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The Children of War

Abstract

There are more than 300,000 child soldiers in the world today. Complex economic and psychological factors have contributed to this large number; while some of these child soldiers qualify as slaves, many do not. Although there are several United Nations (U.N.) conventions that protect the rights of the child, many states have had difficulty implementing such protections. This has led to the perpetuation of the child slavery problem. Unfortunately for the children involved, their troubles do not end with the fighting. After the conflict, former soldiers must undergo the oftentimes-painful process of rehabilitation and integration back into society.

Keywords

Human rights, Slavery, Contemporary slavery, Child soldiers

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The Children of War

By Jennifer Plante

There are more than 300,000 child soldiers in the world today. Complex economic and psychological factors have contributed to this large number; while some of these child soldiers qualify as slaves, many do not. Although there are several United Nations (U.N.) conventions that protect the rights of the child, many states have had difficulty implementing such protections. This has led to the perpetuation of the child slavery problem. Unfortunately for the children involved, their troubles do not end with the fighting. After the conflict, former soldiers must undergo the oftentimes-painful process of rehabilitation and integration back into society.

For the militant groups that utilize them, child soldiers are often a necessity. In many countries, particularly in Africa, the adult population is severely diminished due to war and disease, which results in a large proportion of the population being comprised of children under eighteen years of age. So, in order to fill the ranks, militant groups use children as soldiers. Additionally, the prevalence of child soldiers has been aided by changes in weaponry from centuries past. Deadly weapons are now small and light enough for even ten year-old girls to carry and use. Furthermore, children make good soldiers because of their obedience and reported fearlessness in battle. This combination of factors makes it all but impossible for armed militant groups to overlook the use of children as a resource in war.

For militant groups, there are obviously significant advantages to using child soldiers. As a result, they will use any method available to ensure the presence of children in their ranks. The media and popular culture have made famous the plight of child soldiers who are orphaned and forcefully drugged. For many children this is a reality, as these unfortunate children are forced to partake in military operations and to commit atrocities against their own people. There is no question that these children are victims of slavery.

Some children choose to join the ranks of militant groups, which also contributes to the continuing use of child soldiers. In poor, conflict ravaged states, children find themselves without families and without structure in their lives. Militant groups often fill this void by becoming a surrogate family and by providing informal military training. Children also join militia groups for revenge. Loved ones are murdered and children find themselves with few options. They often join groups to exact revenge on those who destroyed their families.

Whether children want to directly participate in armed conflict or not, laws that protect them from such participation have been only moderately successful at best. This lack of success is due to two factors: ambiguous language in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and difficulties associated with implementing Western ideas of childhood on non-Western states. The CRC states, "Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities" and that recruitment of children between ages fifteen and eighteen should begin with the oldest first. This ambiguous language does not strictly prohibit the use of child soldiers and because of this, groups have continued to get away with the use of child soldiers in armed conflicts.

Many people advocate for more forceful language, as well as a stricter and more encompassing definition of a "child." While the CRC specifically defines a child as a person under the age of

eighteen years of age, the rules change in times of conflict; during these times it lists fifteen as the acceptable age for participation. Humanitarian groups want to see the “straight-18” position adopted, which would prohibit the use of children under eighteen in armed conflict. With the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, the age for recruitment is raised. Although the language is still weak in the Optional Protocol, raising the age of recruitment makes it more difficult for militia groups to allege confusion over the age of their soldiers.

These ideas about age and how to define what constitutes a child are difficult and complex; they become even more so when Western ideas are imposed on non-Western states. Children in these places lead hard lives, and are thrown, prematurely, into adult situations. It is difficult to say that a child of fifteen cannot decide for him or herself whether or not to join a militia group when the child has been on their own and making decisions alone for a while. Conventions that are in place to protect children are not always feasible, and have proven difficult to enforce.

Rehabilitation and reintegration are also serious hurdles for child soldiers. The psychological needs of each child are different depending on the child’s experience as a soldier. Girl soldiers are often the victims of sexual abuse, and thus, require separate therapy to overcome particular emotional wounds. Also, a child who is abducted and forced into service has different needs from one who chooses to enlist as a means of revenge. Besides medical and psychological care, former child soldiers also need training and education. They need to be taught skills in order to join the workforce and to become productive members of society. Many states do not have the resources to provide for such services, and former child soldiers often turn to crime to survive.

