

## The study of child soldiering: issues and consequences for DDR implementation

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### ABSTRACT

An increasing number of children are actively participating in armed groups, drawing attention to the issue of child soldiering from both international humanitarian organisations and the academic community. Despite this interest, there is a lack of explicit attempts to bring the insights of these two arenas together. More specifically the theoretical issues raised by the scholarly community have not been incorporated into disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) practices. This article combines these two arenas to show that questions related to age, gender, agency and the recruitment of child soldiers in particular have not yet been resolved, leading to problems in the implementation of child-centred DDR programmes.

### Introduction

Violence, repression and armed conflict are unfortunately common occurrences in the everyday lives of many of the world's children. Millions of young people have been first-hand witnesses to wars and the atrocities that invariably accompany aggression. Moreover, an increasing number of adolescents have also been actively recruited by governmental military organisations, militias and rebel groups since the end of World War II.<sup>1</sup> Children as members of armed groups have become integral to the way wars are fought, such that their involvement in conflicts can no longer be classified as passive.<sup>2</sup>

It is estimated that governmental military organisations, militias and rebel groups are currently making active use of some 300,000 child soldiers in at least 86 countries.<sup>3</sup> While this estimate is not necessarily accurate, as information on child soldiers is generally difficult to obtain,<sup>4</sup> the mere fact that children (are forced to) actively participate in military campaigns unquestionably constitutes a serious violation of their rights.<sup>5</sup> Their deployment violates international human-rights standards and may have serious consequences not only for the child combatants themselves but also for the entire society: it increases the likelihood of conflict recurrence,<sup>6</sup> and can severely affect the economic situation of the countries involved.<sup>7</sup>

These issues, among others, have brought the problem of child soldiering to the forefront in both academia and the international humanitarian field.<sup>8</sup> Academic scholars are primarily devoted to identifying the causes and consequences of child soldiering. At the same time

the international policy community has made significant efforts to address the issue of children in armed conflict, including the establishment of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes focusing especially on children. However, despite an increase in interest in the subject in both the academic and humanitarian sectors, there still seems to be a lack of explicit attempts to unite the two fields. In this review article theoretical debates in the academic community are linked to the DDR literature on the reintegration of former child soldiers. Specifically the theoretical issues raised by the academic community are shown to have sometimes resulted in practical difficulties affecting the success of child-centred DDR programmes.

To this end, first, a brief overview is given of the existing research on child soldiering and child-centred DDR programmes. Thereafter certain important theoretical issues raised by the academic community are discussed. These academic issues can be found in the field of International Relations, and to a limited extent in the work produced by child psychologists and anthropologists. This exercise demonstrates that each of the identified issues is related to specific problems plaguing child-centred DDR programmes. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications of this exercise and suggests some avenues for academic research.

### Theoretical issues

Scholarly research on child recruitment is growing at an impressive rate. Activists, think-tanks and civil society groups conducted most of the early work. It is only recently that scholars from a variety of disciplines have begun to examine this phenomenon.<sup>9</sup> Such studies have generally explored the broad socioeconomic, political and demographic factors that may contribute to the use of children in civil wars, as well as how and why disputants recruit them.<sup>10</sup>

Studies of the former issue have, for instance, emphasised how globalisation, the sheer abundance of young people and the development of small weapons have influenced child soldier rates.<sup>11</sup> Studies in the latter category have examined the supply and demand for children, ie what motivates children to join armed groups and what motivates armed groups to recruit them.<sup>12</sup> These studies have explored the influence of the lack of education, poverty, vengeance, the allure of military life and starvation as motivators for joining armed groups.<sup>13</sup> Other scholars have asserted that armed groups recruit children because they are more militarily effective, or because the use of children as soldiers produces psychological complexities that can potentially slow down opposing troops.<sup>14</sup>

Recently scholars in the field of International Relations have also begun to investigate the consequences of child soldiering.<sup>15</sup> For example, Blattman shows that past violence leads to increased political engagement among former child combatants in post-conflict situations.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Haer and Böhmelt find that child soldiering increases the military effectiveness of an armed group on the battlefield, as well as the likelihood of conflict recurrence.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast, relatively little has been written about DDR programmes. Generally these programmes take place to promote security and stability by disarming combatants, removing them from military structures, and socially and economically integrating them into society. Usually they consist of three components. First, during the disarmament part, information is collected on the size, profile and deployment of the armed forces and the number, type

and location of their weapons. Additionally, combatants are gathered at pick-up points, moved to disarmament sites and are voluntarily disarmed. Their weapons and ammunition are stored, moved, and/or destroyed. Demobilisation is the second component of DDR programmes. This entails the separation of combatants from their command and control structures. During this process eligibility for the DDR programme is determined through a screening process, in which the former combatants receive identity and discharge documents that recognise their military involvement, their demobilisation and their eligibility for reintegration assistance. They also receive reinsertion assistance in the form of cash to cover their immediate basic needs.<sup>18</sup> Reintegration is the third component of the DDR programme. This encompasses a complex process in which ex-combatants return to their communities to adjust to civilian life. This reintegration part can include services like counselling, health check-ups, 'catch-up' education, microcredits and public works projects.<sup>19</sup>

