



United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

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TOPICS

1. Combating the use of child soldiers in Sub-Saharan Africa
2. Preventing the radicalization of teenagers by religious fundamentalists in western societies

CHAIRS

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Table of contents:

Combating the use of child soldiers in Sub-Saharan Africa.....	3-8
Introduction.....	3-4
Background.....	4
Campaign achievements.....	4-5
Major Member States involved.....	5-7
Possible solutions.....	7
Bibliography and links for further reading.....	7-8

Introduction

Throughout most of its history, the African continent has been no stranger to violent conflict. In the past decade alone, the world has witnessed widespread genocide in Rwanda, interstate war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and bloody, protracted civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Both government forces and insurgent groups have become increasingly reliant upon the recruitment of children to help fight their battles. In addition, these young individuals sometimes serve as sex slaves for high-ranking military officials or are sold into slavery in exchange for weapons, money, and other scarce resources. This disturbing trend has received much attention in recent years from political leaders, human rights activists, and other members of the international community. Several initiatives have been launched during the past decade to help alleviate the problem. Much work still remains, however, before an effective strategy can be developed and implemented that will discourage the use of children in battle. The use of children in violent conflict is a serious problem that continues to plague both the African continent and the international community as a whole. According to a recent report released by The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, more than 300,000 children under the age of 18 serve as child soldiers with government armed forces and armed opposition groups worldwide, with over 120,000 of them located in Sub-Saharan Africa alone (The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2001). In some of these countries, it is not uncommon to even find 7 and 8-year-olds engaged in battle. Some children voluntarily join government armies or insurgent groups, while others are abducted and forced to fight against their will. There are many reasons why the recruitment of children, both boys and girls, in particular African nations has continued to increase over the years. In addition, the problem is often exacerbated by several domestic and international factors. Some of the more salient features of this disturbing trend are worth reviewing. The proliferation of light, inexpensive weapons in many African countries in recent years has greatly contributed to the recruitment of child soldiers for battle. One U.S. State Department report notes:

During the Cold War, state-to-state arms transfers to Sub-Saharan Africa involved primarily heavy, high-maintenance equipment such as jet fighters, helicopters, transport aircraft, and tanks. After the collapse of Communist governments in the former Soviet Union and its East European allies, state-to-state transfers declined while commercial and illegal arms trafficking in light weapons increased. The consequent widespread availability of cheap weapons, easy to use and maintain (AK-47s sell for as little as \$6 in some African countries), fuels destruction throughout the continent (U.S. State Department 1999).

In previous years, weaponry was still somewhat complex, heavy, and bulky and children were limited to mainly support roles when participating in violent conflict. The increased availability of small arms, however, has allowed even the youngest of individuals to engage in direct combat. Very little effort and training is required for a 10-year-old to use an automatic weapon that weighs only a few pounds but still results in massive slaughter. Additionally, the relatively low cost of such weapons allows them to be bought by some of the poorest communities on the continent. The same report vividly demonstrates this point by stating, "In some countries, it is easier and cheaper to buy an AK-47 than to attend a movie or provide a decent meal" (U.S. State Department 1999).

Key points clearly recognizable is, that the countries affected or included in the use of child soldiers, are countries with an instable government, a government with a limited amount of reach, and in every case, countries with a lower level of industrial development including a high level of education for the youth.

Background



Launched in 2014, the campaign Children, Not Soldiers, an initiative of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and UNICEF, aimed to bring about a global consensus that child soldiers should not be used in conflict. The campaign was designed to generate momentum, political will and international support to turn the page once and for all on the recruitment of children by national security forces in conflict situations. The campaign received immediate support from Member States, UN, NGO partners, regional organizations and the general public. The UN Security Council and General Assembly welcomed “Children, Not Soldiers” and requested regular updates through the Special Representative’s reporting.

At the time of the launch, the countries concerned by the campaign were:

Afghanistan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen.

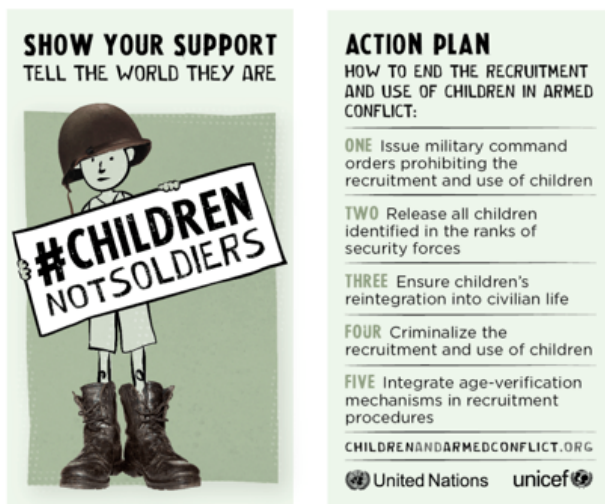
The campaign ended at the end of 2016, but the consensus envisioned is now a reality and thousands of child soldiers have been released and reintegrated with the assistance of UNICEF, peacekeeping or political missions, as well as UN and NGO partners on the ground. National campaigns to promote the objectives of

“Children, Not Soldiers” have been launched in most countries concerned and beyond.

