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Forum: SF1: Social and Human Sciences

Issue: The issue of child soldiers in war, with a special focus on the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria

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Introduction

War is a catastrophic situation that can happen between communities because of political, economic and industry related disputes. When children are involved they get separated from their families and are left vulnerable. They may also experience physical harm, violence and sexual exploitation. Even just seeing a war can cause severe physical and psychological damage to children that can last a lifetime. In some war zones, children are used as soldiers. Hence, a child's state after serving as a soldier in war is unimaginable. Even if the child can survive the war without any physical harm, it will not be possible for them to recover from the psychological damage.

First of all, this situation is a significant children's rights violation and completely unethical in many ways. In a press release by Child Soldiers International: the number of child soldiers has been increased 159 per cent within 5 years and approximately 30,000 recruitment cases were verified. Ongoing conflicts in DR Congo, Central African Republic, Nigeria ,and many other states ,boys and girls are being used as fighters, informants, domestic,and sexual slaves.

In the United Nations' annual reports between 2013 and 2018 in 17 countries 29,128 verified child recruitment cases were recorded. Most of these cases were from the continent of Africa. Child recruitment is one of the most desperate issues that the world is facing. Usually, families are forced to hand their children over, but some of them are given voluntarily. Organizations are explaining this paradox by ignorance, lack of education, economic situation, personal or community injustice and ethnic or religious issues.

Throughout the years, even the war techniques have been developed but especially in less developed countries child soldiers are being used in conflict zones. There is also a disadvantage for children that developed technology brought, which is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). Those weapons are easy to use even for a child, so this makes the situation easier for the manipulators.

Children are used for a variety of different reasons in the war zone: cooking, carrying loads, and spying. They use the advantage of children's innocence to manipulate them into spying and carrying messages. This technique benefits them since no one suspects this from children.. In conclusion, ignorant people are taking advantage of the vulnerable even though there are many organizations, resolutions or campaigns about the issue these are still not enough to prevent child recruitment. So, necessary actions must be taken, and laws should be implemented in order to prevent children from being sent to the war zones, protect them in a possible war. Also, providing the necessary healthcare services to recover the ones that harmed while being used as soldiers or in other war-related assignments.

Definition of Key Terms

Recruitment: the process of finding people to work in a workplace or become a new member of an organization

Military Recruitment: recruitment for military positions, which is, the act of asking people, to join a military voluntarily. Conscription is the involuntary version of it. Even before the era of all-volunteer



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militaries, recruitment of volunteers was an important complementary of filling military positions, and in countries that have extinguished conscription, it is the sole means. To facilitate this process, armed forces have established recruiting commands.

Exploitation: Exploitation is defined as the act of using resources or the act of treating people in an unfair way in order to benefit from labour or their efforts. The overuse of natural resources to build a city is an example of the exploitation of those resources.

Sexual Exploitation: Sexual exploitation is an act or acts committed through non-consensual violation, abuse or exploitation of another person's sexuality for the purpose of sexual gratification, financial gain, personal advantage or benefit, or any other non-legitimate purpose.

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW): Small arms and light weapons range from clubs, knives and machetes to, for example, mortars below the calibre of 100 mm. They are manufactured to military specifications for use as lethal materials of war. Broadly speaking, small arms are those weapons designed for personal use, and light weapons are those designed for use by several persons serving as a crew. The most important issue that these weapons cause is, they are easy to use so, makes it easier to involve armed children in war zones.

Sex Slave: a person who is enforced to perform sexual acts, and who isn't free to leave the place where they are being kept as a slave or to quit the work that they are being forced to do. (dictionary.cambridge.org)

Reintegration: Including an isolated person back to society when they have been away or banned for a long time because of a specific reason such as: prison, slavery, war etc.

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV): Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) refers to any act that is perpetrated against a person's will and is based on gender norms and unequal power relationships. It encompasses threats of violence and coercion. (www.unhrc.org)

Background Information

Children that are under the age of 18 are some of them even around 8 years old are being forced to work as soldiers. Since 2001 child soldiers are being used in all countries that have an ongoing civil war or any armed conflict. So almost all the regions in the world there were forced and voluntarily child soldiers.