Children have been often excluded from the above-described DDR programmes. There are two reasons for this: first, it was argued that they did not pose a threat to post-conflict.<sup>20</sup> Second, since children cannot be legally recruited, child-centred DDR programme elements were not viewed as a routine component of peace making.<sup>21</sup> Where they were not neglected, they were often included in underfunded and unsuitable programmes.<sup>22</sup> Fortunately, this has changed in recent times and most child-centred DDR programmes now have their own imperatives.<sup>23</sup>

In the disarmament phase children do not have to present a gun (or a defined equivalent). Child soldiers also do not receive reinsertion assistance in the form of cash during the demobilisation phase of the programme. The most important differences, however, can be found during the reintegration phase. The reintegration process of boys and girls starts at Interim Care Centres (ICCs). These are transit facilities that help to prepare them for going home and give nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) time for the preparation of families and communities to receive the children. Although boys and girls go to separate ICCs, they receive the same care, support and basic services at these centres. These care and support packages are often different from those offered to adult combatants. Much more emphasis is placed on educational activities, recreational activities, psychological support and counselling, and several different types of life-skill training. Once the parents or extended family members are traced, the children will be taken home to their family and will join an appropriate educational programme. These communities are sensitised to reduce stigmatisation. As such, child-specific programmes are particularly community-based so that adequate services are provided to communities to enable them to care better for children.<sup>24</sup>

Very little research has been conducted on the effectiveness of these child-centred DDR programmes and the general problems that plague them. Those studies that have examined DDR programmes in relation to child soldiers have primarily concentrated on examining their (short-term) effectiveness. This has mainly been done on the basis of case studies. Halton, for instance, examines the reintegration of former child soldiers in Sudan;<sup>25</sup> Binadi and Binadi do the same for Nepal;<sup>26</sup> while Banholzer and Haer investigate the case of Uganda.<sup>27</sup> Because DDR programmes have generally been investigated on the basis of these kinds of in-depth case studies, it is not surprising that few studies have attempted to identify common problems across the DDR programmes for former child soldiers.

Despite the increase in interest in the phenomenon of child soldiering and DDR programmes in both academic and humanitarian fields, there still seems to be a lack of explicit attempts to bring the two sectors together. In the following section, I will demonstrate that

this failure to consolidate information has had a significant influence on the successful reintegration of former child soldiers. It is important to note that academic scholars have raised many issues in their work. The most prominent studies, however, deal with issues such as what constitutes a child soldier, the question of voluntary enlistment, whether former child soldiers can be prosecuted for their actions, and the roles played by child combatants in armed groups, with a special focus on girl soldiers. Each of these issues is discussed separately below in an attempt to demonstrate that they have a negative impact on child-centred DDR programmes.

## Need for consolidated information

### *Age threshold*

An essential step in addressing the problem of child soldiering is clearly defining what a child soldier is. This definition hinges on what is meant by the term 'child'. In general the international community defines a child soldier as 'any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers, and those accompanying such groups, other than purely as family members.'<sup>28</sup> This definition was mentioned in the highly influential Machel report on children in armed conflict compiled for the UN,<sup>29</sup> and in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; it was then officially adopted by international organisations and NGOs at the Cape Town conference on child soldiers in 1997. After this conference it was adopted by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees as the official definition.<sup>30</sup> Subsequently most humanitarian and human rights organisations began to use this definition, which is now the standard universal definition in the international discourse.<sup>31</sup>

Although this universalist definition might seem to solve the identification problem regarding child soldiers, it is rather controversial. For one thing, some scholars argue that the notion of childhood is culturally constructed and varies across societies. It should, therefore, not be determined primarily by an artificial age threshold.<sup>32</sup> In many non-Western societies a person may be regarded as an adult once he or she has completed the culturally scripted initiation ceremony or rite of passage into manhood or womanhood.<sup>33</sup> In Afghanistan a girl becomes an adult with her marriage and particularly after the birth of her first child, while a young man may not attain social adulthood until he becomes the head of his family after the death of his father, and assumes responsibility for relatives and their households.<sup>34</sup>