Unfortunately, there are children around the world who not only have to witness war, but who also participate in it. Some child soldiers truly are victims of slavery, abducted and forced to commit terrible crimes, all for the benefit of their captors. But, the reasons why children participate vary—from coercion to revenge—and they are not all helpless victims. Child soldiers will continue to exist even if states agree with and attempt to abide by a set of rules that strictly prohibits their use. The problem will only cease when it is no longer beneficial for militia groups to recruit child soldiers, and when children in poor states have other options besides joining these militant groups.

Bibliography

Achvarina, Vera, Ragnhild Nordas, Gudrun Ostby, and Siri Rustad. 2007. “Regional Poverty and Child Soldier Recruitment: A Disaggregated Study of Sub-National African Regions, 1990-2004.” Conference Papers - International Studies Association. International Studies Association Annual Meeting: Chicago, IL.

Annotation: The authors of this paper seek to determine the relationship between poverty and child soldiering. While the assertion that the two go hand-in-hand has been made repeatedly, it has not been subjected to systematic tests. Therefore, this is a study with disaggregated variables. The authors generate indicators of absolute and relative regional poverty based on household assets, education levels, and infant mortality rates. Then, they investigate whether poverty does indeed lead to increased recruitment of children. Overall, the study was inconclusive, but

findings did indicate higher recruitment levels in regions with high infant mortality rates and where refugee camps are present.

Andvig, Jens and Scott Gates. 2007. "Recruiting Child Soldiers." International Studies Association Annual Meeting: Chicago, IL.

Annotation: Drawing from child labor economics, child psychology, and conflict studies, this paper examines the reasons why some militant groups recruit children while others do not. The investigation about why children make effective soldiers is particularly informative. While they do acknowledge other factors, the authors believe that by understanding the demand for child soldiers, it is possible to explain the differences in child-adult soldier ratios across different groups.

Bayer, Christophe Pierre, Fionna Klasen, and Hubertus Adam. 2007. "Association of Trauma and PTSD Symptoms With Openness to Reconciliation and Feelings of Revenge Among Former Ugandan and Congolese Child Soldiers." *JAMA: Journal of the American Medical Association* 298(5): 555-559.

Annotation: This article presents the results of an investigation into the association between posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and the openness to reconciliation in former child soldiers from Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The article presents a cross-sectional field study of 169 former child soldiers with an average age of fifteen years. The study found that more than one-third of the children interviewed met symptom criteria for PTSD. The report also notes that these children were less open to reconciliation and had greater feelings of revenge. The authors suggest the effect of physical trauma should be taken into consideration in rehabilitation and reintegration programs.

Blattman, Christopher. 2007. "The Causes of Child Soldiering: Evidence from Northern Uganda." Conference Papers - International Studies Association. International Studies Association Annual Meeting: Chicago, IL.

Annotation: In this paper, Blattman uses survey and interview evidence from former child soldiers in northern Uganda to investigate an economic rationale for rebel recruitment. Young adolescents, aged thirteen to fifteen, were three times as likely to be conscripted as a child of nine or an adult of twenty-three by the Lord's Resistance Army. The economic logic behind this finding is that these individuals offered the highest expected net benefit. In general, adolescents make more effective guerrilla soldiers than do young children, and they are more easily indoctrinated than adults. While this paper is still in the draft phase, it does offer very useful information on child soldiers from an economic standpoint.

Breen, Claire. 2007. "When Is a Child Not a Child? Child Soldiers in International Law." *Human Rights Review* 8(2): 71-103.

Annotation: In this article, Breen examines different attitudes and approaches to the use of child soldiers, as well as the pitfalls of these approaches. Some time is spent discussing the realities that child soldiers face, but the majority of the article focuses on defining "child" and addressing the efficacy of international legal mechanisms for protecting children. This article does a nice job of identifying and explaining the international laws in place to protect children, but the overall conclusion is that such laws are ineffective as they currently are.

