

powerful tool for development. Walker states that "religion offers alternatives to the dominant models of social, economic, and political development"⁸⁸ and Maathi concludes that culture, poverty, environmental degradation, and women's rights are linked.⁸⁹ Thus, for many Africans, cultural loss may be reclaimed through new iterations of traditional beliefs and customs incorporated into a faith that is often familiar and

very relevant to their current lived experience. This religious revolution can thus serve as an alternative development model, facilitating reclamation of culture, while asserting Africans' abilities to discuss and develop an approach towards environmental sustainability and gender equality on their own terms.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have argued that Christianity has taken on a revolutionary role in postcolonial Africa and that its continued growth is likely to shape global Christian thought, creating yet another kind of revolution. This influence currently tends towards conservative positions, particularly on matters of sexuality, but African churches both mainstream and independent must be seen as developing their viewpoints to bridge traditional beliefs and Christian scripture through the mobilization and assembling of congregants. This context must be understood by development practitioners working in Africa. However, beyond understanding the context, I suggest that these networks can and do serve as places for dialogue on key development issues, such as environment and gender. Negotiating varying opinions on these topics through religious organizations could be an alternative form of development, one that allows Africans to take ownership of the discussion while reclaiming and interpreting lost cultural aspects through their new faith.

⁸⁸ Walker, 1999, 15.

⁸⁹ Maathi, 2009, 165.

Children in Armed Conflict:

An Analysis of International Efforts to Prevent the Use of Child Soldiers

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In many parts of the world today, children are engaged in extreme conflict as part of rebel factions, paramilitaries, and in some cases, government armed forces. Many of these children are trained to serve as armed combatants, forced labourers, and sex slaves. Over the past few decades, the international community has mobilized to combat the issue of child soldiering, calling it a basic human rights abuse. To support this mobilization, multiple documents have been drafted and implemented by both government and international organizations. The most prominent international document dedicated to the protection of children and the restriction of child soldiering, is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted by the General Assembly in 1989. Following this was the creation of its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict in 2000.¹ Yet, despite this increased international awareness, the global use of children as armed combatants appears to be rising, and "the recruitment and employment of child soldiers [continues to be] one of the most flagrant violations of the norms of international human rights."² Although the international community has drawn attention to the issue, there has been little success in stopping or even reducing the practice of child soldiering.

¹ Christine Lundy. *An Introduction to the Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Ontario, Canada: Full Circle Press, 1997), 86.

² P.W. Singer, *Children at War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2005), 37.

In considering the rise of children in armed conflict around the globe since the early 1990s, and specifically in situations of political violence, the shortcomings of the CRC and its Optional Protocol become very apparent. This work will assess the current international efforts to reduce the use of children as combatants by first investigating what a child soldier is, as well as how children are recruited, indoctrinated, and trained to take part in war. Following this, the main body of the CRC and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict will be more closely examined. By understanding the creation of children as agents of violence, it becomes apparent that the CRC is not an agreement powerful enough to invoke change and, in order to remedy the issue, the document must be further developed. In light of this realization, this work will present four key requirements to further develop international efforts in eliminating the practice of child soldiering: First, there should be a larger focus on the conditions of civil warfare as opposed to interstate warfare, as most child soldiers are now recruited in regions of civil conflict between government armies and rebel groups. Second, stronger monitoring of the global arms trade is necessary, as the increase in small weapons trading makes the participation of children more likely. Third, the idealistic, universal approach presented by the CRC needs to be adjusted to accommodate the realities of children's local contexts. And, finally, there is a desperate need to properly sanction individuals that are known child soldier recruiters, which institutions such as the UN, as well as the International Criminal Court (ICC), have often failed to do.

WHAT IS A CHILD SOLDIER?