Additionally, many societies regard children as competent 'young adults' who bear significant social, economic, political, and military responsibilities for their families and communities.<sup>35</sup> This is particularly the case for so-called 'adolescents'.<sup>36</sup> Military participation is conceptualised as part of becoming an adult and under-18-year-olds are encouraged to take part in military activities.<sup>37</sup> Practically this means that those adhering to a more culturally sensitive definition of age do not rule out the acceptability of child soldiering under certain circumstances *per se*.<sup>38</sup>

The debate between these two models of approaching age and childhood is not solely an issue in child soldier research; it also has important consequences for DDR programmes and their implementation. Programmes that have special provisions for children formerly associated with armed groups have encountered several problems as a result of this strict age threshold of 18. The simplest and the most intractable problem is the lack of birth and

identity records, which undermines the distinction between adults and children in many DDR programmes.<sup>39</sup> Based on the prevailing assumption that children are dependent on adults, the international community sometimes relies on local commanders or village elders to help administer demobilisation exercises by drawing up a list of their child soldiers.<sup>40</sup> Such exercises often become political, usually reflecting the existing lines of power and influence within the village.<sup>41</sup> For example, Shepler discovered that such lists often include the sons of the village chief, the former commander of the local militia, or the imam, even if these children were not involved in any armed groups.<sup>42</sup> As a result, reintegration benefits intended for former child soldiers often went to those who were already better off and more connected to the local power networks, thus re-marginalising the 'genuine' child soldiers who lacked these social resources.<sup>43</sup>

More importantly many former child soldiers are regarded by their communities or themselves as 'young adults' in their socio-cultural context.<sup>44</sup> They would prefer to have access to the adult DDR packages that include cash assistance (and sometimes even microcredit schemes), rather than child-centred packages, in order to support their families.<sup>45</sup> In other words, a separate demobilisation and community reintegration programme for child soldiers may cause frustration and might even lead, in certain circumstances, to the decision to re-join armed groups.

### **Recruitment and criminal responsibility**

Related to the discussion on how one should define the 'child' part of the term 'child soldier', is the debate about these combatants' accountability. Two questions in particular are frequently raised by the scholarly community: can we speak about 'voluntary' recruitment in the case of child soldiers? And, if so, can we hold them responsible for their actions?

The international community often actively explains away the 'voluntary' recruitment part (and as such children's accountability) with reference to 'desperation', 'manipulation' or 'lacking the cognitive skills to make a free choice'.<sup>46</sup> For instance, in her *amicus curiae* brief to the International Criminal Court in the Lubanga case, Leila Zerrougui, the special representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, argued that the distinction between voluntary enlistment and forced recruitment was a distinction without meaning, claiming that we can never speak of voluntary enlistment in the case of child soldiers.<sup>47</sup>

Most scholars, however, are slowly opening up to the possibility that children can actually join an armed group on a voluntarily basis.<sup>48</sup> Hart argues that it is apparent that in many locations where children are associated with military groups, recruitment cannot be explained solely in terms of physical coercion and intimidation.<sup>49</sup> In fact, war can often create new social, economic and political systems and relationships that may compel children (and adults) to enlist on a voluntary basis. As Utas notes, 'The Liberian Civil War created new opportunities for earlier otherwise marginalized peoples. Young men from marginal backgrounds became field commanders and strongmen of society. Young women too left their homes and ventured out into the public sphere. It was a high-risk game...but it also offered high yield gains.'<sup>50</sup> Some scholars have therefore argued that under-18 combatants in fact play an active and often critical role in political and military movements, with little direct coercion from adults.<sup>51</sup> This 'voluntary' factor must be taken more seriously by humanitarian

agencies, as it can serve as a window into young people's underlying concerns, grievances, needs and aspirations, which may otherwise be ignored in the 'all-are-victims' discourse.<sup>52</sup>

If we assume that children have at least some form of 'free choice' with regard to the decision to join an armed group, can we hold them responsible for their actions? Can we, for instance, assume that child soldiers are criminally responsible and have *mensa rea* (free will) at the time when they committed their crimes?

