



FACT FILE: WAR AND CONFLICT

'War is the continuation of politics by other means' – Karl von Clausewitz (1780-1831)

Background/History

As long as man has existed, he has killed man. There has hardly been a year in the last 200 where there has not been a war being waged somewhere in the world.

People call these wars by different names but for many they boil down to the same thing, loss of life, relatives, land; hardships, famine and the many indignities that come with armed conflict.

The Facts

Child Soldiers

In many countries raged by war, children have become direct participants. Millions of African children grow up surrounded by armed conflicts, and are forced to get involved in combat. Up to 300,000 children are participants in armed conflict worldwide as indicated on the research conducted by the Quaker UN offices and Radda Barnen, published in 1998. Africa has the largest number of child soldiers. It is believed to be as high as 100,000. Child soldiers are children under the age of 18 who are members of armed forces or armed political group.

In Liberia, children as young as seven have been found fighting in combat.

Countries using child soldiers in their armed conflict are: Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Congo DR, Rwanda, Somali, Sudan, and Uganda.

What are child soldiers used for?

Child soldiers are obliged to undertake a range of tasks including:

- participation in combat
- laying mines and explosives
 - scouting
 - spying
- acting as decoys
- couriers or guards
 - training
- drill or other preparations
- logistics and support functions
 - portering
- cooking and domestic labor
 - sexual slavery

Warlords in Somalia and Sudan starve women and children to get their hands on humanitarian aid.

Why child soldiers?

Children are vulnerable and easily intimidated so they are obedient.

Many are abducted, and often threatened to follow orders or die.

Some of them join armed groups out of desperation.

During conflict, children have no access to school; they are driven away from their homes; or they are separated from family members. Many perceive armed groups as their best chance for survival.

Others seek escape from poverty or join military forces to avenge family members who have been killed.

The future of a child soldier

Child soldiers suffer higher casualties than the adults because of their immaturity and lack of experience.

Lacking an education, many find it difficult to rejoin peaceful society.

Schooled only in war, former child soldier are often drawn into crime or become easy prey for future recruitment.

"I would like to give you a message. Please do your best to tell the world what is happening to us, the children. So that other children don't have to pass through this violence."

A 15-year-old girl who escaped from the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda

Liberia

It's estimated that 20% of the combatants in Liberia's civil war were children. They were among the most brutal fighters: many of them killed, raped, tortured and even practiced cannibalism.



Many children joined one of the rebel factions because the former government had persecuted their family and ethnic people. Others were hoping to finally escape the grinding poverty of rural Liberia.

Some were seduced by promises of some money and clothes. And yet others were simply too young to know any better. But the majority joined simply to protect their lives.

From: <http://www.liberia-leaf.org/reports/trials/Childsoldiers/index.htm> contains testimonies

Aged 14 years. "I was coming from church on Sunday morning. They abducted five girls coming from church. They took us to the front line. We had to cook and carry

ammunition in the bush. They treated us bad; if I didn't go with them, they would kill me...They brought me to Monrovia and left me here. I want to go to school. I want to go back to Nimba to my people."

From http://www.amnestyusa.org/Child_soldiers/document.do?id=80256DD400782B8480256EB30054AFB1

<http://hrw.org/reports/2004/liberia0204/> - excellent website on Liberia – on HRW

CASE STUDY

Sudan: The situation in Darfur

Two United Nations officials are headed to Sudan's Darfur region to assess the humanitarian and political situations, after a weekend which saw a number of serious violent incidents in the vast war-torn area. Incidents included attacks on humanitarian and commercial trucks, a tribal militia attack on a village and an alleged rape of four girls.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian Affairs and Development, Manuel Aranda Da Silva, will visit the Kalma camp in South Darfur on Wednesday, along with Sudan's Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister.

They will assess the situation in what has become the largest camp for internally displaced people (IDPs) in Darfur, with a population of approximately 140,000. The Sudanese Government has imposed a blockade that cuts off commercial traffic to the camp, naming banditry and security incidents as the reason.

In addition, displaced persons cannot travel to nearby Nyala.

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Sudan, Jan Pronk, will participate in a mission to measure the progress achieved in the year after the signing of the Joint Communiqué between the Secretary-General and the Sudanese Government. The Joint Implementation Mechanism (JIM) visit to West Darfur took place on the 15 and 16 June.

Source: www.allafrica.com



CASE STUDY

Democratic Republic of Congo

Rampaging militiamen have staged a series of vicious attacks on scores of civilians in the past week, forcing more than 1,000 people to flee remote villages in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations said today.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), a particularly virulent rampage by Mayi-Mayi elements active in the area prompted the flight of some 100 individuals from the village of Songsa to the town of Manono. 15 females - including eight girls - were raped and forced to flee naked, able to move only at night due to their lack of clothing.

Looting took place and 11 of the village's 30 houses were burned to the ground and. The terrified displaced people arrived in Manono, Katanga, on 31 May.

OCHA say 1,600 individuals fled their homes in the villages of Kyungu and Nkumbu to seek shelter in Mpiana, another town in the Manono region, for fear of attack by Mayi-Mayi active in the area. Although the group managed to bring some basic household goods with them, they no longer have any food.

Four villages may have been burned after the internally displaced people (IDPs) left the area, OCHA said.

