

The Contribution of International Non-Governmental Organizations in Addressing the Problem of Child Soldiers



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Abstract

War and armed conflicts not only destroy resources and human capital but also violate human rights. Women and children are the most vulnerable groups affected by wars and armed conflicts. Children are separated from their families and recruited by armed forces. The role of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) on the issue of child soldiers starts with helping in the creation of international humanitarian norms and laws and includes implementing them on the ground. They contribute to the drafting of norms and standards in collaboration with the United Nations (UN) and other international humanitarian organizations. For the implementation of humanitarian laws, they cooperate with different UN specialized agencies and other humanitarian organizations. They encourage respect for international humanitarian law (IHL) related to the issue and generate sensitivity towards the problem through popular media, movies, screenplay, videos, campaigns and contests etc.

Some INGOs are very large and well-known, such as *Amnesty International*, *Child Soldiers International* and *Human Rights Watch*. Some INGOs that have played a seminal role in addressing the problem of child soldiers are unique in status, such as the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), which is neither an inter-governmental nor a non-governmental organization. Although INGOs do not always succeed, their involvement in rehabilitation programs has given them a wealth of experience that is useful in playing a role in rehabilitation and reintegration programs related to child soldiers.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section provides the detail of INGOs which works for children and child soldiers. The second section discusses role of INGOs in addressing the rights of child soldiers and the manner in which INGOs implement humanitarian laws. The last section concludes the paper.

Keywords: INGOs, Child Soldiers, Child Rights, Humanitarian Laws, Rehabilitation and Reintegration.

Introduction

There are many INGOs that work for human rights; some organizations give special attention to the rights of child soldiers. *Amnesty International*, *War Child*, *Human Rights Watch*, *Child Soldiers International* are such organizations. These INGOs play an important role in addressing the problems of child soldiers and raising awareness at the international level on issues of child soldiers. Some of these organizations work with the United Nations organs to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers and help the UNICEF's Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes.

There are a number of examples of conflicts, where child soldiers are used and have been used and in these conflicts the work of INGOs is highly appreciable. In the case of African conflicts, the issue of child soldiers was primarily the main focus of many INGOs. Although the issue is quite new in this region because in the 1990s, there are a long progression of civil conflicts was marked. It may noted that civil conflicts basically took place in countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Burundi, Rwanda, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan. The intense use of child soldiers considered as the result of these kinds of civil wars in this

region. Jean-Hervé Jézéquel describes the works of NGOs in the African region, "INGOs such as Human Rights Watch, Save the Children, or the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers have led active campaigns against the use of child soldiers. Though these organizations have drawn attention to the participation of children in conflicts from Latin America (Colombia) to the Near East (Palestine) and even Asia (Burma), Africa is often presented as the continent hardest hit by this "unacceptable practice". Seven out of nine reports put out by Human Rights Watch on the use of child soldiers in the last ten years concern sub-Saharan African countries" (Jean-Hervé Jézéquel).

Child Soldiers International works to prevent the recruitment of children and their involvement in hostilities through country work, thematic research and global monitoring. Its thematic research and investigation, update national and international policy. It publishes *Child Soldiers Global Reports* based on an understanding of the reasons and complexity of child recruitment and their other use in hostilities. It also identifies sustainable solutions for these problems (child-soldiers.org).

Review of Literature

Child Soldiers International's (2014) *Briefing on the status of implementation of the June 2011 Action Plan on children associated with armed forces and groups in Chad*, about the operation of Chadian troops to Mali in 2013 triggered powerful international and national efforts to further the implementation of the Action Plan. As a result, since May 2013, a number of reforms to end and prevent child recruitment in Chad have been implemented or initiated, including the criminalisation of child recruitment and use in conflict in Chadian law. On the other hand, screenings conducted in 2013 show that children had been included into the armed forces and that adult soldiers under the age of 18 had been unlawfully recruited. Many important prevention instruments, such as the adoption and implementation of age verification measures, the creation of a free and available birth registration system, the establishment of a useful complaint mechanism, and the initiation of investigations into reports of child recruitment, have yet to be implemented. Most recent policy reforms have yet to be operationalized in order to accomplish and institutionalise useful and long-lasting prevention. It suggested that the Chadian government requires the durable support of the international community (Child Soldiers International 2014:1). This information was collected by *Child Soldiers International* in a mission to Chad in November 2013 and then continued dialogue with UN and Chadian government officials. It provides a review of progress in the legal and practical protection of children against military recruitment, and it recommends more actions to achieve complete compliance with the Action Plan.