The children that were poor, living in a combat zone, separated from their families, or have limited access to education are usually the victims of this violent crime. In 2000 the United Nations had adopted Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child involvement of children in armed conflict. This protocol mainly focuses on prohibiting the forced recruitment (conscription) of children under the age of 18.

The International Labour Organization (ILO), Convention of the Worst Forms of Child Labour has been prohibited conscription or compulsory recruitment of underage children for use in an armed conflict.



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Throughout history and in many regions and cultures, children have been involved in military expeditions. For example, thousands of children participated on all sides of World War I and World War II. Children have been used and trained for combat, assigned to carry out the roles such as porters, messengers or spies, or used for cruel tactical advantage as human shields or for political advantage in propaganda. Children are an easier choice compared to adults in military recruitment because of their better susceptibility to influence. While some children are voluntarily recruited because of financial disadvantages or by the idea others are being forced to be a part of the army.

Historical Background of the issue:

The first activity of children involved in war zones can be traced back to ancient ages. Near the Mediterranean young people helping adults in conflicts by providing them with the necessary war equipment was common for that time. Examples of those practices are also found in the Bible, such as David and King Saul, in ancient Egyptian art, Hittite, ancient Greek mythology, philosophy and literature. In antiquity usually while taking children to the war the family of the child were also taken with them. The first community that realized using children in armed conflicts is a cruel and unwise situation was the Roman Empire. So, the king Plutarch implemented regulations that stated a certain age for military recruitment, which was 16. In medieval Europe, young children around 12 years old were being used in wars and it explained as the actual combats were limited. The Children's Crusade in 1212 was an attempt to regain Holy Land from the Muslims done by the European Christians. Children were used in battlefields and many things that were against humanity were done. Children's Crusade has totally deviated from its purpose and turned into a great manipulation and loss of life. Many children were manipulated and tricked to be sold by the merchants as slaves which they thought were the Holy Lands but indeed, it was a slave market.

Young children also took part in the battles in the process of modern warfare. In 1814 Napoleon faced a huge enemy army so to solve the issue, even though it was an unethical way, he chose to use children in their army. The Emperor's army's orphans had fought with Mac Donald and they were just between the age of 14 and 17. In 1814 most of the soldiers were named as Marie Louise's after the French Empress Marie Louise they also known as 'the infants of the Emperor. Their most commonly known role was being the "drummer boy". During the American civil war, a child, a boy that was 15 years old Bugler John Cook was a soldier in the US army. He achieved a medal of honour in the battle of Antietam which is the bloodiest day in American history. These kinds of events may seem heroic but in another point of view, it gives people an excuse to use children in armed conflicts or encourages vulnerable children to be a part of this violent situation.

Causes and Effects:

Some children are voluntarily joining the armed forces despite the vulnerability and age. But some of them, which are the crucial part of the issue, are forced to be recruited. There are some external effects that encourage military executives to use children in the armed forces. These are usually the large enemy military forces, not enough military forces, technological, geographical, financial, political disadvantages. Throughout history, children are usually being used in such events because of the insufficient amount of people in the military but by the time passed the effects and reasons developed with the developing societies. When the education systems were developed, and children rights are understood by the executives and families, child soldiers were alleviated but still in some underdeveloped regions it is still an issue. When governments cannot solve the issues diplomatically war occurs, and one side will always have a disadvantage about the technology and the number of military forces. So especially if that region's education system is not developed and poverty is extensive, recruitment of children happens and sometimes families are voluntarily handing their children over. That is because of the economic disadvantages which people are facing because of the wrong policies of states, job opportunities etc. Another reason for child soldiers is benefiting from ignorant families' religious beliefs.

