

PART III: PRESENTATION ON CHILD SOLDIERS

INTRODUCTION

- The use of children as soldiers is an abusive practice that is an extremely hazardous form of work.
- More than half a million children under the age of 18 are recruited into military service by governments and armed groups in 180 countries worldwide (UN,2001)

Introduction cont.....

- The UN estimates that, in 2006, more than 250,000 children were actively involved in armed conflict in government armed forces, government militias and in a range of armed opposition groups.
- The problem is worst in Africa, where there were estimated 100,000 children soldiers in 2004

Introduction cont...

- Therefore the problem of child soldiers is not confined to developing countries in conflict situation.
- Industrialized like the United States and United Kingdom also recruit children under 18 into their armed forces and deploy them to conflict zone, but with a parent's permission. Recruits or older do not need parental permission.

WHY CHILD SOLDIERS

- The use of child soldiers in armed conflict, is the worst forms of child labour, such abuses are documented in Angola, Burma, Colombia, the Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sudan, Uganda, Chad, Nepal, SriLanka, Burundi, West Africa, Liberia, Angola, Lebanon and Sierra leone.

Why child soldiers cont....

- Child soldiers are mainly used by opposition forces and rebel groups and in conflict by government forces as well.
- They perform a variety of roles, from combat positions to serving as clearers of landmines, spies, messengers, porters, servants, or for sexual purposes

Why child soldiers cont....

- According to a deserter of the Mozambique resistance group RENAMO; RENAMO does not use many adults to fight because they are not good fighters; kids have more stamina, are better at surviving in the bush, do not complain and follow directions.
- Widely perceived as cheap and expendable, child soldiers tend to receive little or no training before being thrust into the front line.

Why child soldiers cont

- Technological advances have made child soldiers more commonly used. Light weight automatic weapons are easy to operate and so little training is required before children can start fighting.
- In many conflicts, such as in Sierra Leone, drugs have also been used to dull the children's fear, and do sensitize them to the brutality of their tasks.
- Child soldiers are, in many ways, treated the same as adults.

How Children Become Soldiers

- There are many ways that children in war-torn countries can become child soldiers. Some are forcibly abducted. In many areas, children - some as young as nine years old are taken from their homes and forced to fight. There have also been cases of mass abductions, where many children at one time are taken to serve in the conflict.

How Children cont....

- In other situations, the children are recruited or volunteer to join out of necessity. In many of the countries where child soldiers exist, war has deteriorated already-poor economic conditions. Serving in the military may be an economic necessity for some children, whose families struggle to get by. Many children believe that becoming a soldier will give them a better chance at survival

How Children cont....

- Another factor that motivates children to join is the idea of revenge. These children living in war-torn regions may have witnessed incredible violence and brutality against their families or communities, and join the military for revenge against the perpetrators of these acts.

Consequences

- The physical and psychological consequences for child soldiers are manifold, and all incredibly dire.

❖ *Psychological Consequences*

All children in conflict areas suffer psychological consequences, but none more than child soldiers. Forced to leave their homes and families, witness and perform brutal and violent acts, and denied a childhood, these children suffer lasting consequences from their time at war.

Consequences cont...

- Another large problem is their later moral development, which is greatly affected by what they are forced to endure.
- Many child soldiers have trouble adapting to a more sedate civilian life, and spend their entire lives in fear of violence from their superiors. Others have been “hardened” by their experiences, making them more likely to commit violent acts during and after the conflict. This is another factor that makes the reintegration of child soldiers into society incredibly difficult.

Physical Consequences

- Child soldiers are forced to endure brutal conditions, hard work, poor medical care and inadequate nutrition at a crucial time in their development.
- They can be forced to endure harsh beatings and carry incredibly heavy loads

Physical Consequences cont...

- The fact that they are young, and less able to care for themselves than their adult counterparts, makes children more prone to die from starvation, or preventable diseases caused by the unhygienic conditions in which they are forced to live.

Physical Consequences cont...

- The chance of sustaining serious injury in the course of carrying out their duties is also high, and many child soldiers have emerged from war with missing limbs or other serious wounds, such as bullets and shrapnel that remain embedded in their bodies. The long-term treatment of these injuries can be costly, and nearly impossible for people with very limited economic means.

Physical Consequences cont...

- Rape and Sexual Violence
 - ❖ There is growing recognition of the role of girls as child soldiers, but rampant sexual abuse is a problem faced by boys and girls alike.
 - ❖ Girls in particular are often forced to provide sexual favours, as well as fight, and can face incredible stigma upon returning to their home communities

Physical Consequences cont...

- ❖ They are also at high risk for unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Because female child soldiers have not yet received much recognition, there are fewer rehabilitation programs in place to help them

Question

- **Q. What is your opinion about child soldiers?**
- **What should be done.**

Thank you for listening