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Transforming Children of War into Agents of Change

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Transforming Children of War into Agents of Change

Abstract

Since the turn of the century, Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced the fastest growing rate of child soldiers. Consider the following statistics:

- An estimated 60 percent of child soldiers in Africa are fourteen years old and under (Singer 2006: 29);
- In Uganda the average age of personnel in armed forces is 12.9 (Singer 2006: 29);
- Since 1990, two million children have been killed in armed conflict, the equivalent of five hundred per day for ten years (Singer 2005).

Keywords

Human rights, Sub-Saharan Africa, Children's rights, Child soldiers

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Transforming Children of War into Agents of Change

By Brooke Breazeale

Since the turn of the century, Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced the fastest growing rate of child soldiers. Consider the following statistics:

- An estimated 60 percent of child soldiers in Africa are fourteen years old and under (Singer 2006: 29);
- In Uganda the average age of personnel in armed forces is 12.9 (Singer 2006: 29);
- Since 1990, two million children have been killed in armed conflict, the equivalent of five hundred per day for ten years (Singer 2005).

The international community has responded by signing several treaties and by condemning children's participation in combat, but unfortunately, these conventions have done nothing to reduce the number of children participating in conflicts. In fact, as recently as 2008, for every two children released from captivity in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, five were abducted and forced to be child soldiers (Amnesty International 2008). Several contributing factors have been identified to explain the dramatic increase in child soldiering. Understanding these factors and formulating effective preventative strategies are necessary steps towards reversing this unnecessary evil. Yet, in fact, prevention methods have not proved to be helpful for children and communities dealing with the consequences of war. Former child soldiers who have been acculturated into a world of violence and destruction have been expected to go through peaceful transition back into society without the necessary skills, support systems, and opportunities to do so, leaving them vulnerable to re-recruitment efforts or criminal activity. To break this cycle of violence, local and international rehabilitation and reintegration efforts must channel adequate funding and resources into comprehensive educational programs that transform these children of war into agents of change.

Contributing Factors

The surge in intrastate conflicts after the Cold War surge has brought hundreds of thousands of young children to the front lines in sub-Saharan Africa. Armed struggles over power and resources have caused civil wars between state and non-state actors. Lacking the financial and military capacity to maintain rule of law, weak governments have incited multiple power-hungry political entrepreneurs to take up arms. Despite limited resources and varying degrees of support, these warlords have easily countered governmental forces by tapping into the abundant supply of easily accessible and expendable fighters—child soldiers.

Utilizing extreme indoctrination and fear tactics, warlords have been able to transform impressionable, dependent youth into loyal, ferocious armed forces capable of overtaking comparatively powerful, well-equipped governmental forces. Governmental forces have followed suit, placing young children on the front lines to fight against their peers, as was the case in the Sudanese civil war. In the early stages of the conflict, 36 percent of government forces were consisted of children, compared to the majority 64 percent fighting for the rebel forces. By the end

of the war, the number of children fighting for the Sudanese army had increased to 76 percent (Achvarina and Reich 2006).

The widespread availability of small arms has also contributed to the increase in child soldiering. Hundreds of thousands of weapons that flooded into Africa after the Cold War have proven to be a timely asset for fighting factions. In addition to the surplus of small arms circulating in the global market, excessive manufacturing and technological improvements have yielded accessible, light-weight, inexpensive machines that can be easily mastered by young children. This dangerous trend has allowed even small rebel groups to emerge as powerful forces, capable of terrorizing, displacing and murdering hundreds of thousands of citizens within their own states.

Unprotected displacement camps have also contributed to the increased number of young combatants. The surge in armed conflicts and widespread violence in sub-Saharan Africa have caused an estimated 15.2 million people, with the majority consisting of women and children, to seek refuge in protected camps within or outside their homelands. Although these new settlements have been intended to provide a safe haven for vulnerable populations, the lack of camp protection has inadvertently resulted in ideal training and recruitment camps for armed factions preying on vulnerable young transients. The abduction of 4,700 refugees in Chad during a one-month period has demonstrated the danger facing millions of people already battling the insecurity of displacement, disease, poverty, and increased mortality.