Last but not least, the ethnicity of people was determinative while conscripting children. Racism has been an issue for many years, and it affected and still affecting people's decisions. The



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effects of child recruitment have a global influence because it is against many protocols and also a human right violation. Taking advantage of the vulnerable and manipulating them for doing heavy work is against every belief that the human race has. From the individual perspective, the effects are even more desperate. Conscripted children may be murdered during the war or returning with severe injuries and disabilities. The life of that child and his or her family will be essentially reversed. Even if the child will not suffer from any physical damage the psychological damage is inevitable so necessary mental care services should be provided to the victims.

Girls as soldiers:

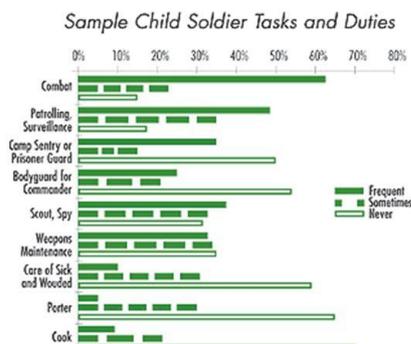
Approximately 30 percent of the children that are conscripted consists of girls. These soldiers are obliged to fight but on the other hand, they face many other issues. They are often subjected to sexual abuse and there are even some cases that were taken as mistresses by the leaders of the army. In the reports of Human Rights Watch which are the interviews from victims. They were impregnated by their commanders and forced to fight while carrying their babies strapped to their backs. The estimated number of girl child soldiers around the world is 250,000 in at least 20 countries. So, this means about 30-40 per cent of the child soldiers are girls. They are more vulnerable than boys because of biological disadvantage and being used as sex slaves, facing violence and rape.

Places That Child soldiers have been Recruited:

According to the Coalition to Stop the use of Child Soldiers which is a Global Report in 2004, between 2001 and 2004 child soldiers were widespread by that time these acts were common in: Burundi, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Myanmar, Uganda. After 2004 at the moment, and between 2004 and 2020 the child soldier problem has occurred in many more regions. Such as, Nigeria, Central African Republic, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and many other states were involved with this cruel crime.

Roles

- infantry shock troops
- raiders
- sentries
- spies
- trench diggers
- porters



Grave Violations Against Children in Armed Conflict

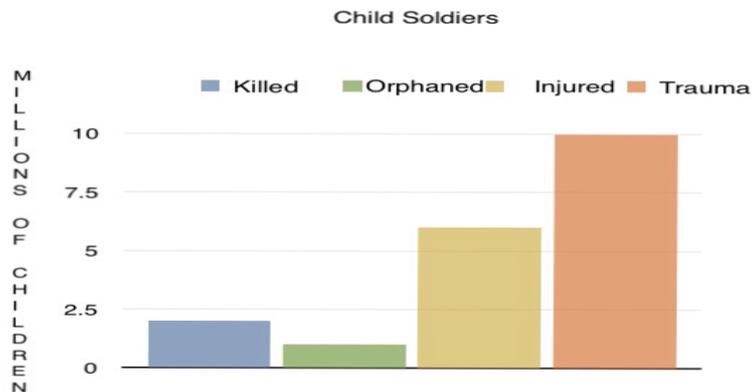


THE ENORMITY OF THE ISSUE:



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Children's conscription began centuries ago because of underdevelopment even though people have realized this situation is unethical, manipulative people and ignorance lead them to take advantage of the vulnerable. Children have been torn apart from their families and forced to work in battlefields. In the 21st century this situation cannot be an issue, but it is. By the time flies if people do not take precautions or find solutions to prevent children from being recruited, unfortunately, the problem will spread all around the world which will be making it unstoppable.



Timeline of Major Events

1943	Hitler youth boys were fighting the forces of Britain, The United States and Soviet Russia
1945 June	After the Japanese government had lost the Battle of Okinawa, the government adopted new laws in preparation for the important battles in the main islands. They established the laws that made it possible boys aged 15 or older and girls aged 17 or older to be recruitment for actual battles. Those who managed to escape the draft had been punished by imprisonment.
1989-1985 1999-2003	In civil wars of Liberia, all factions abducted children for direct combat, forced labour, and sexual slavery. It was the common practice of commanders to give children drugs and threaten them with execution in order to enhance their subservience; for example, soldiers were regularly given Valium before a battle, known as "bubbles" or "10-10". Children were forced or persuaded to commit grave human rights violations against civilians, including torture, rape, and the kidnapping of other children for military use. Children around the age of 10 were used in direct combat.
1990	The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is adopted by the organization of African Unity (OAU). States that it would like to make 18 the required age for conflict.