Cheney, Kristen. 2005. "Our Children Have Only Known War: Children's Experiences and the Uses of Childhood in Northern Uganda." *Children's Geographies* 3(1): 23-45.

Annotation: Through evidence found during sixteen months of fieldwork with children in Uganda, this article examines national and generational causes of conflict. The article also examines different concepts of childhood, and discusses how these concepts are used by different groups of people. Cheney believes that children have difficulties with being rehabilitated because of the stigma society places on former child soldiers. Governments and activists need to re-evaluate their objectives and methods of helping children of war. She argues that the rehabilitation of children will be more effective if programs focus on positive social change as opposed to restoration and recuperation.

Cohn, Ilene. 1998. "The Protection of Children during the Liberian Peace Process." *International Journal of Children's Rights* 6(2): 179-220.

Annotation: In this article, Ilene Cohn examines several peace processes, and presents recommendations at each stage in the Liberian peace process that would promote measures to protect and reintegrate children. The Liberian peace process is divided into four different parts; Cohn describes how each one relates to children's issues. As children now play a relatively large role in armed conflicts in some countries, the peace process should be more child-conscious. Cohn makes several recommendations as to what can be done in Liberia, as well as making general recommendations for similar situations.

_____. 2001. "The Protection of Children and the Quest for Truth and Justice in Sierra Leone." *Journal of International Affairs* 55(1): 1.

Annotation: After conflict had subsided in Sierra Leone, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created to determine the war's impact on children and the role they played in committing abuses. At the time the article was written, both the TRC and the Special Court for Sierra Leone were in the planning stages. This was the first time that juvenile justice was brought onto the international stage. Many human rights activists, lawyers, and child protection experts disagreed on the best way to protect a child's rights without injustice.

de Berry, Jo. 2001. "Child Soldiers and the Convention on the Rights of the Child." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 575: 92-105.

Annotation: Article 38 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its implementations are the primary focus of this article. The author argues that in order for article 38 to be effectively executed there must be a consideration of the contexts in which child soldiers appear; the two contexts that are identified in the article are state crisis and the local crisis, as each has particular contextual influences children's participation in armed conflict. The author uses child soldiers in the Teso region of Uganda as an example of how these two contexts have an impact upon the phenomenon of child soldiers.

Denov, Myriam, and Richard Maclure. 2007. "Turnings and Epiphanies: Militarization, Life Histories, and the Making and Unmaking of Two Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone." *Journal of Youth Studies* 10(2): 243-261.

Annotation: This article focuses on changing identities and actions of child soldiers during militarization and demilitarization. The story is told through the eyes of two former Sierra Leonean child soldiers, one male and one female, with regards to militarization. The two children detail their lives as combatants in Sierra Leone's civil war, discuss how they took on a militarized identity, and describe their efforts to reintegrate into civilian life during demilitarization. While the experiences of these two former soldiers cannot be completely generalized, they do offer significant insights for societies that have been affected by warfare.

Dickson-Gomez, Julia. 2002. "Growing up in Guerrilla Camp: The Long-Term Impact of Being a Child Soldier in El Salvador's Civil War." *Ethos* 30(4): 327-356.

Annotation: This article examines the long-term impacts of children's active participation in the war in El Salvador. Dickson-Gomez does this by examining four young adults, three males and one female. The four people in these case studies each experienced the brutal assassination of family members, the subsequent fleeing of the rest of their families, and finally their admission into the guerrilla ranks. The combination of such terrible events in their lives made the children unable to trust others and unable to identify themselves outside of the cause for which they were fighting. The psychological trauma suffered as children, along with difficult economic conditions, have made the transition to productive adulthood difficult for these former soldiers.

Druba, Volker. 2002. "The Problem of Child Soldiers." *International Review of Education / Internationale Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft / Revue Internationale de l'Éducation* 48(3/4): 271-277.

Annotation: In this article Volker Druba looks closely at the legal protection that is supposed to be afforded to children everywhere. The author examines positive attributes and downfalls of the Geneva Conventions, the Additional Protocols I and II, and the Convention on the Rights

of a Child, among others. Through the use of a handy chart, it is easy to see to whom each convention refers, whether there are age limitations to recruitment, and whether or not direct or indirect participation in armed conflict is prohibited.

