The Use of Children as Soldiers in Africa

A country analysis of child recruitment and participation in armed conflict

Preface

The purpose of this report is to document and assess the extent of the military recruitment of African children and their use as soldiers in armed conflict. In particular, the report provides details of national legislation governing recruitment into the armed forces, national recruitment practice (which, sadly, does not always conform to the prevailing legislation), and, where armed conflict is ongoing, the extent of child participation in hostilities, whether as part of government armed forces, government-sponsored armed groups or militia, or non-governmental armed groups or militia. It also includes basic demographic data and information on the estimated size of governmental armed forces and non-governmental armed groups.

An attempt has been made to include relevant and accurate information on the situation in each African country. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in the report is correct as at the end of February 1999. In a small number of cases information has proved impossible to obtain. Requests for information were sent to each of the States referred to in this report via their Embassies in Europe or their Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva or New York. Where responses were received, these have been reflected in the report.

This report is being presented as a background document to the African Conference on the Use of Children as Soldiers, which is taking place in Maputo, Mozambique, from 19-22 April 1999. The Conference, which is being hosted by the Mozambican government, is being organised jointly by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and the Save the Children Alliance. The information contained in the report will subsequently be revised and updated based on discussions at the Conference and the results integrated into a worldwide report on child recruitment and participation in armed conflict to be published by the Coalition at the end of 1999. Similar research is being conducted into the military recruitment of children and their use as soldiers in armed conflict in Asia, Europe, and the Americas.

Research for the report was coordinated by Joël Mermet, Researcher for the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and the report was produced by Françoise Jaffré, Communication Officer of the Coalition. The Coalition actively seeks comments on the information contained herein and welcomes any additional information, including when confidentiality is requested by the source. Information received anonymously, however, will not be taken into consideration.

Stuart Maslen,
Coordinator of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers

The Use of Child Soldiers in Africa: An Overview

Child Participation in Armed Conflict in Africa

The scope of the problem

Based on the information contained in this report, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers believes that more than 120,000 children under 18 years of age are currently participating in armed conflicts across Africa. Some of these children are no more than 7 or 8 years of age. The countries most affected by this problem are: Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Uganda. Furthermore, Ethiopian government forces engaged in an armed conflict against Eritrea, and the clans in Somalia, have both included an unknown, though probably not substantial, number of under-18s in their ranks. In internal armed conflicts in the Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, and Senegal, on the other hand, there has been little or no recorded use of
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under-18s by government or armed opposition forces, and there are almost certainly no under-15s participating in hostilities in these three situations.\(^1\)

The risks to children of participation in armed conflict

In addition to the obvious risks to children of participation in armed conflict — which apply equally to adults — children are often at an added disadvantage as combatants. Their immaturity may lead them to take excessive risks — according to one rebel commander in the Democratic Republic of Congo, "[children] make good fighters because they’re young and want to show off. They think it’s all a game, so they’re fearless." Moreover, and as a result of being widely perceived to be dispensable commodities, they tend to receive little or no training before being thrust into the front line. Reports from Burundi and Congo-Brazzaville suggest that they are often massacred in combat as a result.

Children may begin participating in conflict from as young as the age of seven. Some start as porters (carrying food or ammunition) or messengers, others as spies. One rebel commander declared that: "They’re very good at getting information. You can send them across enemy lines and nobody suspects them [because] they’re so young." And as soon as they are strong enough to handle an assault rifle or a semi-automatic weapon (normally at 10 years of age), children are used as soldiers. One former child soldier from Burundi stated that: "We spent sleepless nights watching for the enemy. My first role was to carry a torch for grown-up rebels. Later I was shown how to use hand grenades. Barely within a month or so, I was carrying an AK-47 rifle or even a G3."

When they are not actively engaged in combat, they can often be seen manning checkpoints; adult soldiers can normally be seen standing a further 15 metres behind the barrier so that if bullets start flying, it is the children who are the first victims. And in any given conflict when even a few children are involved as soldiers, all children, civilian or combatant, come under suspicion. A recent military sweep in Congo-Brazzaville, for instance, killed all "rebels who had attained the ‘age of bearing arms’.

Girls too are used as soldiers, though generally in much smaller numbers than boys. In Liberia, "[a]bout one per cent of the demobilised child soldiers [in 1996-7] were girls or young women. But many more took part in one form or another in the war. Like many males, females joined one of the factions for their own protection. (Un)willingly, they became the girlfriends or wives of rebel leaders or members: ‘wartime women’ is the term they themselves use."

Concy A., a 14-year old girl, was abducted from Kitgum in Uganda and taken to Sudan by the LRA. "In Sudan we were distributed to men and I was given to a man who had just killed his woman. I was not given a gun, but I helped in the abductions and grabbing of food from villagers. Girls who refused to become LRA wives were killed in front of us to serve as a warning to the rest of us." The risks to these girls of sexually transmitted diseases or unwanted pregnancies are enormous. Grace A. gave birth on open ground to a girl fathered by one of her [LRA] rebel abductors. Then she was forced to continue fighting. "I picked up a gun and strapped the baby on my back," the emaciated, now adult, 18-year-old recalled while nursing her scrawny baby. "But we were defeated by government forces, and I found a way to escape."

Girls are also the victims of child soldiers. In Algeria, a young woman from one of the villages where massacres had taken place said that all of the killers were boys under 17. Some boys who looked to be around 12 decapitated a 15-year-old girl and played ‘catch’ with the head.

The consequences for society

Atrocities have all too frequently been committed by child soldiers, sometimes under the influence of drugs or alcohol which they may be forced to take. In Sierra Leone, for example, a journalist from the French newspaper Le Figaro claimed that most of the rebels are children not older than 14, who are under the effect of drugs and alcohol. He reported what one of them told him about torture they inflict on their victims: "at 2 p.m., they gouge out two eyes, at 3 p.m., they cut off one hand, at 4 p.m., they cut off two hands, at 5 p.m., they cut off one foot and ... at 7 p.m. it is the death which falls down."

But drugs alone do not account for the atrocities committed by children. It is their systematic abuse by adults, combined with a pervasive culture of violence that is ultimately responsible. In March 1998, at the trial of a 13-year-old DRC soldier who had shot and killed a local Red Cross volunteer in Kinshasa after a dispute on a football pitch, even the prosecution declared that the lack of control of boy soldiers was as much the fault of their older commanders and constituted extenuating circumstances. The boy was nonetheless condemned to death, although President Kabila later
commuted the sentence to life imprisonment.

The Recruitment of Children by Governmental Armed Forces

National Legislation

The overwhelming majority of African States set 18 as the minimum age for recruitment, whether voluntary or through conscription. Indeed South Africa is in the process of increasing its minimum age for voluntary recruitment to 18 (conscription has already been abolished) and Mauritania may also be raising its minimum age from 16 to 18. In Angola, however, a country severely affected by the phenomenon of child soldiers, the government recently reduced the age of conscription to 17 years. Given the lack of systematic birth registration, even younger children are inevitably recruited even if the will to prevent underage recruitment existed. Moreover, reducing the minimum age of conscription to 17 is currently lawful since international law sets 15 as the international minimum age.

Burundi and Rwanda have the lowest legal recruitment ages on the African continent, seemingly 15 or 16 years for volunteers, although Uganda has formerly claimed to accept children with the apparent age of 13 to be enrolled with parental consent. In Chad, parental consent appears to allow the minimum age of 18 to be effectively reduced. Concerns also exist as to legislation in Botswana, Kenya, and Zambia where children with the ‘apparent age of 18’ can lawfully be recruited. Libya appears to accept volunteers at 17 years, if not younger. In South Africa, in a state of emergency, children of 15 years of age or above can be used directly in armed conflict by virtue of the Constitution. Finally, legislation in Mozambique, a country whose past has seen widespread use of child soldiers, specifically allows the armed forces to change the minimum conscription age — 18 — in time of war.

National Practice

If only domestic legislation were always respected in practice, the problem of child soldiers in Africa would be significantly reduced. Many African States — Benin, Cameroon, Mali and Tunisia to name but a few — appear to follow appropriate recruitment procedures that prevent underage troops being recruited into the army. However, in Angola, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Uganda, children, some no more than seven or eight years of age, are recruited by government armed forces almost as a matter of course. Some children do volunteer to join the armed forces (though the true number will vary depending on how one interprets the word volunteer). In the DRC, for example, between 4,000 and 5,000 adolescents responded to a radio broadcast calling (in clear violation of international law) for 12-20 year olds to enrol to defend their country; most were street children.

Yet tens of thousands of children are forced to join up, sometimes at gunpoint. In Angola, forced recruitment of youth (‘Rusgas’) continues in some of the suburbs around the capital and throughout the country, especially in rural areas. It has been claimed that military commanders have paid police officers to find new recruits and Namibia has collaborated with Angola in catching Angolans who have fled to Namibia to avoid conscription. In Eritrea, a 17-year-old Ethiopian prisoner of war, Dowit Admas, interviewed by a British journalist claimed that he was playing football in Gondar High School when Ethiopian government soldiers rounded up 60 boys and sent them to a military training camp. In Uganda, there have been persistent reports that street children in Kampala have been approached by soldiers and forced to join the army in order to be sent to the Democratic Republic of Congo, and in November 1998, parents protested against the forced recruitment by the Uganda People’s Defence Forces of 500 youths in Hoima.

Government-supported Militia Forces

In Sudan, although the minimum legal age of recruitment is 18 years, recruitment into the Popular Defence Forces can start lawfully at 16 years. Even in armed forces that otherwise appear to respect recruitment procedure, the creation of government-sponsored militia forces tends to open the floodgates to child recruitment. In Algeria, for instance, so-called ‘Legitimate Defence Groups’ and ‘communal guards’ seem to operate beyond the law, without effective regulation or control.

In Burundi, in addition to widespread recruitment into regular armed forces, Tutsi armed groups, made up of youth aged from 12 to 25, have been formed with the encouragement of government authorities in order to defend the Tutsi minority. These groups recruited people from sport and school groups and were armed by politicians, businessmen and
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serving and retired members of the armed forces. Meanwhile, government militia in Congo-Brazzaville, which have been widely credited with egregious human rights abuses, include many teenage children among their ranks.

Military Schools

In a number of African countries military schools serve to give children an education, not just as a backdoor form of under age recruitment. In Benin, for example, the Centre National d'Instruction des Forces Armées educates children from the age of 13 and the Prytanée militaire of Bembereke selects children of high ability from the 6th grade. Children in these schools are not members of the armed forces and they are encouraged, but not forced, to pursue a military career after graduation, which usually occurs when they are about 19 or 20 years of age. In other countries, such as Burundi and Rwanda, military schools appear to serve as backdoor recruitment into the armed forces of tens of thousands of children.

Armed Opposition Groups

In situations of armed conflict, wherever governments have recruited and used children as soldiers, so have armed opposition groups, and just as certain African governments have chosen to violate national laws, so opposition groups have flouted public declarations and pledges not to recruit and use children in combat.² For instance, UNITA's draft 1990 Constitution sets 18 as the minimum age for recruitment, yet, in 1998, the Inter-African Network for Human Rights and Development (Afronet) and Human Rights Watch alleged that UNITA was abducting children and young men and women between 13 years of age and their early 30s living in border towns of Cazombo and Lumbala Nguimbo.

More often, however, no such declaration has been made. The Hutu opposition in Burundi has systematically recruited boys and girls under 15 years of age into its armed groups; and a number of different sources have stated that the Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave (FLEC-FAC) in Angola also recruited children into their forces. The FLEC-FAC was reported to have children as young as eight years of age among its ranks and an estimated 30-40 per cent of them were girls. In Sierra Leone, reports have clearly detailed the fact that rebel forces recruit children below 18 years of age and demonstrate that children as young as five are enrolled.

In Uganda, the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) systematically abducts children from their schools, communities and homes. Children who attempt to escape, resist, cannot keep up, or become ill are killed. Generally, the rebels take their captives across the border to an LRA camp in Sudan. There, these children are tortured, threatened and sexually abused. Latest reports suggest that the LRA has now turned to selling abducted children into slavery in exchange for arms.

Children enrolled by force into armed opposition groups often have little choice but to remain and fight. In Uganda, for example, if children abducted by the LRA do manage to escape or surrender, they may face the wrath of the Government. Despite claims made on Ugandan television by the armed forces that they are "rescuing these children daily", and "handing them to charity organisations for care", in January 1999, the Ugandan army executed, in circumstances to be clarified, five teenage boys between the ages of 14 and 17 suspected of being rebel soldiers. Moreover, in April 1998, 25 boys were charged with treason and are still awaiting trial. All these boys face the death sentence even though they were abducted by rebels and used as child soldiers by them. The children are charged with failing to release information about rebel soldiers or are said to have fought with the rebels. If the death penalty were carried out against these youths, this would be a manifest violation of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols and of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These international treaties, to which Uganda is a party, clearly prohibit capital punishment for those under 18 years of age at the time of the commission of the offence.

But even some of those armed opposition groups who use children as soldiers recognise the dangers. "It's true they can hold a gun and fight, but you spoil the education of a child," Songolo [a rebel commander in the Democratic Republic of Congo] said, adding that he is against the practice but has seen many child soldiers in the country. "Their minds go bad...they become criminals if they leave". (This of course applies as much to volunteers as it does to conscripts.) Indeed there are reports that the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), which have used many thousands of children in their struggle against the regime in Khartoum, is finally realising that they have created a generation of children who cannot read or write and know only the respect that is earned by the barrel of a gun. It remains to be seen whether they are truly willing to stop recruiting children and to demobilise those that are currently serving in their ranks.

Concluding remarks

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/C157333FCA91F573C1256C130033E448-chilsold.htm
Many African countries effectively protect children against military recruitment and use as soldiers. Sadly, others do not, failing to meet the standards they themselves have set. It is hoped that the abuses and violations that are identified in this report will be acted upon positively: the use of children as soldiers is the result of deliberate action, or at least in some cases, deliberate inaction. Even armed opposition groups are not always beyond the reach of the law, and many are sustained by governments.

In a statement to the United Nations Security Council on 12 February 1999, Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, declared that "[W]e would be derelict if we did not reiterate, in the strongest possible terms, that until the minimum age of recruitment is universally set at 18, the ruthless exploitation of children as soldiers will continue." The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers wholeheartedly endorses this statement and would only add that African countries can play a leading role in ensuring this standard is adopted; of even more importance, they can help to ensure that this standard is respected in practice.

1. The current international minimum age for military recruitment and participation in armed conflict, in both international human rights and humanitarian law, is 15 years. Efforts are continuing to raise this minimum age to 18 years in an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which has not yet entered into force, sets 18 as the minimum age for both recruitment and participation in armed conflict.
2. The international minimum age of 15 years for recruitment and participation in armed conflict applies to armed groups as well as to governments. The Statute of the International Criminal Court makes it a war crime for any government or armed opposition group to recruit or use as soldiers children under 15 years of age.

**Algeria**

*Algeria has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*

Population: 29,473,000

Under-18s: 13,284,000 (45%)\(^1\)

**Governmental Armed Forces**\(^2\)

- **Active:** c. 124,000\(^3\) (including c. 75,000 conscripts)
  - Army: 107,000
  - Navy: c. 7,000
  - Air Force: 10,000
- **Reserves** c. 150,000 up to age 50
- **Paramilitary:** c. 146,200
  - Gendarmerie: 25,000
  - National security forces: 20,000
  - Republican guard: 1,200
  - Communal guards/Self-defence groups: c. 100,000\(^4\)

**National Recruitment Legislation**

The minimum age for recruitment (conscription) is 19 years according to Article 1 of the National Service Act.\(^5\) Military service is compulsory for all men; women cannot serve even on a voluntary basis. Conscripts can postpone their service until they are 27 years old in order to complete their studies.\(^6\) In addition, in peacetime, exemptions are possible under certain circumstances — for medical or psycho-logical reasons, when a brother is already serving, in the case of sole breadwinners of families or sole supporters of an ill or young brother or sister, and sons of heros and martyrs from the war of independence.\(^7\)

Military service lasts for 18 months, divided into six months of military training and 12 months active service.\(^8\) After completing their period of service soldiers remain available to the Ministry of Defence for five years and can be
immediately recalled at any time. Thereafter, they form part of the reserve forces for a further 20 years.\textsuperscript{9}

In January 1997, the Prime Minister signed a Decree which officially established, two years after their actual creation, the ‘Legitimate Defence Groups’ (\textit{Groupes de défense légitime}).\textsuperscript{10} The Decree also determined the conditions within which they are allowed to act, in particular the need for their authorisation by the local Prefect. They are permitted to use force only in case of self-defence or in order to help people in danger. Their leaders are sometimes, but not always, a law-enforcement officer and their members receive no remuneration. The Decree does not, however, require Legitimate Defence Groups to report on their activities and to respect the fundamental rules of both international human rights and humanitarian law. Nor does it set a minimum age or procedure for recruitment or require that members of these groups receive a formal training.\textsuperscript{11}

Many reports have suggested that the formation of these groups has led to a ‘privatisation’ of the war and that the government is unable to control their actions.\textsuperscript{12}

National Recruitment Practice

It has been reported that in many parts of the country the Legitimate Defence Groups have recruited young people into their ranks.\textsuperscript{13} In addition, ‘communal guards’ were created in 1994 in order to control urban areas. There have been widespread reports of young people, some of them coming from the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), being recruited into this new force.\textsuperscript{14}

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

Following bloody rioting in October 1988 Algeria’s one-party State initiated a democratisation programme and a new constitution was adopted in 1989. One of the first parties to be legalised was the Islamic Salvation Front (\textit{Front Islamique du Salut} or FIS). In local elections in June 1990 and then in the first round of parliamentary elections in December 1991, the FIS won the majority of seats. The army stepped in, cancelled the election process and banned the FIS. President Chadli resigned and a ‘\textit{Haut Comité d'État}’ was established with Mohamed Boudiaf at its head.

In March 1992, the FIS was dissolved by the Court of Algiers and a wave of repression against the Islamists started. M. Boudiaf was assassinated in June 1992 and replaced by Ali Kafi who was then replaced by Rédha Malek.

In January 1994, Liamine Zeroual was made President. Allies of President Zeroual formed a political party in March 1997 which was not able to obtain a majority in subsequent elections. Protests ensued from all sides claiming voting irregularities and widespread fraud. New presidential elections will take place on 15 April 1999 after the resignation of President Zeroual in September 1998.

The eight years since the 1991 elections have seen a massive civil conflict envelop every part of life in Algeria. Thousands of men, women and children have been murdered by Islamist guerrilla groups and the security forces.\textsuperscript{15}

It has been reported that children and youth are actively participating both in various local militias linked to the government and in the different armed groups opposed to the governmental armed forces.\textsuperscript{16}

 Armed Opposition Groups\textsuperscript{17}

• The Islamic Salvation Army (\textit{Armée Islamique du Salut} — AIS), the armed wing of the \textit{Front Islamique du Salut}, was created in 1994. This group, which numbers perhaps 2,000 people, is led by Madani Merzaq.\textsuperscript{18}

• The Armed Islamic Group (\textit{Groupe Islamique Armé} — GIA) comprises small groups each of 50-100 persons. The GIA began its activities in early 1992, after the legislative elections.

• The Islamic Front for Armed Jihad (\textit{Front Islamique pour le Djihad Armé} — FIDA).

• The Islamic League for Preaching and Jihad (\textit{Ligue Islamique de la Daawa et du Djihad} — LIDD)

• The Armed Berber Movement (MA) appeared soon after the death of the singer Lounes Matoub and swore to eliminate any Algerian who respected the Arabic-only law which came into effect on 5 July 1998. (The existence of this group has
been questioned by the government and others.)

The Psychological Institute in Algiers has claimed that young people fighting for the Islamic groups are not driven by religious motives but rather by frustration or by their impossibility of starting a family because of unemployment and housing problems.19

A journalist who made a secret visit to a camp of the Islamic Salvation Army reported the presence of boys, some as young as 15, among the movement’s soldiers. One of them told him that he had killed seven men in the week of the elections. "Two boys described themselves as assassins. Armed with sawn-off shotguns, they stalk security men in public places, firing at point-blank range and disappearing into the crowd."20

A witness who lived in a small district of the Mitidja, where the GIA was controlling the population, said: "It was incredible — kids with a Kalashnikov on their shoulder in every street. They check the papers of people going by and watch who’s coming in and who’s leaving the town. You see them, backs to the wall, with a pistol in their hands, chatting. They’re maybe not even 18 years old. People don’t go out to walk about any more."21

Another source, which has requested confidentiality, has claimed that the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) use young boys, mainly in their early teens, to plant bombs and carry out surprise attacks.

A young woman from one of the Algerian villages where massacres had taken place said that all of the killers were boys under 17. Some boys who looked to be around 12 decapitated a 15-year-old girl and played ‘catch’ with the head.


Notes
2. The information in this section comes from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London, unless otherwise stated.
3. Approx.130,000 according to Pouvoirs. No. 86, September 1998.
4. The "Legitimate Defence Groups" number some 180,000 according to Bruno Etienne, Le Figaro, 31 August 1997.
6. Article 98 of the National Service Act.
7. Articles 90 to 104 of the National Service Act.
10. Décret 97-04 fixant les conditions d’exercice de l’action de légitime défense d’un cadre organisé.
11. It is not clear whether, in practice, members do receive special training. In 1998, during a hearing before the UN Human Rights Committee, an Algerian government representative said that they did not but then later talked of a six-month special training. UN Doc. CCPR/C/SR.1681, 24 July 1998, para. 44; UN Doc. CCPR/C/SR.1683, 28 July 1998, para. 20.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
17. Estimates of the size of armed groups are from the IISS.
18. Website of the FIS: http://www.members.aol.com/alfFis/ribat/a.htm

Angola

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 11,569,000
Under-18s: 6,049,000 (52%)

Governmental Armed Forces2

• Active: c. 110,500
Army: c. 98,000
Navy: 1,500-2,000
Air Force/Air Defence: 11,000
• Paramilitary: 15,000
Rapid Reaction Police: 15,000

National Recruitment Legislation

Article 152 of Angola’s 1992 Constitution3 declares that:
"1. The defence of the country shall be the right and the highest indeclinable duty of every citizen.
2. Military service shall be compulsory. The manner in which it is fulfilled shall be established by law."

Conscription was reintroduced in 1993 and the former law on military service4 was replaced by the law 1/93 on 26 March 1993 and its subsequent decree of application.5 Military service was made compulsory for all men aged between 20 and 45. In the 1996 Decree, the minimum age for voluntary recruitment was fixed at 18 years for men and 20 years for women.6 In November 1998, the Council of Ministers approved the compulsory conscription of Angolans born in 1981.7 This means that the minimum age for conscription has been lowered from 18 to 17 years.