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1994	Child soldiers were included in the Rwanda genocide, 5,000 children were in the national army.
1991-2002	In the process of the Algerian civil war children were recruited frequently. A government-allied militia the Legitimate Defence Groups (LDG) also used child soldiers, according to some reports. Although the rules for joining the LDG were the same as the army, in which only adults were conscripted the LDG applied “no safeguards to ensure that children could not join up”. The extent of child conscription or recruitment during the war remains unknown.
May 2002	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the treaty signed in UN
2004	In Burundi, hundreds of child soldiers were in the Forces Nationales pour la Libération (FNL), an armed rebel, Hutu group. Children between the ages of 10 and 16 were also conscripted by the Burundese military.
2007-2012	By the Chadian military as participants children were used extensively in armed conflict. They were also involved in various rebel forces, including the United Front for Democratic Change, local self-defence forces known as “Tora Boro” militias, and two Sudanese rebel movements operating in Chad: the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the G-19 faction of the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA). After an action plan signed with the United Nations, children were released from service and were no longer conscripted. By 2014, Chad had been removed from the UN list of countries that use child soldiers in war.
2017	The global commitment to end children have been used in armed conflicts led to the release and reintegration of more than 5,000 children.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

The United Nations

In 2000 UN adopted an optional protocol to the convention on the rights of the child on their involvement in armed conflicts as soldiers or as any other employee. This protocol has mainly prohibited the conscription of children under the age of 18. Also, these acts are prohibited under international law.

United Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

UNESCO mainly focuses on integrating armed conflict child victims to the society. Help states to provide them with the necessary educational programmes and mental health development. UNESCO is also raising awareness in rural areas to make people realize the enormity of the issue. Also, helping the states to find the necessary funds. Organizing promotional activities such as



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conferences, exhibitions, seminars and workshops. The action that UNESCO has taken called Assistance to the Integration of Demobilized Child Soldiers (AIDC).

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour has been prohibited conscription or compulsory recruitment of children that are under the age of 18 for being used in an armed conflict. Also, while military executives are conscripting children this also turns out to be a violation of labour rights. Which is a forced labour situation, that makes ILO an important factor in order to prevent child recruitments.

United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF defines the child soldiers as “any child, boy or girl, under 18 years of age, who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity.” This age limit was also established by the UN in 2000. UNICEF has been helping children for the past 70 years. UNICEF has played a significant role in helping and saving children around the world by releasing children that have been associated with armed forces and providing them with assistance to return their homes. The organization provides a variety of recovery services such as the recovery of physical and mental health, skills training and education.

Child Soldiers International

Child Soldiers International is an NGO that has its headquarters in London that has been active since 1998. Established with the help of other organizations that advocate human rights such as Amnesty International, Child Soldiers International works to end conscription and use of children on behalf of war zones and armed groups.

The organization puts an emphasis on reintegration reduction of violations and promoting the ban on child recruitment. For instance, Child Soldiers International offers education, literacy and other classes for girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The organization is also working on in order to increase the quantity and quality of programs which are about reintegration.

War Child

The main aim of the war child organization is to keep children safe, give them education and equip them with the skills in order to help them to build a future for themselves. Providing the access to education for Syrian children, giving the necessary healthcare services, rehabilitating the ex-soldiers from Central African Republic. Works with affected by war in 9 countries and reached 180,000 in 2018. War child is doing fundraising programs in order to find credit for the treatment of the child victims. They are also raising awareness and being the voice of the victims, they persuade people to help child soldiers all around the world.