Faulkner, Frank. 2001. "Kindergarten Killers: Morality, Murder and the Child Soldier Problem." *Third World Quarterly* 22 (4): 491-504.

Annotation: Sierra Leone is the case study used in this article to examine the issue of child soldiers. Faulkner examines international law for protocols on ending this problem, while also questioning why the enforcement of current legislation has proven problematic. He also examines the conditions under which children become soldiers, and addresses the long-term effects of combat on children. Faulkner is pessimistic about the ability of current laws to help solve the problem and views the lack of political will to stop the use of child soldiers as the main problem that needs to be overcome.

Fonseka, Bhavani. 2001. "The Protection of Child Soldiers in International Law." *Asia-Pacific Journal on Human Rights & the Law* 2 (2): 69-89.

Annotation: Although the main focus of this article is the protection of child soldiers under international law, it also gives a nice overview of the problem in general. Bhavani Fonseka provides a detailed history of international law, discussing how it is geared towards protecting citizens, and children in particular, in armed conflicts. This article is unique because it includes the problems of boy and girl soldiers, and addresses, at length, the problem of child soldiers in Asian countries. Fonseka believes that in order to reduce the number of child soldiers, it is more important to provide children with alternative options to joining militant groups.

Fox, Mary-Jane. 2004. "Girl Soldiers: Human Security and Gendered Insecurity." *Security Dialogue* 35(4): 465-479.

Annotation: This article explores the link between human security and the insecurity of girl soldiers. During her research, Mary-Jane Fox focuses primarily on girls in non-state militant groups. She does so because these groups have a higher presence of girl soldiers than state militaries, and because these groups also have the most extreme cases of child rights and gender-based abuses. Girls serve not only as combatants but also as porters, cooks, and sex slaves. Girl soldiers pose a double insecurity crisis, in that they highlight the state's inability to protect them from being enlisted into militia groups, and make apparent the failure of the state and the international community in realizing that they too need to be reintegrated into society.

_____. 2005. "Child Soldiers and International Law: Patchwork Gains and Conceptual Debates." *Human Rights Review* 7(1): 27-48.

Annotation: In this article, Mary-Jane Fox reviews the development of international humanitarian law and evaluates how it relates child soldiers. She examines the Geneva Conventions, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. There is a fascinating debate between a universalist approach and a contextualist approach to the problem of child soldiers. Although she describes the laws that have been written to protect children as "patchwork," she is optimistic that the remaining holes in the system will be filled.

Francis, David J. 2007. "Paper Protection' Mechanisms: Child Soldiers and the International Protection of Children in Africa's Conflict Zones." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 45(2): 207-231.

Annotation: The arrests of former Liberian warlord Charles Taylor and Congolese warlord Thomas Lubanga Dyilo have created the expectation that international bodies that protect children in conflict situations will now have more enforcement powers. However, there are still major problems with the implementation and enforcement of the conventions that protect children's rights. One of the major obstacles is the application of a Western-centric view of childhood, and the problems that arise when it is imposed on African societies. Another problem is that war-torn African communities have difficulties incorporating international laws into their domestic laws.

Hart, Jason. 2006. "The Politics of 'Child Soldiers.'" *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 13(1): 217-226.

Annotation: Jason Hart discusses the growing concern with children involved in armed conflicts. Hart asserts that although many papers and reports have detailed the exploitation of children by military groups, there is not much evidence to support it. Hart also examines the debate regarding the definition of a child, and whether or not children can and should be held responsible for their sometimes-brutal behavior. He uses David Rosen's book, Armies of the Young to support his ideas.

Kanagaratnam, Pushpa, Magne Raundalen, and Arve E. Asbjornsen. 2005. "Ideological Commitment and Posttraumatic Stress in Former Tamil Child Soldiers." *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 46(6): 511-520.

Annotation: This is a psychological study of the impact on present ideological commitment on posttraumatic stress syndrome in former Tamil child soldiers who are living in exile. Twenty former soldiers participated in the study, eighteen men and two women, who joined Tamil between the ages of thirteen and seventeen. Knowledge of psychology is helpful when reading this article, as it is heavy in psychological terminology and analysis. Present ideological

commitment seems to predict better mental health when exposure is less intense. The study also found that time has a negative impact on ideological commitment.

