiers of War's Scars," Christian Science Monitor, October 30, 2001.
 - 2) Christian Science Monitor, "In Sudan, soldiers become children again," Christian Science Monitor, September 6, 2001.
- B.** Yvonne E. Keairns, *The Voices of Girl Child Soldiers*, Quaker UN Office, October 2002. This report can be found in the American Friends Service Committee web site <http://www.afsc.org/issues/>.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

According to Human Rights Watch, there are four kinds of international law relevant to child soldiers: international human rights law, international humanitarian law, international criminal law and international labor law. Consult <http://hrw.org/campaigns/crp/int-law.htm> for more information.

Also view:

UNICEF, *3551: Demobilization of Child Soldiers in Southern Sudan*, 26 min., UNICEF: 2001
Order at <http://www.unicef.org/vidcat/order.html>

Cost: \$15.00 / Length: 26 minutes

UNICEF Summary of film: 3551 is the number of child soldiers taken away from front lines and offered new hope in a place ravaged by one of Africa's longest running wars. These boys are in the Sudan Peoples Liberation army and they have never known peace. Peter Malwien is one of those boys and he's lost both of his parents to the war. We follow Peter as aircraft from the UN's World Food Programme are diverted from usual humanitarian tasks and more than two and a half thousand boys are lifted by air to the Rumbek area. At the camps, built where the children are to live until they can be returned to their homes, Peter, who has never been to school begins to imagine new and exciting challenges. Finally, we watch Peter's hard journey home and the reconciliation with his remaining family members.

(http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/video_3567.html)

The Child Soldiers Protocol

A Summary of Key Provisions by Human Rights Watch

<http://hrw.org/campaigns/crp/protocol.htm>

In 2000, a dramatic breakthrough was achieved in efforts to end the use of children as soldiers. On January 21, after six years of negotiations, governments from around the world agreed on a new international treaty to prohibit the use of children as combatants.

The new child soldiers protocol establishes eighteen as the minimum age for direct participation in hostilities, for compulsory recruitment, and for any recruitment or use in hostilities by non-governmental armed groups. It is technically an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Previous international standards had allowed children as young as fifteen to be legally recruited and sent into war. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (which has been ratified by every government except the United States and Somalia) generally defines a child as any person under the age of eighteen. However, in situations of armed conflict, the convention set the lower age of fifteen as the minimum age for recruitment and participation in armed conflict. The new protocol helps to correct this anomaly.

The new protocol was adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly on May 25, 2000, and opened for signature in early June. By August 2002, two years after its adoption, 109 countries had signed it, and 35 countries had ratified it. The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers is campaigning for universal ratification of the protocol.

Key provisions of the Protocol:

- * **Participation in Hostilities:** Governments must take all feasible measures to ensure that members of their armed forces that are under the age of eighteen do not take a direct part in hostilities.
- * **Conscription:** Governments must not conscript (compulsorily recruit) any persons under the age of eighteen.
- * **Irregular Armed Groups:** Rebel or other irregular armed groups are prohibited from recruiting under-18s or using them in hostilities. Governments are required to criminalize such practices and take other measures to prevent the recruitment and use of children by such groups.
- * **Voluntary recruitment:** Governments must raise their minimum age for voluntary recruitment beyond the current minimum of fifteen, and must deposit a binding declaration stating the minimum age they will respect. (In practice, this means the minimum age for voluntary recruitment is sixteen.) Governments recruiting under-18s must maintain a series of safeguards, ensuring that such recruitment is genuinely voluntary; is done with the informed consent of the person's parents or legal guardians; that recruits are fully informed of the duties involved in military service; and that proof of age is established.

- * **Implementation:** Governments must demobilize children recruited or used in violation of the protocol, and provide appropriate rehabilitation and reintegration assistance.
- * **Ratification:** All governments can sign and ratify the protocol, regardless of whether or not they have ratified the underlying Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- * **Monitoring:** Governments must submit a report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child within two years of ratifying the protocol, providing comprehensive information on the measures it has taken to implement the protocol. Thereafter, follow-up reports are made every five years.

Child Labor Module Series
Child Soldiers

LESSON 5

Soldiers for Peace

LESSON 5



Soldiers for Peace

LESSON OVERVIEW

Students will learn how youths in Colombia have organized the Children's Movement for Peace in order to create peace in their homes, communities, and country. Students will write a dialogue between a child soldier and a member of the Children's Movement for Peace to show that they understand each group's perspectives and circumstances.

OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to:

- ✎ Identify the political, social and economic conditions in Colombia that foster violence
- ✎ Identify the purposes, activities, and achievements of the Children's Movement for Peace in Colombia
- ✎ Describe the efforts of individuals involved in the Children's Movement for Peace
- ✎ Analyze why young people in Colombia have been willing to risk their own safety in order to promote peace
- ✎ Compare and contrast the circumstances, fears and dreams of a child soldier in Colombia and a member of the Children's Movement for Peace
- ✎ Complete an action plan related to eliminating the use of child soldiers.

CONCEPTS

Peace, personal and community participation

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- ➡ What efforts can and should individuals make to reduce violence?
- ➡ How much risk should an individual take to reduce violence?
- ➡ How can youths work to reduce violence?
- ➡ What can an individual do to help eliminate the use of child soldiers?

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

- ☑ Computer with Internet access
- ☑ Website: CNN/Turner Learning, *Soldiers of Peace*, CNN/Turner Learning, 1999, <http://www.turnerlearning.com/cnn/soldiers/intro.html>

☑Video: Kyra Thompson, *Soldiers for Peace*, CNN/Turner Learning, 1999, <http://www.unicef.org/vidcat/377/index.html>.

