



CHILD PARTICIPATION IN SITUATIONS OF ARMED CONFLICT

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Estimates – Numbers of Children Involved

- **As a result of conflicts and human rights violations, there are about 20 million children living as refugees or internally displaced within their own national borders. More than 2 million children have died as a direct result of armed conflict over the last decade. More than 6 million children, have been permanently disabled or seriously injured – and there are an estimated 300,000 child soldiers.**

BASIC LEGAL RULES

- **‘Participation’**: children who are able to form their own views are entitled express their views regarding matters affecting them, and these must be taken into account depending on their age and maturity (Art. 12, 1989 CRC)
- **‘Child’**: is generally considered to be someone under the age of 18 (Art. 1, 1989 CRC)
- **‘Child Soldiers’**: growing international trend to prohibit the recruitment and use of children under 18 in armed conflict as soldiers.



Talk Outline

- **Terms: ‘Participation’, ‘Child’, ‘Armed Conflict’**
- **Link: Child Rights and Participation in Armed Conflict**
- **Perspectives of Children**
- **Achievements, Challenges, and the Way Forward**

Terms: 'Participation'

- Three different meanings:

- Broad sense: getting involved

- Art. 12, 1989 CRC

Terms: 'Participation' (contd.)

□ Participation as 'soldiers'

- Definition of 'soldiers': no precise definition, but child soldier considered any person under 18 who is a member of or attached to government armed forces or any other regular or irregular armed force or armed political group, whether or not an armed conflict exists. Child soldiers perform a range of tasks including participation in combat – but also e.g., spying, acting as couriers or guards; training or other preparations; cooking and domestic labour; and recruitment for sexual purposes.



Terms: 'Participation' (contd.)

- **Reasons for child participation as soldiers:**
 - **Forced Recruitment**
 - **Choice?**
 - **Military Advantage**



Terms: 'Child'

- **Legal definition**

- **Challenges:**

- ☐ **Demographics**
- ☐ **Birth registration**
- ☐ **Misperceptions: child soldiers and civilians as victims?**

Terms: 'Armed Conflict'

■ 'New wars':

- ☐ global impact
- ☐ massive population displacement
- ☐ spill over borders
- ☐ involve both local and global actors
- ☐ involve regular as well as paramilitary groups, warlords, mercenaries, and organised crime groups
- ☐ battles are rare
- ☐ most violence is inflicted on civilians, including children.



Link: Rights and Participation

Art. 12, 1989 CRC

- ☐ **Clash between rights and participation**
- ☐ **Usefulness in advocacy**



Perspectives of Children

- **Access Difficulties**
- **Human Rights Organisations**
- **Ishmael Beah and others**
- **Uganda**



Achievements

- **UN Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict**
- **UN Security Council**
- **Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict**
- **ICC and Sierra Leone Prosecutions**



Challenges

**Armed conflict – and child participation –
here to stay?**



Ways Forward

- **Development Issues**
- **Military and other Training**
- **Great Lakes Pact**
- **Human Security and EU**
- **Romeo Dallaire Initiative**
- **Educating Children – Art. 29, 1989 CRC**