Transforming children into soldiers

“The rebels told me to join them, but I said no. Then they killed my smaller brother. I changed my mind.” - Former child soldier, age 7 (Singer 2006: 3)

Simply categorizing child combatants as either willing volunteers or passive abductees has resulted in a gross oversight of the context and realities of civil war. Although some young adults do volunteer, they have done so more often to escape or alleviate the insecurity, vulnerability, and the lack of food that plagues their communities, rather than to support some ideological movement. For the countless children living in constant fear of attack or abduction, the security and power of an AK-47 has often been their sole means for survival. In many cases, joining armed groups has been the only way for children to avoid persecution or death.

“Now we were in a hideous state—they killed my parents in front of me, my uncles’ hands were cut off and my sister was raped in front of us by their commander...After all this happened, they told us, the younger boys, to join them.” - Former child soldier, age unknown (Singer 2006: 14)

Regardless of how children come to be soldiers, armed forces use the same methods of indoctrination, intense military training, addictive drugs, promised wealth, and increased status to manipulate, terrorize, solidify dependency, and prevent defection among their new recruits. For example, during the conflicts in Sierra Leone, Mozambique and Angola, warlords often forced children to sever all ties with their communities by committing atrocities against their neighbors, including killing their own family members. Alone for the first time, children become dependent on their captors and other comrades for survival. To instill fear and absolute compliance, leaders randomly kill children who display weakness, deviant behavior or remorse for their actions.

“The day of my arrival in the military camp, exhausted as I was, a soldier came for me...I was only eight and I was a virgin, but he didn’t pity me...I still don’t know where I got the energy to cry.” - Girl abducted by rebel forces, age 16 (Honwana 2006: 88)

The experiences of girls and young women during war are particularly devastating, even if they do not participate in direct combat. In most cases, girls are abducted and forced to serve as domestic workers, sex slaves, spies, or looters. Commanders often have numerous wives, and as former boy soldiers report, girls are regularly given as gifts or rewards for exceptional acts of terror. Well before they reach puberty, many girls are claimed as sexual property and are subjected to severe abuse and violence. The social consequences are equally devastating. Many girls return from the bush with multiple children, communicable diseases, and an irreversible stigma that results in rejection from their family and communities. In a society that limits economic opportunities for women, these girls must attempt to rebuild their lives and support their children with little to no education, job skills, or community support.

Creating Agents of Change

“There is no work for me. I have few skills except using a gun and it’s easy money...” - Former child soldier, age 19 (Singer 2006: 115)

Reintegrating former child soldiers back into their communities is arguably the most challenging but essential part of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process. Years of exposure to extreme violence, abuse, disease, and malnourishment during their formative years leaves many former child soldiers with severe psychological and physical scars. In addition to coping with these scars, former child soldiers must convince angry and fearful community members that they are worthy of respect, acceptance and forgiveness. Although reintegration efforts have been implemented in several sub-Saharan African countries, poor funding and short-term commitments have prevented former combatants from obtaining adequate educational and training opportunities. In order to truly generate greater self-sufficiency and social responsibility for former child soldiers and their communities, well-funded and long-term reintegration efforts need to utilize conflict resolution techniques, leadership skills and economic opportunities into existing educational programs.

To break the cycle of violence, former child soldiers need to learn the non-violent, interactive skills necessary to resolve their conflicts and fulfill their needs in a peaceful manner. Forced to fight and kill during their developing years, child soldiers are taught to resolve their problems through violence and intimidation. Classroom activities need to replace these war tactics with lessons in tolerance, active listening, effective communication skills, and mediation techniques. Curriculum including collaborative group work, role-reversal exercises and experiential activities can help children learn peaceful ways to relate to those around them.

In addition to learning conflict resolution skills, former child soldiers need to cultivate skills in leadership and social responsibility. Children who have been stripped of their identity and most basic rights deserve the opportunity to harness their creativity, compassion and talents and to lead their communities towards a more peaceful and prosperous future. Pedagogy needs to encourage children to identify current community issues and formulate concrete ways to tackle those issues. By actively

participating in projects or services that respond to the specific needs of the community, children can develop leadership capabilities while reestablishing trust and respect within their communities.