Khalil, Doris Deedei. 2006. "Abuses of the Girl Child in Some African Societies: Implications for Nurse Practitioners." *Nursing Forum* 41(1): 13-24.

Annotation: This article focuses on the general plight of girls in Africa. The article identifies and explores the potential areas of abuse of girls, naming specifically: female circumcision, child slavery, rape, child prostitution, child soldiers, teenage pregnancy, and arranged marriages. This article was written primarily for healthcare professionals and provides strategies that could be implemented in situations where girls are abused. While the section discussing girls and their role as soldiers is relatively short, this article does provide a broad picture of the adversities that many girls in Africa face.

Kuper, Jenny. 2005. Military Training and Children in Armed Conflict. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Annotation: This book aims to determine whether there are ways in which military officers can be trained that would improve the protection of children in armed conflict situations. In order to do this, the legal obligations of military personnel with regards to the treatment of children, and especially the obligations of officers of national armed forces, are examined. The author intended for this book to be used primarily by people who are involved in the training of national armed forces, such as officers and members of government. This book contains information about laws and policies pertaining to child rights and how they relate to armed conflict.

Machel, Graca. 1996. "Impact of Armed Conflict on Children." United Nations.
<http://www.un.org/rights/introduc.htm>

Annotation: This report was commissioned by the United Nations in 1993 to evaluate the effects of war and armed conflict on children. This was one of the first comprehensive reports on the status of children in states fraught with armed conflict, and it has served as a resource for many human rights and children's rights activists. In addition to her findings, Machel also includes recommendations for the protection of children during such conflicts.

_____. 2001. The Impact of War on Children. New York: Palgrave.

Annotation: This is a review of progress made since the United Nations Report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children that was published in 1996. This is a very comprehensive review of child soldiers, their exploitation, and the effects that war has on children. Machel also includes chapters on education, communications, and weapons, and discusses how they relate to the problem of child soldiers. She also provides recommendations for raising the standards of child

protection along with a summary of the recommendations she presented to the International Conference on War-Affected Children in 2000.

Mann, Howard. 1987. "International Law and the Child Soldier." *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 36(1): 32-57.

Annotation: This article was written two years before the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was put into effect. Howard Mann examines both state and non-state use of child soldiers and the reaction of the international community about such usage. Furthermore, he provides an overview of international law as it pertained to the protection of children in armed conflict, both as participants and civilians, prior to the CRC. His critique of the CRC, which was in drafting phase at the time this was written, is that it is completely inadequate in addressing the problem of child soldiers.

Maslen, Stuart. 1998. "The Use of Children as Soldiers: The Right to Kill and be Killed?" *International Journal of Children's Rights* 6(4): 445-451.

Annotation: The article analyzes the scope of the problem, detailing the number of children acting as child soldiers, as well as pointing to some of the places in which they are most prevalently used. Malsen also discusses the need to end the use of children as soldiers, and elucidates the efforts that are already being made to do so. He briefly touches on the legal framework that is in place, as well as the work that NGOs are doing to prevent and stop the use of child soldiers. While the article does provide a nice synopsis of the problem of child soldiers, it does not offer any suggestions for possible solutions.

Mazurana, Dyan, and Susan McKay. 2001. "Child Soldiers What about the Girls?" *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 57(5): 30.

Annotation: The largely unknown plight of young girls involved in armed conflict is the subject of this article. While girls have been forced to join the ranks of armed combatants in more than twenty countries, their participation oftentimes goes unnoticed. The authors of this article discuss the roles girls play in armed conflicts as both soldiers and as sexual property. The problems of pregnancy and child-birth are discussed at length. Reintroduction into society is also mentioned; the authors believe that the focus of reintroduction programs is on boy soldiers, while the girls are oftentimes left to fend for themselves. Short anecdotes from girls across the world are employed in order to illustrate the atrocities these girls go through.

Mitchell, James A. 2006. "Soldier Girl?" *Humanist* 66(5): 16-18.