National Recruitment Practice

"Between 1980 and 1988, in Angola, every third child has been involved in military operations and many have fired a gun at another human being."8

Children have been recruited and used as soldiers throughout the Angolan conflict. After the Lusaka Peace Accord in 1994 soldiers from both government and UNITA forces were officially demobilized. A total of 8,500 child soldiers9 were registered (children comprised 12 per cent of UNITA troops gathered in the 15 Quartering Areas), but this figure greatly underestimates the scale of the problem since many soldiers had been recruited as children but had reached 18 by the time of registration.10 By the end of March 1997, only 2,336 child soldiers had been demobilized and over 50 per cent of the total had deserted the Quartering Areas.11

"I didn’t want to join the Army, they made me join", says Francisco, a 17-year-old Private in the Angolan armed forces, as he explains how soldiers burst into his home on a night three years ago in the interior province of Bie and took him away.
"All these years, all I have wanted to do is go home. Now finally, I am going back to Bie to see my family and work with my father on his farm."

According to the Government, no one below the age of 18 years is being recruited but non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations operating in Angola testify to the contrary. It is reported, for example, that forced recruitment of youth (‘Rusgas’) continued even after the reintroduction of conscription in 1993. Such recruitment no longer takes place in Luanda but in some of the suburbs and throughout the country, especially in rural areas.13 It has been claimed that military commanders have paid police officers to find new recruits. Children as young as 14 have been forced to enlist.14 It is estimated by one confidential source that there are currently more than 3,000 child soldiers in the Angolan armed forces (FAA), although UNICEF claimed that in 1997 there were 520 children in the FAA.

Following the lowering of the age of conscription in November 1998, the military census of all male Angolans born between 1 January 1979 and 31 December 1981 started on 18 January 1999 after a statement of the Minister of Defence, General Pedro Sebastião.15 The call-up came the day after UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced his plan to withdraw the UN peacekeeping force from Angola. The young men have been gathered at an office near Luanda Airport to register. Under existing legislation women between 20 and 45 years of age may also be called up, but they are actually not recruited.16

It has been reported that wealthy Angolans have sent their children of draft age overseas to avoid army service. Furthermore, corrupt authorities were accepting money in return for official draft exemption, even though the Minister of Defence had publicly declared that "the defence of the motherland is a duty from which no Angolan citizen should be exempted".17 Angolan news organisations have been specifically warned by a letter from the Minister of Social Communications, not to incite young men to oppose the country’s compulsory military draft registration.18

One source, requesting confidentiality, has asserted that boys in their early teens are still being rounded up and deployed.
There are said to be very high desertion rates for these children, though it is not clear whether they are able to make it home. The same source claims that where very young children are initially recruited, they are ‘thrown back’ as the receiving military commanders do not want them.

Paido, an Angolan now 24 years of age, described the Angolan style of recruitment in an interview published in the New York Times at the beginning of 1999.

"I was walking with two girls. And they called me. I was too close to them, so I couldn’t run. Even though my identification card said I was underage — and that was true — I was big, they insisted I was old enough, and they grabbed me and took me to a police station. It was full of kids. (…)"

“They put me in a cell with the other kids, while the cops went to get trucks. When they capture you they immediately send you to the provinces for training, far away where you don’t know anyone. I was very lucky. A neighbour saw me being taken and told my mother. My uncle is a policeman, and he talked to the station commander. When the rest of the guys were loaded on the trucks, my uncle got me out.”


Child Participation in Armed Conflict

Civil war has been the norm since the independence from Portugal on 11 November 1975. Following a cease-fire agreement in May 1991 (the Bicesse Accord) between the government and the insurgent National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), in October 1992 renewed fighting started in much of the countryside. A second cease-fire agreement, the Lusaka Protocol, was signed between the two warring parties on 20 November 1994. This peace accord provided for the integration of former UNITA insurgents into the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA). Military integration began in June 1996 and a Government of National Unity and Reconciliation was installed in April 1997. A 7,200-strong UN peacekeeping force (MONUA) was set up to monitor the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol.

In May 1997 the process to extend government into UNITA-occupied areas began, but fighting between UNITA rebels and the FAA continued. As the situation continued to deteriorate a split occurred within the UNITA forces in August 1998 and a new faction calling itself the Democratic Consciousness: Platform for Renaissance and Plural Understanding became semi-public on 2 November 1998.19 The fighting intensified in November 1998 when the government launched an offensive against UNITA, seeking to capture its headquarters in Andulo and Bailundo.20 Finally, on 17 January 1999, after the shooting-down of two UN-chartered aircraft in December 1998 and the further increase in the level of hostilities in the country, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan told the Security Council that there was no more peace to keep and that the UN was ending its peacekeeping operations. The 1,000 UN military, police and civilian personnel are expected to be out of Angola by 20 March 1999.

It has been reported that both Namibia and Zimbabwe have sent troops to Angola to back the Angolan armed forces in their offensive against the UNITA rebels, although there are no precise figures on the size of this support.21 At the same time, Angola has sent troops to the Democratic Republic of Congo to support President Laurent-Désiré Kabila.22

More recently, Angola accused Zambia and its former Defence Minister, Mr Ben Mwila, of involvement in an illegal support network for UNITA. Mr Mwila angrily denied these charges and asked for tangible evidence of these allegations.23 On 9 February, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) offered to help defuse tensions between the two countries. SADC was prepared only to seek a political solution and would not send a verification mission to Zambia to verify the allegations.24

Armed Opposition groups25

• Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). It was claimed that some 10,600 of roughly 18,500 UNITA troops had been integrated into the national army and a further 24,000 or so fully-equipped troops plus an additional 35,000 soldiers were awaiting demobilisation.26

• Following a split within UNITA in August 1998 a new faction called Democratic Consciousness: Platform for
Renaissance and Plural Understanding was formed (see above). It was reported that about 4,000 UNITA soldiers had deserted and surrendered their weapons to the Angolan authorities. These men come from the UNITA breakaway faction.27

• The Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave (FLEC): this opposition group split into many factions which are currently operating within the enclave : the FLEC-FAC (FLEC-Cabindan Armed Forces) and the FLEC-Renovada. Both number about 1,500-2,000. 28

In 1996, UNITA began demobilizing its child soldiers and had returned 2,000 children to civilian life by January 1997.29 Yet despite pledging not to recruit children again30 UNITA has continued to recruit great numbers of children into its ranks.31 In 1998, the Inter-African Network for Human Rights and Development (Afronet) and Human Rights Watch alleged that UNITA was abducting children and young men and women between 13 years of age and their early 30s living in border towns of Cazombo and Lumbala Ngúimbo.32 In addition, it was previously reported that in July and August 1997 Rwandan refugees, including 200 youths, were forcibly recruited when they entered areas of Angola under UNITA control.33 According to the United States Department of State, in 1998 UNITA conducted forced recruitment, including of minors, throughout all of the country’s disputed territory. Recruits were taken to isolated military camps and subjected to psychological stress and extreme hardships; those who attempted to desert were executed. Women, many as young as 13 years old, were recruited forcibly to serve as porters and camp followers, and reports of sexual assault were widespread and credible.34 It is estimated by one confidential source that the total number of child soldiers in UNITA is currently about 3,000.

A number of different sources have also stated that the Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave also recruited children into their forces. The FLEC-FAC was reported to have children as young as eight years of age among its ranks35 and that 30-40 per cent of them were girls.36 A similar situation is believed to exist in the breakaway FLEC-Renovada.37

Notes

2. Estimate from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. The text is available on the Internet: http://www.angola.org/referenc/constitution.
4. Law No. 12/82.
5. Decree No. 40/96 of 13 December 1996.
6. Although other sources have claimed that the minimum age for voluntary recruitment is in fact 15 years.
8. Mr. Pino Arlacchi, Executive Director, UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, Opening address to the Conference on Establishing the Rule of Law in Post-conflict Situations, Vienna, Austria, 26 June 1998.
9. Another source reported that at the time of the Lusaka Protocol, the armies registered over 9,000 minors, of whom 5,171 were selected for demobilisation. Most of these youths had been recruited forcibly at 13 or 14 years of age. Wessels, M., Child soldiering: Challenges to security and democracy, Paper presented at the Secretary’s Open Forum, US Department of State, 4 December 1998.
10. In January 1997, 212 child soldiers between the ages of 13 and 17 were demobilized from the Angolan armed forces. This marked the first official demobilisation by the government. Fleming, J., “Baby steps toward final peace in Angola”, Christian Science Monitor, 2 February 1997.
11. Information supplied by UNICEF.
22. See the later country analysis for the Democratic Republic of Congo.
25. Estimates taken from IISS.
31. The United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and UNICEF have all reported the recruitment of children by UNITA forces.
Benin

Benin has signed (1992) and ratified (1997) the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 5,720,000
Under-18s: 3,050,000 (53%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2
Active: c. 4,800
Army: c. 4,500;
Navy: c. 150;
Air Force: c. 150.
Paramilitary: 2,500

National Recruitment Legislation

Recruitment in Benin is governed by Law n° 63-5 of 30 May 1963, as amended by Ordinance n° 75-77 of 28 November 1975. According to Benin’s State party report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the minimum age required for enlistment in the army, either as a volunteer or as a conscript, is 21 years. (3) It appears, however, that volunteers may be accepted from 18 years of age. (4) Conscription is selective (5) and lasts for 18 months (6). About 800 to 1,000 persons are conscripted each year. (7)

National Recruitment Practice

According to UNICEF there is no underage recruitment into the Benin armed forces. The government has also maintained that it does not recruit under-18s. (8)

There are 2 military schools in Benin: the "Centre National d'Instruction des Forces Armées" which educates children from the age of 13 and the "Prytanée militaire" of Bembereke where children of high ability are selected from 6th grade (also 13 years of age). Children in these schools are not members of the armed forces. They are encouraged, but not forced, to pursue a military career after graduation, which usually occurs when they are about 19 or 20 years of age. (9)

The Prytanée militaire, which was established in 1982, is a school placed under the supervision of both the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Defence. Every year, between 30 and 35 of the brightest children from all districts of the country children are accepted into the Prytanée. Pupils are under the responsibility of a civilian teacher (who is also the director of studies) and a military officer (who is also the head of the school). They receive the same academic education as pupils in other schools but in addition are taught the art of war and given moral and civic instruction. At the end of their studies, they have the option to follow a military or a civil career. (10)

In addition, there are two training centres for officers, one in Porto Noveo and the other in Ouidah. The minimum age for entry these schools is 18. (11)

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict ongoing in Benin. (12) Benin sent a contingent of 145 troops to Guinea Bissau to join the West African peace monitoring forces serving there. (13) There is no evidence that this contingent included any underage troops.

Notes
1. Estimate taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
2. IISS estimates.
3. UN Doc. CRC/C/3/Add.52 of July 4, 1997, para. 54.
4. Information obtained by the Swedish Consulate in Porto Novo through official sources in Benin; UNICEF; and Defence for Children International -Benin (DCI-Benin).
6. IISS 1998
7. DCI Benin.
9. Information obtained by the Swedish Consulate in Porto Novo through official sources in Benin.
10. UNICEF; DCI-Benin.
11. DCI-Benin.
12. Also attested by letter of the Ambassador of Benin in Brussels sent to the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Brussels, 10 December 1998.

Botswana

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 1,518,000
Under-18s: 758,000 (50%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

Active: 7,500 (Army: 7,000, but due to be raised to 10,000; Air Wing: 500)
Paramilitary: 1,000
Police Mobile Unit: 1,000

National Recruitment Legislation

Recruitment into the armed forces is on a voluntary basis. Enlistment is regulated by the Botswana Defence Force Act of April 15, 1977. (3) In Section 17 it is stated that "a person offering to enlist in the Regular Force shall be given a notice in the prescribed form setting out the questions to be answered on attestation and stating the general conditions of the engagement." An officer shall recruit a person only if he has been given such a notice, understands it and wishes to be enlisted.

Only one condition is formally mentioned in this Section, namely to have the apparent age of 18 years. Section 26 (1) of the Botswana Defence Force Act states that "if a person appearing before a recruiting officer for the purpose of being enlisted in the Regular Force knowingly makes a false answer to any question contained in the attestation paper and put to him by or by the direction of the recruiting officer, he shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding P100 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or to both."It is not known, however, if age is one of the questions in this notice.

According to UNICEF there are no military schools in Botswana.

National Recruitment Practice

It is not known how the legislative requirements are implemented in practice, in particular if and how exact age is determined. There is, however, no evidence of underage recruitment taking place.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in Botswana.

In September 1998 Botswana sent troops to Lesotho as part of the peacekeeping mission of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). There is no evidence that any underage soldiers were among the Botswana contingent.
### Notes

1. Estimate from International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London.
2. IISS estimates.

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### Burkina Faso

*Has signed (1992) and ratified (1992) the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*

Population: 11,087,000  
Under-18s: 5,985,000 (54\%)  

**Governmental Armed Forces**

Active: 10,000 (Army: 5,600; Air Force: 20)  
Paramilitary: unknown.  
Gendarmerie: 4,200  
Security company: 250  
People's militia: 45,000 trained

**National Recruitment Legislation**

Article 10 of the Constitution of 11 June 1991 states that "Each citizen of Burkina Faso is required to contribute to the defence and preservation of territorial integrity. Each citizen is required to carry out national service upon demand." The minimum age for voluntary enlistment in the armed forces is 20, whereas the minimum age of conscription is 18. According to the State party report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, conscription, known as National Development Service, is compulsory for all.

**National Recruitment Practice**

There is no evidence of underage recruitment taking place. According to Rädda Barnen (Swedish Save the Children), there is a military school, the Prytanée militaire of Kadiogo, that accepts children between the ages of 11 and 13, but the pupils are not members of the armed forces.

**Child Participation in Armed Conflict**

There is no armed conflict in Burkina Faso.

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### Burundi

*Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*

Population: 6,398,000  
Under-18s: 3,373,000 (53\%)
Governmental Armed Forces:

- Active: c. 22,000; Army: 18,500
  (including Gendarmerie) Air Wing: 100

- Paramilitary: Gendarmerie: 3,500

National Recruitment Legislation

There is no legal provision for conscription in Burundi. Prior to the conflict the minimum age for voluntary recruitment was believed to have been 18 years. In its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Burundi stated that the minimum age of recruitment is fixed between 16 and 25 years of age, but that, in practice, nobody is enrolled below the age of 18.4 However, it added that in recent years the armed forces had been rapidly increasing in size and ‘getting younger’. One source suggested that the minimum age for recruitment was actually 15 years.5 It has not been possible to obtain copies of national recruitment legislation.

National Recruitment Practice

It is asserted that before the beginning of the conflict in Burundi no children under 18 years of age were recruited into the armed forces but it is widely agreed, despite Government denials, that this did occur in substantial numbers, once fighting broke out. The Government did, however, acknowledge in its report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child the use of young children, no more than 15 years of age, called doria (which means ‘ear agent’ in Kirundi language). According to the report, they are seen close to combatants and are used to collect and provide them with information.6

In fact, these children, who serve as kind of housekeepers, are completely integrated into the military environment. They wear military uniforms, they sleep in the same rooms as the soldiers, and they are taught to use weapons. It is rare to see them actually training with soldiers, but they are obliged to work for them — cooking, carrying water, coal or wood, or washing uniforms. Most do not go to school, though there are exceptions.7 The youngest reported doria, no more than eight years of age, was seen in Kigosi (Kirundo province, North-East). He was wearing a uniform and was a war orphan. Apparently only ethnic Tutsis are accepted in the army. The UN Special Rapporteur on Burundi, for example, has specifically asked the Burundian authorities "not to recruit young people under 18 years of age for the army or mandatory civic service and to ensure that such recruitment is never imposed by force and that it includes all the ethnic components of the population without distinction." He has also asked the Government "to prosecute the instigators of practices comparable with forced labour and the use of ‘regroupment’ camp residents in tasks of a military nature."8

Estimates of the numbers of children recruited by the armed forces over the past five years vary considerably, from a low of 2,000 to a high of 14,000.9 Another source mentioned that there are between 800 and 1,000 children between 14 and 17 in the regular armed forces. 10

The Burundian Government has now set up a compulsory ‘civic service’ for students.11 According to the UN Special Rapporteur, "the Government endeavoured to enrol large numbers of young men and women who are about to complete their higher studies in a mandatory civic service scheme. This has appreciably reduced the hold of extremist groups over young people and is a positive step.” But the Rapporteur also thinks that this civic service seems to bear more of a military than a civilian stamp.12 According to other information received in confidence by the Coalition, it appears that this service is purely military in nature.

In addition to regular armed forces, Tutsi armed groups, made up of youths aged from 12 to 25, were formed with the encouragement of Government authorities with the aim of defending the Tutsi minority. These groups recruited people from sport and school groups and were armed by politicians, businessmen and serving and retired members of the armed forces.13 They were estimated to be about 3,500. But these groups disappeared with the arrival of Major Pierre Buyoya at the head of the country. The eldest of these youths have tended to be enlisted into the regular armed forces, whereas the younger ones have carried out military tasks. 14

A further problem fuelling child recruitment is the existence of many military schools, known as ‘training centres’. It is difficult to obtain accurate information on the situation in these schools but the minimum age for entry is believed to be between 13 and 16.15 There are also schools specifically for corporals and warrant officers in Burundi. Students must
have completed the course of study known in French as the *Cycle inférieur des humanités*, and the minimum age for entry is believed to be between 14 and 17 years. Finally the *Institut Supérieur des Cadres Militaires*, which is comparable to university study, is for students who hold a *Certificat homologué des humanités*. In this case, the minimum age is believed to be between 17 and 20 years.16 Altogether, the number of children attending these schools is estimated to be over 36,000, and they are all believed to be members of the armed forces.17

Pikou is one the army recruits who took part in the fighting in Burundi following the 1993 coup attempt:

"I was a big guy, you know, 14, not just a kid! I executed the commanders’ orders with pleasure. We had been conscripted in the army, given the need to expand troops to fight rebels. We underwent a kind of informal training in ‘Camp Base’. Twenty days were enough before we were given uniforms, boots and everything."

Pikou, a Tutsi, is now living in Nairobi trying to put his military experiences behind him. He didn’t flee the war, as he puts it, but wants to make it clear that he could no longer put up with atrocities made against Hutu captives, both rebels and civilians:

"No, I didn’t flee because after all the army had (and still has) an upper hand on the ground. I just deserted the army to embrace new horizons. In fact, my ambition was not to become a soldier, but to be a businessman."

Testimony received by Gervais Abayeho.

**Child Participation in Armed Conflict**

An internal armed conflict has been opposing the Tutsi-dominated security forces and allied armed groups to an armed Hutu-dominated opposition group for the last five years. The conflict has so far claimed more than 200,000 lives and triggered massive population displacement both within the country and across into neighbouring countries. Since July 1996, when Major Pierre Buyoya seized power in a military coup, the country has been largely cut off from the outside world, following the decision by nine countries from the region to impose harsh economic sanctions. These sanctions were suspended in January 1999, on condition that the peace process continues.

The peace process started in June 1998 under the mediation of the former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere and the same month a new provisional constitution was adopted by the Burundian parliament as a gesture of goodwill towards the process. By the end of 1998 three rounds of negotiations had taken place but it was predicted that three more would be needed to produce a workable peace accord.18 It has been reported that as a result of being excluded from peace talks, the main armed opposition group, CNDP/FDD, has stepped up attacks before each new round of negotiations as a way of putting pressure on the Government.19

It has been estimated that between 8,000 and 10,000 children are currently taking part in hostilities in Burundi.20

According to several reports, children as young as 13-14 years of age have been seen at checkpoints in the countryside, but rarely in Bujumbura. Burundians try to justify this by claiming that children look younger than they really are because of malnutrition.21 Moreover, it has been reported, but not confirmed, that young children (*kadogos*) were sent to the Democratic Republic of Congo to fight.22 In addition to these child soldiers, there are other underage children, about 12-13 years of age, who are forced to assist the troops by carrying food and water up into the hills and/or carrying out domestic activities in the military camps.23

**Armed Opposition groups**24

Hutu opposition groups include:

- the National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD) with its armed wing Forces for the Defence of Democracy (FDD),
- the Front for National Liberation (FNL), Frolina,
- the Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People (*Palipehutu*),
The former Rwandan and Zairian Armed Forces (FAR-FAZ),
the militias of the former Rwandan President Juvenal Habyrimana,
and the Impuzamigambi.

The Burundi Hutu rebel groups, especially the FDD, have also been reported to be fighting in the ongoing war in the Democratic Republic of Congo on the side of President Laurent Kabila. Their total fighting strength is not known.

No opposition armed group has, so far, pledged not to recruit children into its ranks, and according to the army the Hutu groups are increasingly being made up of child soldiers, including both boys and girls under 15 years of age.25 The Hutu groups recruit children from the most vulnerable groups, such as street children, and train them. At the beginning of the conflict, it is estimated that between 3,000 and 5,000 children below the age of 18 had been sent to the Central African Republic, Rwanda and Tanzania for training. Between 1,000 and 1,500 children of both sexes were recruited. Boys became spies and were sent to the camps of the regular forces and girls were used as wives and cooks.26 But most of the time these children are not well trained and are therefore often massacred in combat.27

As a result, one source claims that there are fewer and fewer children in these groups (between 500 and 800). This reduction in number is also partly due to the fact that families who agreed at the beginning of the war to give their children to these groups refused to continue this. Consequently, these families are the target of punitive attacks. Moreover, the Hutu groups are backed by the former Rwandan and Zairian armed forces and by Uganda and Angola.28

In 1998, the UN Commission on Human Rights adopted Resolution 1998/82 on the ‘situation of human rights in Burundi’ in which it "expresses its concern at the forcible recruitment and kidnapping of children by nongovernmental armed groups, and invites the Government of Burundi to take measures to combat that trend, having in mind the non-militarization of Burundian society, particularly the children."

Silvester, now 17, was with Burundi Hutu rebels fighting the Tutsi-dominated army when paratroopers assassinated the first democratically-elected President, Melchior Ndayae — a Hutu, in 1993. At that time he was barely 12 years old.

"It was a sudden twist of events, in our Kamenge suburb [north of the capital, Bujumbura]. They [the army] had killed our President, we had to fight back. I dropped [out of] school. School was almost impossible for us, as Kamenge was almost daily rocked with heavy shelling by the army and the rebels."

"Soon after the attempted coup, we went on rampage destroying houses belonging to Tutsis. Most of them had already fled, knowing very well that Kamenge was no longer their place. Those who remained were slaughtered. We used to live together, but what the Army had done was unacceptable".