To build on these valuable skills and solidify self-sufficiency, reintegration strategies must incorporate economic opportunities for returning soldiers and their communities. Supplementing educational approaches with micro-financing projects generates tangible economic prospects for high-risk youth who lack adequate skills, training and financial resources. By including vocational training in school curriculum, children can learn tangible skills that can be directly applied to small business ventures outside the classroom, ensuring financial security for them, while stimulating economic growth in their communities.

Concluding Remarks

Finding ways to eliminate child soldiering in sub-Saharan Africa warrants a dramatic increase in funding and long-term, sustainable interventions from international and domestic actors. It is essential that the primary factors contributing to the increased use of child soldiers be vigorously addressed with effective preventative strategies and aggressive actions. Yet to truly impact the lives of children already exposed to the atrocities of war, comprehensive, well-funded reintegration programs need to become a top priority for all parties advocating for the rights and protection of war-affected children. Children who have learned few skills outside of war and survival tactics deserve educational and vocational opportunities to prepare them for a prosperous and peaceful future. By supporting programs that combine micro-financing opportunities with a curriculum promoting conflict resolution and leadership skills, reintegration efforts can empower young war-affected children to become leaders in their communities.

Annotations

Achvarina, Vera, and Simon Reich. 2005. "Why do Children Fight? Explaining the Phenomenon of Child Soldiers in African Intra-State Conflicts." Pittsburgh: Ford Institute for Human Security.

Annotation: In this extensive report, Achvarina and Reich challenge the widely accepted causes of increased child soldiering, which include poverty, high orphan rates, and small arms proliferation. The authors recognize that these factors do contribute to the prevalence of child soldiers, but these factors do not explain the variance of child participation across different countries, nor do they provide policy makers with short-term strategies for immediate action to reverse the problem. Instead, the authors attribute increased numbers of child soldiers to the lack of protection provided for internally-displaced persons (IDP) and refugee camps. Achvarina and Reich provide an impressive and persuasive quantitative study, as well as a comparative case study of two Liberian conflicts that justifies the need for enhanced protection of IDP and refugee camps. However, the authors' emphasis on disproving the previously accepted contributing factors leaves the reader with an over-simplistic, narrow explanation for the multi-faceted, complicated issue of child soldiers.

_____. 2006. "No Place to Hide: Refugees, Displaced Persons, and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers." *International Security* 31 (1): 127-164.

Annotation: This article restates the previous report, with more focus on the need to provide protection for refugees and IDPs in the way of location selection, border control and adequate security forces. The authors argue that increased camp accessibility gives rise to the increased child soldier rates. A multiple regression analysis measuring child soldier recruitment in relation to poverty, orphan rates, and the extent of refugee/IDP camp protection in nineteen intrastate African conflicts. As with any research project, this study does have its limitations, including lack of concrete data relating to the different variables, which the authors recognize and justify. Regardless, this report offers a good introduction to the issues of security and child soldier recruitment and provides a convincing case for increased awareness and protection in refugee and IDP camps.

Ager, Alastair, Boothby Neil, and Stark Lindsey. 2008. "Children and Fighting Forces: 10 Years on from Cape Town." *Disaster* 10 (3): 361-369.

Annotation: In 1997, child protection experts came together in Cape Town, South Africa, to develop international standards, guidelines and best practices on the recruitment, prevention, and social reintegration of children associated with armed forces. Ten years later, organizations revisited the guidelines established in Cape Town and developed the Paris Principles to address lessons learned and take action for further child protection in conflict areas. This paper examines the impact of principles over the past decade, as well as remaining gaps in five intervention strategies: psychosocial support; community acceptance; education; training and livelihoods; inclusive programming for all war-affected children; and follow-up and monitoring. The authors carefully explain the rationale, effects, and remaining gaps for each area and call for more systematic studies to validate and support these five intervention strategies. This is an informative resource for those interested in current strategies, their impact, and ways in which they might be improved.

Amnesty International. 2008. "No End to War on Women and Children: North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo." Available online: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AFR62/005/2008/en/bbe6934a-9f60-11dd-9e51-afa0a8282a50/afr620052008en.pdf>.