☑Book: Sara Cameron, *Out of War* (Scholastic Press, 2001).

SUGGESTED DURATION

1-2 class periods

COURSE CONNECTIONS

American History, World History, Government, Global Studies, Current Events

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING THE LESSON

Activity 1

1. This lesson introduces students to the Children's Movement for Peace (CMP) in Colombia. It is a group of youth who organized and petitioned for a national special election about the future of Colombia. "The Children's Mandate for Peace and Rights" election was held in October 1996. Over 2.7 million Colombian children voted in the election. UNICEF, The National Network for Peace Initiatives, the Red Cross, the Scout Federation and the Catholic Church supported the initiative. Subsequently, the CMP was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize (the first time children had ever been nominated) and five members were invited to participate in the Hague Appeal for Peace Conference on May 11-15, 1999, in the Netherlands. The movement is an example of how youths can be positive change agents in the world.
2. Read the background information about the CMP and the profiles of the individuals involved at <http://turnerlearning.com/cnn/soldiers/intro.html>. Prepare a brief presentation for students about the CMP.
3. Use the video, *Soldiers for Peace*, and the accompanying learning activities from the CNN Web site, to provide additional background about the individuals involved in the CMP and their strategies for change.

Additional profiles and stories about the CMP are available at

<http://www.unicefusa.org/peace/stories.html>, and

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1999/children/stories/child.soldiers/>

4. Discuss the risks the CMP members took, their successes and disappointments. Provide this update from Sara Cameron in August, 2002, about the CMP members:
 - A) Juan Elias and his family are still waiting for political asylum in the U.S.

- B) Farlis speaks good English after spending a year in California. She is now back studying in Bogota.
- C) Johemir avoided conscription into the army and is a university student in Bogota.
- D) Wilfrido is studying via the Internet in Apartado. Things are very tough for him. His home area is extremely violent.
- E) Mayerly's family fell into economic difficulties after her father left home. She's managing to continue her studies in communications. She addressed the General Assembly of the UN in May during the UN Special Session on Children, <http://www.unicef.org/specialsession/>.

All of the children are still engaged in peace work except for Maritza, who is having a difficult time with drugs.

- 5) Using facts from the video and Internet resources, discuss *Out of War* author Sara Cameron's assessment of the Movement:

the real achievement of the Movement is the light it sheds on how young people must be involved in peace making. It isn't enough to just protect or even just to educate those who live with violence. We have to help young people understand that they have the power and the capacity to build a different world -- and one that doesn't rest on more violence. Too often such kids have only two choices, to hide from violence or to join in with it. As adolescents they want to define who they are. If they have been driven from their homes by war they may lose faith in their parents, their community leaders, their government to protect their futures. They see those who drove them from their homes by force as having the greatest power. It's a "logical" step then to see force and violence as the answer to protecting your own future (as well as seeking revenge.) The Children's Movement taught me that when young people talk openly about what war does to them, when we find ways to help them engage in finding solutions, in helping other younger kids, in improving their communities in whatever way, we give kids affected by violence a third choice... and a way out of war. In some ways it means letting kids put their education to work faster, sooner – proving to them that learning works.

Activity 2

1. The Children's Movement for Peace is an effort to change a culture of war to a culture of peace. After completing Reading #1, identify how the Children's Movement for Peace is contributing to a culture of peace. What additional steps could the young people take to change their culture from one of war to one of peace? What have the Colombian children accomplished that other youths should emulate?
2. Open a concluding discussion with the following questions: What needs to happen for the transition from a war culture to a peace culture to become permanent? Who has the ultimate responsibility to make that happen?

Activity 3

1. Assign students to design a personal action plan to stop the use of child soldiers. Examples of existing campaigns can be found at the following websites:

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/crp/whatdo.htm>

Say Yes to Children Campaign: http://www.netaid.org/SayYes/en/new_index_html

U.S. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers: <http://www.us-childsoldiers.org/join.html>

Amnesty International: <http://www.amnesty.org>

2. Students can plan events (films, speakers, posters) to raise awareness about the use of child soldiers in their school. Dates to consider include:

September 18: International Day of Peace

November 19: World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse

November 20: International Children's Day

December 10: Human Rights Day

The International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World began in 2000 and extends to 2010.

EVALUATION

Write a two-voice poem or dialogue that reflects the viewpoints of a member of the Children's Movement for Peace and a child soldier in Colombia. Present the poems or dialogues in class. Incorporate each individual's experiences, values, fears and dreams in the poem or dialogue.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXTENDING THE LESSON

The Children's Movement for Peace has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Write a newspaper editorial supporting this nomination. Research other groups that have received the Nobel Peace and compare the Children's Movement for Peace to those organizations.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS

Abrams, Irwin. *The Nobel Peace Prize and the Laureates: An Illustrated Biographical History, 1901-2001*. Science History Publications, 2001. ISBN: 0881353884

Keene, Ann T. *Peacemakers: Winners of the Nobel Peace Prize*. Oxford University Press, 1998. ISBN 0195103165.

PEOPLE

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WEB SITES

Nobel e-Museum, <http://www.nobel.se/peace/index.html>, presents all the peace laureates, their acceptance speeches, biographical information, and links to additional resources.

Official Web site (in Spanish) for the Children's Movement for Peace, <http://www.geocities.com/EnchantedForest/Creek/8238/index.htm>. Open "Imágenes del Movimiento" for photographs.

Sara Cameron, <http://www.saracameron.org>

UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.org/children-in-war/feature-peaceed.html>, reports on programs for promoting peace in war-torn regions.