In the South Kivu town of Nindja, militia members killed 19 civilians on 23 May and prompted an estimated 6,000 people to flee to Ihembe, near Walungu. Among the seriously wounded, some had had their limbs hacked off by machetes.

Witnesses claim up to 50, were carried off by armed men.

IDPs in six overcrowded camps in Ituri's Djugu and Irumu areas, where many have live for six months seemed unlikely to be able to return home in the near future, it said.

If the security situation deteriorates further, the delivery of vital humanitarian aid to these camps could become problematic. Aid suspension could leave more than 100,000 individuals, mostly women and children, without water, health care and food, the agency said.

Meanwhile, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guhenno, told reporters after briefing the Security Council today on the DRC, that the situation in Ituri had somewhat improved, particularly since nearly 14,000 militia had been disarmed, which was a very significant number.

However, the situation in Ituri had not completely stabilized. He reported to the Council that a Nepalese peacekeeper protecting a human rights investigative team in the region had lost his life earlier this week. "So that tells us that there are still people who are prepared to kill - to prevent the consolidation of peace and human rights in Ituri." There were still very serious dangers in the Ituri province, and he had warned the Council "we need to remain vigilant there because we don't have peace yet." source: allAfrica.com

Statements

"Even if they have never seen a gun, millions of children suffer from wars, as resources that could have been invested in development are diverted into armaments. Indeed, one of the most distressing realities of our time is that most wars have been fought in precisely those countries that could least afford them." *State of the World's Children*, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 1996.

Statistics

In response to the conflict in Rwanda and extensive regional displacement, a vast tracing programme was set up in 1994 by the International Red Cross, UNHCR, UNICEF, Save the Children and other NGOs. More than 100,000 children were registered. By May 1996, more than 33,000 of these children had been reunited with family members.

In 1994, 250,000 children were slaughtered in Rwanda in the space of a few weeks.

From Human Rights Watch:

Today, as many as 300,000 children under the age of 18 serve in government forces or armed rebel groups. Some are as young as eight years old'.



Where Child Soldiers Are Being Used? – 33 different countries

Following are countries where child soldiers are reported to be fighting in recent and ongoing (2002) armed conflicts.

G indicates children are serving in government forces
P in paramilitaries, and
O in opposition forces.

Colombia (P,O)
Mexico (P,O)
Peru (O)
Russian Fed (O)
Turkey (O)
Yugoslavia (P,O)
Algeria (P,O)
Angola (G,O)
Burundi (G,O)
Chad, (G)
Republic of Congo, (G,O)
DRC (G,O)
Eritrea (G)
Ethiopia (G)
Rwanda (G,O)
Sierra Leone (all groups)
Somalia (all groups)
Sudan (G,P,O)
Uganda (G,O)
Afghanistan (all groups)
Iran (G,O)
Iraq (G,O)
Israel and OT (G,O)
Lebanon (O)
India (P,O)
Indonesia (P,O)
Myanmar (G,O)
Nepal (O)
Pakistan (O)
Philippines (O)
Solomon Islands (O)
Papua New Guinea (O)
Sri Lanka (O)
East Timor (P,O)
Tajikistan (O)
Uzbekistan (O)

Both girls and boys are used as child soldiers. In case studies in El Salvador, Ethiopia, and Uganda, almost a third of the child soldiers were reported to be girls. Girls may be raped, or in some cases, given to military commanders as "wives."

Research Links

On war:

<http://www.antiwar.com>

<http://www.crimesofwar.org/africa-mag/> links to http://www.crimesofwar.org/africa-mag/afr_02_darfur.html which is an excellent site on Sudan/Darfur – with background to the conflict, pictures and links to other articles.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/289156.stm>

http://mondediplo.com/1999/04/08africa?Var_recherche=war+in+africa

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

On child soldiers:

<http://hrw.org/Campaigns/CRP/index.htm> Excellent website, which links to testimonies etc From Human Rights Watch

http://mondediplo.com/2001/09/13soldiers?Var_recherche=child+soldiers An article written about the general situation, it has some statistics and general explanations on the effects war has on children.

<http://www.childsoldiers.org/home/> Focus is mainly on the civil war in Sierra Leone.

http://www.vachss.com/help_text/child_soldiers.html

http://www.amnestyusa.org/child_soldiers/index.do

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/childrensrighs/childrenofconflict/soldier.shtml>

<http://www.un.org/rights/introduc.htm#contents>

<http://www.un.org/rights/concerns.htm>

These two sites are the UN rights site concerning armed conflict, looking particularly at



WAR AND CONFLICT: DISCUSSION POINTS

Talk about the language and behaviour that people use to reject and insult others - the language of prejudice. Has your part of society welcomed 'difference and diversity'?

Talk about the society you know best - your community, your neighbourhood, your school, your college, your workplace - and how it is organized. - Can you see likely causes for conflict? Or can you see how the chance of conflict has been lessened by any particular arrangement?

In what ways will your day differ to a child soldier's?
Don't just think about the actions you take throughout the day; try to include feelings too.

Why do you think the parents of child soldiers are unable to stop this from happening?

For those who are homeless or without a family, what do you think are the alternatives to joining an armed group?

Who might be able to help a child soldier who wants to leave?

"When I grow up I want to be..."

What are your hopes and ambitions for the future?

What can you imagine are the hopes of ex-child soldiers?

Do you think you and they share the same aspirations?

Why might ex-child soldiers find achieving their aims more challenging?