First and foremost, it is important to understand the definition of a child soldier and the role that children play in armed conflict. Defining child soldiers sometimes poses challenges, however, seeing as "notions of childhood are culturally

constructed and vary across societies."³ Western societies generally consider a person less than eighteen years of age to be a child, whereas other societies might base the change into adulthood on cultural initiation ceremonies, or the completion of specific labour or social roles. Despite these differences though, most societies agree that those under the age of eighteen are considered too young to take part in armed conflict, and have labeled them as *minor* or *underage* soldiers, if not *child* soldiers.⁴ Furthermore, the notion of child soldiers suggests the arming and physical combat of children in situations of war. However, many children, especially females, are used in other positions, such as porters, labourers, spies, scouts, drill instructors, couriers, guards, cooks, and sex slaves.⁵ It is important to include these positions in the definition of a child soldier, as well as those children acting as armed combatants. In the 1997 Cape Town Principles, UNICEF defines a child soldier as:

Any child – boy or girl – under 18 years of age, who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including, but not limited to: cooks, porters, messengers, and anyone accompanying such groups other than family members. It includes girls and boys recruited for forced sexual purposes and/or forced marriage. The definition, therefore, does not only refer to a child who is carrying, or has carried, weapons.⁶

There are said to be approximately 300,000 child soldiers under the age of fifteen engaged in armed conflict around the globe, with the

³ Michael Wessells, *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006),

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⁴ *Ibid.* 5.

⁵ *Ibid.* 6.

⁶ UNICEF, "Convention on the Rights of the Child Frequently Asked Questions," 2006, http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30229.html.

highest concentrations located in Africa and Asia.⁷

Children may become part of armed forces for any number of reasons. The use of child soldiers is inexpensive and convenient, seeing as in many war zones over half or more of the population is composed of children.⁸ The convenience, low cost, and freedom from liability makes the recruitment of children very appealing to various armed groups, whether they are government forces, paramilitary groups, or rebel factions. Aside from these practical aspects, however, children are quite easily manipulated or exploited, which also makes them appealing recruits. Commanders consider children to be unformed raw material that can be molded easily, and they can often be trained in ways that most adults would object to.⁹

Since children are physically small and easily intimidated, many are subject to forced recruitment, which entails the use of violence or aggressive threats. Forms of forced recruitment include individual abduction or group abduction, by which schools and orphanages are raided and multiple children are captured at a time.¹⁰ In addition, many children join armed groups through unforced recruitment or voluntary means, due to what are known as 'push' or 'pull' factors. Push factors are negative situations that children are able to escape from by joining armed groups, including familial abuse, hunger, and most notably, extreme poverty. Many times, children see joining armed forces as a means of gaining access to a regular food supply, clothing, and medical attention. Pull factors, conversely, are positive rewards that children may receive by joining armed groups, such as power, wealth, education, a sense of family, and feelings of

personal achievement.¹¹ In order to "understand the lure of these incentives, one has only to imagine the power felt by a child who...has always felt powerless but who now carries a gun and is feared and respected by many."¹²

After being recruited into an armed group, whether through forced or unforced means, children usually undergo indoctrination procedures involving physical punishment,

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the promise of material rewards, and the offer of psychological rewards such as honour and group acceptance.¹³ Indoctrination is a key step in the successful

transformation of children into soldiers, as they are taught to assume a new perspective of the world in which they turn from civilian to an agent of violence. The process is meant "to create a sort of 'moral disengagement' from the violence that children are supposed to carry out as soldiers."¹⁴ Although indoctrination procedures are quite varied among groups, they all seek to habituate children to acts of violence, to create a dependency of child soldiers on their leaders, and to change children's ideologies or worldviews. After indoctrination, children that have been recruited for roles that require little training, such as cooks, labourers or porters, begin work immediately. Those recruited to fight, however, undergo training processes that vary in length and level of skill. However, the level of training depends on the group they have joined. In any case, "training levels are generally

⁷ Jo De Berry, "Child Soldiers and the Convention on the Rights of the Child," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 575 (2001), 93; Wessells, 2006, 6.

⁸ Wessells, 2006, 33-34.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

¹⁰ Lundy, 1997, 85; Singer, 2005, 58-60; Wessells, 2006, 37-42.

¹¹ Wessells, 2006, 46; Singer, 2005, 61; Daya Somasundaram, "Child Soldiers: Understanding the Context," *British Medical Journal* 324.7348 (2002), 1268-1270.

¹² Wessells, 2006, 47.