Although Article 12 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child addresses the right of children to 'express...views freely in all matters affecting [them]', which some have interpreted as an indirect recognition of children's agency, suggestions that children also have accountability when it comes to participating in armed conflict are often countered by the international community.<sup>53</sup> On several occasions the UN has stated that 'former child soldiers are victims of criminal policies for which adults are responsible',<sup>54</sup> and that 'the United Nations, as well as many NGOs and child protection actors share the view that children associated with armed groups should not be detained or prosecuted, but should be primarily treated as victims by virtue of their age and the forced nature of their association.'<sup>55</sup> Amnesty International (AI) takes this argument a step further by asserting that, before any model of justice can be applied to former child soldiers, an assessment of the child's awareness of the choices open to him or her should be conducted.<sup>56</sup>

If we assume that child soldiers are (to some extent) aware of the available choices and their consequences, can we hold them responsible for the atrocities they commit? If so, how should we do this? Theoretically there are two kinds of models of justice that (indirectly) address the issue of child soldiers in relation to the issue of culpability: the retributive model and the restorative model.<sup>57</sup>

The retributive model argues that wrongdoers should be held accountable for their crimes through punishment, the severity of which should be proportional to the seriousness of the crime. If criminals are not punished, according to the proponents of this model, a climate of impunity is created, enabling more conflict and more criminal behaviour.<sup>58</sup> McMahan explains the model as follows: 'Because child soldiers pose a threat in exactly the same way that adult combatants do, they have combatant status and are therefore legitimate targets of attack according to contemporary just war theory. Whether they are morally responsible for the threat they pose is irrelevant.'<sup>59</sup>

This model has been applied in a number of settings. For instance, following the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, many former child soldiers were arrested and detained – the first time in history that children accused of committing genocide were convicted and imprisoned.<sup>60</sup> In the Congo, a 14-year-old former child soldier was recently executed.<sup>61</sup> However, many scholars and policy makers alike have recognised that trying children in courts (and thereby forcing them to relive their actions) could significantly add to their potential stigmatisation and might lead to difficulties with reintegration.<sup>62</sup>

The restorative model of justice, on the other hand, attempts to make restitution, or ameliorate relational damages, through goods or services offered by the offending party that signal recognition and remorse for their wrongs.<sup>63</sup> In contrast to the retributive model, which often conflicts with local cultural norms, the restorative justice approach is harmonious with many (African) societies' norms of justice. However, many of the existing restorative justice processes are currently not tailored to children.<sup>64</sup>

Although most international organisations have difficulties with acknowledging the accountability of children in the first place (because of their age and the forced nature of

their association), they acknowledge (to some extent) the need for accountability and some form of justice.<sup>65</sup> AI and the UN emphasise that detaining and prosecuting former child soldiers for their actions via the retributive model of justice should always be regarded as a measure of last resort; where former child soldiers must be held accountable, they prefer alternative methods, such as those offered by the restorative model.<sup>66</sup>

While some human rights organisations acknowledge the necessity for justice, this is not automatically reflected in child-centred DDR programmes. Most of the existing programmes focus on 'normalisation' activities, such as basic schooling and recreational programmes, rather than on prosecution. Herein lies one of the major flaws in many of these programmes: by presuming victimhood and ignoring the existence of voluntary recruitment and the power of 'tactical agency', they envision a return to an idyllic concept of childhood.<sup>67</sup>

While rehabilitation of former child soldiers by emphasising their innocence continues to be the preferable alternative in the international community, it may not fully satisfy the needs of the victims or the general community to which these children return.<sup>68</sup> Holding former child soldiers accountable for their actions might help direct victims and community members to find peace and move forward with their lives.<sup>69</sup> This is of special importance since many of these former child soldiers receive humanitarian aid, which often shapes the public notion that former child soldiers are 'rewarded' for their actions; meanwhile their civilian victims are not recognised nor 'compensated', enhancing sentiments of injustice.<sup>70</sup> Some authors, such as Lafayette, have therefore argued that victims' quest for justice cannot be secondary to the rehabilitation and forgiveness of a child soldier.<sup>71</sup> However, the balance between justice and rehabilitation of these children is difficult to accommodate, especially because many traditional restorative justice practices cannot be employed because of the 'innocence' discourse of DDR programmes.

Further, with their strong emphasis on victimhood, DDR programmes ignore the interplay between innocence, childhood and responsibility.<sup>72</sup> For example, in his discussion of the Aguentas (a youth militia in Guinea Bissau), Vigh describes how in the context of reintegration, the community redefined the Aguentas as children, even if at the time the militia members were over 18, in order to facilitate reconciliation.<sup>73</sup> In this case the community understood the individuals to be children because they were victims, whereas international law sees them as victims because they were children.