Annotation: This report explains the continued gross human rights violations inflicted on women and children in the DRC, despite the supposed peace agreement in January 2008. After providing a brief background of the events leading up to the peace agreement, the report outlines the atrocities experienced by women and children in the area of North Kivu, specifically sexual violence against women and the forced recruitment of children. Amnesty International provides an intimate look into the daily horrors experienced by women and children, incorporating interviews with numerous victims, as well as an in-depth look at the legal provisions crafted to address these crimes against humanity. The report ends with pertinent,

albeit highly idealistic, recommendations directed specifically at each actor involved in the conflict.

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 provides quantitative data to assess the psychological consequences of war on the potential for peace building. The authors acknowledge their limitations of a restricted sample group and potential Western influence, but their results do reveal a significant correlation between post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms in former child soldiers and their willingness to forgive. This article gives little background information about PTSD, the conflicts or recommendations for fostering forgiveness, but it does offer practitioners empirical evidence to utilize for future psychosocial interventions.

Betancourt, Theresa, Shawna Pochan, and Maria de la Soudiere. 2005. "Psychosocial Adjustment and Social Reintegration of Child Ex-Soldiers in Sierra Leone: Wave II Follow-Up Analysis." New York, NY: International Rescue Committee.

Annotation: This report presents the initial data from a follow-up study of ex-combatants of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) youth who participated in the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) community reintegration program. These children's experiences were compared to children who self-reintegrated without the benefit of psychological assistance, family tracing and community follow-up. The authors provide a clear, organized outline of their objectives, methods, measures, and outcomes. There is valuable information regarding factors that positively influence psychological adjustment and community acceptance for former child soldiers. However, the reader should be cognizant of the bias inherent in this long-term study conducted and written by the authors.

Betancourt, Theresa. 2008. "High Hopes, Grim Reality: Reintegration and the Education of Former Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone." *Comparative Education Review* 52 (2):565-587.

Annotation: In this article, Betancourt looks at the challenges of providing education for former child soldiers and the specific obstacles these children face when trying to return to the classroom. The author gives a brief introduction to what children go through while fighting, and identifies some of their resulting challenges including psychological trauma, debilitating stigmas and embarrassment of being surrounded by younger classmates. Betancourt includes interviews from the children themselves, as well as their teachers and caretakers to provide an inclusive study of the former fighters' experiences. The majority of participants conclude that psychological trauma was a main obstacle to the children's successful reintegration. The author does a thorough job of outlining various ways in which psychological support and training could be incorporated into programs, as well as specific examples of projects implementing such

strategies.

Blattman, Christopher. 2007. "The Causes of Child Soldiering: Evidence from Northern Uganda." Paper Presented at the International Studies Association 48th Annual Convention. February 28. http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p179774_index.html.

Annotation: This paper documents a study carried out in Uganda, surveying why certain children were forcibly recruited into the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The author hypothesizes that young adolescents were more appealing targets than adults because they were more pliable, loyal, effective and reliable. The author and his team conducted surveys in 1016 houses, including 462 former abductees who had escaped or been released from captivity. To assess the value, cost, and retention of forced recruits, the research team used surveys to record attitudes and actions of former abductees. The results revealed that in the sample population, three times as many boys of the age fourteen were abducted than boys of the age nine or twenty-three. Blattman concludes that improved outside incentives, such as education, would encourage more children to defect. However, this conclusion naively assumes that defection is a viable, safe option for children, which is most often not the case.

Boothby, Neil. 2006. "When Former Child Soldiers Grow Up: The Keys to Reintegration and Reconciliation." In A World Turned Upside Down: Social Ecological Approaches to Children in War Zones. Edited by N. Boothby, Alison Strang, and Michael Wessells. Broomfield: Kumarian Press, Inc.

Annotation: This chapter is a useful addition to the theme of the book, which addresses social and ecological approaches for children in war zones. Boothby offers the initial findings of a longitudinal study of thirty-nine former child soldiers who stayed at the Languene Center in Mozambique. The Mozambican government asked Save the Children to provide psychological and social assistance at the center. Boothby clearly outlines the approach, rationale and specific interventions utilized by Save the Children. The article gives a brief but poignant description of the conflict and the war-related experiences of 252 boys and 252 girls between the ages of six and fifteen. Boothby briefly explains his method and provides great detail about the various behaviors and symptoms experienced by each of the thirty-nine boys selected for the study. This is an exceptional study that provides a rare opportunity to observe the long-term effects of reintegration programs and offers valuable key findings for future interventions.

Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. 2008. "Child Soldiers: Global Report 2008." London: Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers.

Annotation: This is a rich report elaborating on the progress made with prevention and demobilization of child soldiers over the past four years. This document meticulously outlines the successes, shortcomings and remaining challenges regarding states' compliance with international treaties, children's participation in DDR programs, and the effectiveness of current DDR programs. This report is an impressive compilation of all pertinent information regarding

the issues of child soldiers, as well as a comprehensive list of each country's background, policies regarding child soldiers, child soldier usage, and preventative steps against child recruitment.

De Boeck, F. and Alcinda Honwana. 2005. "Children and Youth in Africa: Agency, Identity, and Place." In Makers and Breakers. Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa. Edited by F. De Boeck, & Honwana A. Oxford: James Currey.

Annotation: This chapter serves as the introduction to a book that analyzes African youth through a unique lens. Whereas most authors approaching youth issues examine how socio-economic, cultural, and political factors impact children, De Boeck and Honwana broaden their research to include the impact youth in Africa have on their multi-faceted environments. This chapter eloquently entices the reader to explore the remaining chapters for a new perspective and approach to understanding youth agency and empowerment.

Denov, Myriam , and Richard Maclure. 2006. "I Didn't Want to Die So I Joined Them': Structuration and the Process of Becoming Boy Soldiers in Sierra Leone." *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 18 (1): 119-135.

Annotation: This article offers a unique view of how child soldiers interpret their experiences in armed conflict. The authors argue that children cannot be categorized as simply victims of their circumstances, nor senseless murderers detached from environmental influences. Instead, the authors propose that the experience of child soldiers is a "mutually reinforcing duality of structure and agency." This article effortlessly guides the reader through the political and socio-economic environment that paved the way the brutal civil war. Drawing from the experiences of thirty-six former young combatants, the authors offer a telling outline of how the children were coerced, desensitized and then empowered by their ability to excel in their new militant roles. The article demonstrates the various ways in which children exhibited agency and adopted the predatory ways of their commanders. This article offers a compelling argument for directly engaging children in post-conflict decisions that impact their social development and sense of agency.

Honwana, Alcinda. 2006. Child Soldiers in Africa. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Annotation: This book focuses on the involvement of children in the wars of Angola and Mozambique. Honwana has four main arguments that she examines in detail throughout the book. She argues that children's involvement in war is an ancient phenomenon fueled by new warfare tactics and altered concepts of childhood; children are not helpless victims, but have agency that is shaped by their individual experiences and circumstances; healing and reintegration efforts need to be drawn from local views and systems; and social development and poverty reduction must accompany reintegration efforts. Born in Mozambique, Honwana offers a unique, intimate perspective of the issues of child soldiers and offers valuable insight for program and policy improvements. This book is an invaluable resource for anyone working with

child soldier issues.

Husby, Gorill, and Ellen Stensrud. 2005. "Resolution 1325: From Rhetoric to Resolution: A Report on Women's Role in Reconciliation Processes in the Great Lakes in Africa." Oslo: Care Norway and the International Peace Research Institute. Available online: <http://www.careinternational.org.uk/4965/conflict-and-peace/resolution-1325-from-rhetoric-to-practice-a-report-on-womens-role-in-reconciliation-processes-in-the-great-lakes-in-africa.html>.

Annotation: This report looks at the implementation of Resolution 1325 in Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000 and addresses the need to increase women's representation in peace processes and to support women's peace initiatives. It also addresses women's vulnerability in armed conflict, particularly through gender based violence, and the need to prosecute such crimes. This study recognizes the gap between theory and practice in transforming peace initiatives into on-the-ground advances in women's political participation. The document makes useful suggestions for how to bridge this gap and provides an in-depth look at the background, political climate, women's peace initiatives, and the government's adherence, or lack thereof, to the resolution in each country.