¹³ Singer, 2005.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

well short of the common standards of Western professional armies in both skills and duration, but are usually enough to learn how to kill effectively.”¹⁵ The approaches of recruitment, indoctrination, and training differ depending on the type of armed forces conducting them, but it is clear that all three processes are crucial in the transformation of children into soldiers. The presence of child soldiers has serious consequences for the functioning of any society. Children signify an entirely new source of combatants that were not considered by most forces in the past, a source whose lives are regarded as cheaper than the average adult soldier. This has led to higher casualty rates and the prolonging of conflict in many regions, as P. W. Singer explains: “When children are present, violent conflicts tend to be easier to start, harder to end, and greater in loss of life. They also lay the groundwork for conflict recurrence in following generations.”¹⁶ Throughout the 1990s, the world saw a significant rise in the number of child soldiers, an increase that highlighted the need for a concrete international document for the rights of children, as well as the official condemnation of their involvement in armed conflict.¹⁷

THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Since 1919, when the League of Nations first formed their Committee on Child Welfare, there have been various attempts at international recognition of the rights of children. However, none have been as concerned with children in armed conflict as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted by the General Assembly on November 20th, 1989. The original agreement was drafted in Geneva in 1924 and was known as the Declaration of the Rights of the Child or the Declaration of

Geneva.¹⁸ This agreement outlined the basis of child rights and would eventually be augmented to become the CRC of 1989. Although the later Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols also seek to protect women and children in situations of war, the CRC “was perhaps the most notable [agreement], and certainly most representative of global consensus” on the rights of children.¹⁹ Since its adoption, 192 states have become States Parties to the Convention, which is more than any other human rights treaty in history.²⁰

Article 38 of the CRC is the section concerned with the protection of children in situations of armed conflict, requiring States Parties to respect “the rules of international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts which are relevant to the child.”²¹ It is instructive to note that this article is the only occasion where the definition of a child is lowered to below the age of fifteen rather than eighteen. However, the reason for this decision was not due to conflicting notions of the definition of a child, but rather to the longstanding presence of persons below the age of eighteen in national armed forces youth cadet programmes. Countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia “threatened to withdraw all support from the Convention unless the provision in Article 38 were changed to meet their current national legislation,” allowing sixteen and seventeen-year-olds to take part in such voluntary programmes.²² This debate became officially recognized with the creation of the Optional Protocol to the CRC, which “officially prohibits all recruitment of children by armed groups, but allows governmental forces to recruit volunteers under the age of eighteen.”²³ In summary, the Convention now allows the recruitment of

¹⁵ Singer, 2005, 77.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁷ Lundy, 1997, 83.

¹⁸ Lundy, 1997, 21.

¹⁹ Singer, 2005, 141.

²⁰ UNICEF, 2006.

²¹ Lundy, 1997, 86.

²² *Ibid.*, 85-86.

²³ Volker Druba, “The Problem of Child Soldiers,” *International Review of Education* 48.3 (July 2002), 273.

persons under eighteen on a voluntary basis to a state's government forces, but without their direct participation in armed conflict. However, it prohibits child recruitment to any other armed groups, whether forced or unforced. Despite this, many States Parties to the Convention have instilled national legislation to guarantee the age of eighteen as the minimum for recruitment into government armed forces.²⁴

The Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000, and entered into force in 2002. Its adoption was due in large part to the lobbying efforts of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, which was formed in 1998 by six leading nongovernmental organizations: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Save the Children – Sweden for the International Save the Children Alliance, Jesuit Refugee Service, the Quaker United Nations Office – Geneva, and International Federation Terre des Hommes.²⁵ The protocol amended the Convention in order to better treat the issue of child soldiering by first increasing the age of direct participation in armed conflict from fifteen to eighteen years. In addition, the protocol requires an official declaration stating the minimum age for recruitment that States Parties to the Convention must respect. It also bans any forced recruitment of persons under the age of eighteen, and explicitly includes non-state actors.²⁶

Although a significant number of states have signed the protocol, it is important to recognize

²⁴ Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict," 2007, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc-conflict.htm>.

²⁵ Claire Breen, "The Role of NGOs in the Formulation of and Compliance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict," *Human Rights Quarterly* 25.2 (May 2003), 453-481; Singer, 2005, 142.

²⁶ Druba, 2002, 273; Singer, 2005, 143; Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2007.

that it is optional, and that both the protocol and the CRC are non-binding agreements. As demonstrated by numerous non-binding agreements of the UN, conventions that do not legally bind their signatories may fail to effectively carry out their objectives. Furthermore, it must be noted that the CRC allows for official 'reservations' by which states are able to disregard certain articles in instances where the Convention conflicts with their national legislation.²⁷ These aspects weaken the authority of the Convention, as states are able to sign and ratify it under the terms that they have defined for themselves.