Following the 1993 attempted coup, ‘ethnic cleansing’ took place in Bujumbura between the two groups, with the emergence of Tutsi- and Hutu-dominated suburbs. A Tutsi could not venture into a Hutu area and vice versa, while assassinations and murders downtown were common place.

"We spent sleepless nights watching for the enemy. My first role was to carry a torch for grown-up rebels. Later I was shown how to use hand grenades. Barely within a month or so, I was carrying an AK-47 rifle or even a G3," Silvester recalls.

When the rebellion in Kamenge was overpowered by the Army in 1995, Silvester managed to sneak out of the area with his family and together they crossed into Kenya to seek asylum. Now living in Nairobi, he has resumed school. His memory, however, is still haunted by what he saw and did in Kamenge as a child rebel.

"It was a sad experience, killing, watching people being killed. But sometimes we did enjoy it, you know during fire exchange with the military. I lost my dad and my two brothers in the fight and told myself that I had no other choice but doing it. I don't know if peace will be recovered some day in Burundi."

Testimony received by Gervais Abayeho.
Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. Association Nationale pour la Communication et l’Education aux droits de l’Homme (ACEDH) estimated the figure at 35,000-37,000.
5. According to another source there are no clear rules on recruitment into the armed forces.
7. Information supplied by a reliable source requesting confidentiality.
9. Information supplied by Gervais Abayeho, Consultant Researcher, Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers.
11. Decree No. 1/005 of 1 December 1996 on the creation of a civic service.
14. DCI-Burundi, op. cit.
15. Information supplied by Gervais Abayeho.
16. ACEDH, op. cit; information supplied by Gervais Abayeho.
17. Information supplied by Gervais Abayeho.
20. Information supplied by Gervais Abayeho.
21. Information supplied by a reliable source requesting confidentiality.
22. Ibid.
23. ACEDH, op. cit.
25. Rädda Barnen, op. cit. The UN Special Rapporteur on Burundi has stated that “the rebels have not only destroyed numerous schools, particularly in Bujumbura Rural, but also kidnapped school-age children and adolescents to force them to join their ranks.” UN Doc. E/CN.4/1998/72 of 13 February 1998, paras. 68 and 95.
26. DCI-Burundi, op. cit.
28. DCI-Burundi, op. cit.

Cameroon

Has signed (1992) but not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Population: 13,937,000
Under-18s: 7,053,000 (51%)

Governmental Armed Forces

• Active: c. 22,100 (including Gendarmerie)
  Army: 11,500
  Navy: c. 1,300
  Air Force: 300

• Gendarmerie: 9,000

National Recruitment Legislation

Presidential Decree No. 94/185 of September 1994 concerning non-officer military personnel sets the minimum age for recruitment at 18 and the maximum age at 22 within the year of recruitment. Furthermore, the candidates must have at least the First School Leaving certificate. In addition, for officers there is the École Militaire Inter-Armes in Yaoundé. The minimum age for recruitment is 18 years. Moreover, if the candidate is less than 21, he or she must have parental authorisation.

National Recruitment Practice

There is no evidence of any underage recruitment into the armed forces.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/C157333FCA91F573C1256C130033E448-chilsold.htm
There is no ongoing armed conflict involving Cameroon, although a border dispute exists between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Bakassi peninsula, where there have been sporadic skirmishes, and over Lake Chad. In an application of 29 March 1994, amended on 6 June 1994, Cameroon asked the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to determine the question of sovereignty over the Bakassi peninsula and over islands in Lake Chad, and to specify the course of the land and maritime boundary between itself and Nigeria. On 11 June 1998, the ICJ found that it had jurisdiction to deal with the merits of this case and found that Cameroon’s claims were admissible. On 28 October 1998, Nigeria filed a request for an interpretation of this judgement (the first time this has occurred in the history of the ICJ). For the time being, the case remains pending.

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. Article 11.
4. In a press communiqué dated 12 May 1997 from the Minister Delegate at the Presidency in charge of Defence, there is a minimum age of 18 years for direct recruitment into the school.

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**Cape Verde**

*Has signed (1992) and ratified (1993) the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*

Population: 406,000

Under-18s: 193,000 (47%)

**Governmental Armed Forces**

- Active c. 1,100
  - Army: 1,000
  - Air Force: under 100

**National Recruitment Legislation**

Military conscription exists and is compulsory. Article 83(1) of the 1992 constitution states that "[a]ll individuals shall have the duty to contribute to the defence of the nation." This is confirmed by Article 271:

"(1) The defence of the Nation shall be the right and the duty of all Cape Verdians.
(2) Military service shall be compulsory, as provided by law.
(3) Conscientious objectors and those who are unfit for military service shall perform civic service, as provided by law.
(4) Substitution of civic service for military service may be established by law."

The minimum age for conscription is not known.

**National Recruitment Practice**

Military service is selective and lasts for two years, but no information is available on the methods of recruitment and selection.

**Child Participation in Armed Conflict**

There is no armed conflict in Cape Verde.

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
Central African Republic

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 3,416,000
Under-18s: 1,657,000 (48%)1

Governmental Armed Forces

- Active: (including Gendarmerie c. 4,950)
  Army: 2,500
  Air Force: under 150
- Paramilitary: 2,300
  Gendarmerie: 2,300

National Recruitment Legislation

No information is currently available on national legislation governing recruitment.

National Recruitment Practice

Conscription is selective and military service lasts for 2 years.3

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

In 1996, the Central African Republic was shaken by a politico-military crisis, punctuated by three successive mutinies by elements of the Armed Forces. As a result of the mediation of Presidents of Gabon, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali, the Bangui Agreements were signed on 25 January 1997 by the different parties, which included the necessary elements for a comprehensive settlement of the crisis. On 31 January 1997, an Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) was set up with the mandate to restore peace and security in the country, notably by undertaking operations to disarm the former rebels, the militia and all other unlawfully armed individuals.

Following the departure of French troops in April 1998, the UN Secretary General recommended the creation of a UN Peacekeeping force. This force was established by UN Security Council Resolution 1159 of 27 March 1998. The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) was deployed on 15 April 1998 and is continuing its work. Certain elements of the Bangui Agreements have not yet been implemented, for example the restructuring of the armed forces. Accordingly, the UN Secretary General has recommended extension of the mandate of MINURCA.4 However, the UN Security Council recently expressed concern about the effect of the Central African Republic's current political tensions on stability in the country.5

There is no evidence of any child participation in the conflict.

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
Chad

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 6,702,000
Under-18s: 3,241,000 (48%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

• Active: 30,350 (including Republican Guard)
  Army: c. 25,000
  Air Force: 350

• Paramilitary: 4,500 active
  Republican Guard: 5,0003
  Gendarmerie: 4,500

National Recruitment Legislation

Military service is compulsory according to Article 51 (2) of the 1996 Constitution. This article also states that "[T]he defence of the Fatherland and the integrity of the national territory is a duty for every Chadian", and that "[T]he conditions for accomplishing this duty are determined by law." The minimum age for recruitment is fixed by Article 14 of Ordinance No. 01/PCE/CEDNACVG/91 of 16 January 1991 (armed forces reorganisation ordinance) and set at 18 for volunteers and 20 for conscripts. However, a law adopted the following year states that although volunteers must be 18 years of age, a non-emancipated minor can be enrolled with the consent of his tutor.4 It is not clear how these two laws can be legally reconciled. Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation indicated that there is no minimum age for the participation in an armed conflict.5

National Recruitment Practice

It has been reported that conscription is applied selectively to some groups. The Chadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation mentioned that the conscripts are divided into two groups. The first one the size of which is fixed by decree every year is effectively enrolled into the armed forces, while the second group stays at the disposal of the military authorities for a period of two years.6 The Government stated in 1992 that military service in Chad is performed only by the students of the National College of Administration and of the National College of Physical Education and Sports, upon completion of their training.7 This information was reproduced in a recent report of the UN Secretary-General.8 However, Amnesty International reported in 1996 that the governmental forces were actually recruiting children as young as 12. A Chadian public prosecutor, quoted in the report, denounced recruitment by the gendarmerie of children aged between 12 and 15 which were used at checkpoints to arrest the so-called ‘codos’ (members of armed opposition groups). He added that these children frequently denounced people who were not members of the opposition groups. The authorities have admitted this unlawful recruitment.9

The terms and conditions set by the Sovereign National Conference forbids the recruitment of children in the regular armed forces and calls for the rehabilitation of children who have served as soldiers. In 1996, a national workshop was organised on the issue during which military, religious and political leaders expressed their opposition to the use of child soldiers. Structures were subsequently created within the Ministry of Defence to tackle the problem. Furthermore, a mediation body was created within the office of the Prime Minister which approached the rebels to advocate against the use of child soldiers. Thanks to this, the use of child soldiers was considerably reduced by both the rebels and the regular armed forces.10

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

A memorandum of understanding signed between the Republic of Chad and France on 30 July 1991 provided for a reduction in the size of the armed forces, the discharge of minors and their reintegration into civilian life. A 1992 decree concerning the discharge of army personnel stipulates that the provisions apply specifically to minors.11 In accordance
with this decree a census of minors was organised by the Ministry for the Armed Forces. Of the 500 minors listed, 467 were discharged with an end-of-service grant. The other 33, having reached the age of majority, preferred to continue their army career.12

After three decades of civil war which has been internationalised because of the intervention of several foreign powers (mostly France and Libya, and more sporadically Israel, Nigeria, Sudan, and USA) Idriss Déby seized power in 1990. He was not able to establish democracy, however, and from 1991 the Chadian National Army (ANT) was once more confronted by a number of armed opposition groups, mainly in the South and the East of the country.13 A peace accord was signed in April 1997 between the Government and the Armed Forces for the Federal Republic. In May a second peace accord between the Government and the FARF officially ended the armed conflict in the south of the country. As with the previous accord, it provided for an amnesty for all members of the FARF and for the integration of its members into the army. In November, the FARF, as a political party, merged itself into the Mouvement Patriotique du Salut (MPS), the party in power under the control of President Déby.14 France still has about 900 soldiers in Chad.

In late 1998, Chad sent troops to the Democratic Republic of Congo in order to help President Kabila in his fight against the rebels. It has also been reported — and denied by the Chadian authorities — that the country sent troops to Sudan in order to bolster Sudanese armed forces in their battle against the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA).15

Armed Opposition groups

The origin of main opposition armed groups can be found in the Chadian National Liberation Front (FROLINAT), created in 1966, which then split into many opposition movements. In 1995, the main armed opposition groups created the National Alliance for the Resistance (ANR), which follows many other agreements among armed groups.

In the East:

• The Chad National Front (FNT): created in 1992. About 1,000 men.
• The Renewed National Front of Chad (FNTR): this group is a faction of the FNT.
• The Conseil National de Redressement (CNR): about 300 men.
• The National Resistance Forces (FNR): this 600-men strong group is led by Lieutenant-Colonel Mahamat Garfa, a major opponent to President Déby. This group was previously called the Dissident Chadian National Army (ANTD).

In the region of Lake Chad:

• The Movement for Democracy and Development (MDD) with two factions: the MDD-Western Armed Forces (about 300 men) and the MDD-Chadian National Armed Forces (about 300 men, partisans of Hissène Habré, the former head of State)

In the North:

• The Frolinat-CPR: group led by Goukouni Wedeye which seems to have increased in size in recent years.

In the South:

There are many small groups operating in the region but the strongest one is the Armed Forces for the Federal Republic (FARF).

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. According to reliable sources, the size of the army is about 52,000 men but is being reduced to 26,000 under the structural adjustment programme.
6. Ibid.
9. Amnesty International, Chad: a country under the arbitrary rule of the security forces with the tacit consent of other countries, AFR/20/11/96, London 10 October 1996.
10. Information provided by reliable sources.

Comoros

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Population: 651,000
Under-18s: 345,000 (53%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

• Army: 700
• Navy: 200

National Recruitment Legislation

According to UNICEF the minimum age for recruitment is 18 and military service is carried out on a voluntary basis. The procedure for recruitment is governed by legislation, although it has not been possible to obtain a copy. There is a military training centre on the main island of the Comoros, but again the minimum age of recruitment is 18.3

National Recruitment Practice

During the time of the mercenaries,4 young boys were recruited by the Government but this has been stopped since 1996. It is hard to determine which current members of the armed forces were actually recruited under the age of 18.5

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

In August 1997, after four months fighting between federal troops and separatists of the Island of Anjouan, the separatists declared the independence of Anjouan from the rest of the Comoros. In December 1998, renewed fighting broke out on the island between different separatist groups, and the Federal Government requested military intervention from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to help restore peace and security. After an emergency meeting of the OAU, it was decided to respond to the request as a matter of urgency. A regional delegation of diplomats led by South Africa arrived in the Comoros on 9 December 1998.6 On 29 January 1999, ministerial delegations from 11 African countries held talks in Pretoria in an attempt to find a political solution to the secessionist crisis.7 Presidential elections are scheduled to take place in early 1999, following the death of President Mohemed Taki Abdoulkarim, in November 1998.

There are now two separatists groups in Anjouan. One of them is led by the self-declared President Abdallah Ibrahim and the other, smaller group by the former Prime Minister Chamassi Said Omar. Both agree on the need for independence of the island but disagree on what its relationship with France should be. Neither group has made a public declaration not to recruit children. It is hard to know how many each group numbers but UNICEF has received information that in both groups young boys between 13 and 16 years of age have been recruited. It is believed that alcohol or drugs are used to entice children into joining the groups.8

Notes

3. Information supplied by UNICEF.
4. The period between 1978 and 1995 where mercenaries (backed by South Africa), among them Bob Denard, were particularly close to the Government. Bob Denard was in charge of the 'Garde présidentielle'. After the 1995 coup, the mercenaries left the country.
5. Information supplied by UNICEF.
7. Information supplied by UNICEF.

Congo-Brazzaville

Has signed (1992) but not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 2,745,000
Under-18s: 1,433,000 (52%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

• Active c. 10,000
  Army: 8,000
  Navy: 800
  Air Force: c. 1,200
• Paramilitary: 2,000 active
  Gendarmerie: 2,000
  People’s militias: 3,000 (being absorbed by the armed forces)
  Presidential Guard: currently being formed

National Recruitment Legislation

There has been no conscription since 1969 and, apparently, enlistment in the armed forces is voluntary. The minimum age for recruitment is 18.3

National Recruitment Practice

It is not known whether recruitment procedures for enlistment into the regular armed forces are followed. It is certain that recruitment of children into government-supported militia has been systematic.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

An internal armed conflict broke out in June 1997 when Cocoye troops loyal to democratically-elected President Lissouba encircled the Brazzaville residence of opposition leader Sassou Nguesso. Fierce fighting opposed Sassou’s Cobra militia to the Cocoye backed by the Zulu militia. However the arrival of Angolan troops to support Sassou proved decisive and he won the war in October 1997 forcing Lissouba and his Prime Minister Bernard Kolelas into exile.4

Each political party created a militia in 1993 just after the contested parliamentary elections. The former Prime Minister Bernard Kolelas was protected by his militia called the Ninjas. The former President Pascal Lissouba was protected by the Cocoye, backed by the Zulus.5 In January 1999, the Cocoye unveiled a new political movement called Mouvement National pour la Libération du Congo (National Movement for the Liberation of Congo — MNLC).6

Reports estimate that between 7,500 and 10,000 people were members of government-sponsored or opposition militia groups during the June-October conflict. They recruited people from the towns who were between 15 and 35 years of age.7 Many of the teenage fighters were killed in combat.8 During her one-day visit to Brazzaville in April 1998, Carol Bellamy, UNICEF Executive Director, met with President Sassou Nguesso. She declared that UNICEF and the Congolese Government would cooperate on the opening of a reeducation centre for child soldiers in Brazzaville. The Government was to provide UNICEF with premises for this centre.9

In June 1998, Rodolphe Adada, the Congolese Foreign Minister, said in a press conference that the problem of child soldiers was truly a tragedy, and one that was unfortunately seen all too often. He added, though, that in the case of Congo, it was not extremely significant. According to him, although the problem certainly needed to be addressed, child
participation had not been a major issue, except towards the end of civil war, when more young children under the age of 16 had taken part in the fighting.10

But a new cycle of hostilities started in southern Brazzaville during the autumn of 1998 between the armed forces of the new government and the Ninjas, the militia of the former Prime Minister Bernard Kolelas.11 As fighting worsened the Cocoye took part in the fighting in many areas of the south-western part of the country. It was reported that new recruits were not properly trained with the result that ‘illegal behaviour’ led to civilians being victims of the fighting.12 It was also reported that Angola had again sent troops to back President Sassou Nguesso.13 These troops have been estimated at 1,500.14 President Nguesso denied the assertion by opposition groups that other foreign forces, including Cubans, are supporting him. The Ninjas also denied the Government’s allegation that they were backed by UNITA rebels.15

In December 1998, seeking to end the civil war once and for all, President Sassou deployed regular army troops in the region of Pool, south of the capital. This led to an increase in the level of fighting and continuing excesses. The US State Department reported, in its 1998 Human Rights Report on Congo-Brazzaville that undisciplined Government soldiers including Cobra militia forces, were responsible for summary executions and rape in response to anti-government violence during the last four months of 1998. Rebels who had attained the ‘age of bearing arms’ were killed.16

As rebel militia came into the capital, witnesses reported seeing many children among them. "That day [17 December 1998], at about 11 am, there was a sudden clamour, clapping. I heard someone say, "They’re coming, it’s the Ninjas!" I went out and saw young men, not more than 14 or 15 years old, all wearing black shorts, bodies covered with charcoal, a gun in one hand, the bible in the other. The crowd was welcoming them. I sensed the danger and went home."17

On 26 January 1999, the Minister of Defence ordered military mobilisation in the south of the country because of the fighting opposing the governmental forces to the Cocoye and the Ninjas.18 At the beginning of February, in an interview in the French newspaper Libération, President Denis Sassou Nguesso reiterated his refusal to talk to the opposition forces. "They would now like to force negotiation on us by violent means. We will not negotiate with people who have destroyed the country and have knives in their teeth." He denied that Cuban troops were fighting alongside his forces and claimed that Angolan detachments had "practically left" the country, with units remaining only in Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire and Dolisie. On the reports of indiscipline and human rights abuses among his soldiers, he said a "mind set we are attempting to alter has set [in] in this country".19

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
15. Ibid.

Congo, Democratic Republic

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/C157333FCA91F573C1256C130033E448-chilsold.htm
Population: 48,040,000
Under-18s: 25,934,000 (54%)1

**Governmental Armed Forces**

There are no precise figures of the size of the armed forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) because of the change of regime. The South African Press Agency of Agence France Presse estimated that the DRC forces number around 60,000 ground troops, plus another 15,000 young recruits currently receiving training. Kinshasa also has special police units, and the backing of 15,000 Mayi-Mayi in the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu.2

**National Recruitment Legislation**

The draft DRC Constitution enshrines a provision concerning the minimum age of recruitment, which is set at 18 years. This is in accordance with what the government claims is currently the practice, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary.3

**National Recruitment Practice**

In his war against President Mobutu in 1996-97, Laurent-Désiré Kabila recruited and used thousands of children as soldiers. CNN, for example, attested that boys as young as 8 years of age called Mayi Mayi (meaning ‘water’ in Swahili — the theory being that the bullets shot at them would turn into liquid) were fighting within the Alliance of Democratic Forces for Liberation (AFDL).4 In his 1998 report on the situation of human rights in the DRC, the UN Special Rapporteur denounced the recruitment of children by the AFDL armed forces for use as soldiers, citing the case of "11-year-olds carrying heavy weapons and engaging in combat", and added that "because of their lack of training and their ability to handle weapons, these child soldiers, known as ‘kadogos’, have been corrupted and have participated in robberies and killings."5 The total number of children used by Kabila as soldiers in the war against Mobutu has been estimated at up to 10,000, or possibly even more.6

At the same time the Zairean armed forces were also recruiting young people between 15 and 18 in order to create a ‘deterrent army’. This led many young people from Kisangani, for example, to leave the city in order to avoid being forcibly recruited.7 Youngsters from the rural regions were particularly vulnerable to recruitment; it was reported that both rebels and regular troops used to target boys as young as seven. According to one commentator, "if they refused to join the armed group, they were usually arrested, accused of connivance with the enemy and, frequently, summarily executed."8

After the arrival in power of President Kabila, the DRC army became a mish-mash of different types of personnel, including former Zairean armed forces, new recruits (a lot of children among them), and Rwandan soldiers.9 Human Rights Watch publicly denounced the fact that children who were recruited before Kabila assumed the Presidency of the country were still serving as soldiers in the new Government armed forces.10 However, many of the children used by Kabila to overthrow Mobutu were left to their own devices in Kinshasa or became street children. In Kisangani, up to 4,000 former child soldiers were gathered in the Kapalata camp where they were malnourished and living in deplorable conditions. Several hundred died of cholera or malnutrition in December 1997.11

In early 1998 it was reported that former kadogos (child soldiers) would be targeted by a new national service with the aim of training young recruits to become ‘Builders of the Nation’ (Bâtisseurs de la Nation). A pilot training centre was set up in March 1998 in Kaniama-Kasese. Two thousand youngsters were supposed to be trained there with the ultimate objective of creating 33 such centres around the country for almost 50,000 ‘Builders of the Nation’.12

Yet on 7 August 1998, an official communiqué on national radio called for children and youth between 12 and 20 years of age to enlist in the armed forces, in response to the insurgency against the Government.13 International and non-governmental organizations denounced this wave of recruitment and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan publicly announced his concern about the reported recruitment of child soldiers in the DRC.14

Between 4,000 and 5,000 adolescents responded to the communiqué and were assembled in the Stade des Martyrs in Kinshasa. Most of them were street children who were told that they would be sent to the Kibomango camp for military training.15 Two months later, the Agence congolaise de presse reported that 6,000 ‘young volunteers’ had been sent from
Kinshasa to the interior of the country for military training.16

In a statement issued from Geneva on 14 August 1998, Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director of UNICEF, accused both government and rebels in the country of recruiting children as soldiers. She said that UNICEF was especially concerned about the re-enlistment of some 400-500 children from a transit centre near the city of Kisangani and more than 100 from the eastern town of Bukavu. A spokesman for UNICEF gave further clarification, saying that these youngsters had been abducted by the rebels but that both sides were involved in enlisting young teenagers.17

A FAC (Government armed forces) commander in Kinshasa who had done an informal survey of troops stationed there in November 1998 found that one out of every fourteen FAC soldiers was under the age of thirteen.18

In March 1998, a 13-year-old Congo boy soldier who shot and killed a local Red Cross volunteer in Kinshasa after a dispute on a football pitch was condemned to death by a military tribunal. Military officers in the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo went beyond prosecution recommendations for life imprisonment and imposed a capital sentence. The prosecution said that the lack of control of boy soldiers with guns was as much the fault of their older commanders and constituted extenuating circumstances. In the public hearing held at the side of the pitch, the boy said he had received three months' military training in the East of the country before joining Laurent Kabila’s successful campaign to overthrow former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko last year.