MacMillan, Lorraine. 2008. "Ideologies of the Private Realm and North-South Relations: The case of the Child Soldier." Inaugural World Conference: Ideology and Discourse Analysis (IDA) Rethinking Political Frontiers and Democracy in a New World Order. Denmark.

Annotation: This paper examines how child soldiers are perceived based on Western notions of childhood, which the author argues is founded on victimhood, deviance and subordination. MacMillan gives a fascinating and highly controversial perspective on the way in which Western thinking has affected and possibly shaped the current perceptions, attitudes and interventions applied to the issue of child soldiers. The author argues that this is a result and perpetuation of Western dominance in the South. In her conclusion, she reduces the Westerner's attempt to "educate" parents, teachers, and communities as an attempt to control the way in which these children are socialized according to Western standards.

MacVeigh, Johanna, Sarah Maguire, and Joanna Wedge. 2007. "Stolen Futures: The Reintegration of Children Affected by Armed Conflict." London: Save The Children.

Annotation: This report offers a broad assessment of various programs that have dealt with the reintegration of children previously involved with armed forces. Save the Children and its partners conduct a comprehensive evaluation concerning the effectiveness of their various programs. The document first lays out what defines a successful reintegration and then describes the main issues and shortcomings of reintegration efforts, which include poor co-ordination of services, the inability to fulfill objectives due to continued instability, and the lack of adequate funding. This report offers the reader a concise but thorough overview of programming issues from the perspective of international actors, as well as personal reactions of the children affected

by the programs.

Medeiros, Emilie. 2007. "Integrating Mental Health into Post-conflict Rehabilitation: The Case of Sierra Leonean and Liberian 'Child Soldiers.'" *Journal of Health Psychology* 12 (3): 498-504.

Annotation: This report addresses the importance of mental health care in rehabilitation programs for former child soldiers, using data from Sierra Leone and Liberia. This is a brief look at an in-depth, two-and-a-half year study. However, the authors give a compelling and haunting depiction of the experiences and impact that the war had on these children. Their recommendations are detailed and practical for those working with former child soldiers in any aspect, but especially in the area of mental health.

Nutt, Samantha, and Eric Hoskins. 2004. "The Unknown War." *Maclean's* 117 (2): 16-18.

Annotation: Samantha Nutt and Eric Hoskins, both doctors who have worked extensively in war zones, provide a brief but compelling perspective concerning the unthinkable conundrum for Uganda youth. The threat of abduction by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) forces an estimated forty thousand children to make a nightly dangerous trek from their rural villages to larger cities in search of a safe place to sleep. The authors give candid accounts from children who managed to escape the LRA, along with examples of the dangers that aid and relief organizations face. Despite its brevity, this article poignantly demonstrates the plight of Ugandan children.

Pederson, J. and T. Sommerfelt. 2007. "Studying Children in Armed Conflict: Data Production, Social Indicators and Analysis." *Social Indicators Research* 84: 251-269.

Annotation: In this report, the authors aim to demonstrate what specific social indicators are relevant to research on war-affected children. Pederson and Sommerfelt attempt to answer the central policy question of how to decrease children's detrimental transition into war and increase their desirable transitions back into society. The authors go to great lengths to distinguish between the different stages, characteristics, experiences and exposure of children in relation to conflict. It should be noted that this is not a study on child soldiers, but an essential, comprehensive guide to assist researchers with what data and indicators are most relevant to assessing the challenges that former child soldiers face.

Schmidt, A. 2007. "Volunteer Child Soldiers as Reality: A Development Issue for Africa." *New School Economic Review* 2 (1):49-76.

Annotation: Schmidt offers a unique examination of child soldiering by analyzing the motivations of the numerous children who voluntarily enlist with armed forces. This presents an interesting perspective for policy makers when considering prevention strategies. This paper utilizes several studies carried out on modes of recruitment in various countries, mainly Sub-

Saharan Africa. The author examines several factors that frequently motivate children to volunteer and offers a controversial rationale for those motivations. This article turns the notion of child soldiers as “victims” on its head and forces the reader to consider the uncomfortable possibility that these children were willing participants in the gross human right violations against their family and community members.