Annotation: In this article, James Mitchell tells the story of a sixteen-year old Sri Lankan girl, Sundari, who was abducted and forced to join a resistance army called the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The article primarily focuses on Sundari's experiences and her hope for the future, but it also provides basic information about the conflict in Sri Lanka and about the

activity of the LTTE, which has been around since 1983 and is considered to be one of the more successful terrorist groups. Although the article is not extremely detailed, it does allow for the story of one of war's often overlooked groups, girl soldiers, to be told.

Peters, Krijn, and Paul Richards. 1998. "Why We Fight': Voices of Youth Combatants in Sierra Leone." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 68(2): 183-210.

Annotation: This very enlightening article contains excerpts from nine interviews by former child soldiers in Sierra Leone, each with a very different background and perspective. At the time of the interview, each former soldier was undergoing reintegration training through one of two programs in Freetown. The interviews support the authors' view that children who participate in armed conflict have a wide variety of reasons for doing so, ranging from revenge, to the desire for food and a warm bath, to the need for some form of education. This article is most valuable because it provides an opportunity to hear details from the perspective of those who participated.

Rosen, David M. 2005. *Armies of the Young: Child Soldiers in War and Terrorism*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Annotation: David M. Rosen challenges the popular notion put forth by human rights activists that children are passive victims of armed conflict. He uses historical examples from Sierra Leone, Palestine, and Eastern Europe to support his argument that the issue of child soldiers is more complicated than just child exploitation. He examines the complex legal question of what constitutes a child soldier, and addresses the problems that arise with these definitions. Furthermore, he argues that children oftentimes make conscious choices to take up arms; in some cases, this may be the necessary course of action.

_____. 2007. "Child Soldiers, International Humanitarian Law, and the Globalization of Childhood." *American Anthropologist* 109 (2): 296-306.

Annotation: Rosen investigates the development of laws and treaties that regulate the use of child soldiers. He further addresses the political, social and cultural contexts in which these developments are rooted. He argues that the problem of child soldiers has developed from use of different age categories by international, regional and local groups to advance certain political and ideological positions, which he calls "politics of age." Furthermore, he believes that the notion of childhood put forth in legal documents is too limiting to be effective in protecting children all over the world.

Shepler, Susan. 2005. "The Rites of the Child: Global Discourses of Youth and Reintegrating Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone." *Journal of Human Rights* 4(2): 197-211.

Annotation: This article is the result of eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in Sierra Leone. The main focus of this article is the implication of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in the process of reintegrating child soldiers after armed conflict. There is a thorough examination of how the different notions of childhood impact reintegration and reconciliation efforts. Finally, Shepler concludes that new meanings of childhood are emerging in Sierra Leone as a result of the involvement of local members in society and of former child soldiers who are participating in the process of national reconstruction.

Singer, P. W. 2003. "Fighting Child Soldiers." *Military Review* 83(3): 26-31.

Annotation: This short article focuses on the use of child soldiers in Iraq's armed forces. At the time the article was written, half of the Iraqi population was under eighteen, so in order to keep control of society, it was militarized. By indoctrinating children into the military, it allowed the regime to tighten its grip on society. Singer even goes so far as to compare the Saddam Lion Cubs to the Hitler Youth group of child soldiers. He also provides policy suggestions on how to deal with child soldiers in war situations. He suggests that children should be subjected to the same inspection scrutiny as adults, and that the United States should consider using non-lethal weapons in situations when children are involved.

_____. 2005. *Children at War*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Annotation: This book breaks the issue of child soldiers into three parts: "Children at War," "The Process and Results of Child Soldiers," and "Responding to the Child Soldier Problem." The first section describes the scope of the child soldier problem. The second part details the causes for using children as soldiers and describes how they become soldiers. The last section discusses prevention, dealing with child soldiers in battle, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Lastly, it addresses potential courses of action for the future. In the appendix, Singer also includes the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

Van Bueren, Geraldine. 1994. "The International Legal Protection of Children in Armed Conflicts." *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 43(4): 809-826.