Following appeals from various sources, the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment by President Kabila. Estimates of the number of child soldiers in the army range from 6,000 to 20,000.

 Reuters report from 28 March and 21 April 1998.

The Democratic Republic of Congo said ... it was closing a military camp in the eastern city of Kisangani where more than 300 child soldiers have died in an outbreak of cholera and dysentery. ...

Aid workers say up to 3,000 young Mayi-Mayi, some as young as eight years old, were living in the Kapalata barracks in cramped and miserable conditions without adequate food and water. The Mayi-Mayi were an important part of the rebel force that helped Laurent Kabila topple the former Zaire’s veteran dictator Mobutu Sese Seko last May (1997) after a seven-month rebellion. They have since been at odds with Kabila's Government. The majority of the Mayi-Mayi children at the camp handed themselves over to authorities last October as potential recruits for the national army after several months of low-level fighting in the eastern Kivu provinces.


Child Participation in Armed Conflict

In August 1998 a conflict broke out between Tutsi-led rebels and Government forces in the far East of the country. Initially, southern African countries were split over how to handle the war. But the crisis in the DRC took a definitive turn with the decisive military support lent by Zimbabwe and Angola to President Kabila against the rebellion, which was itself backed by Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda.19

Both Government and rebel forces in the DRC, together with their allies from Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, are using thousands of children as soldiers.20 During a press conference the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu, appealed to all parties in the conflict to immediately stop the recruitment and use of children. In addition, he claimed that children were being recruited in neighbouring countries for combat in the DRC.21 In Bukavu, in late 1998, rebels had abducted or threatened to abduct children, apparently for use in the army, from several local organisations working with unaccompanied minors.22

Sporting an orange and purple cloth hat and oversized camouflage fatigues with two sheathed knives tied
around his waist, Musimbi says he became a soldier at the age of 13. After joining rebels in Goma led by then guerrilla leader Kabila, he was deployed to the north-eastern city of Kisangani, where he fought on frontlines with rebel troops and hiked hundreds of kilometres (miles) through jungles in the former Zaire.

In May 1997, Musimbi arrived with victorious rebels in the capital Kinshasa, helping to oust one of Africa’s longest ruling dictators, the late Mobutu Sese Seko.

After the war, he was sent back East to man checkpoints and help guard the main road winding north from Goma, the rebels’ eastern stronghold, to Kisumbu. The road slopes through a chain of volcanoes on DRC’s eastern borders with Uganda and Rwanda and is now lined with soldiers, many of them children, who wave down passing vehicles with weapons and beg for cigarettes and small change.

"I have no interest in going to school," Musimbi said proudly. "I've fought and killed many people. I'm a soldier, it's all the experience I need."


The parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo

At the end of October 1998, as the war was at its height, a dozen African states were trying to broker a cease-fire. Many of them, however, were involved militarily in the DRC while peace negotiations were ongoing. 23

Kinshasa and its allies

• Angola: a mechanised brigade of around 4,000 men is believed to be engaged in DRC. Luanda was reported recently to be preparing to send a further two motorised divisions, comprising 2,000 men, to the DRC.
• Chad: an estimated 1,500 troops were sent to DRC in September 1998.
• Namibia: Windhoek has between 200 and 300 troops in the DRC. 24
• Sudan is also said to have sent troops to the DRC and the rebels said that they were fighting Sudanese soldiers in the north-west part of the country. 25 Sudanese planes have also reportedly bombed rebel positions.
• Zimbabwe: between 3,000 and 5,000 men in the DRC. Some sources in Kinshasa put the number of Zimbabwean troops much higher. More troops were due to arrive in the country. In November 1998, the Zimbabwe Independent estimated that between 6,000 and 7,000 soldiers have been sent to DRC. 26
• The Central African Republic was also accused by the rebels of providing military support to DRC government troops. 27

The rebels and their allies

• Rebel forces: the eastern-based insurgents have around 60,000 men according to their military leaders. In addition, a number of Government troops, and Mayi-Mayi combatants, have been absorbed into their ranks. Many of the DRC’s rebels are members of the country’s Tutsi minority and veterans of President Kabila’s own insurrection. On 16 August 1998, they launched a coalition movement, the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD) — the Congolese Rally for Democracy. 28 This group, chaired by Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, was restructured in January 1999, 29 but one of its leaders, Arthur Z’ahidi Ngoma, abandoned the movement to pursue his own struggle against other Congolese opposition groups. 30
At the beginning of November 1998, a new rebel group, the Mouvement de Libération Congolais (MLC), Movement for Congolese Liberation, was launched by the millionaire businessman Jean-Pierre Bemba with the support of the Ugandan authorities. One of his first actions was to recruit 1,000, mainly young men, and a number of teenage girls. Later in the month he met with representatives of the RCD in Kampala to discuss how to work together. 31
• Rwanda: for a while Kigali denied categorically that it was involved militarily in the DRC, even though it was believed to have several hundred, possibly several thousand, soldiers, including several officers, fighting alongside the rebels. Rebels officers said around 200 Rwandan troops took part in the capture of Kindu. Subsequently, Rwanda acknowledged that it had sent troops to back the rebels but did not indicate how many soldiers were involved. 32
• Uganda: more than 4,000 Ugandan soldiers are in the DRC according to diplomatic sources. It was also reported that Burundi joined the war on the side of the rebels. In addition, some sources alleged that UNITA soldiers were in the DRC helping the rebels but this has not been confirmed. 33

Reports have confirmed that the rebel groups are made up of many child soldiers. In one report, rebel soldiers admitted that there were about 5,000 child soldiers among both the rebel troops and the government armed forces. 34 The rebels have denied recruiting children as soldiers, yet a journalist mentioned that new recruits who look only 12 or 13 will readily assert that they are actually 25 years old. 35 On 2 September 1998 during the Non-Aligned Movement’s Summit in Durban, President Kabila condemned the Rwandan and Ugandan-backed rebel troops for having "turned children into
Senior rebel commanders drumming up much needed support at rallies in the East have called openly on child soldiers to support them. Rebel politicians say they strongly oppose the practice, but keeping rebel ranks free of children is difficult. According to them, many young recruits are orphans who join voluntarily, seeking protection from the army and a place in society after their parents have been killed in civil conflict. Soldiering brings with it the right to carry a gun, which can guarantee life and food for families in a country where, in some parts, the state long ago ceased to operate effectively. But once given the freedom to kill, children can suffer psychological problems and are likely to have difficulty conforming to civilian society.

"It's true they can hold a gun and fight, but you spoil the education of a child," Songolo said, adding that he is against the practice but has seen many child soldiers in the country. He added: "Their minds go bad ... they become criminals if they leave."37

On 28 November 1998, a cease-fire agreement was signed during the Franco-African Summit in Paris between the DRC and all foreign countries having sent troops to the DRC. However, the meeting that should have taken place in Lusaka for the official signature of the cease-fire never took place and further negotiations were convened. In January 1999, leaders of Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Rwanda, and Uganda agreed a cease-fire in Windhoek, Namibia, but the DRC government and the rebels were not represented.

On 1 March 1999, Ernest Wamba dia Wamba said he would speak to rebel military commanders to ensure no children under the age of 18 were recruited or deployed. "We are going to discuss the issue with our military personnel and we'll try to push for that and ease these young recruits out of the military", he told Reuters by satellite phone from Goma. "We want to make sure that the age of recruitment doesn't go beyond the accepted age of 18", dia Wamba said. The rebel leader made the comments after meeting in Rwanda last week with Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for of children and armed conflict.38

It remains to be seen whether this represents anything more than a public relations initiative.

It's true they can hold a gun and fight, but you spoil the education of a child," Songolo said, adding that he is against the practice but has seen many child soldiers in the country. He added: "Their minds go bad ... they become criminals if they leave."37

Notes

3. A recent census done in Kinshasa and in the south of the country revealed that among a group of 700 soldiers there were 50 children below 13 years of age.
4. "Child soldiers lead rebel advance in Zaire", CNN, 7 December 1996. It is also believed that groups of Mayi-Mayi also fought alongside former President Mobutu's forces against the then Tutsi-dominated AFDL.
6. Braeckman, C., "Les apprentis-militaires qui suivaient Kabila sont aujourd'hui livrés à eux-mêmes: Mulume, enfant-soldat du Congo,
9. Information supplied by UNICEF.
Côte d’Ivoire

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Population: 14,300,000
Under-18s: 7,307,000 (51%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

• Active: 13,900 (including Presidential Guard and Gendarmerie)
  Army: 6,800
  Navy: 900
  Air Force: 700

• Paramilitary:
  Presidential Guard: 1,100
  Gendarmerie: 4,400
  Militia: 1,500

The Côte d’Ivoire’s armed forces (Fanci) are believed to be very weak so much of the defence of the country is undertaken by the French armed forces.3

National Recruitment Legislation

Conscription is regulated by the Law on Military Recruitment No. 61-210 of 12 June 1961, as modified by the Law No. 62-230 of 29 June 1962.4 According to this law, all men of 21 years of age are liable for a military service which lasts for 6 months. However, it is believed that not all 21-year-old men are enlisted and some sources state that recruitment is selective.5 Nevertheless, the Decree No. 89-769 of 21 June 1989 (this Decree is based on the above legislation) called up from 3 July 1989 all young people born in 1970. This means that the minimum age for recruitment is in fact 18 ½ years of age. Furthermore, the decree allows all recruits conscripted on 6 July 1987 to leave the armed forces only after 29 June 1989. This means that, at least for this class of age, military service actually lasted for 2 years.

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/C157333FCA91F573C1256C130033E448-chilsold.htm
There is one military secondary school in Côte d'Ivoire, the École militaire préparatoire technique of Bingerville, which is under military command. No further information on this school is currently available.

National Recruitment Practice

There is no evidence of underage recruitment taking place in the country.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire. However incursions by Liberian rebel soldiers have compelled the Ivoirian authorities to reinforce patrols along the country’s western border since 1994. For example, the Ivoirian News Agency (AIP) reported that a near military confrontation between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia was averted on 23 January 1999 following the timely intervention of Ivoirian authorities.

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
4. Information obtained by the Swedish Embassy in Abidjan through official sources.
6. Information obtained by the Swedish Embassy in Abidjan through official sources.

Djibouti

Has signed (1992) but not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 634,000
Under-18s: 298,000 (47%)

Governmental Armed Forces

- Active: c. 9,600 (including Gendarmerie)
  Army: 8,000
  Navy: 200
  Air Force: 200
  Gendarmerie: 1,200

- Paramilitary: c. 3,000 active
  National Security Force: c. 3,000

National Recruitment Legislation

Military service is not compulsory and the recruitment is apparently done only on a voluntary basis. No information on the minimum age of recruitment is available. The army is mainly composed of members of the Issa, the dominant Somali clan in Djibouti.

National Recruitment Practice

No information is available on current recruitment practice in Djibouti.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

On December 26, 1994, a peace agreement was signed between the government and the Afar guerilla movement, the
Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD). This armed group was created in 1991. The FRUD is reported to have included many young men and boys.

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
4. Information obtained by the Swedish Embassy in Abidjan through official sources.
6. Information obtained by the Swedish Embassy in Abidjan through official sources.

Egypt

*Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*

Population: 64,465,000
Under-18s: 28,017,000 (43%)

**Governmental Armed Forces**

- Active: 450,000
  - Army: 320,000 (perhaps more than 250,000 conscripts)
  - Navy: c. 20,000
  - Air Force: 30,000
  - Air Defence Command: 80,000

- Reserves: 254,000

- Paramilitary: 230,000 active
  - Central Security Forces: 150,000
  - National Guard: 60,000
  - Border Guard Forces: 20,000

**National Recruitment Legislation**

Conscription is compulsory according to article 58 of the 1980 Constitution which states that: "Defence of the homeland and its territory is a sacred duty and conscription is compulsory, in accordance with the law." The law which regulates military service is the 1980 Military and National Service Act No. 127. Under this law all men between 18 and 30 years of age are liable for military service, which lasts for 3 years. Graduated students serve for a period of 18 months.

**National Recruitment Practice**

There is no evidence of any underage recruitment into the Egyptian armed forces.

There are several military schools in Egypt:

- The Military Academy, Heliopolis, Cairo: to be admitted in this school, the requirements are a secondary school general certificate and its equivalent or a bachelor degree from one of the Egyptian universities. No minimum age is given.
- The Air Defence College: the candidates must have finished the high school and must not be more than 22 years on the first of October of the year they enter the Academy. For foreign students this maximum age is fixed at 21 years. No minimum age is given.
- The Egyptian Naval College, Alexandria: among other qualifications, the candidates must be below the age of 21. No
minimum age is given.6
• The Military Technical College, Cairo: the applicants must be secondary graduates of the science branch with a minimum score of 80 per cent, Egyptian, unmarried and not over 22 years of age. No minimum age is given.7
• The Egyptian Air Academy, Belbais: the conditions required for the applicants are numerous. One of them is dealing with the age: the applicant must not be over 21 years of age on the day of starting the study at the Air Academy. No minimum age is given.8
• The Armed Forces Technical Institute: the candidate must be below 24 years of age. Moreover the accepted candidate must pass successfully a period of military and scientific preparation at the training centre of the Institute. No minimum age is given.9

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

The Government faces an Islamic opposition which targets politicians, police and army members, tourists, and intellectuals. It reacted in 1992-93 with a very repressive policy of arrests and executions. Since October 1992, 85 death sentences have been passed by the military courts and 64 executions have been carried out. This led to a shift in strategy, and to attacks abroad.

But in recent years, attacks against tourists in Egypt have intensified. The authorities are now targeting even moderate Islamics. As a result, many leaders of Islamic groups have been arrested and/or executed. This has led to more and more young people participating in terrorist activities without any control.10 A ‘teenage boy’ was among 39 males brought to trial for membership of the al-Gama’a al-Islamiya armed opposition group in November 1997.11

Armed opposition groups12

• Al-Jihad (Holy War): created in 1975-76, this group principally aimed at Copts in the South and at politicians. It claimed responsibility for the assassination of Anwar El-Sadat. Other attacks towards politicians have been laid at the door of the Jihad but it is hard to know who was actually responsible.
• Talae‘h al-Fatah (the Vanguard of the Conquest): this group was created in the early 1990s in Pakistan. The assassination of the writer Forag Foda (1992) and the assassination attempts against prominent politicians have been imputed to it.
• Al-Gama’a al-Islamiya (Islamic Group): the group’s preeminent spiritual leader is Shaykh Umar abd al-Rahman who lives in the United States. The members of the Gama’a are gathered in cells at the district or city level. They are under the responsibility of an emir. In Egypt, they advocate an Islamic State and have links with other Islamic groups abroad.

Notes

2. IISS estimates and Government information taken from its Website: http://www.mmc.gov.eg/welcome.html.

Equatorial Guinea

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Population: 420,000
Under-18s: 208,000 (50%)
Governmental Armed Forces

• Active: 1,320
  Army: 1,100
  Navy: 120
  Air Force: 100

National Recruitment Legislation

Even though the Constitution makes military service compulsory, it seems that no law has been passed to regulate national service.

National Recruitment Practice

It is not clear whether or not conscription is enforced and if a legal basis does exist for it, although it has been asserted that all men who are 18 years of age are liable for military service.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in Equatorial Guinea.

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. Article 16, paragraph 2.

Eritrea

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Population: 3,409,000
Under-18s: 1,713,000 (50%)1

Governmental Armed Forces

• Active: c 46,000 (due to to be reduced to 35,000)
  No precise breakdown of the figures is available.

National Recruitment Legislation

Military service is governed by the Decree on National Service of 23 October 1995. All men and women between the ages of 18 and 50 are eligible for military training and national service. The national service lasts for 18 months: a six-month induction period (the longest of its kind in the world), which takes place at Sawa in the north-west of the country, followed by a twelve-month service that includes non-military tasks such as development work, but which is carried out within the armed forces and which is run by the Ministry of Defence. So far, in October 1998, 120,000 people had received the 6-months training. Some 35 per cent of the Eritrean armed forces are female.

National Recruitment Practice

There is no confirmed recruitment of underage soldiers at the present time, although the lack of systematic birth registration makes it impossible to know whether the minimum age is being respected in practice.
Child Participation in Armed Conflict

In 1990, after 30 years of fighting to win independence from Ethiopia, the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front captured the capital, Asmara, and formed a provisional government under Isaias Afewerki. A referendum took place on 23 to 25 April 1993, in which 99.8 per cent of those voting endorsed national independence. Although relations with Ethiopia were swiftly normalised, disputes remained over some border areas.

In May 1998, an incident took place between Eritrean and Ethiopian soldiers in the Badme region during which four Eritrean soldiers were killed. This led to a border conflict between the two States. In January 1999, after a lull of eight months and the failure of all outside attempts to solve the problem,7 the UN Secretary-General assigned Mohamed Sahnoun as Special Envoy to support diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis.8 At the beginning of February the conflict erupted again.9

On 10 February 1999, UN Security Council Resolution 1227 condemned the use of force and demanded an immediate halt to hostilities. The resolution was approved unanimously at a session in which UN special envoy Mohamed Sahnoun briefed the council on his ill-fated peace mission to the region. Sahnoun said later the world could soon see Africa’s first ‘high-tech’ war, as both sides had sophisticated arsenals and aircraft.10

By mid-February 1999, Ethiopia was claiming that 7,000 Eritrean soldiers had been killed or wounded and Eritrea was claiming that its forces had so far killed 1,500 Ethiopian troops and wounded 3,000.11 A delegation of the European Union visited Ethiopia (19 February 1999) and Eritrea (the day after) in order to push the OAU plan to arbitrate the border dispute. This plan was accepted by Ethiopia but a response was still waited from Eritrea.12 On 27 February, in the face of military losses, Eritrea told the United Nations Security Council that it accepted a peace plan drawn up by the Organisation of African Unity which Ethiopia had endorsed. Eritrea said Ethiopia launched a fresh assault on 28 February along the 40-mile Badme front, despite international calls for an immediate cease-fire. Ethiopia denied the claim.13 On 2 March, almost a million Ethiopians crowded a square in the capital, Addis Ababa, to celebrate the recapture by their army of the border town of Badme, seized by Eritrean troops in 1998.14

Children were used as soldiers by Eritrea in the war of independence against Ethiopia. It is not known whether Eritrean children are being used in the current conflict.

In addition, some small armed opposition groups do exist within Eritrea itself. It was reported that Eritrean Liberation Front rebels in the Danakil region of the country came into conflict with government officials over young men refusing to be conscripted in the national army: this resulted in the death of two Government soldiers.15 Sudan has also recruited and trained people from a group known as the Eritrean Islamic Jihad after clashes arising between Islamic militants and government forces in December 1994.16

Notes

2. Estimate taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
6. See for instance the Rääda Bamen country file on Eritrea on its Website: http://www.rb.se
16. Ibid.
Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 60,148,000
Under-18s: 31,741,000 (53%)\(^1\)

**Governmental Armed Forces**\(^2\)

* Active c. 120,000 including 100,000 soldiers in the Army.

However, on 12 May 1998, the Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister of Defence, Tefera Walawa, reported to Parliament that Ethiopia’s Defence Force stood at between 60,000 and 70,000 soldiers.\(^3\)

**National Recruitment Legislation**

The minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces is 18 years. There is no compulsory military service\(^4\) and conscription is not mentioned in the 1995 Constitution\(^5\) but Article 36 (1) of the Constitution provides that children will "not be subject to exploitative practices, neither to be required nor permitted to perform work which may be hazardous or harmful to [their] health or well-being."

Article 4 of the Defence Force Proclamation No. 27/1996 deals with recruitment. No disposition deals with the minimum age of recruitment but it is provided that "[t]he Ministry [of Defence] may, in accordance with criteria issued by it from time to time, recruit persons fit and willing for military purposes." These criteria have been made public in notices calling recruits from time to time. So far such notices included the minimum age of 18 years as one of the criteria.\(^6\)

**National Recruitment Practice**

It had been reported that the Government was making serious efforts to respect the minimum age of 18 years for entry into the armed forces and that many underage children who wanted to join the army had been rejected as recruits. War Resisters International had already pointed out that there is no system of verifying age in Ethiopia and it is up to the recruitment officer to estimate the age of the youth. "Therefore, this can lead to possible errors, although it cannot be ascertained that children have been recruited as a result."\(^7\) In May 1998, the Minister of Defence told legislators that "practical and successful recruitment" had been carried out so as to ensure a proportional representation of the different ethnic groups in the country.\(^8\)

However, two reports in The Independent, a British newspaper, on 10 and 11 February 1999, indicated otherwise. On 10 February, Lucy Hannan refers to Ethiopian prisoners of war, including 16-year-old Kadir Abdulkadir from Jigiga (Somali region, Ethiopia), who claims he was forcibly recruited from school. The following day she reported an interview with a 17-year-old POW, Dowit Admas, who claimed that he was playing football in Gondar High School when Ethiopian Government soldiers rounded up 60 boys and sent them to Bershkel Military Training Camp in Gojam.

Apart from officer’s and specialised training schools, there are at least six known military training camps. They are located in Birr (Gojjam), Tolay (Shoa), Hurso (Hararge), Blatte (SNNPR), Dedessa (Wellega) and Tatek. Precise details are not available on the capacity and functioning of these schools but it has been calculated that at least 100,000 people are under training, and that all camps are operational. A new defence force engineering college was established in 1996. No information is available on the age of recruitment in this school.\(^9\)

**Child Participation in Armed Conflict**

In addition to the conflict with Eritrea (see above Eritrea country file), Ethiopia is also confronted by an internal armed opposition group, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Before 1995, it was alleged that OLF recruited children and peasants by force but no information on the current recruitment methods are available.\(^9\)

**Notes**

2. Estimate taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
6. Information provided by Rädda Barnen.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.

Gabon

Has signed (1992) but not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 1,138,000
Under-18s: 505,000 (44%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

• Active: c. 4,700
  Army: 3,200
  Navy: c. 500
  Air Force: 1,000

• Paramilitary: 2,000
  Gendarmerie: 2,000

National Recruitment Legislation

The Law-Decree that established the national armed forces instituted compulsory military service.3 It has been claimed that the minimum age for recruitment is 20 years of age.4

National Recruitment Practice

No information is available on the current practice with regard to conscription.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in Gabon.