Singer, Peter W. 2005. “Child Soldiers: The New Faces of War.” Washington DC: Brookings Institution.

Annotation: In this article, Singer offers an abbreviated summary of his book, “Children of War” (see next entry). Singer condenses the main points and arguments presented in his book to offer a concise description of the issue of child soldiering in each affected continent, the experiences of child soldiers, how and why they are recruited and why child soldiering has come to be the norm in modern warfare. Singer concludes by recommending steps for reversing this norm before, during and after child recruitment. Although Singer’s book merits a thorough examination, this brief article is an informative introduction to the complex issue of child soldiering.

_____. 2006. *Children at War*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Annotation: Singer is Senior Fellow and Director at the Brookings Institution. He served as an advisor on the issue of child soldiers for the US Marine Corps and the CIA. This book is an essential resource for anyone working on child soldier issues. Singer provides an in-depth, extensive outline of the causes, experiences, implications, reintegration, and even prevention of child soldiers.

Sommers, Marc. 2006. “Youth and Conflict: A Brief Review of Available Literature.” Washington DC: United States Agency of International Development.

Annotation: Sommers draws from a broad compilation of articles and internet research to analyze the reporting of prominent ideas, trends, and promising practices for war-affected youth and the interventions implemented to assist them. The six main program areas dominating the literature are vocational training, reproductive health, basic skills, peace education, empowerment, and psycho-social programming. The article offers a clear, succinct collection of the various approaches implemented in war-torn areas, as well as an objective analysis of each program’s strengths and shortcomings. Sommers extracts some important findings from his review and provides recommendations for improved approaches. However, Sommers seems to perpetuate one of his main criticisms; he leaves the reader with more information about what needs to be done, versus how to do it.

Stohl, Rachel. 2002. “Targeting Children: Small Arms and Children in Conflict.” *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* IX (1):282-292.

Annotation: This article was produced by the Senior Analyst for the Center for Defense Information. Stohl offers an extensive examination of the intimate linkage between small arms proliferation, children and terrorism. The first section outlines how small arms impact children, physically and psychologically. The second section emphasizes how small arms proliferation undermines children's basic needs, as well as future socio-economic opportunities. The third section examines the culture of violence that has resulted, and the fourth section explains how small arms have fueled terrorist groups. Stohl provides a compelling argument for the positive correlation between small arms proliferation and the deteriorating safety, health and protection of children throughout the world. However, the author's concluding remarks offer only broad, intangible recommendations, such as insisting that all armed forces prohibit the use of children under the age of eighteen. Such advice does little to bridge the gap between effective interventions and institutional rhetoric.

US Agency for International Development. 2007. "Issue Paper #1: Role of Education and the Demobilization of Child Soldiers." Washington DC: US Agency for International Development.

Annotation: This is an issue paper produced in conjunction with CARE USA and EQUIP1. It serves as a review of up-to-date information on the current conditions of child soldiers. USAID recognizes that there is limited information on the education strategies and aims to provide successful examples of educational practices in conflict situations. The report briefly outlines the issue of child soldiers, how they are recruited, and the residual harmful effects they experience post-conflict. USAID views education as imperative for the children's rehabilitation. The article clearly demonstrates the numerous ways in which education can benefit these children, as well as the challenges that are inherent in the delivery of that education. The conclusions and recommendations consist of only one brief paragraph with little detail or concrete examples of successful strategies. However, these strategies are outlined in more detail in the second issue paper released on the same subject.

_____. 2007. "Issue Paper #2: Role of Education and the Demobilization of Child Soldiers-Aspects of an Appropriate Education Program for Child Soldiers." Washington, DC: US Agency for International Development.

Annotation: The second part of the USAID report on child soldiers provides examples of successful education programs, including efforts towards integrating conflict resolution, reconstruction, health, shelter, and livelihood training into education efforts. USAID introduces the reader to various approaches, such as peace education, and cites specific international organizations that are implementing such programs. The report concludes with what would be necessary to successfully execute these various demobilization efforts. USAID calls for more literature on how to design the pedagogy and content for these approaches, as well as ways to more effectively measure the impacts of these programs. As in the first issue paper, the information is brief, but the report offers a concise compilation of the most pressing obstacles concerning the access and quality of education in reintegration programs, as well as the latest

strategies that have proved to be most successful.