According to the Amnesty International report (2011), in Somalia the recruitment of children into armed groups is common and 15 years old boys often considered as adults. In February 2010, a woman told Amnesty International that her 10 year old

son was recruited by al-Shabab in Mogadishu. According to the testimonies collected by Amnesty International, the areas where recruitment of children, particularly young children, has been especially intense are Mogadishu, Brava, Kismayo, Baidoa, the Sakow district in the Middle Juba region and the Gedo region, areas which were firmly under the control of al-Shabab. It is very difficult for international community to put a mechanism to systematically investigate war crimes and other serious abuses in Somalia (Amnesty International 2011).

According to a *Human Rights Watch* Report (2012), In July 2011 the UN Security Council passed a resolution that expanded the criteria for sanctionable offenses in Somalia to include grave violations against children, including the recruitment or use of child soldiers, killing and maiming, sexual and gender-based violence, attacks on schools, and abduction. The Security Council affirmed that targeted sanctions, including travel bans and asset freezes, can be applied to both individuals and entities for such violations. While it also extended the mandate of the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea to include monitoring and reporting on grave violations of children's rights, including the recruitment of children and attacks on schools, the Security Council did not increase staff or resources of the monitoring group, raising doubts as to the effectiveness of the measure. Furthermore, while channels for reporting on grave violations of children's rights in Somalia by all warring parties exist, monitoring mechanisms lack capacity. The Human Rights Unit within UNPOS, for example, has to date failed to appoint a full-time child rights expert (Human Rights Watch 2012: 85).

In 2014, after the civil war in the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2012, the number of girls and boys below the age of 18 recruited by armed groups has increased to four times its previous level (savethechildren.org). Around 6,000 to 10,000 children were members of armed groups when the document "CAR: Four times more children associated with armed groups, two years after the outbreak of the crisis" was published by Save the Children in 2014. In the violent situation of the country, *Save the Children* provided specialized psychological support for children associated with armed groups, as well children who have witnessed crimes or other acts of violence, through Child Friendly Spaces and Youth Networks (ibid). It also provided facilities to demobilized children to return to school. The release of illegally recruited children and their reintegration into community life is a very difficult task for INGOs. Access to education, jobs and social protection is difficult to obtain for children who are released from the armed groups after being unlawfully recruited. Reintegration is more difficult for girl soldiers because the community does not easily accept girls who have been raped and are sometimes unmarried mothers.

According to Graca Machel's report (1996), "United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and international civil society actors should begin to pursue quiet diplomacy with government and non-state forces and their international supporters to encourage the immediate demobilization of child

soldiers and adherence to the Convention on the Rights of the Child" (Machel 1996: 16).

There are many INGOs sponsored publications (reports, fact sheets, books etc) on the activities of non-governmental organizations related to child soldiers. But there are very few independent academic and scholarly writings that can analyse these organizations' work. This proposed study seeks to fill this gap in providing a thorough assessment of the strengths of and challenges face by INGOS in addressing the problem of child soldiers.