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.

Gambia

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 1,169,000
Under-18s: 549,000 (47%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

• Active: 800
  Gambian National Army: 800
**National Recruitment Legislation**

There is no conscription in Gambia and volunteers — men and women — must be 18 years of age. After their enlistment, they undergo a training of four to six months.3

**National Recruitment Practice**

There is no evidence of underage recruitment in Gambia.

**Child Participation in Armed Conflict**

In January 1999, Gambia sent troops to Sierra Leone within the ECOMOG forces as support for efforts to restore peace in the country. In February 1999, Gambia also sent troops (140 soldiers) as part of the ECOMOG forces in Guinea-Bissau.4 There is no evidence of any underage soldiers being deployed as part of this contingent.

**Notes**

2. Estimate taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.

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**Ghana**

*Has signed (1997) but not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*

Population: 18,338,000
Under-18s: 9,340,000 (51%)1

**Governmental Armed Forces**

- Active: 7,000
  - Army: 5,000
  - Navy: 1,000
  - Air Force: 1,000
- Paramilitary: c. 800
  - Presidential Guard: c. 800 and increasing

**National Recruitment Legislation**

The minimum age for recruitment is 18 years. Although according to Article 41 (h) of the 1992 Constitution "it shall be the duty of every citizen to defend Ghana and render national service when necessary", there is no law on conscription,3 and therefore the Ghanaian armed forces consist purely of volunteers.

**National Recruitment Practice**

A form of conscription has, though, been established through the 1980 National Service Act (Act 426). According to this law, all graduated students over 18 years of age are obliged to perform a two-year national service including an eight-week period of military training. No information is available on the nature of this training, but recruitment procedures and training are based on the British model.4 There is no evidence of underage recruitment in Ghana.5

**Child Participation in Armed Conflict**

There is no armed conflict in Ghana.
Notes

2. Estimates from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London. Social Service International, Ghana, claims that there are over 20,000 soldiers in the Ghanian army.
5. According to Social Service International.

Guinea

Has signed (1998) but not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 7,614,000
Under-18s: 4,080,000 (53%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

- Active: 9,700
  Army: 8,500
  Navy: 400
  Air Force: 800

- Paramilitary: 2,600 active
  Gendarmerie: 1,000
  Republican Guard: 1,600

- People’s Militia: 7,000

National Recruitment Legislation

According to national legislation all Guinean citizens between the ages of 18 and 25 years may be called up by the army for a period of service of 18 months.3 The rate of recruitment is 95 per cent among men and 5 per cent among women.4

National Recruitment Practice

There is no evidence of underage recruitment in Guinea.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in Guinea but the country faces insecurity because of armed conflicts or troubles within its immediate neighbours. In the autumn of 1998, Guinea had about 700,000 refugees on its territory — 300,000 from Liberia and 400,000 from Sierra Leone. Moreover, a number of armed groups, such as the RUF from Sierra Leone, and ULIMO and the NPFL from Liberia, use Guinea as a rearguard military base (and commit atrocities against refugees and Guinean civilians at the same time).

Guinea is contributing several hundred troops to peacekeeping operations in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. Guinea also sent troops to Guinea-Bissau in June 1998 to help the government resist the attempted coup d’état.

The living conditions of Guinean soldiers are extremely poor, and this was a major contributory factor in the outbreak of a two-day mutiny in February 1996 which killed 50 people, wounded 100 more and resulted in extensive damage to the capital, Conakry.5

Notes:
Guinea-Bissau

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 1,112,000
Under-18s: 534,000 (48%)

Governmental Armed Forces

* Active: c. 9,250
  Army: 6,800
  Navy: c. 350
  Air Force: 100

* Paramilitary: 2,000
  Gendarmerie: 2,000

National Recruitment Legislation

The legislation in force states that all Guineans between 18 and 25 years of age are submitted to compulsory military service. The military service lasts for 24 months and the recruitment is selective.

National Recruitment Practice

Owing to economic constraints, only two national recruitments have taken place since 1974. Voluntary recruitment seems to be enough; 90 per cent of recruits are students from the secondary school in the capital.

Since the liberation war against the Portuguese, which ended in 1974, no reported cases of the use or recruitment of child soldiers in the army have been presented to UNICEF or concerned NGOs. Recently, however, rebel leader Ansumane Mané complained about the deployment on the front of 350 young recruits "forcibly enrolled in the Government troops" who had fired gunshots, constituting a violation of the cease-fire.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

On 7 June 1998, an army mutiny began after the dismissal of the chief of staff, General Ansumane Mané. The mutiny escalated into a pitched battle between governmental troops, supported by soldiers from Senegal and Guinea, and rebels backed by the Casamance Separatist Movement. After 5 months of fighting and the collapse of a first cease-fire signed on 26 August, a peace agreement was signed on 2 November 1998, in Abuja, Nigeria, just after the ECOWAS Summit. The parties agreed on a cease-fire, general and presidential elections by the end of March 1999, the withdrawal of all foreign troops, and the deployment of an intervention force under the auspices of ECOWAS to be sent at the border between Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. Togo, Niger, Benin and Gambia have all pledged to contribute troops to this peacekeeping mission.

However, new fighting broke out in the first week of February 1999, and as a result the arrival of the peacekeeping troops was postponed. A new cease-fire was signed between the parties in conflict on 3 February 1999. On 12 February, the UN reported that the Guinean and Senegalese troops backing ‘beleaguered’ President Joao Bernardo Vieira were to begin leaving almost immediately. On 20 February 1999, a government of national unity was appointed with a member of the Junta at its head, Francisco Fadul. He indicated that his government will be unable to abide by the timetable initially drawn up in Abuja.
Even though no cases of child soldiers have been reported so far, concerns have arisen on two occasions. At the very beginning of the conflict about 500 youth were recruited by the armed forces for training in Guinea Conakry. It is estimated that these young recruits were between 18 and 19 years of age but an enquiry is ongoing in order to determine their exact age. In addition, during food distribution by the National Red Cross, the army took the opportunity to select and force suitable youngsters to enrol. Most of them were more than 18 years old but enquiries are likewise underway.

**Armed Opposition groups**

The military junta consists mainly of forces from the regular army backed by veterans from the liberation war. These forces are estimated to include 7,000 regular soldiers. At the early stage of the conflict, it has been reported, and confirmed by eye-witnesses, that youngsters between 17 and 18 years of age volunteered for the military junta. Nevertheless, the number of youngsters involved is low (about 50) and nothing indicates that they participated in hostilities. Moreover it is generally agreed that the Junta did not lack personnel but rather matériel.

**Notes**

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. Information supplied by UNICEF.
6. Information supplied by UNICEF.
14. Information supplied by UNICEF.

**Kenya**

*Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*

Population: 28,414,000
Under-18s: 14,914,000 (52%)1

**Governmental Armed Forces**

- Active: 24,200
  - Army: 20,500
  - Navy: 1,200
  - Air Force: 2,500
- Paramilitary: 5,000
  - Police General Service Unit: 5,000

**National Recruitment Legislation**

Recruitment into the Kenyan armed forces is regulated by the Armed Forces Act, Chapter 199 of the Laws of Kenya. According to Section 173 (1) of this Chapter, "a person offering to enlist in the armed forces shall be given a notice in the prescribed form setting out the questions to be answered on attestation and stating the general conditions of the enlistment". An officer shall recruit a person only if he has been given such a notice, understands it and wishes to enlist.

The first condition enshrined in this Chapter is that the person to be recruited must have the apparent age of 18 years.
"unless written consent to the enlistment has been given by his parents or guardian or, where his parents or guardian are
dead or unknown, by the District Commissioner of the district in which the person resides."3 The second condition is that
the person to be recruited must be a Kenyan citizen.4

National Recruitment Practice

According to Rädda Barnen, a further requirement to join the armed forces is a national identity card. This card can
only be issued when the person applying is above 18 and is able to produce a birth certificate. There is no evidence of
underage recruitment in the armed forces.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There are believed to be two armed opposition groups in Kenya: the February 18 Popular Resistance Army, and the
Kenya National Patriotic Front. These are the latest in a list of armed groups which have carried out actions in Kenya,
though they appear to have been inactive for the past two years.5 It is not known whether they have recruited children
into their ranks.

There is also an Islamic opposition in Kenya which has been countered by President Moi through the prohibition of the
Islamic Party of Kenya. But the Islamic issue could revive quickly. Insecurity in Kenya is mostly due to armed groups
pillaging in the North and East of the country.6

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. Section 173 (2).
4. Section 173 (3).
6. Ibid.

Lesotho

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 2,131,000
Under-18s: 1,031,000 (48%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

• Active: 2,000
• Army: 2,000

National Recruitment Legislation

Lesotho has no conscription and the enrolment into the Royal Lesotho Defence Force is voluntary.3 Every person who
enlists shall be given a notice "specifying the information required to be provided by that person and stating the general
conditions of the engagement to be entered into by that person" (section 27 (1) of the Act). This notice does not specify any
minimum age but requests the date of birth.

"The recruiting officer shall not enlist any person in that force unless satisfied by that person that he has been given notice,
understands it and, and wishes to be enlisted" (section 27 (1) of the Act). Section 73 of the Act states that "any person who,
when before a recruiting officer for the purpose of being attested in pursuance of this Act, has knowingly made a false
answer to any question contained in the attestation paper and put to him by the direction of the recruiting officer commits
an offence, and shall, on conviction, be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months".

National Recruitment Practice
Current recruitment practice is not known.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

On 22 September 1998, under the banner of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), 600 South African troops, backed up a few hours later by 200 Botswanan troops, entered Lesotho’s capital Maseru to quash what was in effect a coup against Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili’s government and a mutiny within the Lesotho Defence Forces. This crisis followed the general elections which took place in Lesotho in May 1998 and led to a wave of protests among opposition parties and the army. It is not known whether children have been used as soldiers within the Lesotho opposition forces.

Notes

2. Estimate taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.

Liberia

Has signed (1992) but not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 2,467,000
Under-18s: 1,224,000 (50%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

No information is available on the size of the government armed forces. Under the peace accord signed by the warring factions on 19 August 1995, all militia forces were due to be disarmed and demobilised. ECOMOG was made responsible for supervising the implementation of this plan.

National Recruitment Legislation

There is, in theory at least, no military conscription in Liberia. The minimum age for voluntary recruitment is set at 18 years. It is believed that this minimum is included in national legislation.3

National Recruitment Practice

According to officials of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), the armed forces do not recruit any person below 18.4 The reality, however, is that in the past all factions have recruited large numbers of children. There are no precise figures in this regard, though it is believed that the current armed forces are primarily composed of former National Patriotic Front of Liberia’s (NPFL) fighters.

According to data collected during disarmament/demobilisation in 1996-97, 18 per cent of the NPLF soldiers were children.5 Of those aged seventeen and under, the majority (69 per cent) were 15 to 17 years old, and had served an average of four years; 27 per cent of the remaining fighters under seventeen were between the ages of twelve and fourteen years old.6 “About one per cent of the demobilised child soldiers were girls or young women. But many more took part in one form or another in the war. Like many males, females joined one of the factions for their own protection. (Un)willingly, they became the girlfriends or wives of rebel leaders or members: ‘wartime women’ is the term they themselves use.”7 In addition, according to the United States Department of State, many youths remain traumatised and some are still addicted to drugs. The number of street children in Monrovia and the number of abandoned infants increased significantly following disarmament.8

It is believed that children, who continue to be recruited into the AFL, are treated in the same way as they were in wartime. During the conflict, they have sometimes been treated even more cruelly than adult soldiers. One child soldier
reported that he had been made to bayonet his pregnant sister in the stomach as a way of instilling total loyalty. Boy soldiers were placed in special ‘Small Boys Units’, where they were taught to kill without question.9 These units were particularly feared by civilians for this reason.

The Liberian Government has also denied allegations of training child soldiers, yet a child rights advocate, Kimmie Weeks, 17, has claimed children have been recruited and trained as soldiers at the Camp Schiefflin barracks located on the outskirts of Monrovia. According to confidential sources, as many as 500 children between the ages of 10 and 17 were seen on a base doing combat drill and light rifle training. Justice Minister Eddington Varmah said the recruits on the base were not underage but in their early twenties.10 However, Kimmie Weeks has been condemned by the Liberian authorities for ‘subversive activities’ and the security forces are looking for him.11

Of less dispute is the fact that there are army-run elementary and high schools located within army barracks. These schools are used for children of military personnel and are not military but offer the same academic programmes as the governmental schools. Before the war, the government ran an officer training corps programme which was compulsory for all high school and university students. The training included instruction in military discipline and science but was described as being ‘mild’ in intensity. Efforts are currently ongoing to revitalise the programme. The International Committee of the Red Cross is currently training instructors for this programme, all of whom are military personnel. The head of the programme, a colonel, is willing to incorporate human rights and international humanitarian law in the content of the course. UNICEF and UNHCR are preparing materials on human rights, relevant to their mandate, to be incorporated in the programme.12

Robert (14 years old):

"I became a combatant in 1991 when I was 8 years old. I became a fighter because I felt that my friends and my parents were suffering. I joined a faction and served as a bodyguard to one of the chiefs of staff. I used an AK-47. It wasn’t too heavy. I used it often, but I never killed civilians. I was often really afraid.

I was given cigarettes and marijuana during the war, but I’ve changed now and I don’t smoke. I don’t really think about the war much now, and I don’t have nightmares. I talk to counsellors a lot about what happened. Now I’m learning to be a carpenter, but I first want to go back to school before starting to work."


Child Participation in Armed Conflict

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, using many thousands of child soldiers, factions in Liberia fought a brutal seven-year civil war, which claimed more than 200,000 lives and turned more than half of the country’s pre-war population of two million into refugees in neighbouring countries. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), deployed a peace-keeping force, ECOMOG, which succeeded in ending hostilities, supervised elections in 1997, and installed an elected civilian administration led by Charles Taylor, the man who started the war, as President.

Nevertheless, even though there is no fully-fledged armed conflict, Liberia is very much still in the grip of insecurity and the daily threat of violence is pervasive. On 18-19 September 1998, two days of fighting between the government and elements of the former United Liberian Movement for Democracy in Liberia-Johnson (ULIMO-J) faction shook Monrovia. Men detained during this fighting are now being tried for treason in connection with an alleged plot to overthrow the Government.

In addition, Liberia has been accused by the United Kingdom and the United States of America of backing the rebels in Sierra Leone. 13 Ghanaian President Rawlings has also criticized this military support saying it was a "stab in the back" for ECOWAS efforts to bring peace in Sierra Leone.14

Notes

2. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. Information provided by UNICEF.
4. Information provided by UNICEF. A UNICEF-supported survey on children in the armed forces was supposed to begin in 1998 but was
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postponed because of new fighting in the middle of September.
5. Information provided by UNICEF.
9. Information provided by UNICEF.
12. Information provided by UNICEF.

Libya

Has signed (1998) but not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 5,784,000
Under-18s: 2,988,000 (52%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

• Active: c. 65,000
  Army: c. 35,000 including c. 25,000 conscripts
  Navy: 8,000
  Air Force: 22,000

• Reserve: c 40,000 (people’s militia)

National Recruitment Legislation

The Constitutional Proclamation of 11 December 1969, in its article 16 states that "[D]efence of the homeland is a sacred duty. Military service is an honour for the Libyan People". A similar principle is proclaimed in article 3 of the General People’s Congress Law No. 20 of 1991 on the consolidation of freedom which states that "[D]efending the homeland is a right and an honour and no male or female citizen must be deprived of it".

According to the government of Libya, national legislation stipulates that national service is compulsory for all citizens who have attained 18 years of age.3 Persons under 18 years of age are therefore not subject to conscription and do not participate in military operations.4

However, this age is lower in the General People’s Congress Law No 21 of 1991 on Mobilisation. Article 1 of this law deals with the definition of expressions used in this law. Under ‘human resources’ the law means "male and female citizen who attain their 17th year of age provided they are physically able to engage in combat and production". This law refers to the Act No. 9 of 1987 on national [military] service, a copy of which it has not been possible to obtain.

Furthermore not only Libyan citizens are liable for military service but also people who have acquired so-called ‘Arab nationality’, created by the Libyan government for workers from neighbouring countries who were recognised as Arabs.5 Women are very involved in the military activities and a military Academy for young girls was created in 1979 for them.6

National Recruitment Practice

During the hearing of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya before the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Ms. Ouedraogo, one of the members of the Committee, declared that she had received information that the minimum age for voluntary service in the armed forces was as low as 14 years. Mr Al Awad, the Libyan representative, replied that "19 was the minimum age for military service, but [that] persons who had not yet completed their studies could postpone military service until the age of 26."7 If the size of the armed forces is compared to the potential number of conscripts, it can be concluded that only a small proportion of conscripts are actually recruited.
Other sources have claimed that military service is compulsory for all men and women aged 18 to 35. This service is believed to last for 3 years in the army and 4 years in the navy and air force. Moreover, during their education, all children receive preliminary military training from the age of 14 upwards. Between 15 and 18 years of age, school children are trained in the use of hand-weapons.

### Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no information available on the use of children as soldiers in Libya.

### Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. Act No. 9 of 1987 concerning national service, as amended.

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### Madagascar

*Has signed (1992) but not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*

**Population:** 15,845,000  
**Under-18s:** 8,428,000 (53%)  

#### Governmental Armed Forces

- **Active:** c. 21,000  
  - Army: c. 20,000  
  - Navy: 500  
  - Air Force: 500  
- **Paramilitary:** 7,500  
  - Gendarmerie: 7,500

#### National Recruitment Legislation

Military conscription is enshrined in Article 18 of the Constitution of Madagascar which states that: "*National service shall be an honourable duty*." Nevertheless, no information is available on the requirements for performing military service, which lasts for 18 months. There is a possibility to carry out military service outside the armed forces.

#### National Recruitment Practice

In its report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Madagascar claimed that "*no legal provision on national service or a state of national necessity requires children to take a direct part in hostilities. Malagasy law contains no provision for children under 18 years of age to be enlisted for service in a situation of armed conflict.*" Further information on current recruitment practice is not available.

#### Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in Madagascar.

### Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. Act No. 9 of 1987 concerning national service, as amended.
Malawi

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 10,086,000
Under-18s: 5,390,000 (53%)

Governmental Armed Forces

• Active: 5,000
  Army: 5,000

• Paramilitary: 1,000
Mobile Police Force: 1,000

National Recruitment Legislation

There is no military conscription in Malawi but, in time of public emergency, every citizen aged between 18 and 60 may be called up for national service under the National Service Act. Recruitment into armed forces is generally on a voluntary basis and the minimum age is 18 years.

National Recruitment Practice

There is one military school and a number of training camps in Malawi. The minimum age for entry is 18 years.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in Malawi.

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. A different source has claimed that the true figure is 8,875.
4. Chapter 12:02.
6. Information supplied by UNICEF.

Mali

Population: 11,480,000
Under-18s: 6,182,000 (54%)

Governmental Armed Forces

• Active: c. 7,350 (all services form part of the Army; the Navy numbers 50 personnel and the Air Force 400)
National Recruitment Legislation

The legal basis for conscription is the ‘Statut général des militaires’. The minimum age for both compulsory and voluntary recruitment is 18 years and the maximum age is 22 years. It is believed that conscription is selective but military service is voluntary in principle and lasts for 24 months.

National Recruitment Practice

There is no evidence of any underage recruitment in Mali. There is one military school in Mali and the minimum age for entry is 12 years. Official sources claimed that the minimum age for entry in military schools was 18 years.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in Mali. In February 1999, Mali sent troops to Sierra Leone as part of the ECOMOG forces seeking to restore peace: 488 officers, non-commissioned officers, and rank and file soldiers who underwent training in the field of peacekeeping are part of this contingent.

There is no evidence of any underage soldiers among the Malian contingent.

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
5. IISS 1998.
6. Information supplied by UNICEF.
7. Letter from the Malian Embassy in Germany to the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 21 January 1999.

Mauritanie

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Population: 2,392,000
Under-18s: 1,79,000 (49%)

Governmental Armed Forces

• Active: c. 15,650
  Army: 15,000
  Navy: c.500
  Air Force: 150

• Paramilitary: c. 5,000 active
  Gendarmerie: c. 3,000
  National Guard: 2,000

National Recruitment Legislation

Article 18(1) of the Constitution adopted on July 12, 1991, states that: “Every citizen has the duty of protecting and safeguarding the independence of the country, its sovereignty, and the integrity of its territory.” Recruitment into armed forces is done on a voluntary basis and the minimum age is 16. The 14 June 1962 Law on Recruitment of the Army (Law n° 132/62 of June 29, 1962) provides for a two-year compulsory service. According to this law, every citizen who...
has reached the age of 17 must be registered and a Council (Conseil de révision) deliberates on each case after a medical examination. However, the age of recruitment is not expressly mentioned.

Voluntary engagement is possible for each Mauritanian citizen who has reached the age of 16 (article 7 of the law). For youths between 16 and 18, the consent of parents or tutor is in principle required, and if not, then authorisation is needed from the Minister of Defence. However, official sources claimed recently that recruitment into the armed forces is done on a voluntary basis and the minimum age of recruitment is actually 18.4

**National Recruitment Practice**

There is no information available on how recruitment is currently being carried out.

**Child Participation in Armed Conflict**

There is no armed conflict in Mauritania. However, there are still tensions in the country since the conflict between Mauritania and Senegal in 1989 during which pogroms took place in both countries against populations from the other country. Furthermore, the ultimate resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara will inevitably have consequences also for Mauritania.5

**Notes**

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.

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**Mauritius**

*Has signed (1991) and ratified (1992) the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*

**Population:** 1,141,000

**Under-18s:** 376,000 (33%)1

**Governmental Armed Forces**

- Active nil
- Paramilitary: c. 1,800
  Special Mobile Force: 1,300
  Coast Guard: c. 500

**National Recruitment Legislation**

Mauritius does not have an army but two paramilitary forces, the coast guards and a ‘Special Mobile Force’. According to the government, the minimum age for recruitment into the Special Mobile Force is 18 years of age.3

**National Recruitment Practice**

There is no information available on whether the minimum age is respected in practice.

**Child Participation in Armed Conflict**

There is no armed conflict in Mauritius.
Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.