Campaign achievements:

- All Governments concerned by the Campaign are engaged in an Action Plan process with the United Nations.
- The government of Afghanistan criminalized the recruitment of children, endorsed a road map to accelerate the implementation of its Action Plan as well as age assessment guidelines to prevent the recruitment of children;

- Chad put in place all necessary measures to end and prevent the recruitment of children in its armed forces and is no longer listed.
- A second country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) put in place all necessary measures to end and prevent the recruitment of children in its armed forces and is no longer listed for this violation in the annexes of the Annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.
- Over 800 children (and youth recruited as children) were released from Myanmar's army since the signature of the Action Plan in 2012. In September 2015, the country signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict;
- Somalia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in September 2015. The Government established a child protection unit in the Somali armed forces and put in place mechanisms for the handover to the United Nations of children found in the ranks of its army;
- Sudan signed an action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children in the country's security forces; There is notable progress in the implementation of this Action Plan.
- In 2014, South Sudan recommitted to the action plan signed in 2012. Implementation has been stalled due to conflict;
- Yemen signed an Action Plan with the UN in May 2014. Implementation has been stalled due to conflict.



Mayor Member States involved:

Kongo:

Eastern DRC has been plagued by armed conflict involving national and foreign armed groups and forces for over 20 years. The majority of fighting forces have recruited and used children, and most armed groups still exploit boys and girls today. After signing an Action

Plan with the UN in 2012, the Congolese government has virtually stopped enlisting children into its armed forces, although many of its soldiers continue to use girls for sexual and domestic purposes. Children continue to be recruited and used by numerous armed groups in DRC. Girls are often used as 'wives' and sexually abused by their commanders and other soldiers. Although a third of all children associated with armed groups in DRC are thought to be girls, they make up only about 7 % of children released to date. When they are released or escape from armed groups, many never receive any support to reintegrate into their communities and for the few who do, the support has often been poorly adapted to their needs. Many are shunned by family and friends and some even chose to go back to the bush, not being able to face the rejection.

Afghanistan:

Since NATO forces overcame the Taliban government in 2001, Afghanistan has been gripped by an increasingly violent and complex armed conflict. At the end of 2014, historic elections ushered in a national unity government, NATO ended its combat mission and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) formally took lead responsibility for the country's fragile security. Despite this, the conflict has intensified as ANSF have struggled to counter the Taliban's efforts to regain control of the country. Numerous militias and armed groups operate, most of whom are known to use children in some capacity. After decades of violent conflict, severe poverty and a lack of other opportunities have driven children into the fighting on all sides. Children taking part in hostilities risk being killed, injured or sexually abused, and have been used as suicide bombers. For many children in Afghanistan, war is a way of life.

Myanmar:

Myanmar has been affected by some of the longest-running internal armed conflicts in the world. Following independence from the United Kingdom in 1948, the failure to agree to a comprehensive political settlement on power sharing led to conflicts between a number of ethnic minority groups.

After the state armed forces seized power in 1962, the country laboured under a repressive military dictatorship for nearly half a century. Internal armed conflict continued; children were and still are commonly recruited and used by the conflicting parties. A transition to civilian government began in 2011.

Myanmar's internal armed conflicts have been marked by severe human rights violations, attacks against civilians, and mass displacement, with children widely used by both state armed forces and armed groups. Despite a minimum enlistment age of 18, large numbers of boys were recruited, often forcibly, into the national army, with some sent to the front line far from home and forced to fight in gruelling and dangerous conditions.

Myanmar signed an Action Plan with the UN in 2012 to end the use of child soldiers by the Tatmadaw. Since then, the Tatmadaw has released 849 children and young people and taken significant steps to reduce child recruitment, but has yet to sustainably root it out and occasional cases of recruitment by the armed forces are still being reported.

The Tatmadaw was first listed in the UN Secretary-General's report on children in armed conflict as one of the parties guilty of recruiting children in 2003, and remains on the list alongside seven ethnic armed groups from the country.

While some ethnic armed groups have policies not to recruit children, they have also failed to implement them consistently, and the UNSG has urged the government to allow the UN to engage with listed armed groups to enable them to sign Action Plans of their own.

In 2015, the country took the welcome step of signing the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC), a significant step towards eradicating the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. However it is yet to ratify the treaty to make it fully legally binding.

Ratifying OPAC would demonstrate Myanmar's political will to continue to address the issue, in line with the roughly 85% of states that have already done so, including every other member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The key provisions of the treaty are largely in line with Myanmar's existing national laws and policies on armed forces recruitment, and would build on progress achieved to date under the UN Action Plan.

Furthermore, ratifying OPAC would provide an avenue to strengthen dialogue with armed groups on child protection in areas they control, and provide a framework for the government and civil society organisations to highlight national efforts to end child soldier use to the international community.

Possible Solutions:

The key to stop problems in relation to children manipulated to work and serve as soldiers, such as human trafficking or young woman being abused as sex slaves, is to form a better social structure in every country, with the western and industrial developed countries seen as a possible ideology. If the problem of children as soldiers is solved, many other problems bound and included with children working as soldiers are being tackled or solved. Therefore it's important that every affected country by children working as soldiers is making a move to start tackling the issue. To start with the governments of the countries must secure the human rights for every individual in the country, of course, including the children. Independent Warlords suppressing the countries villages should not be a problem at any time, therefore the countries police and it's military should be the highest form of authority in their countries. Also the children in their villages shouldn't be able to be taken away with no one recognizing at school. Therefore a duty for every child to attend education could be a small step to tackle a big issue.

Biography

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