### *Differences in involvement and gender*

The term 'child soldier' applies to a wide range of children with enormously varying experiences and roles in their respective armed groups.<sup>74</sup> A child soldier may be anything from a sex slave to a cook, a porter or a combatant. His or her involvement may also be merely temporary or long-term. However, until recently the academic community tended to overlook these differences: the study of child soldiers was, in effect, the study of boy combatants.<sup>75</sup> This focus was primarily a result of security concerns: boys were assumed to have the most disruptive influence on post-conflict stability.<sup>76</sup> Consequently children who served in roles other than as active combatants or did not possess any weapon at the time of disarmament were often left on the margins.<sup>77</sup>

One particular group that was widely ignored in the academic literature is girl combatants. Girls associated with armed groups were often depicted as victims lacking any form of accountability.<sup>78</sup> Recently, however, scholars have begun to assemble narratives of girls as

combatants in El Salvador, Columbia, Eritrea, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Uganda and elsewhere.<sup>79</sup> Some of these studies have estimated that as many as 40% of the fighters in contemporary intra-state wars are girls.<sup>80</sup>

However, guaranteeing girls' access to DDR programmes remains a major challenge.<sup>81</sup> Few girls have enrolled in or benefited from national DDR programmes.<sup>82</sup> For instance, in a study conducted in five eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo, 23 girls were demobilised in comparison to 1718 boys – despite girls being recruited or abducted just as extensively as boys.<sup>83</sup>

According to the UN, DDR planners and programme staff have frequently ignored girl soldiers' needs and experiences.<sup>84</sup> This is despite the fact that some authors have suggested that girls and women are at greater risk of developing post-traumatic and depressive symptoms after traumatic events, including war trauma.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, it is argued that girl soldiers are subjected more often to sexual victimisation, whether as part of their initiation into the group or as a condition of remaining in the group.<sup>86</sup>

Once out of the armed group the experiences of former girl soldiers differ from those of former boy soldiers. They are less likely to marry or find livelihoods and, together with their children (especially those born during their time with the armed group), they experience relatively high rates of rejection and stigmatisation by their families and communities.<sup>87</sup> In addition, they are particularly likely to experience attempts at re-recruitment, as commanders often want to retain the girls' added value as 'wives' or 'servants'.<sup>88</sup>

Because DDR programmes are based on the idea of universalist rather than tailored treatment (ie they presume that all child soldiers share essentially the same characteristics and experiences and consequently should receive the same kind of assistance), differences in experiences and needs are often overlooked.<sup>89</sup> For example, most DDR programmes for former child soldiers are focused on 'a return to the way it was before the war'.<sup>90</sup> This focus can be harmful for girl soldiers, since some of them may be pushed to resume conventional, socially ascribed roles that could clash with the new power, skills or agency they have acquired during their time with an armed group.<sup>91</sup> Ignoring these newly acquired skills might undermine their potential for development in the post-conflict world and could lead to frustration.<sup>92</sup> At the same time, however, DDR programmes that fail to acknowledge the fact that former girl soldiers often exhibit behaviour deemed to be a 'violation of acceptable gender norms and social values' are at risk of further marginalising them.<sup>93</sup>

Some authors have called for a more holistic approach in the development of DDR programs.<sup>94</sup> Francis emphasises that front-line active child soldiers need a different kind of assistance for reintegration and rehabilitation from those who have been used as cooks.<sup>95</sup> Those in the latter category are often able to trace their families and are willing to return home. They are generally welcomed back into the community, while those in the former category might encounter severe problems when returning. In light of the neglected ranks of girl soldiers, authors such as Far have suggested that the DDR approach should be much more gender-sensitive.<sup>96</sup> DDR programmes should be focused on assistance based on the specific experiences and needs of former (girl) soldiers, including mental health, reproductive health and vocational training interventions, as it cannot be assumed that traditional socio-economic support is an option for most girl returnees.

## Conclusion

In recent years the academic community has written a great deal about the phenomenon of child soldiering. In doing so, they have identified certain theoretical difficulties connected to this phenomenon. In this review article theoretical debates in the academic community have been linked to the child-centred DDR literature, showing that these issues have sometimes resulted in practical difficulties affecting the success of DDR programmes.