Annotation: While this article is more than ten years old, it is useful because it discusses the international legal protection of children who are directly involved in armed conflict, as well as civilian children. Van Bueren examines the question of whether the involvement of children in armed conflict is justifiable or not, and whether, in terms of international law, military concerns overshadow the safety of children. The article brings up the issue of children voluntarily enrolling in the military, and questions when they can make that decision for themselves. She

contends that instead of changing treaties, the only effective way of ending the problem of child soldiers is to give children alternatives to military life.

Wessells, Michael. 2000. "How We Can Prevent Child Soldiering." *Peace Review* 12(3): 407-413.

Annotation: Wessells discusses the worldwide proliferation of the use of children in war. He presents four priorities which must be addressed in order to prevent the use of child soldiers. The first prevention priority he discusses is the need to address issues of poverty and wealth distribution. He names the construction of more effective legal and human rights standards, improved care and protection of children who are in immediate danger of becoming soldiers, and the implementation of effective programs to demobilize and reintegrate child soldiers as his three other prevention priorities.

_____. 2005. "Child Soldiers, Peace Education, and Postconflict Reconstruction for Peace." *Theory Into Practice* 44(4): 363-369.

Annotation: Wessells writes this article from the viewpoint that all children become victims when they are coerced into armed conflict. In the first section of this article, Wessells discusses the reasons why children become soldiers. Abduction, revenge, and glamour are all cited as reasons for participation. In the second section, Wessells focuses on reintegration and on the effectiveness of peace education. He outlines three stages used in peace education, and finally he employs the example of Sierra Leone, where peace education was interwoven into the reintegration process, to discuss its effectiveness.

_____. 2006. *Child Soldiers*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Annotation: Michael Wessells writes comprehensively about children involved in armed conflict. He provides general information about the topic before delving into children's lives as they enter and serve in militant groups. Much of his information comes from personal interviews that he conducted with more than 400 former child soldiers from various nations. He also looks at the impact that armed conflict has on such children, as well as addressing their integration back into society, and finally, preventive measures.

West, Harry G. 2000. "Girls with Guns: Narrating the Experience of War of Frelimo's 'Female Detachment'." *Anthropological Quarterly* 73(4): 180-194.

Annotation: West provides an anthropological account of the experiences of girls who fought for the Frelimo de Libertacao de Mocambique (FRELIMO) during the campaign for Mozambican independence. Although the fight took place between 1964 and 1974, this article still provides insight into the lives of female fighters through its narratives from former girl soldiers. FRELIMO believed female emancipation was central to their ideology. They could therefore not afford to allow half the population go unutilized in their fight. These two ideas, taken together,

compelled FRELIMO to recruit girls, who joined the fight out of fear and respect. Although many women have had difficulty reintegrating back into society, they experienced a previously unknown sense of empowerment while they were fighting with FRELIMO.

Zack-Williams, Tunde B. 2006. "Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone and the Problems of Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration into Society: Some Lessons for Social Workers in War-torn Societies." *Social Work Education* 25(2): 119-128.

Annotation: This article is the product of three short fieldwork sessions in Sierra Leone in 2001. Zack-Williams focuses on the social reasons that cause children to join armed social movements. He sees political and economic crises as the causes for the destabilization of the Sierra Leonean family, which ultimately results in children looking for surrogate families, for which they often turn to armed militant groups. He evaluates demobilization and reintegration, utilizing Ferdinand Tonnies' dichotomy: *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. This article views the problem of child soldiers from a social worker's point of view, and is meant to be relevant to social work practice even in the West.

Zia-Zarifi, Saman, Anna Niestat, and Jo Becker. 2007. "Children in the Ranks: The Maoists' use of Child Soldiers in Nepal." *Human Rights Watch*, <http://hrw.org/reports/2007/nepal0207/nepal0207web.pdf>.

Annotation: Although peace talks have been in development in Nepal since November 2006, the Maoists' military group, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), has continued to recruit children. This report provides information on the methods the PLA uses for recruitment, and the impact such recruitment has on Nepali families. This information is based on interviews with twenty-one former child soldiers who were recruited by the Maoists. In addition, Human Rights Watch also provides recommendations for Maoists, the Nepalese Government, the United Nations Security Council working group on children and armed conflict, and others, regarding what they should do to ensure that this problem is eradicated.