Morocco

Population: 27,518,000
Under-18s: 11,565,000 (42%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

• Active: 196,300
  Army: 175,000 (including c. 100,000 conscripts)
  Navy: 7,800
  Air Force: 13,500

• Reserves: 150,000 (obligation to age 50)

• Paramilitary: 42,000 active
  Gendarmerie royale: 12,000
  Auxiliary Force: 30,000

National Recruitment Legislation

Article 16 of the Constitution adopted on 10 March 1972 states that "All citizens contribute to the common defence of the homeland."3 Eighteen years is the minimum age for voluntary or compulsory recruitment in the armed forces as fixed by the Royal Decree of 9 June 1966.4

National Recruitment Practice

Although military service is, in theory, compulsory for all males (with possible exemptions), not all 18-year-old men are called up and it seems that urban youths are more likely to perform military service because of their better education. Service lasts for 18 months. Moreover, it is believed that the majority of those enrolled are volunteers and, because of the popularity of joining the armed forces, only one out of 60 volunteers is admitted. There is also a possibility for youngsters to perform a two-year civilian service in Government departments.5

There is no evidence of underage recruitment into the Moroccan armed forces.6 According to UNICEF, the minimum age of 18 years applies to all civil servants and the legislative provisions are enforced.

There are four military schools in the country where children are enrolled at the end of primary school. Nevertheless, they become officially members of the armed forces when they pass the national exam which is organised every year and which is open to all students having a high school diploma. The students who succeed then enrol in various military graduate schools (air force, navy, etc.).7 Under the age of 18, pupils of the military high schools follow the same training programmes as pupils of the national education system and may leave at any time.8

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

In 1976, after the withdrawal of Spain from Western Sahara, an armed conflict broke out between Morocco and the opposition Polisario Front. The Popular Front for the Liberation of the Saquiat al-Hamra and the Rio de Oro (Polisario Front) was created in 1973. Fighting continued until 1991, with Morocco claiming its sovereignty over the territory whereas Polisario had proclaimed on 26 February 1976 the ‘Saharan Arab Democratic Republic’. The same year, this Republic became the 51st Member State of the Organisation of African Unity.
Algeria backed the Polisario Front until the end of the 1980s but gave up because of economic constraints and internal political problems. Diplomatic relations with Morocco were restored in 1988. Libya also backed the Polisario Front until 1984.

On 30 August 1988, Morocco and the Polisario Front agreed on a peace agreement proposed by the United Nations. On 6 September 1991, a UN-sponsored cease-fire came into effect and a United Nations Mission for the referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was established to police it. A referendum for self-determination among the Western Saharan population was due to be conducted. The referendum has been postponed many times. Former US Secretary of State James Baker has been appointed by the UN as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to find a solution to the crisis.

There has been no fighting between Morocco and the Polisario Front since the UN peace plan in 1991. The Polisario Front is believed to be still conscripting into its ranks (although many are said to be happy to leave the refugee camps) but no information is available on the minimum age and process.

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
6. Information supplied by UNICEF.

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**Mozambique**


**Population:** 18,265,000
**Under-18s:** 9,361,000 (51%)![1]

**Governmental Armed Forces**![2]

- **Active:** c. 5,100-6,100
  - Army: 4,000-5,000 (to be raised to between 12,000-15,000)
  - Navy: 100
  - Air Force: 1,000

**National Recruitment Legislation**

Following the 1992 peace agreement between the Government and the armed opposition group RENAMO, it appears that conscription, previously in operation in the country, was abolished. This situation changed when a new law governing conscription was adopted in 1997. RENAMO voted against the law arguing that Mozambique did not have the financial means for conscription and that it ran counter to the peace agreement which envisaged the formation of a 30,000 strong Mozambique Armed Defence Force, composed of demobilised forces of the government forces and RENAMO. According to the head of the RENAMO parliamentary group the new law is a carbon copy of the old Portuguese law on military service previously in force in Mozambique.

According to Article 2 of this law:

"1. All Mozambican citizens between the age of 18 and 35 years are subject to compulsory military service and to comply with the military obligations that derive from it.
2. In time of war, the above established ages for the accomplishment of the military obligations may be changed by law."

**National Recruitment Practice**
In July 1998, the Prime Minister declared that an extraordinary military registration period would run from 1 August to 30 September 1998. During the period, all Mozambican men and women born between 1975 and 1980 were required to register for military service. In all, 750,000 people were supposed to register but the Mozambican Defence Minister, Aguiar Mazula, said that only a tiny number of them would ever be able to join the armed forces. By the beginning of September 1998, 35,000 Mozambicans had registered.

"The current size of the Mozambican armed forces (FADM) is less than 12,000. Moreover budgetary constraints mean that the FADM can hardly grow by more than 3,000 or 4,000 troops in any one year." Aguiar Mazula declared that the government only intends to recruit 2,000 soldiers in 1999.

There is no evidence of any underage recruitment, although the possibility of altering the age for recruitment in time of war is disquieting given Mozambique's history prior to 1992. A specific problem has, however, arisen with the possible drafting of former child soldiers from the civil war into military service based on the new law adopted in 1998. Many of these youths are now of draft age and are vulnerable to military service again because their prior service was not recognized by a demobilisation certificate.

There is one military school based in the northern province of Nampula. The minimum educational requirement is the 10th grade.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in Mozambique. In the former war between Frelimo and Renamo, many thousands of children were used as soldiers.

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
4. These laws were Law No. 4/78 - Lei do serviço militar obrigatório, and Decree No. 3/86 - Regulamento básico do militar nas forças armadas de Moçambique. "Mozambican Assembly approves conscription, Renamo walks out", Panafrican News Agency, 3 November 1997.
7. "Military registration to start August", op. cit.
8. "Mozambique to resume military registration in August", op. cit.

Namibia

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Population: 1,613,000
Under-18s: 784,000 (49%)

Governmental Armed Forces

• Army: 7,752
• Navy: unknown
• Air Force: 70
• The 21st Battalion Guard: 629
• Special Field Forces: 3,495

National Recruitment Legislation

Namibia has never had conscription since its independence and no provision was included in the 1990 Constitution dealing with the issue. Nevertheless, Article 15-2 of this constitution states that "children [...] shall not be employed in or
required to perform work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with their education, or to be harmful to their health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development. [...]”. However, in this Article a child is defined as any person under 16 years of age.

Chapter 9 of the Namibian Defence Force Personnel Policies lays down the requirements a candidate must meet for voluntary recruitment. Among them, the candidate must be between the age of 18 and 25 years and must be a Namibian citizen. These ages are also mentioned in the recruitment brochure of the Namibian Defence Force.

National Recruitment Practice

Information is not available on whether underage soldiers are in fact recruited by the Namibian Defence Force. However, Namibian and Angolan authorities have often collaborated in the *rusga* (forced recruitment) on Namibian soil of hundreds of Angolan youths who fled conscription into the Angolan Armed Forces. More recently, the Namibian police forces and Angolan troops conducted joint ‘swooping’ operations at Oshikango and the surrounding localities "to select young people and take them away for recruitment into the Angolan government army. It was reported that only young males were taken away in this exercise".

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

Namibia is confronting internal opposition in the Caprivi strip in the far north-east of the country where an armed group is claiming independence for the area. In October 1998, more than 100 of these secessionists fled to Botswana where they were arrested. Negotiations are ongoing for the extradition of these soldiers to Namibia where they will be put on trial. In February 1999, the number of these Namibian ‘refugees’ was put at 2,423. The President of Botswana pledged that none of them would be forced to return. In February, tensions increased between the two countries as Botswana agreed to grant refugee status to fifteen of the asylum-seekers.

In addition, Namibia sent troops to the Democratic Republic of Congo in support of President Kabila. Recent estimates suggested that Namibia had sent more than 2,000 soldiers although Namibian authorities refused to comment. Namibian troops have also been sent to Angola to join Angolan government forces in their offensive against UNITA rebels. It is not known whether any of these contingents contained underage soldiers.

Botswana and Namibia have agreed to submit the dispute on the Kasikil-Sedudu island to the International Court of Justice for a final and binding ruling. The first round of the hearing took place between 15 February and 5 March 1999 at the Court in the Hague.

Notes

3. The SSF is formed to render a protection service to certain political dignitaries and special services under exceptional circumstances and composed mainly of demobilised ex-combatants. It can be used as a military strike force.
4. Article 118 of the Constitution declares that an Act of Parliament will create and regulate the Namibian Defence Force. However, the Defence Amendment Act 1990 does not refer to a minimum age for conscription nor for voluntary recruitment into the armed forces.
5. Namibian Defence Force. *Interested in joining the NDF?*

Niger

*Has acceded (1996) to the African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of the Child*

Population: 9,788,000
Under-18s: 5,382,000 (55%)1

**Governmental Armed Forces**2

- Active: 5,300
  - Army: 5,200
  - Air Force: 100
- Paramilitary: 5,400
  - Gendarmerie: 1,400
  - Republican Guard: 2,500
  - National Police: 1,500

**National Recruitment Legislation**

Niger has conscription although it is only imposed selectively. Military service lasts for 24 months but no information is available on who is liable for it.3

**National Recruitment Practice**

No information is available on national recruitment practice in Niger.

**Child Participation in Armed Conflict**

An armed conflict started at the end of 1991 opposing the Government to the Touaregs, notably the *Front de libération de l’Air et de l’Azawak* (FLAA). Many divisions occurred within the FLAA leading to the creation of a number of separate armed groups. On 24 April 1995, an agreement was signed in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) between the Government and the rebels from the North (*Organisation de la Résistance Armée*). France, Chad and Burkina Faso facilitated this agreement. On 28 November 1997, a new agreement was signed between the government and two rebel movements (*Union des Forces de la Résistance Armée* — UFRA; and the *Forces Armées Révolutionnaires du Sahara* — FARS) in Algiers. Finally, on 21 August 1998 a peace agreement was signed by the Government and the last rebel movement, the *Front Démocratique du Renouveau* (FDR).

The peace process is still fragile because of lack of money and of political troubles. Since 1997, 5,000 combatants have been gathered in different places and will be reinserted in civil society or in the army.4

In January 1999, Niger sent troops to Guinea-Bissau as part of the ECOMOG forces to support efforts to restore peace in the country.5

**Notes**

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.

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**Nigeria**

*Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*

Population: 118,369,000

Under-18s: 61,393,000 (52%)1
Governmental Armed Forces

• Active: 77,000
  Army: 62,000
  Navy: 5,500
  Air Force: 9,500

• Port Security Police: c. 2,000

National Recruitment Legislation

There is no conscription in Nigeria. Recruitment into the armed forces is done on a voluntary basis and the minimum age for such enlistment is 18 years. University graduates are required to perform a 12-month civilian service.3

National Recruitment Practice

There is no information available on whether the minimum recruitment age is respected in practice. The Nigerian Military School in Zaria4 accepts boys between 11 and 18 years of age,5 but it is not known whether they are members of the armed forces.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

Nigeria and Cameroon are currently negotiating a solution to a border dispute between the two countries (see Cameroon country file).

An internal ethnic conflict exists around Warri, in the delta of the river Niger. The roots of this rivalry date back decades, when the Ijaw people settled in the region that was already inhabited by several other ethnic groups, including the Itsekiri. But this rivalry turned violent in 1996 and 1997, following a decision by the Nigerian government to relocate the seat of a local government office from an Ijaw town to one controlled by the Itsekiri. The Nigerian authorities sent additional military personnel into the area as a precaution. Hundreds of people died in 1998 because of this conflict.6

In April 1997, ‘youth’ combatants were reported as being the driving force in the clashes which took place in Warri. The youths were said to have gone underground.7 It was reported that the fighting and killing arose mostly due to the fact that young people felt they had nothing to lose. On a related track, many of these young Ijaws have also joined a mass protest against the Nigerian government’s oil policy in the Nigerian delta. Bands of armed Ijaw youths captured a number of oil producing platforms and flow-stations, and took several oil workers hostage.8

Mr Bello Orubebe, lawyer, 33, is one of the leaders of the Ijaws. He mentioned in an interview that 20,000 persons have been trained during 6 months in military camps located in the Delta region. He added that his income financed the training of the members of the Niger Delta Volunteer Force, a militia created by Major Isaac Boro.9

Nigeria is the largest contributor of troops to the ECOMOG peacekeeping forces in Sierra Leone with 12,000 soldiers. These troops are due to withdraw in May 1999.

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
4. Website: www.geocities.com/Athens/Academy/9921.
5. According to information provided confidentially it seems that even younger children of 9 or 10 years of age are in this school.
Rwanda

Has signed (1991) but not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 5,883,000
Under-18s: 3,115,000 (53%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

• Army: 55,000
• Paramilitary: 7,0003
Gendarmerie: 7,000

National Recruitment Legislation

Article 5 of the Ordnance No. R/85/25 of 10 May 1962 on the creation of the Rwandan Army says that it is based on voluntary recruitment. Legislation adopted in 1977 sets the minimum age for volunteers at 16 years for contract non-commissioned officers, corporals and privates.4 However, the legislation also allows the Ministry of Defence to make exceptions with respect to the age and educational level of recruits.

The minimum age of entry in a school for commissioned officers was set at 17,5 but it was also specified that the Ministry in charge of the Armed Forces can accept derogations with regard to the age of admission. The minimum age of entry for non-commissioned officers was set at 16.6 The decree makes no provision for derogation on age of entry into these schools.

National Recruitment Practice

In October 1994, when the Ministry of Defence committed itself to demobilise all child soldiers, the elderly and the disabled from the Armed Forces, it was estimated that 5,000 persons below the age of 18 were members of the Rwandan People’s Army.7 These children are called kadogo or ‘little ones’ in Kswahili. At the end of 1996, 2,922 kadogo had been demobilised and the Ministry of Defence claimed that there were no more children left in the army (though this has been contested). One of the children demobilised under this initiative explained to UNICEF that: "The best thing about the army was that they protected me from rain and cold, and I learned how to cook. But I am glad to be out. Now I can cook for myself and my friends. Maybe I can go to school and become a carpenter. I never wanted to become a soldier."8

Because of a refusal by many secondary schools to accept former child soldiers, these children asked to return to the army and the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Social Integration proposed, in 1996, to review their application on a case-by-case basis.9 During a survey carried out in 1997, 2,134 Rwandan children associated with the military were documented. Of these, 725 had an army number implying that they were soldiers. The remaining were called Kadogo simply because they were living with soldiers. It is likely that they were working as cleaners or servants.10

In addition, in early 1998, it was estimated that at least 2,893 minors were being held in Rwandan detention centres as genocide suspects. Of these, 197 were sent to the Gitagata reeducation centre opened in July 1995 for boys below the age of 14, the minimum age fixed for criminal responsibility under Rwandan legislation. In 1996, some of these children were as young as 8 years of age. Since 1996, the Government has repeatedly promised to release all minors from detention — a promise which has still not been completely fulfilled. Some of the minors held on genocide-related charges appear to have been arrested arbitrarily; some have been arrested because of the alleged actions of their relatives; others have not even been informed of the reason for their arrest, other than the general accusation of ‘genocide’. Children in local detention centres (‘cachots’) have been subjected to ill-treatment.11

In 1997, Ms. Aloysia Inyumba, Rwandan Minister for Gender, Family and Social Welfare, denounced the use of child soldiers in the African continent and appealed to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to work out a consensus among its member states to prevent children from being involved in wars. She made this statement during a meeting on children in situations of armed conflict in Africa organised by the OAU and the Nairobi-based regional NGO, the African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect.12
However, the reality in Rwanda today is that legislation is not respected and that because of the ‘war effort’, children are in ever increasing danger of being recruited. Witnesses reported that children are being press-ganged or kidnapped or otherwise forced to join armed groups and RPA troops fighting President Kabila’s Congolese armed forces in the DRC. In late 1998, it was reported that some street children living in the Rwandan cities and towns of Kigali, Butare, Giseny and Ruhengeri were being press-ganged, loaded in military lorries and sent to the battlefields in the eastern DRC. The same is now being done in villages. Some school children are also being rounded up and taken to the war front. There they are provided with uniforms and plastic boots, before they undergo a rudimentary training. Their age ranges between 7 and 14 years. One estimate suggested that between 14,000 and 18,000 children are recruited into the armed forces every year.

Prior to the 1994 war and genocide, there were two military schools in Rwanda — one for commissioned officers and the other for non-commissioned officers. At the present time, there is no longer a school for commissioned officers, while two military schools for non-commissioned officers opened in early 1998. It has been estimated that over 45,000 children are in these schools. According to one source, the minimum age is as low as 10 years for rank soldiers.

**Child Participation in Armed Conflict**

There is a continuing armed conflict between armed groups (which include members of the former Rwandese armed forces — ex-FAR — and Interhamwe militia and the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA). The armed forces are backed by the Interhamwe militia. In addition, Rwanda has sent troops to the DRC to support the rebels fighting against the Congolese armed forces. It is estimated that over 20,000 children take part in hostilities.

No declaration on the non-recruitment of children has been made by the armed opposition groups and militia fighting the government. It is hard to determine how many children are participating in hostilities on the side of rebels, particularly as not many children came back to Rwanda after the dismantling of the refugee camps in Eastern Zaire in late 1996. The children who belong to rebel groups have been recruited in the country and their age varies between 11 and 14 years. When first recruited they are mostly used as porters, spies or cooks. Then, after a short training, they are used actively as soldiers. Last year, children were among rebels who attacked Kinihira displaced people’s camp in Kayove commune (in the northwest prefecture of Gisenyi) killing 29 people and wounding 20 others. The assailants were said to number about 1,000 but no precise figures have been given on the number of children among them.

Some of the children currently fighting the government are forcibly recruited by the rebels, depending on the situation on the ground. Others ‘voluntarily’ join the groups because they have no family or financial support from the Government.

Shadrack is just one among many who has fought in Rwanda.

"It was terrible! I was a member of the so-called ‘Interahamwe’ militia. We were backing the army to flush out anything that resembled a Tutsi. It seemed to me that almost everyone was taking part in the fighting. While the army were busy fighting the RPF, we people were also taking part, to make sure that the whole country was being cleansed. In Gikondo suburb (Kigali), I remember going through hundreds of dead bodies with a FAL rifle. People were crying all the time, amid heavy gunfire and mortar shells”.

Shadrack now lives in the Kibera slum, Nairobi, and seems to have adjusted to life there. While he acknowledges the fact that Hutu people committed genocide and crimes against humanity, he also holds that Tutsi should also be held responsible for the same crimes.

"We did it for a reason, they also did it to our people, but that remains un-highlighted. I was 16 so I can recall quite well. They [RPF] also committed atrocities when they invaded Rwanda in 1990 and they are still killing people, so what do you mean?"

Testimony received by Gervais Abayeho.

**Notes**
2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London. Given the situation in Rwanda these figures and subsequent should be treated with great caution.
3. Other estimates put the figure much higher: between 75,000 and 100,000 troops. Information supplied by Gervais Abayeho, Consultant Researcher, Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers.
4. Article 3 of the ”Arrêté présidentiel sur le régime du personnel sous contrat des Forces Armées Rwandaises” (Arrêté No. 03/02 of January 3, 1977).
5. Article 1 of the “Arrêté ministériel No. 29/02 du 15 septembre 1978 portant mesures d’exécution de l’Arrêté Présidentiel No. 01/02 du 3 janvier 1977 portant statut des officiers des Forces Armées Rwandaises”.
6. Ibid.
7. Other sources vary considerably and they estimate the number of former child soldiers to 15,000-20,000. Information supplied by Gervais Abayeho.
10. Information supplied by UNICEF.
13. Information supplied by Gervais Abayeho.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Information supplied by UNICEF.
17. Information supplied by Gervais Abayeho.
19. Information supplied by UNICEF.
20. Information supplied by Gervais Abayeho.
21. Ibid.

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Senegal


Population: 8,762,000
Under-18s: 4,459,000 (51%)1

**Governmental Armed Forces**

- **Active:** 13,350
  - Army: 12,000 (mostly conscripts)
  - Navy: 700
  - Air Force: 650
- **Paramilitary:** 4,000
  - Gendarmerie: 4,000

**National Recruitment Legislation**

Although according to the Constitution, military service is compulsory, enrolment into the army is based on voluntary recruitment. According to the law, volunteers must be between 18 and 23 years old to join the army but in practice this age has apparently been raised to 19 and even 22 by now because of the increasing demand.3 There is still legislation on conscription, although it has not been possible to obtain a copy.4

In 1994, the Government stated: "Military service although obligatory in Senegal, is performed in practice, and taking account of economic realities, on the basis of voluntary enlistment for the duration of the legal service. However, the State may at any time, on its own initiative call up any citizen fulfilling the conditions defined by the law. This particular provision is used exceptionally as an enforcement measure within the framework of the civic and moral training of young people."5

**National Recruitment Practice**

There is no evidence of any underage recruitment in Senegal.6
There is a military secondary school (Prytanée militaire formally called ‘Ecole des enfants de troupe’) located in Saint-Louis where children are taught military instruction and discipline in addition to the normal academic programmes. This military component of the education is provided in case these boys later wish to enter the army. The boys are selected by competition and some of them come from other African countries such as Mali, Burkina-Faso and Niger. Although they wear a uniform, they are not part of the armed forces. Teachers are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. They are about 12 when they enter in this school. After 7 years of secondary school and their final exam (baccalauréat), the students are free to enroll or not into the army. Some of the general officers and professional staff of the army come from this Prytanée.

There are two other military schools: one is the military health school for the medical professions, such as dentists, physicians or vets. Applicants must have a general certificate of education and must be between 18 and 20. The other is a military training school for officers. The minimum age for entry is 25 years.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is an ongoing conflict in the South of the country between the armed forces and the Movement of Democratic Forces of the Casamance (MFDC). On 22 January 1999, President Diouf visited Ziguinchor (located in the region claimed by the separatist movement) and made a passionate appeal for peace. During that visit, he met Diamaoune Senghor, a Catholic priest and leader of the MFDC. In February, President Diouf’s government released 123 prisoners, mostly members of the MFDC.

This movement has not formally pledged not to recruit children. It has been reported that children have been fighting with the Casamance Separatist Movement but no precise figures are available. Other sources said that no children have ever fought during this 20-year-old conflict.

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
6. Information on military schools was supplied by DCI-Senegal and UNICEF.
7. Ibid.
10. Information supplied by UNICEF.

Seychelles

Has signed (1992) and ratified (1992) the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Population: 75,000
Under-18s: 40,000 (53%)

Governmental Armed Forces

- Active: 400
- Army: 200
- Coast Guard: 200

- Paramilitary: 250 active
- National Guard: 250
**The Use of Children as Soldiers in Africa report**

- Air Wing: 20

### National Recruitment Legislation

According to most sources, there is no military conscription in the Seychelles. Military service is on a voluntary basis according to the government, although the minimum age is not known. But a National Youth Service (NYS) does exist and was compulsory until 1993. It is not clear whether military training is still part of this service. Participation in the NYS seems to be voluntary but is still a requirement before admission to the Polytechnic School for Vocational Training. (Before 1993 it was a requirement for getting a government job). The minimum age for the NYS is not known but "the Government strongly encourages children to fulfill one year of National Youth Service (NYS) before entering the work force at the age of 16 or the Polytechnic School for Vocational Training". It is not known if there is a link between the NYS and the military recruitment.