In addition to this, the United States and Somalia are two prominent nations that have not yet ratified the Convention.²⁸ This leads to further questions of whether or not the CRC has any authority, as the United States, the current global hegemon, has not yet ratified it. The CRC then appears to be predominantly symbolic and would perhaps be more valuable if it were a binding contract. However, the failure to find a solution to child soldiering lies not only within the degree to which the Convention binds its States Parties, but also within the document itself. Instead of critiquing the non-compulsory nature of the Convention, the goal should be to improve and further develop the current regulations on child soldiering that are outlined in the CRC and its Optional Protocol.

CONDITIONS OF CIVIL WARFARE

In order to do this, the first step to be taken is to focus more on the circumstances of civil warfare as opposed to interstate warfare. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1924), which later evolved into the CRC, was originally drafted

²⁷ UN Treaty Collection, "Chapter IV Human Rights: Convention on the Rights of the Child," 2011, <http://www.treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsno=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en>.

²⁸ UN Treaty Collection, 2011.

during a time of recovery, after a situation of extensive interstate conflict (the First World War). The current agreement continues to reflect this, despite the fact that “the proportion of intrastate civil conflict compared to interstate conflict has increased over the last century.”²⁹ Jo De Berry and Michael Wessells, scholars that have closely examined the global rise of child soldiers, both suggest that the phenomenon of child soldiering is linked most directly to civil conflict. This is because local communities that are normally separated from battlefields during interstate warfare are transformed into landscapes of physical violence during civil conflict. Children living in situations of civil conflict do not consider war as a process of enlisting and traveling to the front lines, but rather as a daily and local reality, which results in their increased vulnerability to push and pull factors.

The effects of civil war on child soldiering practices are evident within many states, but especially postcolonial African states, where the incidences of civil wars involving non-state actors are particularly high. The continent of Africa has become the historical “epicenter of the child soldier phenomenon.”³⁰ For example, the long period of severe civil conflict in Sierra Leone began in 1991 between its government forces and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The RUF supported its war efforts by dominating diamond mining sites, and “regularly abducted large numbers of girls and boys during attacks, forcing them to provide labour and sex and participate in combat.”³¹ Children comprised nearly half of the RUF and 25 percent of the Civil Defense Force (CDF), which was later created by civilians in support of government forces. The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), composed of former Sierra Leone army officers, fought alongside the RUF and also recruited

children to serve.³²

Although Sierra Leone reached a ceasefire agreement in 2001, it illustrates how civil conflict caters to the practice of child soldiering by various groups. The complexities of civil warfare and the vast array of armed groups make it difficult to trace and reprimand those who are recruiting children. Weak state governments cannot control the recruiting of children by rebel factions, and, in a few cases, have been reported to be recruiting children into their own forces. “Up until December 2000, the government forces of Colombia regularly recruited children – a total of approximately sixteen thousand.”³³ It should be noted, however, that Colombia has since stopped this practice, setting the age of government army recruitment to eighteen in the Optional Protocol.³⁴ Regardless of whether the government of Colombia has ended their child soldiering or not, paramilitaries and guerrilla groups, most notably the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC-EP), continue to recruit children. Countries such as Colombia, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo remain locked in civil conflict, the circumstances of which must be further dealt with by the Convention and Optional Protocol. After all, “it is civil war that most threatens the survival and development of children.”³⁵

MONITORING THE GLOBAL ARMS TRADE

The second step in reducing the presence of child soldiers is to manage global processes that undermine the CRC, one of which is the escalating global arms trade. Most civil wars today are not fought with high-tech or expensive weaponry, but with small arms like

²⁹ De Berry, 2006, 93.

³⁰ Singer, 2005, 19.

³¹ Wessells, 2006, 13.

³² Wessells, 2006, 13.

³³ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁴ UN Treaty Collection, 2011.