Aim of the Study

This paper focuses on the issue of child soldiers and the responses of international non-governmental organizations to it. It addresses the questions such as:- What is the contribution of INGOs in improving the situation relating to child soldiers in conflict

zones? How do INGOs help child soldiers to reintegrate and reunite into their family and community life? How do INGOs address the problems of child soldiers in the context of the changing nature of conflict and the growing use of technology in war? The attempt will be to identify the specific advantages (and disadvantages) that INGOs have in contrast to inter-governmental involvement in addressing the problem of child soldiers

International Non-governmental Organizations and Child Soldiers

The term International Non Governmental Organization (INGO) describes a large focused group that work independently of government influence and focus on specific issues. The list mentioned below is the some INGOs which focus on the child soldiers rights.

Table 1: INGOs that work on the issue of child rights and child soldiers

INGO	Establishment year	Main area of work	Work related to child soldiers
<i>Amnesty International</i> (amnesty.org)	1961	human rights	Implement IHL and assist child soldiers in conflict areas.
<i>Child Rights Information Network</i> (crin.org)	1995	Promote and protect children's rights.	Gather and share information related to child soldiers and advocate for their rights
<i>Child Soldiers Initiative</i> (childsoldiers.org)	2007	Works to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers	Implement IHL and provide protection to child soldiers by DDR programs
<i>Child Soldiers International</i> (child-soldiers.org)	1998	Works to prevent the recruitment of children	Implement IHL and provide protection to child soldiers by DDR programs.
<i>Defence for Children International</i> (defenceforchildren.org)	1979	Promotes and protects children's rights on a global, regional, national level.	Implement IHL and provides direct assistance and support to children in need.
<i>Geneva Call</i> (genevacall.org)	2000	Engages with armed non-State actors (ANSAs) to encourage them to comply with international humanitarian norms,	Prevent children recruitment from armed conflicts and also DDR.
<i>Human Rights Watch</i> (hrw.org)	1978	human rights	Work - arms, children's rights, and women's rights.
<i>International Committee of Red Cross</i> (icrc.org)	1863	Protect victims of war - wounded, prisoners, refugees and civilians.	Draft, implement IHL and provide protection to child soldiers through DDR.
<i>International Federation Terre des Hommes</i> (terredeshommes.org)	1960	A network of ten national organisations working for the rights of children and to promote equitable development without racial, religious, political, cultural or gender-based discrimination.	Working on children rights
<i>NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>	1983	Facilitate the promotion, implementation and monitoring of the CRC.	Promote and implement IHL related to children rights.
<i>Save the Children</i> (savethechildren.org)	1919	Works from emergency relief to long-term development by securing and protecting children's rights.	Provide emergency relief to children in conflict areas including child soldiers

<i>SOS Children's Villages International</i> (Soschildrensvillages.org)	1960	Provides assistance to children and informs communities and decision makers about children's rights.	Assist children in armed conflicts
<i>Quaker United Nations Office</i> (quno.org)	1920	To raise voice against injustice and war	Works to build up international laws to ban the recruitment and use of children
<i>War Child</i> (warchild.org)	1993	Protecting and supporting children affected by armed conflict.	Assist child soldiers in conflict areas
<i>Watchlist</i> (watchlist.org)	2001	Works to collect and circulate information on violations against children and use this information to advocate for change.	Collect information on violations against children
<i>World Vision</i> (worldvision.org)	1970	poverty and injustice	Protect children rights

Source: Compiled by Author from Official Websites of INGOs

Role of INGOs in Addressing the Rights of Child Soldiers and the Manner in which INGOs Implement Humanitarian Laws

The role of INGOs on the issue of child soldiers ranges from contributing to drafting the legal frameworks in cooperation with the UN and other international humanitarian organizations to implementation of the humanitarian laws and awareness generation. Morse (2008) quotes Jo Becker's speech who was the Director of the Children's Rights Division at *Human Rights Watch*, "Becker says that the role of NGOs is really important at two levels, one is the prevention side – trying to convince government and armed groups to stop the recruitment and use of child soldiers, on the other side NGOs play an important role when children are coming out of a war situation for this they provide rehabilitation and reintegration support that is helpful for them to get back into family life" (Morse 2008: 1). The role of INGOs related to child soldiers can be divided in following tasks.