International Criminal Court (ICC)

ICC has opened a case against the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2005 about the crimes that they have committed during the civil war. So, the organization has involved with the child soldiers and made an attempt to solve it. Investigations against the Central African Republic began in 2007. It was again about the crimes that they have committed during the war, also the human right that they have violated. 5 years later new crimes were inspected in CAR and another investigation called CARII began. The case named “alleged war crimes against humanity in the context of renewed violence



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starting in 2012". The crimes that CAR has been found guilty for included child conscription too. ICC is still working on further investigations and tries to bring justice everywhere on earth.

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Health Organization is working on the healing process of the child armed conflict victims. Most of them face fatal injuries or are diagnosed with diseases. Girls have been raped, some of them have given birth in unhygienic places and didn't get the necessary healthcare after it. On the other hand, children that have seen war are mentally damaged. So WHO is working on treating these children that are being forced to work in war zones and damaged during the process.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

More than 5 million people have been killed in DRC in the past 20 years. The war in DRC ended in 2003 but it is still a dangerous place for especially women and children. Armed groups are still active in eastern Congo and they are responsible for killing, rape, exploitation and recruitment of children. The children in armed forces in Congo were called "Kadogos" (means little ones). In 2011 30,000 children were still operating with the armed groups. In 2013 a report has been released by The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) which has been stated that between 1 January 2012 and 31 August 2013 up to 1,000 children had been recruited by armed groups, and has been described the recruitment of child soldiers as "endemic". The former president Laurent Kabila had been using children in the conflict from 1996 onwards and it was estimated that up to 10,000 children, and some of them aged only seven years old, served under him.), In the first trials held on human rights violations in the DRC in The International Criminal Court (ICC, led to the first indictments, the first convictions and the first trials, in national jurisprudence for the use of combat children.

Central African Republic (CAR)

As many as 10,000 children had been used by armed groups in the conflict in the Central African Republic between the years 2012 and 2015, but in 2016 the problem persists nationwide. The mainly Muslim (Séléka) coalition of armed groups and the predominantly Christian, (Anti-Balaka) militias have been both used children in armed conflicts; some of them were as young as eight. In 2005, armed conflict occurred between the government of President François Bozize and armed groups, which had supported him to gain power in 2003. After peace came into question it brought some stability, the conflict between the same parties happened again in 2012. Armed groups formed the predominantly Muslim (Séléka) coalition, taking down the President.

In 2016, fortunately, a measure of stability returned to the Central African Republic and, according to the reports of the United Nations, 2,691 boys and 1,206 girls were officially separated from armed groups. In defiance of this, the conscription and use of children for military purposes increased by about 50 per cent, mostly attributed to the armed group known as the Lord's Resistance Army. So, there are many problems that must be solved in the Central African Republic



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Nigeria

More than 3,500 children, most of them were between the age of 13-17, were recruited by armed militant groups between 2013 and 2017 and are utilized in the continued armed conflict in northeast Nigeria, the UN children's agency UNICEF reported. A statement by UNICEF came ahead of the fifth anniversary of the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls in the state's north-eastern Chibok town. Approximately 100 of the women are still in captivity. The agency explained that the figures may not represent the exact picture of the use of child soldiers by the armed groups, especially Boko Haram. "In addition to these children, 432 children were killed and maimed, 180 were abducted, and 43 girls were sexually abused in north-east Nigeria in 2018," it said. Since 2012, non-state armed groups in northeast Nigeria have conscripted, manipulated and used children as combatants and armed-related employees, raped, forced girls to marry, and committed other grave violations against children. So, Nigeria has crucial issues about child recruitment also, conditions are not enough to recover the victims.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

(1998) **First Debate of the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict:** UNSC expressed its support.

(1999) **Security Council Resolution 1261:** The first ever resolution about children in armed conflict have been adopted. Children affected by war was the agenda item.

(2000) **Security Council Resolution 1314:** the resolution reaffirmed that the deliberate targeting of civilians, including children, may constitute a threat to peace and security.

(2000) **United Nations:** adopted Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child involvement in armed conflict. This protocol mainly focuses on prohibiting the forced recruitment (conscription) of children under the age of 18.

(2001) **Security Council Resolution 1379:** List parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children has been requested from the secretary general.