Three theoretical issues are central in this exercise: the age aspect of the official definition; the alleged lack of accountability (sometimes connected to the ways in which children are recruited); and the fact that differences between former child soldiers are often overlooked, especially with regard to gender. First, the official universalist definition strictly adhered to by all child-centred DDR programmes emphasises the age threshold of 18. As demonstrated, this threshold often conflicts with local norms and practices. Moreover, it can lead to resentment or political manipulation among those who do not agree with the definition. In the worst case this might induce some former child soldiers to abandon DDR programmes and re-join armed groups. Second, the academic literature on child soldiering has similarly emphasised the issue of recruitment and accountability. An increasing number of scholars subscribes to the idea that children play a crucial role in many armed groups and that some of them do so voluntarily. Most DDR programmes, however, have been developed based on the concept that children are 'victims' who lack any form of accountability; prosecuting them in any form (via either the retributive model or the restorative model of justice) is therefore not supported, which often leads to resentment among local communities. Finally, the scholarly community has begun to remedy the previous lack of differentiation between the various roles of former child soldiers and between genders. This failing can also be observed in the development and implementation of DDR programmes. These programmes have difficulties with recognising differences between former child soldiers but, more importantly, they are unable to tailor their programmes to address the specific needs of particular subgroups of child soldiers.

What this overview also shows is that there are still many (academic) questions unanswered. For instance, the most obvious one: how does the variation in child-centred DDR programmes influence the effectiveness of the DDR programme? Furthermore, is there a difference between reintegration success between those children who were actively involved on the battlefield and those who only fulfilled passive jobs, such as being cooks and porters? Also, does the implementation of a restorative or redistributive justice model influence the effectiveness of the reintegration of the child? And how do these models influence the way in which children are welcomed back in their community? What determines the preference for either model? Furthermore, it would be interesting to find out from former girl soldiers what they miss in the existing DDR packages. Is it really the case that they need and want specific help, as is suggested by some scholars? Is there a difference in effective reintegration between very young children and adolescents?

Despite these problems and unanswered questions, child-centred DDR programmes should under no circumstance be eliminated. Rather, DDR developers and implementation staff should be made aware of the existence of these issues and how they (potentially) affect the effectiveness of such programmes. The staff should attempt to anticipate potential problems, consulting local actors to ensure that the programme matches the reality on the ground. Moreover, instead of developing a one-size-fits-all DDR programme for children,

DDR developers and implementation staff should seek to implement programmes in which options are tailored to needs and experiences – ie programmes in which former child soldiers can pick and choose the components that are necessary on an individual basis.<sup>97</sup> This system may encourage accountability and result in less frustration, and it will also be less likely to conflict with local norms and values. Flexibility should thus be an essential component of any DDR programme focused on the effective reintegration of former child soldiers.

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### Notes

1. See, for example, Maclure and Denov, "I didn't want to Die," 119; Wessells, *Child Soldiers*; and Gates and Reich, "Introduction."
2. London, *One Day the Soldiers Came*; and Brett and McCallin, *Children*.
3. See, for example, Child Soldiers International, *Global Report 2008*; Tynes and Early, "Governments, Rebels, and the Use of Child Soldiers"; and Machel, *Impact of Armed Conflict*.
4. See, for example, Tynes, "Child Soldiers," 2; and Brett and McCallin, *Children*. For a critique on this estimated number, see Human Security Report, *War and Peace*.
5. Gates and Reich, "Introduction," 5.
6. Haer and Böhmelt, "Child Soldiers as Time Bombs?"
7. Brett and McCallin, *Children*, 26. In this paper the terms 'child soldiers' and 'child combatants' are used interchangeably. However, for an extensive discussion on the difference between these two terms, see Podder, "Neither Child nor Soldier."
8. Lee, *Understanding and Addressing the Phenomenon*, 6; and Achvarina and Reich, "No Place to Hide."
9. Studies conducted in the field of psychology have focused on examining the effects of war and trauma on the behaviour of children in general and of former child soldiers in particular. For good examples, see Wainryb, "And so they ordered Me to Kill"; Boothby, "Mozambique Life Outcome Study"; and Blattman and Annan, "Child Combatants in Northern Uganda."
10. Tynes and Early, "Governments, Rebels, and the Use of Child Soldiers," 80–81.
11. See, for example, Honwana, *Child Soldiers in Africa*; and Singer, *Children at War*.

