

Violent conflicts and their impacts on children: The case of child soldiers



**VIRTUAL PRESENTATION AT THE AHMUNC
BY
SALVATOR NKURUNZIZA,
EXPERT IN CRISIS PREVENTION & RECOVERY**

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***VIEWS DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THOSE OF
THE UNITED NATIONS***

OUTLINE PRESENTATION

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- 1. Root causes of conflict**
- 2. Children as weapon and victims of wars/ conflicts**
- 3. Why child soldiers**
- 4. Take action**

ROOT CAUSES OF CONFLICTS

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- ***Inter-state borders***: Nearly all borders were inherited from colonial times, and were the product of negotiations and treaties between the colonial powers.
- **Border conflicts** arise because of many borders were imprecise; some borders were straddled by a large ethnic group considered strategic by one side of the border; some borders passed through strategic terrain desired by countries on both sides of the border; and some borders passed by areas rich with mineral resources all of which fell on one side of the border, thus excluding the other country.
- **Cultural Identity**: Many existing post-colonial state structures do not satisfy variously the aspirations for cultural identity, autonomy, economic democracy and self-determination of different nationalities co-existing with the contemporary states.

ROOT CAUSES OF CONFLICTS (cont')

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- ***Ethnicity***: Most of separatist movements causing attempts at secession have often been caused by ethnic rivalry as well as by ethnic resentments against the civil head of state
- ***Military***: Inter-state aggression, annexation, intervention or hostility; for example, support for the rebels of other states, or for separatist movements.
- **Poor governance**: Conflicts breed where there is poor governance, human rights abuses and grievances over the unequal distribution of resources, wealth and power. Tensions simmer where people are excluded, marginalized and denied meaningful participation in the political and social life of their countries.
- **Poverty**: Unrest flourishes where people are poor, jobless and without hope

ROOT CAUSES OF CONFLICTS (cont')

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- ***International Politics:*** This takes the forms of ideological or political campaigns, territorial claims, and religious expansionism against other states, regional rivalries, terrorism, coercion or discrimination respecting the trade or economies of other states.
- ***Domestic Politics:*** Power struggles, hostile groups, over-population, economic or religious disparities, oppression, and demands for democracy, communal or ethnic violence related to economic, social, religious, cultural or ethnic issues.

Children as weapon and victims of wars/ conflicts

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❑ **Child Soldiers: Facts & Statistics**

- ✓ There are an estimated 250,000 child soldiers in the world today.
- ✓ Many rebel groups use child soldiers to fight the government, but some governments also use child soldiers in armed conflict
- ✓ As part of their recruitment, children are sometimes forced to kill or maim a family member thus breaking the bonds with their community and making it difficult for them to return home.

Children as weapon and victims of wars/ conflicts (cont')

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- ✓ Child Soldiers: Facts & Statistics
- ✓ It is estimated that 40% of all child soldiers are girls. They are often used as 'wives' for the male combatants.
- ✓ Whilst most child soldiers are abducted or conscripted into the fighting forces, some also volunteer or are volunteered by their parents.

WHY CHILD SOLDIERS?

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- Children are uniquely vulnerable to military recruitment because of their emotional and physical immaturity. They are easily manipulated and can be drawn into violence that they are too young to resist or understand.
- Technological advances in weaponry and the proliferation of small arms have contributed to the increased use of child soldiers. Lightweight automatic weapons are simple to operate, often easily accessible, and can be used by children as easily as adults.

WHY CHILD SOLDIERS ? (cont')

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- Children are most likely to become child soldiers if they are poor, separated from their families, displaced from their homes, living in a combat zone or have limited access to education.
- Many children join armed groups because of economic or social pressure, or because children believe that the group will offer food or security. Others are forcibly recruited, "press-ganged" or abducted by armed groups.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO ADDRESS AND/OR PREVENT CHILD SOLDIERS

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- **Be aware and raise awareness of legal frameworks for action**
- ❑ In 2000, the United Nations adopted an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The protocol prohibits the forced recruitment of children under the age of 18 or their use in hostilities. To date, it has been ratified by more than 110 countries.
- ❑ The ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor prohibits the forced or compulsory recruitment of children under the age of 18 for use in armed conflict. It has been ratified by over 150 countries.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO ADDRESS AND/OR PREVENT CHILD SOLDIERS (cont')

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➤ **Advocacy action**

- ❑ Advocacy to ensure that National States fulfill their commitment to protect children from involvement in armed conflict by establishing legal and practical mechanisms to safeguard children against recruitment and use
- ❑ Promoting compliance with international law, with emphasis on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and developing legislation with different national and local policy-makers
- ❑ Raising awareness of child rights through a variety of media—including education and training for military and other armed forces as well as efforts to reach children and their families

➤ **Support on-going programs**

- Resource mobilization to support organizations that dealing with disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration of child soldiers through
 - ✦ child sponsorship programs and other form supporting implementation of DDRR programs

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO ADDRESS AND/OR PREVENT CHILD SOLDIERS (cont)

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➤ **Support on-going programs**

- Resource mobilization to support organizations that dealing with disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration of child soldiers through
 - child sponsorship programs and other form supporting implementation of DDRR programs;
 - Fundraising campaigns in schools, churches and community to support an organization or projects;
 - Promote the spirit of volunteerism through Volunteer Involving Organizations for peace and reintegration of child soldiers (such as UNV, USA Peace Corps, UNDP, UNICEF & NGOs etc...)
 - Used cloths and toys for reintegration centers and/or Orphanage of children victim of war etc...

THANK YOU FOR ATTENTION