Advocacy amongst in the International Organizations

The issue of child soldiers is very big and complex, international and national NGOs need to work together to deal with it. Amnesty International, Defence for Children International, International Federation Terre des Hommes, International Save the Children Alliance, Jesuit Refugee Service and the Quaker United Nations Office-Geneva all these organizations decided to go for a global campaign in 1998 and formed *The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers* to prevent child recruitment in hostilities. These all INGOs are members of the steering committee of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. In its first meeting in May 1998, the Coalition set a goal to adopt and implement setting of 18 years as the minimum age for recruitment or participation in hostilities. This came to be known as the 'Straight – 18' standard (Becker 2010: 2). The Coalition promoted the implementation and observation of national, regional and international legal standards on the issue of child soldiers. That includes the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibits the use of

children under the age of 18 years in both government and non-governmental armed groups. The Coalition was involved in drafting and adopting the UN Optional Protocol and its ratification by 192 countries. Additionally, the coalition has conducted workshops with activists to help them connect to the issue on the ground and engage directly with some governments to influence changes in legislation and policy.

Under Article 45(a) of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the Committee on the Rights of the Child may invite specialized agencies, UNICEF, and "other competent bodies" to provide expert advice on the implementation of the Convention. The term "other competent bodies" includes non-governmental organizations. This Convention specifically gives NGOs a role in monitoring its implementation. The Committee has systematically encouraged NGOs to submit reports, documentation or other information in order to provide it with a comprehensive picture of how the Convention is being implemented in a particular country. The Committee welcomes written information from international, regional, national and local organizations. Individual NGOs or national coalitions or networks of NGOs may submit information on the implementation of the Convention, as well as the Optional Protocols.

INGOs make influence on international governmental organizations (IGOs) such as UN by participating in the meetings related to the human rights and children rights. They lobbying with IGOs to make effective laws that can protect children from recruitment in hostilities, but their influence not seem much effective. The demand of INGOs for the 18 years age of voluntary recruitment has not been yet accepted by UN because some big countries which recruit child soldiers in their armies do not want it.

Preventing Recruitment

Preventing the recruitment of children and their participation in hostilities is considered the best way of protecting them. INGOs emphasize prevention of recruitment by supporting children affected by armed conflict and encouraging respect for international humanitarian law (IHL) related to child soldiers. The influence of INGOs in the implementation of laws related to child soldiers is

substantial. The UN General Assembly's 2000 Optional Protocol was a milestone in protecting children from participation in hostilities. *Amnesty International* and the *Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers* jointly called on the Russian Federation to ratify the Optional Protocols to the CRC without any further delay and set 18 years as the standard minimum age for voluntary recruitment into its armed forces. At the time, both Russia and China were the two remaining members of the UN Security Council not to have become party to the Protocol. Both countries ratified the document in 2008 (amnesty.org).

NGO group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child has served as the platform for action for members over the years in order to influence the UN system and also regional and national forums. "One of the significant areas of the NGO Group's work is to enable national NGO and coalitions to participate in the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child reporting process. Another key area is the development and maintenance of a focal point to monitor global developments on child exploitation issues. The NGO Group also has several thematic subgroups that play an essential role in coordinating member's efforts to have greater impact on particular issues" (*A Guide for Non-Governmental Organizations Reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child Geneva 2006: 2*).

Local Awareness

INGOs not only encourage respect for IHL but also generate sensitivity towards the problem of child soldiers through popular media, movies, screenplay, videos, campaigns and contests etc. These awareness-generation mechanisms are a very important means of contribution to long-term solutions to the problem. In 2009, from around the world many youth and student groups came together for stronger action to end the use of child soldiers. The campaign was called 'red hands' and it symbolized the global campaign against the use of child soldiers which gathered over 250,000 red hands. On 12 February 2009, they were presented to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York who called for stopping such abuse of child soldiers (Human Rights Watch 2012). Red Hand Day is celebrated every year on 12 February. The day is important because the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict came into force on 12 February 2002. The Red Hand symbol has been used all over the world to say no to the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