³⁵ Lundy, 1997, 86.

the commonly used AK-47 assault rifle.³⁶ Small arms are inexpensive, easy to use, and physically light, allowing for children to carry them despite having less strength than regular adult soldiers. "The greatest tactical reason for the increased use of children in combat over the past few decades is the development and availability of small weapons" that do not require adult skill or strength.³⁷

States Parties to the CRC are, for the most part, not currently recruiting child soldiers into their government forces, but many continue to participate in the extensive global arms trading network. The arms trade does not only allow for the use of child soldiers, but also makes the practice significantly easier. Many of the weapons used by child soldiers originate in Western countries and circulate to war regions through

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trade. For example, child soldiers in Sierra Leonean paramilitaries were reported using guns directly provided by Britain in support of their efforts against the RUF.³⁸ The five permanent members of the UN Security Council are currently the largest weapons producers, and "arms

control specialists estimate there are over 650 million light, simple to use, deadly small arms cheaply available" to those wishing to begin or maintain armed conflict.³⁹ Although there has been some international rhetoric about limiting the proliferation of small arms, there has been no strict or legitimate enforcement of this in

order to reduce the use of child soldiers, the small arms trading system needs to be further monitored and regulations must be enforced. In addition, the CRC and its Optional Protocol must be altered in order to acknowledge the global arms trade as a prominent factor in the continuation of child soldiering.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LOCAL CONTEXTS

The third step in dealing with the issue of child soldiers is to recognize the CRC as a document that presents universal solutions and tends to ignore specific local contexts. Situations of armed conflict that involve children are distinct and variable, and "where gaps exist between local norms and the CRC, there is a need for ongoing education and dialogue."⁴⁰ The reasons for which children become soldiers are quite varied; push and pull factors affect each recruited child differently, and determine the way in which they live as soldiers. The CRC, like many UN agreements, was drafted and amended in large part by developed Western nations, and therefore its global optimism is oftentimes far removed from children's daily realities in armed conflict.⁴¹

The armed groups into which children are recruited differ greatly from one another, though their reasons for using child soldiers are often similar, as discussed above. Children are often recruited into rebel factions in opposition to their state's government, as demonstrated by the RUF in Sierra Leone, the FARC-EP in Columbia, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of Sri Lanka, or the National Patriotic Front of Liberia.⁴² Although rebel groups are often politically driven, some are notorious for their distinctive ideologies, such as Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Kony

³⁶ Roméo Dallaire, *They Fight Like Soldiers They Die Like Children: The Global Quest to Eradicate the Use of Child Soldiers* (Random House Canada, 2010), 121-122; De Berry, 2002, 93; Wessells, 2006, 18.

³⁷ Dallaire, 2010, 120.

³⁸ De Berry, 2006, 99.

³⁹ Dallaire, 2010.

⁴⁰ Wessells, 2006, 35.

⁴¹ De Berry, 2006, 93.

⁴² Singer, 2005; Wessells, 2006.

"claims to have spiritual powers and an agenda of bringing the country under rule according to the Ten Commandments."⁴³ On top of that, many groups, such as the United Way State Army in Myanmar (Burma), have ideologies that are strictly based on ethnicity.⁴⁴

Differences in ideologies, indoctrination and training, as well as differences in recruitment experiences, make every child's situation as a soldier unique. In order to be successful, the CRC and its Optional Protocol must not adhere to such a universal approach to child soldiering, but act as a practical tool to be implemented in local contexts. It is, therefore, necessary to further investigate how conflict affects local social relations in individual regions. In addition to this, educating the on-the-ground military personnel about the guidelines and ethical terms of the Convention – whether they are peacekeeping or intervention forces – might allow the agreement to move from "a position of universal idealism to practical implementation" on a local level.⁴⁵

SANCTIONING KNOWN CHILD SOLDIER RECRUITERS

The final step to be taken in order to deal with the issue of child soldiering is for international bodies, namely the UN and the ICC, to properly sanction known child soldier recruiters. This is necessary especially in the case of non-state actors, who continue to recruit child soldiers despite being explicitly included in the Optional Protocol. Although many rebel leaders have been targeted as known child soldier recruiters, international efforts have failed to persuade them to stop the practice, as Singer explains:

Few rebel groups using child soldiers have been swayed by either the new protocol or by meetings with Otunnu, [a

UN special representative]. The typical pattern is that, after some period of public denial, these groups would make a pledge to stop the use of child soldiers in an effort to garner international goodwill and aid. Their practices would be little altered though.⁴⁶

The LTTE in Sri Lanka, for example, met several times with UN delegates and vowed publicly to stop the use of child soldiers. Even after a ceasefire was put into place in Sri Lanka in 2003, however, UNICEF received approximately 1,370 complaints of child soldier recruitment by the LTTE.⁴⁷ Almost 64 percent of the 630 children still currently missing in Sri Lanka are assumed to have been recruited by the group shortly before government forces declared victory over them in 2009.⁴⁸ By introducing the CRC and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the UN has successfully spread awareness of child soldiering as a human rights abuse. However, it has failed to take formal action against known child soldier recruiters and, therefore, has failed to stop the practice.