### National Recruitment Practice

There is no evidence of any underage recruitment in the Seychelles.

### Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in the Seychelles.

### Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.

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**Sierra Leone**

*Has signed (1992) but not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*

**Population:** 75,000  
**Under-18s:** 40,000 (53%)1

### Governmental Armed Forces

- **Active:** not known
- **Navy:** c. 200
- **Kamajors:** c. 17,000

### National Recruitment Legislation

Eighteen years has been set as the minimum age of recruitment for the new proposed army of Sierra Leone. Until now, there has been no conscription in Sierra Leone and the recruitment into the armed forces was on a voluntary basis. All ethnic groups were represented in the armed forces before the 1997 military coup. According to a government representative, the new army will be "depoliticised, disciplined and will be made up of proportional representatives of the country and regional groupings" and militia groups which backed ECOMOG troops will also be disbanded and demobilised. They will be used as an auxiliary force while a National Youth Service will be implemented.

### National Recruitment Practice
In the view of one commentator, "Sierra Leone has one of the world’s worst records for recruiting children as soldiers. Between 1992 and 1996, the period of the worst fighting between the Government forces and the RUF [Revolutionary United Front], an estimated 4,500 children were forced to fight on both sides." In addition, according to one weekly newspaper report in Sierra Leone, "more than 60 per cent of [a group] of 1,000 fighters" screened by the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Resettlement Committee before the military coup of 25 May 1997 were children.

The Civil Defence Forces (CDF) are made up of a number of tribes, namely the Kamajors in the South and East of the country, and Kapras, Donso and Tamaboros in the North. These are societies of traditional hunters. In the case of the Kamajors, within their overall structure, male children go through an initiation process. This initiation is now used to determine that a child is entering adulthood and can be part of the fighting Kamajors. These child fighters tend to be older than 8 years of age.

During his visit to Sierra Leone in June 1998, Mr Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, obtained commitments from the government and from CDF leaders that the CDF would cease recruitment of children under 18 years of age, begin demobilisation of child soldiers, provide special protection to child combatants, and create a joint task force comprising representatives from the government, ECOMOG, UN agencies, and relevant NGOs. Furthermore, the government announced plans for the establishment of a new national army the recruitment and training for which would be entrusted to ECOMOG. The government specifically promised not to recruit under-18s into this new force.

Yet one CDF field commander, Patrick Zangalaywah, estimated that their forces in the eastern Kailahun district alone numbered 3,000 child soldiers. Moreover, the use of children as soldiers forms part of deliberate military strategy. According to Mr Zangalaywah, "We don’t trust adults quite so much because many have breached the rules governing our militia group and so they get killed by the enemy."

He added that, "these kids are very brave on the frontline" and that they keep the laws governing the conduct of the militia like abstinence from sex, drugs and looting when in combat. UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy herself learned the strength of these rules when a child combatant refused to shake her hand "because he was not allowed to touch a woman."

In October 1998, during her visit to Sierra Leone, Carol Bellamy sought assurances from the government that it would abide by the commitments it had made "to demobilize child combatants, not to recruit new child combatants, and to provide amnesty for those children who had been fighting on the side of the rebel movement." Deputy Defence Minister Hinga Norman, himself a Kamajor chief, told Ms Bellamy that he wished "with all his heart to disarm all children", but explained that he "lacked the means for now."

In his second report on the UN observer mission in Sierra Leone, the UN Secretary-General pointed out that "there is also continued concern about the ongoing armed deployment of underage boys and, in some locations, their continued initiation into the Civil Defence Forces." He pointed out that Ms Bellamy’s visit to Sierra Leone in October 1998 had "greatly assisted efforts to end these practices."

But by the middle of October 1998, less than 100 children had been demobilised following the agreement between Carol Bellamy and President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah on registration and demobilisation of child soldiers. And in November 1998, Olara Otunnu appealed to the CDF to honour its commitments made to him and expressed grave concern about reports that children were being recruited in Liberia for fighting in Sierra Leone.

Ironically, some of the child Kamajors interviewed by journalists said they would want to become soldiers in adult life as well. "I am 14 and a rebel killer. I don’t want to be demobilised, because the rebels know I kill them mercilessly" said Sandi who is based in Daru, a military garrison in the East of the country.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

In May 1997 Sierra Leone was again plunged into chaos when President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was overthrown in a military coup. Negotiations to reverse the coup failed and ECOMOG forces, led by Nigerian troops, ousted the military junta and reinstated President Kabbah on 12 February 1998. Since then, there have been sporadic clashes between ECOMOG forces with the support of the Civil Defence Force against the Revolutionary United Front/Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (RUF/AFRC) backed by the Liberian government. The UN sent peacekeeping troops, UNOSMIL, whose mission is to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate the rebels into society. Civilians have been the deliberate targets
of reprisals by AFRC and RUF fighters engaged in a war of terror against the general population since February 1998. Hundreds of men, women, and children have been killed, raped or wounded and limbs have been amputated on a systematic basis.21

In early January 1999, the rebels entered the country’s capital, Freetown, after days of heavy fighting in the outskirts. On 14 January 1999, a cease-fire was agreed.22 Liberia was accused of backing the rebels in Sierra Leone. It was also reported that Liberia sent former members of the Sierra Leone army to Burkina Faso to be trained for seven months with the support of Libya.23 Mr James Jonah, Sierra Leone’s Minister of Finance, sent a document to the UN Security Council with evidence to back up these allegations.24

**Armed Opposition groups**25

• Revolutionary United Front (RUF): 8,000-10,000

• The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC): 3,000-5,000

Reports have clearly detailed the fact that AFRC/RUF recruit many children below 18 years of age and assert that children as young as seven are enrolled. People who were captured by the AFRC/RUF forces reported that they had seen these forces abducting and holding young men and boys to use as child soldiers, and that child soldiers have been among their AFRC/RUF attackers. It is estimated by one source that 3,000 children are living in the bush with the RUF.26

Attacks against villages are accompanied by abductions of children but no figures are available. Little is known about the condition of the young men and children abducted since February 1998 by the AFRC/RUF forces since few have escaped to tell the story.27 UNICEF has received, through its national tracing network, 81 tracing requests from parents whose children were abducted in October and November 1998. But the organisation considers that the true number is larger.28 In February 1999, UNICEF said that the number of children reported missing by parents in Freetown stood at nearly 2,000 and was rising steadily.29 Other sources agree that several thousands of children have disappeared this way in recent years.30

In a press conference in November 1998 Olara Otunnu appealed again to the RUF to stop recruiting and using child soldiers.31 He had previously pointed out that it was difficult "to reach the rebels and persuade them to demobilise children."32

A journalist from the French newspaper Le Figaro claimed that most of the rebels are children not older than 14, who are under the effect of drugs and alcohol. He reported what one of them told him about torture they inflict on their victims: "at 2 p.m., they gouge out two eyes, at 3 p.m., they cut off one hand, at 4 p.m., they cut off two hands, at 5 p.m., they cut off one foot and ... at 7 p.m. it is the death which falls down."33

A reporter for the Herald Guardian who was captured by the ARFC/RUF in Koidu town, also testified to the role of child soldiers. Some of his captors were under ten years old and wielded guns. He said, "There were little kids, boys, around seven, nine, twelve years old who were among the soldiers. They had guns and felt they had power... I saw girls held in vehicles ready to be transported. The last groups of kids I saw were held at the Branch Energy mining group office in Koidu town. They had 1,500-2,000 of them there. I saw them. In Koidu, the junta forces shouted for kids and gathered them. A soldier told me they are holding these kids as a shield in the event of an ECOMOG attack. They also use them as soldiers, for labour, and for sexual purposes."34

It has been estimated than one third of all underage soldiers are girls.35

On 2 February 1999, ECOMOG soldiers handed over to UNICEF seven child soldiers they had captured during fighting. These children were aged between six and 10 years and were abducted by rebel forces in December 1998.36 By middle of February, there were all together 34 child soldiers and street children who were handed to UNICEF by ECOMOG soldiers.37 A spokesman for UNICEF said that "[T]hree were females. The children ranged in age from six to seventeen years. Two of the seven-year old children claimed to have the rank of corporal and captain. They had been involved in the RUF attack of Freetown". He added that these children were now housed and cared for at a UNICEF-supported mission home three kilometres outside of Freetown.38

"This is our greatest problem because the rebels know the former kid fighters, so they either force them to join once again, or kill them, so we are starting all over again", a UNICEF official told IPS [...]. Swaray, a former child soldier, says dozens
of his peers may be hiding in parts of the city for fear that they may be killed if they surface. "Some of us were used as spies by the rebels. They sent us into the city to study ECOMOG troop movements and military strength to prepare the way for the 6 January assault," he says.39

Four years ago, Alfired was abducted by rebels who attacked his village in the north of the country. In order to catch Alfired, they shot dead his older brother who wanted to protect him. In the rebels' camp, the child, seven years old at that time, succeeded in avoiding the shooting training thanks to the wife of a rebel who took him in affection and hid him under her bed. The fifth day, he was discovered and forced, with the aid of kicks, to take arms. But Alfired shot so badly that he was led the same day with the slaves.

As carrier, he had to follow the combatants in the bush and to carry back to the camp the things they collected during plunders and attacks. They were often sent to the frontline and to villages for stealing, remembers Alfired. "in such cases, we were strongly kept watch, we had to walk in line, in front and in the back there were armed people who shot in any attempt to escape."

The threat is still engraved on his face when he explains how combatants liked to quibble with slaves, led them on military marches which lasts for days, forced them to carry heavy sacks full of food and left them then whole days starving. Alfired begins to crack with emotion when he talks about colleagues who were shot dead because they were walking too slowly.


Kadiatu does not want to get married and to have children. Kadiatu is about 17. She has forgotten her date of birth in the hardship of the war. The newly-made plaits strongly contrast with the hard features of her face. Without any movement, she explains how her childhood abruptly stopped five years ago. How the rebels assaulted her village in Western Sierra Leone. How she saw her neighbour dying. How she with her sisters, her uncle and eight other survivors succeeded in fleeing in a bus. How her car suddenly fell into an ambush of the rebels. How these well-armed men shot dead the fugitives one after another, including her sister and her uncle and left only her alive.

Kadiatu does not swallow nor cry during her report. She was barely 13 when she was brought to the camp as a spoil of war. The first evening she was given to one young rebel, who took her as his wife and raped her from that day onwards. Sometimes other men took advantage of her. Kadiatu does not like to give details about this life. She much prefers to explain how she learnt to shoot and how she became so good at this that she was put in charge of a commando.

This was not a difficult task. "We hid sometimes on the main road and when a car came, we killed everyone and took everything we needed." Stress appeared then in the camp. "There, as women, we had to cook for the men. We were very badly treated, we were allowed to eat only the rests, we were always persecuted and hit for almost nothing. When we struck back, they threatened to kill us." Every thought of escape was smothered. "One day, four of us escaped from the camp" Kadiatu remembers, "they were quickly caught, brought back and killed in front of us".

To fight, to steal, to shoot, to clean, to be at the disposal of men for sex, three and an half years she did all that together. Nothing changed when she got pregnant after two years. She lost the baby, "luckily", she says, "the baby did not come to earth from love." She succeeded in fleeing when her group fell into an ambush of the government’s militia.

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. These forces have been estimated as being up to 30,000 strong. Africa Research Bulletin, 1-31 July 1998.
4. Information supplied by UNICEF.
8. Ibid.
10. Information supplied by UNICEF.
13. Ibid.
15. "Head of UNICEF says there is no justification for continuing use of child combatants in Sierra Leone", UN Department of Public Information, 5 October 1998.
19. "SG’s Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict condemns attacks on civilians and use of child soldiers", UN Department of Public Information, HR/4388, 9 November 1998.
21. Human Rights Watch, Sierra Leone: Sowing Terror, Atrocities against Civilians in Sierra Leone, HRW, New York, July 1998. The UN’s 1999 Inter-Agency Appeal for Sierra Leone notes that "the rebels have systematically committed massive human rights [abuses] including [...] forced recruitment of child soldiers to wage a desperate and senseless campaign of terror on rural civilians".
25. Information from IISS. For information on the conflict in Sierra Leone see for example: http://www.multimania.com/conflit.
27. Human Rights Watch, op. cit.
28. Information provided by UNICEF.
31. "SG’s Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict condemns attacks on civilians and use of child soldiers", op. cit.
34. Human Rights Watch, op. cit.
38. Schlein, op. cit.

Somalia

Population: 10,217,000
Under-18s: 5,533,000 (54%)1

Clan/Movement Groupings2

Somaliland (northern Somalia)

- United Somali Front
- Somali Democratic alliance
- Somali National Movement: 5,000-6,000
- United Somali Party

Somalia

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/C157333FCA91F573C1256C130033E448-chilsold.htm
The Use of Children as Soldiers in Africa report

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/C157333FCA91F573C1256C130033E448-chilsold.htm

National Recruitment Legislation

Given the current situation in Somalia and the lack of central government it is not possible to have detailed information on child soldiers. Moreover, it is not possible to make a distinction between governmental forces and non-governmental groups. Hence, any reference to national legislation would be almost meaningless in the current context.

National Recruitment Practice

Boys who have joined militia groups are reported to be in the 14-18 age group, but there are no reports of girl soldiers. Figures of demobilised soldiers in the Northwest of Somalia (Somaliland) indicated a small percentage in the under-19 age group. In this regard, an overall Youth Survey conducted by UNICEF in 1998 shows that only 1 per cent of children between 14 and 18 years of age work in militia/security staff, and nearly all of them in the Central Zone. This low rate of children among fighters can probably be explained by the fact that there are enough adults volunteering for the various groups and by the lack of resources like food. This information was confirmed recently by World Vision International.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

The German Technical Agency (GTZ) and the National Demobilisation Commission worked to reintegrate former combatants and their families into society in Northwest Somalia. Studies carried out by this project in 1995 indicate that only small numbers of children under 19 years of age were demobilised. For example only 4 per cent of Darar-weine camp, 392 people, were under 19 years of age compared to 24 per cent in the 20 to 25 age group and 56 per cent in the 26 to 35 age group.

Children who are seen with militia often work as servants (cleaning, washing, buying cigarettes etc) for the soldiers and they are not commonly seen armed.

According to the U.S. Department of State, however, "children remain among the chief victims of the continuing violence. Boys as young as 14 or 15 years of age have participated in militia attacks, and many youths are members of the marauding gangs known as 'morian' or 'parasites or maggots'."

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. Information supplied by UNICEF.
4. Ibid.

South Africa

Has signed (1997) but not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 43,336,000
Under-18s: 18,689,000 (43%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

• Active: 3 79,440

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
Army: 54,300  
Navy: 8,000  
Air Force: 11,140  
Medical Service: 6,000

• Reserve: 386,000
• Paramilitary: 138,000
South African Police Service: 138,000

National Recruitment Legislation

A decision was taken to end conscription within the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) as from 27 April 1994. Therefore, recruitment is on a voluntary basis and the minimum age is 17 years, but as the recruit is about to turn 18. Nevertheless, no recruit is deployed into combat before he/she reaches 18 years of age. These rules are enshrined in the South African Defence Review Human Resources Chapter.4

Of concern, however, is the provision enshrined in the Constitution that in a state of emergency, only children under 15 years of age are protected against being ‘used directly’ in armed conflict.5

National Recruitment Practice

According to UNICEF, the new Defence Act, which is scheduled for parliamentary consideration in the latter half of 1999, sets 18 years as the minimum age for all recruitment. There are military schools, but no one under 18 years attends them. In 1998, there was only one recruit who was 17 (and 11 months) when he was recruited.6

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in South Africa although violence in Kwa-Zulu Natal has in the past involved under-18s.

Notes

2. IISS estimates. According to UNICEF, as at 15 January 1999, the army comprised 46,060 military personnel, the air force 9,696, and the navy 5,305.
3. In a letter to the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, the South African Permanent Mission to the United Nations mentioned that the SANDF is composed of 71,937 people, a figure which may, though, vary from time to time. Letter of the South African Permanent Mission to the United Nations, Geneva, sent to the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 8 December 1998. See the SANDF Website: www.mil.za.

Sudan

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Population: 27,899,000  
Under-18s: 13,173,000 (47%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

• Active: 79,700  
Army: 75,000 (including c. 20,000 conscripts)
Navy: c. 1,700  
Air Force: 3,000

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/C157333FCA91F573C1256C130033E448-chilsold.htm
• Paramilitary: 15,000

Popular Defence Force: 15,000 (10,000 according to another source.)

National Recruitment Legislation

According to Article 35 (1) b of the new Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan adopted in June 1998, "Every citizen shall defend the country and respond to the call for national defence and national service." Conscription was introduced by the National Service Law of 1992, according to which all men between 18 and 33 years old, are liable for military service. Military service lasts for 24 months, 18 months for high school graduates and 12 months for university and college graduates.

National Recruitment Practice

According to many reports, issued mostly between 1993 and 1996, the government had to turn to forced recruitment since too few men were actually recruited during the regular call-up. Children as young as 12 years of age were forcibly enrolled into the armed forces or the Popular Defence Forces; street children were an easy target for such recruitment. In late 1997, it was further reported that the Government had decreed, in June of that year, that all boys, typically of ages 17 to 19, were obliged to do between 12 and 18 months compulsory military service to be able to receive a certificate on leaving secondary school. Students need such a certificate for entry into university, and the decree effectively broadened the conscription base.

In a speech on national television, the Minister of Defence, Omer Abdul Marouf said: "We made clear to the parents that any student who does not report for military service or military training will miss chances of going to university, going abroad, or doing business in the country." After an initial two-months basic training, many of the 70,000 students who were conscripted have been enrolled into army units. The Government then sought to send a number of such youths to combat zones for advanced military training, presumably for ultimate incorporation into the Sudanese People's Armed Forces. This came to light when 72 draftees escaped from Khartoum airport, where they were about to be airlifted to the South.

In response, parents protested and women took to the streets. They said that many young men were recruited by force and taken off buses or picked up in the streets. The Government replied that military service was a national duty. The women retorted that the young men were sent to the front with little training and that they "serve as cannon fodder for the better-trained volunteer army." It was also reported that many of these new recruits tried to escape from the camps. In April 1998, 52 recruits died when their boat capsized in the Blue Nile as they tried to flee a camp south-east of Khartoum. Opposition groups said at least 129 recruits died in this incident and that soldiers beat and shot recruits as they tried to escape.

After this incident, President al-Bashir said his government would continue pursuing its compulsory recruitment policy until all those who threaten the sovereignty of Sudan were crushed. He added that a new civil registry will help reorganise recruitment efforts in a highly civilised way instead of collecting youngsters randomly from streets and bus stops. No-one above 18 capable of carrying arms would be exempted from conscription. Sudan plans to recruit 655,000 men into the military by the year 2000, according to the head of Khartoum’s national military service, Usama Abdallah. It was planned to recruit up to 250,000 men in 1998. In general, the armed forces planned to be 60 per cent dependent on army conscripts.

On April 29, 1998, Mubarak El-Mahdi, the Secretary-General of the opposition National Democratic Alliance (NDA), delivered a speech in which he condemned the practice of the Sudanese government of kidnapping school children and forcing them to serve on the front lines. As part of his propaganda offensive he presented two children, of 15 and 16 years of age, who had been taken as prisoners and then released by the NDA. Mr El-Mahdi appealed to "the international community and humanitarian organizations concerned by human rights to intervene to stop the forced conscription campaigns of children and students practised by the NIF [National Islamic Front] government." This appears, to corroborate confidential reports that in Khartoum boys as young as 14 are recruited, and it is claimed that these boys are normally from the South. Already in 1997, the SPLA had issued a press statement, saying that its leader, John Garang, had instructed all commanders, officers and soldiers in the combat zones to provide conscripted schoolboys with safe passage to the ‘liberated’ areas, or across the border, if they so wish, to be able to continue their education somewhere else.
During his visit to Sudan in mid-1998, Mr Olara Otunnu, the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, discussed with government officials the need to keep children under 18 years of age out of the armed forces. He was informed that the Sudanese Armed Forces do not recruit children below 18 since their law forbids this. But the Government promised to take necessary action to rectify any reported breach of the law. In addition, in order to demonstrate their general good faith, the Sudanese authorities secured the release of three children abducted by the Lord’s Resistance Army during Mr Otunnu’s visit.

In addition to the regular armed forces, the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) were created in 1990. According to Article 125 (1) of the Constitution, "the State may establish voluntary military forces for the people’s defence or security, and may also establish other disciplined forces to be composed of Sudanese individuals, and work under the command of the Armed Forces or the Police for the needs of defence, security, order and other public functions.”

The PDF are a militia under the control of the army. Its legal basis is the 1989 Popular Defence Forces Law and the training involves military and civil defence training as well as patriotic and cultural education. The length of the training varies between 45 days and two months. The minimum enlistment age for the PDF is believed to be 16, but it has been reported that younger children have been recruited. Indeed, teenagers living in the camps for vagrant children are often conscripted into the PDF. In 1997, it has been reported that security members gathered young people in the streets for the PDF and that among them there were children not older than 15. Witnesses also said that school girls were parading in PDF’s uniforms in Khartoum and Damazine. Moreover, it is common in the army to replace the words ‘popular defence’ by ‘popular suicide’. According to one confidential source, military commanders are quite willing to show primary school age recruits to senior foreigners and this would seem to imply a widespread practice in rural areas of using young children.

**Child Participation in Armed Conflict**

Since 1983, the Sudanese Government in Khartoum has been fighting a rebellion from a number of southern groups, including the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) headed by John Garang. On 30 June 1989, Lt. Gen. Omar Hassan el-Bashir seized power and the National Islamic Front (NIF) emerged as the power behind the coup. The Government attempted to divide the southern opposition and succeeded in 1991 when a split occurred within the SPLA leading to the creation of the Southern Sudan Independence Movement/Army. Tens of thousands of civilians were killed during the fighting in the South and thousands were internally displaced or became refugees in Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia.

**Armed Opposition groups**

National Democratic Alliance: a coalition of opposition political parties and armed groups from the North and the South. Since 1995, its headquarters are located in the premises of the former Sudanese embassy in Asmara (Eritrea). John Garang has been appointed as the head of the military direction of the NDA. Its main forces are:

In the North of the country:

- Sudanese Alliance Forces: c. 500 (based in and backed by Eritrea, operate in border area)
- Beja Congress Forces: c. 500 (operate on Eritrean border). They are associated with the SPLA forces within the New Sudan Brigade, and operate in the region of Kassala.
- SPLA New Sudan Brigade: c. 2,000 (operate on Ethiopian and Eritrean borders).
- The Sudanese Communist Party.