(February 12, 2002) **International day against the Use of Child Soldiers (Red Hand Day):** Political leaders have decided to make a difference and raise awareness by declaring 12th February as a day that people will remember child conscription is a human rights violation

(2003) **Security Council Resolution 1460:** Supported the Secretary-general's call for an era of application.

(2004) **Security Council Resolution 1539:** Requested secretary-general to devise a systematic and a comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism.

(2005) **Security Council Resolution 1612:** A subsidiary body has been created which is the Security Council Working Group on children and Armed conflict.

(2005) **establishment of a working group by the Security Council:** Group mainly focuses on children in armed conflicts, it plays a significant role in giving timely and reliable information. It is now chaired by Sweden.



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(2008) Child Soldiers Global Report

(2009) Security Council Resolution 1882

(2011) Security Council Resolution 1998: Attacks on schools and hospitals

(2012) Security Council Resolution 2068: Decided to put sanctions against persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children.

(2014) Security Council Resolution 2143: Endorsed a campaign named “Children Not Soldiers.”

(2015) Security Council Resolution 2225: Established the abduction of children.

(November 2017) the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers at the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial conference in Vancouver, British Columbia: Vancouver Principles are a combination of political commitments especially focuses on child protection in peacekeeping, including every stage of a conflict cycle. They have been compromised 17 principles will be focusing on preventing the conscription and any usage of children in armed forces.

(2018) Security Council Resolution 2427: Strengthened the mechanisms to prevent violations committed against children in conflict.

(June 25, 2019) Canadian Forces College (CFC) in Toronto, Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security: Department of National Defence (DND) announced the establishment to support Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to provide and develop, education and training. Also, there will be a special focus on child recruitment.

These examples are some of the many attempts that has been made for child soldiers. The UN and many other bodies are still working to solve the issue by establishing campaigns, holding conferences ,and writing resolutions. For an immediate change other solutions must be made.

Possible Solutions

- I. Inspecting the individuals and groups that are involved in child conscription. (an organization can be established, or an existing organization can be developed)
- II. Providing the children soldiers or any child that is involved in armed conflict the necessary healthcare services, threaten their physical and mental damage caused by the war that they faced.
- III. Finding a solution that focuses on ending the ongoing war in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo which can also solve the child recruitment issue
- IV. Strengthening the laws about the proliferation of SALWs and controlling the sales. Especially inspecting sales of weapons to the underaged people.



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- V. Creating data or an information service to be informed about child recruitment in Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic. Inspecting the conflict areas. (this can be done by sending inspectors or other employees from related organizations)
- VI. Supporting the reintegration programs that NGOs and IGOs have.
- VII. Taking precautions in order to prevent children from sending to the armed conflict areas
- VIII. Providing education-based opportunities to boys and girls, empowering them to increase their decision making and coping skills.
- IX. Family planning in African states in order to prevent a voluntary giving their children situation also providing them job opportunities to subsist their family.
- X. Partnering with communities to determine the reason for child recruitment. This can be violence, lack of economic opportunities, conflicts or instabilities.
- XI. Examining the cases of countries which have suffered from the use of child soldiers.
- XII. Encouraging all member states to focus on the reasons for the problem in their region and find solutions according to it.

Useful Links For Further Research

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_children_in_the_military#cite_note-2-1
2. <https://www.hrw.org/topic/childrens-rights/child-soldiers>
3. <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/six-grave-violations/child-soldiers/>
4. https://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58007.html
5. <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/2017/02/ending-the-use-of-child-soldiers/>

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You must list your sources used in MLA format. You must use hyperlinks, and also use in-text citations in your chair report.

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14. Home, www.icc-cpi.int/pages/situation.aspx.
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16. "Assistance To The Integration Of Demobilized Child Soldiers." *UNESCO*, 6 Oct. 2016, en.unesco.org/partnerships/non-governmental-organizations/assistance-integration-demobilized-child-soldiers.
17. "Healing Child Soldiers." *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, 4 Mar. 2011, www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/87/5/09-020509/en/.