Similarly to the UN, the ICC has been mostly unsuccessful in many cases of prosecuting rebel leaders that are known child soldier recruiters. The case of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, the former president of the Union des Patriotes Congolais (UPC) and the founder and commander-in-chief of the Forces Patriotiques pour la Libération du Congo (FPLC) in the DRC, was the first trial of the ICC and is one case that seems to have been adequately carried out. Lubanga was found guilty of war crimes by means of having systematically recruited children under the age of fifteen to participate in armed conflict. He was

⁴³ Wessells, 2006, 13-14.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁵ De Berry, 2006, 93.

⁴⁶ Singer, 2005, 144.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁴⁸ IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis, "Sri Lanka: Over 600 war children still missing," 2011, <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=93381>.

originally arrested in March 2005 and, after the trial was delayed twice over the years, he was finally convicted.⁴⁹

The case of Lubanga seems to be progressing, but it is an exception to the many situations of rebel leaders that are still at large. The most obvious example is that of Joseph Kony, the leader of Uganda's LRA, who has had an arrest warrant issued to him by the ICC since July 2005, as a result of being charged with 12 counts of crimes against humanity and twenty-one counts of war crimes. He has yet to be detained, and moreover the LRA has since met with ICC officials and stated that they will not sign a final peace agreement with the Ugandan government until the ICC charges have been dropped.⁵⁰ The ICC, therefore, has not only failed to track down and detain Kony, but has become a sort of barrier to peace agreements between the LRA and the Ugandan government.

The San Diego-based, not-for-profit organization Invisible Children, Inc. has recently launched a vigorous media campaign entitled Kony 2012 in order to spread awareness about the indicted war criminal. The group released a half-hour long film about Kony's human rights abuses, specifically focusing on child soldier recruitment, seeking to "make him famous" in the public eye and to aid in his arrest by the ICC within the year.⁵¹ The film spread virally across social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, successfully spreading awareness of Kony and the LRA globally. However, Invisible Children has been heavily criticized on many aspects of the campaign, including its oversimplification of the situation of the LRA in Uganda, its support for the Ugandan army, which has been known to commit its own human rights abuses, and its perpetuation of the 'white man's burden'

⁴⁹ The Hague Justice Portal, "Courts and Tribunals", 2011, <http://www.haguejusticeportal.net/smartsite.html?id=2>; Coalition for the International Criminal Court, "Lubanga Case", 2011, <http://www.iccnw.org/?mod=drctimelinelubanga>.

⁵⁰ The Hague Justice Portal, 2011.

⁵¹ Invisible Children, "Kony 2012," 2012, <http://www.kony2012.com/>.

through its Western, top-down approach.⁵² Although the case of Kony has recently received extensive attention, both positive and negative, other rebel leaders that have reportedly been using child soldiers continue to evade the ICC, despite having had arrest warrants made out to them. These leaders include Dominic Ongwen and Okot Odhiambo, two brigade commanders of the LRA, and Bosco Ntaganda, former Deputy Chief of General Staff for Military Operations of the FPLC and commander of the Mouvement Révolutionnaire du Congo (MRC).⁵³ In addition to spreading awareness of the issue of child soldiering, there needs to be stronger international efforts to trace and physically capture these known child soldier recruiters.

CONCLUSION

Child soldiering is a complex issue with numerous factors making it difficult to manage. International efforts have been successful in spreading awareness of the issue by adopting the CRC and its Optional Protocol but, unfortunately, this awareness and denunciation of child soldiering has not resulted in the end of the phenomenon. In order to better address the problem of child soldiering, this work has discussed four requirements that international efforts must seek to fulfill: 1) A larger focus on the circumstances of civil war as opposed to interstate war, 2) increased monitoring of the proliferation of small arms, 3) better application of the Convention to children's local contexts, and 4) stronger efforts to seek out and prosecute known child soldier recruiters. The use of child soldiers is currently "the world's most unrecognized form of child abuse."⁵⁴ In fulfilling the objectives presented here, the international community can better serve to prevent child soldiering and, if not stop it completely, at least reduce the practice significantly in the years to come.

⁵² Invisible Children, 2012.

⁵³ The Hague Justice Portal, 2011.

⁵⁴ Singer, 2005, 9.