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

Annotation: Wessells illustrates the positive effects that peace education had for a reintegration program sponsored by the Christian Children's Fund (CCF) in Sierra Leone. CCF used a community empowerment approach that interwove peace education into its approach, utilizing projects that fostered cooperation through shared goals. CCF met with village members to establish what projects would best aid the community in reconstructing their villages, while fostering the peaceful reintegration of former child soldiers. Returning soldiers began working with village children on the proposed projects, thus simultaneously building interpersonal relationships, re-establishing trust with their communities and providing tangible contributions to their communities. This article demonstrates how peace education can be effectively woven into reintegration programs to assist former child soldiers to re-build their lives, while making positive contributions to their communities.

_____. 2006. "A Living Wage: The Importance of Livelihood in Reintegrating Former Child Soldiers." In *A World Turned Upside Down*. Edited by Neil Boothby, Alison Strang, and Michael Wessells. Broomfield: Kumarian Press, Inc.

Annotation: In this chapter, Wessells examines the link between poverty, conflict, and child-soldiering. He points out that, while poverty is not the sole cause of armed conflict, it can often motivate many children to join armed factions. Wessells argues that access to jobs, life skills and participation in income-generating activities are essential to prevent initial recruitment of child soldiers and ensure their successful reintegration. Wessells reviews the work of the Christian Children's Fund in Sierra Leone, which focused on sensitization campaigns, community participation, community improvement projects, skill training, and microfinance activities. The author provides an informative and inspiring confirmation of the importance of livelihood activities and psychological support for former child soldiers and their communities.

_____. 2007. "The Recruitment and Use of Girls in Armed Forces and Groups in Angola: Implications for Ethical Research and Reintegration." In Pittsburgh: The Ford Institute for Human Security. Available online: <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0C54E3B3-1E9C-BE1E-2C24-A6A8C7060233&lng=en&id=45789>.

Annotation: This paper is a product of the "Child Soldiers Initiative: Building Knowledge about Children and Armed Conflict," which is an ongoing network of scholars, policymakers and civil society representatives who promote and develop policy proposals for recruitment and reintegration issues of child soldiers. This unique paper focuses solely on the issues of reintegrating young women formally associated with armed forces in Angola. Most DDR efforts have excluded girls from services and benefits. Yet, any efforts to include young women into

reintegration programs could risk increasing girls' stigmatization, which would lessen their chances for successful reintegration. To promote reintegration efforts, Wessells recommends accounting for the specific gendered needs of girls in DDR programming; recognizing the variance in age, experiences and current circumstances among girl participants; organizing alternative reintegration supports for girls outside the formal DDR process; utilizing media sources to reduce stigmatization and providing long-term funding specifically for girls' reintegration efforts.

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

Annotation: In this study, the author takes an anthropological approach to examine the experiences of Mozambican women who fought for the guerilla army, FRELIMO, from 1964 to 1974. West focuses on female combatants who willingly fought as girls and analyzes their experiences twenty years later. The author emphasizes the tendency of Westerners to treat girl soldiers as victims instead of recognizing their experience as empowering. The study is limited in its sample, but it does provide a perspective that is rarely examined; the women interviewed were mostly nostalgic about their experiences and only regretted that their war efforts did not yield the government changes they were promised. This study reminds the reader that DDR programs must take into account the individual experiences of former girl soldiers. However, it should be noted that the treatment and roles of young women in combat have changed dramatically in the past few decades and may not be comparable to the context of this study.

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 examines the factors contributing to the recruitment and participation of child soldiers in Sierra Leone. The author argues that the demise of family and kinship structures and the continued economic and political crisis has led children to look for opportunity and protections from street gangs or organized factions. Zack-Williams gives a thoughtful analysis as to why the rebel movement, the RUF, initially appealed to children, what factors contributed to their disenfranchisement, and why some adolescents eventually volunteered to fight against the RUF. However, his examination of the essential components for demobilization and reintegration policies is briefly summed up in one paragraph. His conclusions are sound, but they are broad, well-established recommendations that do not offer new insight for innovative interventions.