12. See, for example, Wessells, *Child Soldiers*; Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers*; Maclure and Denov, "I didn't want to Die"; and Andvig, *Child Soldiers*.
13. See, for example, Tynes, "Child Soldiers, Armed Conflict," 93; Peters, "Re-examining Voluntarism," 21; Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers*; Tynes and Early, "Governments, Rebels, and the Use of Child Soldiers," 83; and Brett and McCallin, *Children*.
14. See, for example, Haer and Böhmelt, "The Impact of Child Soldiers"; Beber and Blattman, "The Logic of Child Soldiering"; and Tynes and Early, "Governments, Rebels, and the Use of Child Soldiers."
15. See, for example, Blattman, "From Violence to Voting."
16. Ibid.
17. Haer and Böhmelt, "The Impact of Child Soldiers"; and Haer and Böhmelt, "Child Soldiers as Time Bombs?"
18. United Nations. "Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration." Report of the Secretary-General A/60/705. 2006. World Bank. "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration." Social Development Department. Conflict, Crime & Violence. 2009. Accessed April 20, 2016. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resources/244362-1164107274725/DDRFinal3-print.pdf>.
19. World Bank, "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration."
20. Wessells, "Girls in Armed Forces."
21. United Nations, *Children and DDR*. Rather, it was considered an attempt to prevent or redress a violation of children's human rights. Practically this means that child DDR requires that the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of children be pursued at all times, even during a conflict, and that actions to prevent child recruitment should be continuous. See IDDRWG. "Children and DDR." 2005. Accessed April 20, 2016. <http://www.bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/Children%20and%20DDR.pdf>.
22. Singer, *Children at War*, 184. Singer describes the situation in Sierra Leone after the civil war. During this war children represented a large percentage of troops. However, only \$965,000 of the \$34 million the United Nations donated for DDR in the mid-1990s was earmarked for assistance programmes for these children.
23. IDDRWG, "Children and DDR."
24. United Nations, *Children and DDR*.
25. Halton, "Child Soldier Reintegration in Sudan."
26. Binadi and Binadi, "Reintegration of Child Soldiers."
27. Banholzer and Haer, "Group's Attachment."
28. UNICEF, *Cape Town Principles*.
29. Machel, *Impact of Armed Conflict*.
30. Lee, *Understanding and Addressing the Phenomenon*; and Brett and McCallin, *Children*, 14–15.
31. Lee, *Understanding and Addressing the Phenomenon*, 3. See also Brett and McCallin, *Children*; and Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers* for a good overview of all the international laws that deal directly or indirectly with the position of children in armed conflict.
32. See, for example, Wessells, *Child Soldiers*, 5; and Andvig, *Child Soldiers*. Although the problem concerning age is most prominent here, some authors, such as Brett and McCallin, *Children*, 17, point out that it is also unclear how 'armed force or armed group' is defined. They question whether we can consider children who throw stones and do not wear uniforms in situations such as the Palestinian Occupied Territories to be child soldiers. See also Wessells, *Child Soldiers*.
33. See, for example, Wessells, *Child Soldiers*, 5; Boyden, "Childhood and the Policy Makers"; and Andvig, *Child Soldiers*.
34. Lee, *Understanding and Addressing the Phenomenon*; and De Berry et al., *The Children of Kabul*, 6.
35. Andvig, *Child Soldiers*.
36. Lee, *Understanding and Addressing the Phenomenon*, 15.
37. The Dinka of Sudan, for instance, have traditionally initiated adolescent boys into warriorhood between the ages of 16 and 18. Proving oneself to be a competent warrior is a requirement for attaining social adulthood. See Deng, *The Dinka of the Sudan*.