The *Defence for Children International* – Colombia section, was part of a campaign to end the war in Colombia (defenceforchildren.org). With the part of this they were actively involved in the creation of a video entitled "Let's rebuild love: Voices of Colombia Children for Peace". They captured the voices of children impacted by the ongoing war in Colombia in this video. The DCI Colombia used this video to bring awareness to the fact that the use of child soldiers is still a critical issue that needs attention (ibid). On 7 June 2013 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, with the help of the Permanent Mission of Luxembourg, DCI organized an event in

order to raise awareness and share experiences on the situation of children involved and victims of armed conflict in Syria, Iraq and Palestine; promoting child protection and respect of the basic human rights of the child (defenceforchildren.org). Many experts were gathered in this event from the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (COI), United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child Committee (CRC) and NGOs working in the Middle East.

Advocacy amongst the Armed Groups

INGOs organize meetings amongst armed groups and advocate releasing child soldiers. INGOs teach armed groups about international humanitarian laws related to child soldiers and advise them to release child soldiers. Sometimes INGOs pressurise armed groups to release children from their ranks. These meetings have huge influences on the armed groups and often results in the release of child soldiers. Sometimes armed groups sign commitments with INGOs that they will not recruit children in their groups. Chen (2014) states that humanitarian and human rights groups make efforts to develop the international legal frameworks to prevent the practice of child soldiering in Myanmar. For Myanmar the biggest problem is the enforcement of disciplinary process, which should be implemented in light of local conditions. In 2012, the Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army (KNPP/KA) and New Mon State Party/Mon National Liberation Army (NMSP/MNLA) signed a 'deed commitment', with Geneva Cell. He further states that signatories must insure that children below the age of 18 years are not recruited or used by armed forces and armed groups, and armed force also required to ensure the well-being and rights of children in their controlled areas. For the armed force signing the deed commitment, this could be regarded as a way of maintaining dialogue, securing humanitarian assistance and keeping their credibility in the international society (Chen 2014).

The work of *Geneva Call* in Sudan is also appreciable. With the efforts of *Geneva Call*, in 2012, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) submitted a unilateral plan to prohibit the recruitment of children under the age of 18, after an agreement with the UN on child protection (Geneva Call 2012). The JEM is a joined force with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement - North (SPLM-N), to defeat the government.

Many countries in the African region have been devastated by both armed conflict and child soldiering because of civil wars and political instability. Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is one country where child soldiers have long been used by armed groups and armies. The *Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative* worked in this region basically in DRC's North and South Kivu provinces from the spring of 2009 to the spring of 2012 (Child Soldiers Initiative 2013). In DRC, conflicts started in 1994, when hundreds of thousands of refugees entered the Congolese borders, in search of protection from the conflict in neighbouring country Rwanda. In 1998, these refugees started attacks from DRC against the government of Rwanda and Uganda, as a result of which both states declared war against Congolese

president, Laurent Kabila. The following conflict gave rise to the creation of non-state armed groups and various community protection militias, some acting as Rwandan or Ugandan substitutes that have robbed the DRC's resources on their client state's behalf, some acting as self-protection. Mai-Mai was one of non-aligned groups that were initially intended for local self-protection in the DRC.

The *Initiative* started its work in the spring of 2009, when it launched a research trip to Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province. The purpose of this operation was to evaluate the various communication strategies being employed by security and civilian actors to promote the DDR programme to active child soldiers in the bush. In 2010, the Initiative started a second research mission to both Bukavu and Goma, the capital of North Kivu province. The aim of this mission was to identify basic strategies used by perpetrators who recruit command and control child soldiers. This information was then used to inform the creation of a handbook for security sector actors, which was launched in 2012 (Child Soldiers Initiative 2013).