In the South:

- Sudanese People’s Liberation Army: 20-30,000 (35,000 according to another source.)

After a split within the SPLA, in 1991, the Southern Sudan Independence Movement/Army (SSIA) was created by Riek Machar, who is now on the side of the Sudanese Government.

On 21 April, 1997, the Government signed a peace agreement with a group of breakaway SPLA factions and pro-government militias. The latter then signed an agreement in which they united their forces under the name of the United Democratic Salvation Front, headed by Riek Machar. But one of the commanders who signed this agreement, Kerubino Kwanin Bol (SPLA - Bahr-el-Gazal Group), defected from the Government in January 1998 and realigned his forces with the SPLA. (He has since realigned himself once again with the Government forces.)
surprise attacks on government forces in three towns in Bahr-el-Gazal during which thousands of civilians fled into rural areas. This substantially contributed to the famine in this region in 1998. In October 1998, the Sudanese Government and the SPLA, with British mediation, agreed on an interim cease-fire in Bahr-el-Gazal and some parts of the Upper Nile state. In January 1999, Sudan agreed to renew the cease-fire for a further three months.

In addition to the civil war, the Sudanese Government has condemned the incursion of Ethiopian-Tigray Forces on the eastern Sudanese borders, notably in January 1997, and has charged Eritrea with massing troops on the frontier in preparation for an attack in January 1999. Since 1996, the civil conflict took a regional dimension. Neighbouring countries led an armed fight against the regime in Khartoum. About 4-5,000 fighters from the southern rebellion are still based in Eritrea and Ethiopia, from where they mount attacks in Sudan. They are also backed by elements of the regular armed forces of these two countries, at least logistically.26

In 1998, Mr Olara Otunnu met with the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement’s leadership in Nairobi but no pledge was made not to recruit children. However, in July 1995, the SPLA pledged to respect the Geneva Conventions and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.27 Mr Olara Otunnu is due to visit the SPLA-controlled areas of Sudan in 1999.28

Already in the early 1990s, it was reported that the SPLA recruited many underage children into their ranks. The US Department of State gave the figure of at least 10,000 male minors recruited by this group.29 In 1994, Human Rights Watch described how SPLA maintained large camps of boys in Ethiopia and how they inducted these boys into battalions known as the ‘Red Army’. The boys were aged between 14 and 16 years and many of them were massacred during fighting because of their poor training. In 1991, the boys in the camps (estimated to number 17,000), as well as all other Sudanese refugees, had to flee after the fall of the Ethiopian Government and they returned to Sudan. The SPLA split into two factions shortly after but the SPLA and the SSIM/A continued to maintain these boys in separate boys-only camps, as reserve for their military campaigns. Although participating in the family reunification programme launched by UNICEF in 1992, the SSIM/A continued to recruit children into its ranks as did the SPLA (which had not formally undertaken to cooperate with UNICEF).30 Like the SSIM/A, the Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement and its humanitarian wing, the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association started recently a project in collaboration with Rädda Barnen for the demobilisation and rehabilitation of child soldiers.

The US-based NGO Refugees International recently reminded the international community of the situation of about 10,500 unaccompanied children, the former ‘lost boys of Sudan’, who reached the Kakuma refugee camp in May 1992 after having spent months walking from their closed Ethiopian camps through southern Sudan. They are now young men in their 20s and had undergone military training as children. They are stigmatised by their own communities (Dinka or Nuer) and are at risk of being again forcibly recruited by the SPLA.31

A number of organisations have intervened in order to stop this process. In June 1996, for instance, Human Rights Watch sent a letter to John Garang, the commander of the SPLA, asking him to release children who were forcibly drafted and taken for training as SPLA soldiers. Moreover, Mr Otunnu intends to visit Southern Sudan and to meet with representatives of the rebel groups in 1999.

On 27 September 1998, SPLA fighters arrived in Dungu (DR Congo), saying they had not come to help President Kabila nor the rebels but to chase the (Sudanese) refugees back into Sudan and recruit the young men.32

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
4. ...and women, but it seems that it has not been enforced.
5. Article 7 of the Law.
9. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
Swaziland

Has signed (1992) but not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Population: 906,000
Under-18s: 448,000 (49%)

Governmental Armed Forces

- Armed Forces: 2,700
- Paramilitary: unknown

National Recruitment Legislation

The government has stated that there is no conscription in Swaziland and that military service is on a voluntary basis. According to information received by UNICEF from the Ministry of Defence, the minimum age for recruitment and conscription is 18 years. Recruitment is regulated by the Umbutfo Swaziland Defence Order of 1977.

National Recruitment Practice

According to information supplied to UNICEF there has been no conscription in Swaziland. There is no evidence of any underage recruitment.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in Swaziland.

Notes

4. Information supplied by UNICEF.

Tanzania

Has not signed the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 30,799,000
Under-18s: 16,154,000 (52%)1

**Governmental Armed Forces**2

- **Active**: c. 34,600
  - Army: c. 30,000
  - Navy: c. 1,000
  - Air Force: 3,600

- **Reserve**: 80,000
  - Citizen’s Militia: 80,000

- **Paramilitary**: 1,400 active
  - Police Field Force: 1,400

**National Recruitment Legislation**

There is no information available on recruitment legislation in Tanzania.

**National Recruitment Practice**

Not much is known about military service in Tanzania. It seems that it is still compulsory for youths who want to get a government job, to receive a vocational training or to enter university. Most sources suggested that national service lasts for three years, even if it has been stated that the service mostly lasts for only one year. Since 1972, national service has been the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence and is composed of military training, agricultural work and civic education.

Another variant of national service is done on a voluntary basis. Volunteers sign up for three years. This period consist of post-primary education for an initial period of two years. Then they have the choice either to stay in the establishment, or to enlist into the armed forces. This service is subordinated to the armed forces.3

**Child Participation in Armed Conflict**

There is no armed conflict in Tanzania.

**Notes**

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.

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**Togo**

*Has signed (1992) and ratified (1998) the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*

Population: 4,317,000
Under-18s: 2,259,000 (52%)1

**Governmental Armed Forces**2

- **Active**: c. 6,950
  - Army: 6,500
  - Navy: c. 200
Air Force: 250

• Paramilitary: 750
Gendarmerie: 750

National Recruitment Legislation

According to one source, the minimum age for conscription and for voluntary recruitment is 18. Recruitment into the armed forces is regulated by law. Other sources variously claim 20 as the minimum age for recruitment and 17.4 It is believed that there is a selective conscription for two-year military service. Most of the members of the army are Kabye, the President's ethnic group.

National Recruitment Practice

According to one source, less than 20 recruits in 1998 were between 17 and 18 years of age when they entered the armed forces. However, many children are employed as domestics in Togo and the armed forces are no exception. There are therefore children between 6 and 18 years of age who are present in military barracks doing menial work.

There are two military schools in Togo: Ecole de sous-officiers of Temedja and Ecole d’officiers of Pya. According to UNICEF all students are more than 18 years of age. There is also the Prytanée militaire of Tchitchao. Children of military officers or privileged children are 6 years old when they enter this school and stay there until they pass their baccalauréat at the age of 18. Thereafter, they can either join the army or go to university.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in Togo, although the government has alleged that the opposition has an armed wing at its disposal. It is suggested that such an opposition force may be in Ghana from where it can prepare sporadic attacks against the Government. However, Ghana and Togo have good relations and it would be surprising if Ghana would tolerate such a presence on its territory.

Togo sent 80 soldiers to Guinea-Bissau as part of the multinational peacekeeping force in line with the peace agreement which ended the five-months-long civil war in November.

Notes

2. IISS estimates. Other sources put the figures at 9,000 or 12,000. Information supplied by WAO-Afrique.
3. Information supplied by DCI Togo.
4. Information supplied by WAO-Afrique.
7. Ibid.

Tunisia

Population: 9,326,000
Under-18s: 3,759,000 (40%)1

Governmental Armed Forces

• Active: c. 35,000
Army: 27,000 (including 23,400 conscripts)
Navy: 4,500
Air Force: 3,500
• Paramilitary: 12,000
National Guard: 12,000

National Recruitment Legislation

Article 15 of the Constitution of Tunisia says that "the defence of the country and the integrity of its territory is a sacred duty of every citizen.". According to Law No. 89-51 of 14 March 1989, recruitment into the armed forces is compulsory for all citizens once they have attained the age of 20. Nevertheless, voluntary recruitment is possible for every citizen who is more than 18, with the consent of the legal guardian, and the approval of the Ministry of Defence (Article 1 of the Law).

National service lasts for 12 months, including a period of training which is determined by specific rules. Then the recruits belong to the reserve forces for a period of 24 years. After the training, it is possible for the recruited youths to be transferred to the Armed Forces or the ‘Development Units’, or to do their national service in the civil service administration, in a business or within the technical co-operation (Article 3 of the Law).

National Recruitment Practice

There is no evidence of any underage recruitment into the armed forces.

The age required for entering in a military school is between 18 and 23. For those who have not attained the age of majority, an authorisation from the legal guardian is necessary.

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in Tunisia.

Notes

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. Letter from the Tunisian Ambassador to the UN in Geneva addressed to the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 11 January 1999.

Uganda

Has signed (1992) and ratified (1994) the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
Population: 20,791,000
Under-18s: 11,566,000 (56%)

Governmental Armed Forces

• Active: c. 40,000-55,000
Ugandan’s People’s Defence Force: c. 40,000-55,000

• Paramilitary: c. 600 active
Border Defence Unit: c. 600
Marines: c. 400

National Recruitment Legislation

The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda states in its article 17(1)(e) that it is the duty of every citizen of Uganda "[t]o defend Uganda and to render national service when necessary". Article 210(b) of this Constitution makes the
Parliament responsible for making laws regulating the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces [UPDF], and in particular, providing for recruitment into the armed forces and ensuring that members of the UPDF are recruited from every district of the country.

For conscription as for voluntary recruitment the official minimum age is allegedly 18 years. Furthermore, the same minimum age is used for participation in hostilities. Those volunteers include high school graduates (or S6 leavers as they are locally known).

However, in its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Uganda gave a different version of its law: "[T]he substantive law regarding recruitment into the armed forces is spelled out in the Armed Forces (Conditions of Service) Regulations 1969. It is provided that the age of recruitment into the army is 18 years. Any recruitment below that age should only be with the consent of that person’s parents or guardians or the District administrator of the district in which the person resides. No person under the apparent age of 13 years shall be enrolled in the armed forces". This was repeated by the Ugandan delegation in its oral submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

This seems to come into contradiction with article 34 (3) and (4) of the Ugandan Constitution which states that children (persons under the age of 16 for this specific provision) "[s]hall not be employed in or required to perform work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with their education or to be harmful to their health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development".


**National Recruitment Practice**

During the war in the 1980s, large numbers of children were used as soldiers by Museveni’s National Resistance Army (NRA) forces. In an address to a workshop of the Network of Ugandan Researchers and Research Users (NURRU), in Kampala, Mr Eriya Kategaya, First Deputy Prime Minister, defended the conscription of child soldiers during the NRA bush war. He said that "most of these ‘Kadogos’ were from peasant families and apart from the prestige, the facilities in the army are better than those in their homes. They have everything to enjoy in the army." He added that the government cannot take the blame for the high drop-out rate of girl ‘kadogos’ because their situation is not different from children in the rest of the country.

In October 1998, Andy Williams of Tigers, an NGO running a project for street children in Kampala, said that street children had been approached by soldiers and forced to join the army in order to be sent to the Democratic Republic of Congo and to fight on the side of the rebels. This allegation was denied by Uganda’s National Council for Children and by the Minister of State for Defence, Stephen Kavuma.

In November 1998, parents protested against the secret recruitment by the UPDF of 500 youths in Hoima. It is believed that the recruitment was carried out by the District Security Officer (DISO) in Hoima with the aid of the Gombolola Security Officer (GISO). Five hundred youths, most of them below 18 and with questionable discipline records, were recruited without the consent of their parents. The DISO of Hoima confirmed this recruitment and added that it was done in broad daylight and that all the youths were volunteers. He denied that they would be sent to the DRC.

**Child Participation in Armed Conflict**

Uganda is currently engaged in an internal armed conflict against different rebel groups in the country. These groups operate in south-western Uganda (Allied Democratic Forces — ADF) and northern Uganda (Lord’s Resistance Army — LRA).

**Armed Opposition groups**

- Lord’s Resistance Army: c. 12,000 (c. 10,000 in Uganda, and the remainder in Sudan)
- Allied Democratic Forces: c. 500-1,000 (1,500 according to another source)
- National Army for Liberation of Uganda (Nalu): only several hundred combatants.
- West Nile Bank Front: c. 2,000
- Uganda Rescue Front (UNLF-II)
Lord’s Resistance Army

"Those who are responsible for this terrorism — the Lord’s Resistance Army — and their Sudanese backers destroy villages. They abduct and enslave children too young to know what death is. And they have massacred thousands of men, women and children."

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, December 1997.

Both rebel groups (Lord’s Resistance Army and Allied Democratic Forces) recruit children below 18 years of age. It is estimated that over 8,000 children were abducted in northern Uganda. The Concerned Parents Association places the figure at about 10,000. It is estimated that around 90 per cent of LRA soldiers are abducted children, and it is widely believed that the group could not operate without them.

The rebels abduct children from their schools, communities and homes. The children who attempt to escape, resist, cannot keep up, or become ill, are killed. Generally, the rebels take their captives across the border to a LRA camp in Sudan. There, these children are tortured, threatened and sexually abused. Children who try to escape are beaten or killed and when a child manages to escape revenge is taken on the families and communities.

The LRA normally target children between 12 and 16 years of age for abduction, although adults and younger children are also taken. Most children, after having suffered shortage of food and water, are used firstly as slave labour. Girls are given to rebel commanders as ‘wives’. All of the children are trained as soldiers, taught how to use guns and to march. In Kitgum district alone, preliminary estimates indicate that 4,000 children have been abducted over the past several years. Of the total number of children managing to escape rebel captivity or rescued by military forces, approximately 57 per cent are between 11 and 16 years of age and 40 per cent are between 16 and 18 years of age. Only a small proportion of children below 10 years of age manage to escape.

More boys than girls are abducted (more than 70 per cent are boys) but almost four times more boys than girls manage to escape. "Often the children are in very poor shape. They are very malnourished, have rashes all over them, are poorly dressed and some have bullet wounds. Many of the girl captives suffer from sexually transmitted diseases," said the World Vision Country Director in Kampala.

In December 1998, over 80 children were freed from the LRA by government forces and 17 of them were taken to hospital. At the same time, Sister Fasera Rachelle requested the creation of an international mediation to obtain the liberation of 21 schoolgirls who were abducted with 118 other girls from a school in Aboke by the LRA in October 1996. They are the last of this group who are still in the hands of the rebels. These girls have been given as ‘spouses’ to commanders of the LRA and Joseph Kony, the leader of this rebel group, kept four of them for himself.

On 5 February 1999, Brigadier Katumba Wamala, who is in charge of military operations against the LRA, claimed on the Ugandan State television that his troops had rescued 2,172 people in 1998, most of them children and teenagers. "We are rescuing these children daily, and since last year, we have been handing them to charity organisations for care." Yet in April 1998, 25 boys were charged with treason and were waiting for trial. All these boys face the death sentence, even though they were abducted by rebels and used as child soldiers by them. They are charged with failing to release information about rebel soldiers or are said to have fought with the rebels. Some of them have been in prison for years and are still awaiting trial.

In late 1998, the Ugandan First Deputy Prime Minister Eriya Kategaya announced that an amnesty law would be adopted for members of the LRA who surrender. He added that brutal means would not be used since some of the LRA soldiers had been kidnapped and forced to fight and that some of them are kids. Nevertheless, in January 1999, the Ugandan army executed, in circumstances yet to be clarified, five teenage boys between the ages of 14 and 17 suspected of being ADF rebels. Indeed, in January 1999, the ADF began a fresh recruitment drive in western Uganda. Senior army officials said that rebel agents were offering cash rewards to volunteers and promises of financial support to their families. During the same month, newly-recruited youths were captured by Government forces and seven rebels were killed during an army ambush in Kasese.

The LRA enforces discipline through a combination of violence and threats. Once children have been trained (and sometimes even before this training) they are forced to fight in Uganda or in Sudan. Children help the LRA soldiers in looting villages or fighting against the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (in Sudan) or the Ugandan armed forces (in Uganda). Moreover they take part in abductions of more children in Uganda.
Latest reports suggest that the LRA has now turned to selling abducted children in return for arms.

**Allied Democratic Forces**

The ADF also abduct children in their schools or community. On 16 August 1997, the ADF attacked the St. John’s Catholic Seminary in Kasese district, abducting 19 seminarians and two workers. One worker was later killed by having his throat cut, and the abducted children were told that a similar fate awaited them if they attempted to escape. On 19 February 1998, the ADF abducted 30 girls and three boys from Mitandi Secondary School outside Fort Portal. In June 1998, the ADF attacked the Kichwamba Technical School in Kasese and set dormitories on fire. More than 60 people, including 40 students, were massacred. About 100 students were still missing and it is feared that they were abducted by the rebels to bolster their forces.27

**West Nile Bank Front**

It has been reported by a confidential source that there are a number of child soldiers from the WNBF who are currently in government custody, some as young as ten. In interviews with the Ugandan Human Rights Commission, these children claimed they were forcibly recruited into the WNBF.

"The soldiers took me from school. They had guns and the teachers couldn’t stop them. They took me to the bush and made me carry rifles and other things — really heavy loads! Many boys died of hunger and thirst. Then they taught me how to shoot. One day, a boy tried to escape but they caught him. They ordered us to stand around him in a circle and beat him. If we did not beat him, they would beat us. They would kill us. So we beat him. Again and again until he died. The next time a boy escaped, each of us had to run him through with a bayonet. I still see his face. Then they made us fight in battles — shoot guns at soldiers. Life was hard and many children died..."

Testimony of a boy abducted at age 11. This testimony was received by Mike Wessels in June 1998.

Concy A., a 14-year old girl, was abducted from Kitgum and taken to Sudan by the LRA: "In Sudan we were distributed to men and I was given to a man who had just killed his woman. I was not given a gun, but I helped in the abductions and grabbing of food from villagers. Girls who refused to become LRA wives were killed in front of us to serve as a warning to the rest of us."

Mail & Guardian, 21 April 1998.

Grace A. gave birth on open ground to a girl fathered by one of her [LRA] rebel abductors. Then she was forced to continue fighting: "I picked up a gun and strapped the baby on my back," the emaciated, now adult, 18-year-old recalled while nursing her scrappy baby. "But we were defeated by Government forces, and I found a way to escape."


**Notes**

2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. Information supplied by UNICEF.
8. IISS estimates, unless otherwise stated.
9. The strength of the LRA has been put at about 6,000 by the Ugandan First Deputy Prime Minister Eriya Kategaya. Hauser, C., "Uganda rebels: Uganda hopes amnesty will lure rebel defectors", Reuters, 2 November 1998.
Has signed (1992) but not ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Population: 8,478,000
Under-18s: 4,563,00 (54%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

• Active: 21,600
  Army: 20,000
  Air Force: 1,6003

• Paramilitary: 1,400
  Police Mobile Unit: 700
  Police Paramilitary Unit: 700

National Recruitment Legislation

Recruitment into the armed forces is regulated by the Defence Act, Chapter 106, of the Laws of Zambia, Part IV. Recruitment is done on a voluntary basis and seems to be very similar to the Kenyan legislation. According to Article 14 of this Chapter, "a person offering to enlist in the armed forces shall be given a notice in the prescribed form setting out the questions to be answered on attestation and stating the general conditions of the enlistment." An officer shall recruit a person in the Regular Force only if this person has been given such a notice, understands it and wishes to enlist.

The first condition enshrined in this Section is that the person to be recruited must have the apparent age of 18 years "unless consent to the enlistment has been given in writing by his parents or guardian or, where his parents or guardian are dead or unknown, by the District Secretary of the district in which such person resides."

National Recruitment Practice

There is no report of underage recruitment in the country, yet less than 10 per cent of Zambian children are registered at birth meaning that the age limit is likely to be subject to arbitrary assessment.4 There are about five military schools in the country which are run by the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Home Affairs through instructors from the defence forces. The students are between 18 and 25 years of age.5

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in Zambia.

Notes

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/C157333FCA91F573C1256C130033E448-chilsold.htm
Zimbabwe


Population: 11,682,000
Under-18s: 5,944,000 (51%)1

Governmental Armed Forces2

• Active: c. 39,000
  Army: c. 35,000
  Air Force: 4,000

• Paramilitary: 21,800
Zimbabwe Republic Force: 19,500
Police Support Unit: 2,300

National Recruitment Legislation

Recruitment into the armed forces is regulated by the National Service Act (NSA), Chapter 11:08, which entered into force on 1 January 1980. The NSA applies to ‘residents’ as defined in section 3(1), namely any male, (a) who resides permanently in Zimbabwe or (b) has, whether before or after 1 January 1980, resided in Zimbabwe for a continuous period of six months or for periods which amount, on aggregate, to not less than six months in any period of twelve months.

The minimum age is 18 years whether service is done on a voluntary basis or according to a call-up (Sections 10 and 11). Every resident shall be liable to render emergency National Service inside or outside Zimbabwe in the interests of defence, public safety or public order, whether or not such resident has undergone any period of National Service. Once again, the minimum age is 18 years even if the resident is volunteering for such a service (Section 18). Moreover, the Legal Age of Majority Act binds all Government agencies to recruit and employ people of the age of 18 or older.3

National Recruitment Practice

There is no evidence of any underage recruitment in Zimbabwe.4 It is believed that conscription is not enforced despite the existence of the above legislation.5

Child Participation in Armed Conflict

There is no armed conflict in Zimbabwe. According to the Government, children are not participating in armed conflict in the Zimbabwean armed forces.6

Zimbabwe sent troops to the DRC in order to back the government armed forces, allegedly spending at least US$1 million to finance its sojourn there.7 It is not known if underage troops have in practice been used as soldiers in this campaign. However, several sources reported that soldiers and even officers were against Zimbabwean involvement in the DRC and some of them were punished.8

On 19 February 1999, President Mugabe was quoted by media sources as saying that the Southern African Development Community should send forces to Angola to support its war against UNITA.9

Notes
2. Estimates taken from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London.
3. Information provided by the Swedish Embassy in Harare.

15/08/00