38. Wessells, *Child Soldiers*; and Fox, "Child Soldiers and International Law."
39. Brett and McCallin, *Children*, 42.
40. Lee, *Understanding and Addressing the Phenomenon*.
41. Stovel, *Long Road Home*.
42. Shepler, "Conflicted Childhoods."
43. See Utas, "Sweet Battlefields"; and Lee, *Understanding and Addressing the Phenomenon*.
44. See, for example, Read, "When Is a Kid a Kid?"; Lee, *Understanding and Addressing the Phenomenon*; Rivard, "Child Soldiers and Disarmament"; and Shepler, "The Rites of the Child."
45. Rivard, "Child Soldiers and Disarmament"; and Boothby et al., "Mozambique Child Soldier Life Outcome Study."
46. See Peters, "Re-examining Voluntarism," 6; Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers*, 24; Lee, *Understanding and Addressing the Phenomenon*; and Save the Children, "Child Soldiers."
47. United Nations, *Children and Justice*.
48. Peters, "Re-examining Voluntarism," 6–7, argues that the key question that must be addressed is whether youth have far fewer options than adults in the same situation. Often young people have been represented as not having a free choice and thus as having been forcibly recruited, while adults in the same situation are generally assumed to have joined voluntarily and thus to have had a free choice.
49. Hart, "Displaced Children's Participation," 278.
50. Utas, "Sweet Battlefields," 251.
51. See *ibid*; Peters and Richards, "Why we Fight"; and De Berry, "Child Soldiers and the Convention."
52. Lee, *Understanding and Addressing the Phenomenon*.
53. Hart, "Displaced Children's Participation," 279–280.
54. United Nations, *Children and DDR*, 6.
55. United Nations, *Children and Justice*.
56. Amnesty International, "Child Soldiers." There are also some scholars who have attempted to tackle this 'agency problem' by making a distinction between 'tactical' and 'strategic' agency. Honwana, *Child Soldiers in Africa*. These researchers have argued that children possess so-called 'tactical agency' but lack 'strategic agency'.
57. For an extensive overview, see Wessells, *Child Soldiers*; and Lee, *Understanding and Addressing the Phenomenon*.
58. Clark, "Juvenile Justice."
59. McMahan, "Child Soldiers," 28.
60. Leveau, "Liability of Child Soldiers," 49.
61. Leveau, "Liability of Child Soldiers," 55.
62. Grossman, "Rehabilitation or Revenge," 351; Wessells, *Child Soldiers*, 219; and United Nations, *Children and Justice*, 39.
63. Wessells, *Child Soldiers*, 221–222; and Grossman, "Rehabilitation or Revenge."
64. United Nations, *Children and Justice*, 39–40.
65. United Nations, *Children and Justice*, 10; and Amnesty International, "Child Soldiers," 2.
66. United Nations, *Children and DDR*; United Nations, *Children and Justice*; Amnesty International, "Child Soldiers"; and Gordon, "Victims and Perpetrators."
67. Gordon, "Victims and Perpetrators."
68. Shepler, "The Rites of the Child."
69. Lafayette, "The Prosecution of Child Soldiers."
70. Derluyn et al., "Victims and/or Perpetrators."
71. Lafayette, "The Prosecution of Child Soldiers."
72. See Karam, "What is a Child?," 23.
73. Vigh, *Navigating Terrains of War*, 221, 224. This redefinition is also seen in other societies, like that of the Acholi in northern Uganda, who reclassified escapees as children. Finnstrom, *Living with Bad Surroundings*, 228.
74. Wessells, *Child Soldiers*, 6.
75. Özerdem and Podder, "The Long Road Home," 11.
76. Wessells, "Girls in Armed Forces," 184.

77. United Nations, *Children and DDR*.
78. See, for example, Annan et al., "Civil War"; and Coulter, "Female Fighters."
79. Alison, "Cogs in the Wheel?"; Luciak, *After the Revolution*; Annan et al., "Civil War"; and Utas, "Sweet Battlefields."
80. Machel, *The Impact of War*, 17; Save the Children, *Forgotten Casualties of War*; and Wessells, "Girls in Armed Forces."
81. United Nations, *Children and DDR*, 10.
82. See, for example, Schauer and Elbert, "The Psychological Impact"; Annan et al., "Civil War"; McKay and Mazura, "Where are the Girls?"; Mazurana et al., "Girls in Fighting Forces"; Denov, "Girl Soldiers and Human Rights"; Özerdem and Podder, "The Long Road Home"; and Wessells, "Girls in Armed Forces."
83. Wessells, "Girls in Armed Forces," 184; and Bouta, *Gender and Disarmament*. Another famous example is the case of Sierra Leone. It was estimated that during the civil war between 8500 and 11,500 girl soldiers participated. However, the DDR programme established demobilised only 8% of them. For more information, see Williamson, "The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Child Soldiers."
84. United Nations, *Children and DDR*, 10.
85. Tolin and Foa, "Sex Differences"; and Annan et al., "Civil War."
86. Dorais and Corriveau, *Gangs and Girls*.
87. See, for example, Mazurana et al., "Girls in Fighting Forces"; Annan et al., "Civil War," 881; and Stovel, "There's no Bad Bush."
88. Singer, *Children at War*, 185.
89. See Lee, *Understanding and Addressing the Phenomenon*; Wessells, *Child Soldiers*, 8; Francis, "Paper Protection Mechanisms," 215; and Banholzer and Haer, "Group's Attachment."
90. Stout, "Silences and Empty Spaces," 47; and Handrahan, "Conflict, Gender."
91. Stout, "Silences and Empty Spaces," 47.
92. Ibid; Onu, "The International Response"; and Maclure and Denov, "I didn't want to die so I joined Them."
93. Stout, "Silences and Empty Spaces," 47; and Ochen et al., "Formerly Abducted Child Mothers," 91.
94. Banholzer and Haer, "Group's Attachment"; Schauer and Elbert, "The Psychological Impact"; Corbin, "Returning Home"; Knight and Özerdem, "Guns, Camps and Cash"; and Far, "The Importance of a Gender Perspective."
95. Francis, "Paper Protection Mechanisms," 215.
96. Far, "The Importance of a Gender Perspective."
97. McMullin, "Exclusion or Reintegration"; and Lee, *Understanding and Addressing the Phenomenon*.

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