In 2011 and 2012, Security Sector Reform and Strengthened Capacity started the first three trainings of FARDC troops, as part of a broader regional initiative entitled "Child Protection and Prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)" in the DRC. To make these missions effective, the Initiative also partnered with World Vision Canada, World Vision DRC and the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre. Financial support was also provided by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, START (Child Soldiers Initiative 2013).

Unfortunately, many of these groups still exist to the present day, under different leadership or arrangement and recruit child soldiers in Africa.

INGOs Assistance to Child Soldiers through Reintegration and Rehabilitation Programmes

The work of INGOs related to the reintegration and rehabilitation programmes are very important. With the programme of reintegration and rehabilitation, INGOs are specifically intended to help former child soldiers return successfully to normal life without fear of rejection by society. The rehabilitation programmes include all kind of medical care to help them in psychological adjustment from posttraumatic stress disorder, including nightmares, flashbacks, aggressiveness, hopelessness, guilt, anxiety, fear and social separation. INGO programs include games and activities that emphasize trust-building and opportunities to practice nonviolent conflict resolution (vision.org). Drawing, storytelling, music and drama are often used as ways for the children to communicate and process their experiences (vision.org).

Amnesty International as a member of the *Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers* works to end the recruitment of children into armed forces and to reintegrate former child soldiers into community life. The work of *Amnesty International* in Somalia is valuable. According to Somali refugees' testimonies, different methods of child recruitment are used by al-

Shabab. They give choice to children to join them by promising to give those phones and money, through ideological training in mosques. Recruitment agents used more forceful techniques such as threats to children and their relatives, attacks on schools, abductions in public areas and from vehicles departing the country. The testimonies indicate that children are trained in al-Shabab training camps on how to use firearms and hold bombs and explosive devices. Those who oppose such recruitment have been punished, or even killed including children. *Amnesty International* had also worked in Somalia to look at Transitional Federal Government's (TFG's) commitments to end the recruitment and use of children in its ranks and to address the issue of child soldiers who escape or are captured from armed groups.

Another NGO *War Child* helps to get children out of army uniforms and get into school. It has worked with former child soldiers in Africa for many years. In Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) currently it is helping to reintegrate former child soldiers back into society and into education. Many child soldiers get assistance through DDR programmes when they are freed from the armed groups. Sometime these programmes tend to focus on the needs of boys but are not always aware of the specific needs of girls. Girls are often a very vulnerable and marginalised group even among children who are already excluded and rejected by society (warchild.org).

In 2014, *Geneva Call* organized a monitoring trip to Syria and 149 child soldiers were demobilized from the armed forces - People's Protection Units (YPG), the Women's Protection Units (YPJ) and the Democratic Self-Administration in Rojava. The YPG and YPJ are the dominant military force in the Kurdish-populated areas since the withdrawal of most Government forces in 2012 and have been mainly fighting against Islamist armed groups, notably the Islamic State and the Al-Nusra Front (genevacall.org). In January 2014, the Democratic Self-Administration in Rojava was formed and it is the *de facto* governing authority in the Kurdish areas. Most of the children are between 15 and 17 years old. After demobilization, they are given basic education and kept far away from hostilities (genevacall.org).

War Child focuses its work on girls who have been used as soldiers or 'wives' in northern Uganda and eastern Congo. It provides essential education, counselling and health services for girls and helps to deal with the huge stigma associated with girl soldiers. Although boys are considered to be dangerous and violent, girls are often seen as 'damaged goods' by their community and family. This is true if they have been victims of a sexual assault or have given birth to a baby (warchild.org). *War Child* enrolls former child soldiers into school and helps to reunify them with their families if that is deemed to be the best solution. It is very hard for some of children to sit in a classroom after enduring years of violence, so it also provides vocational skills for independent living where appropriate (warchild.org).

Advantages and Disadvantages of INGOs Works

Assistance and protection activities for the victims of war and preventing the recruitment of child soldiers are not an easy task for INGOs; they face many problems and difficulties. INGOs are not free from criticism; there are some advantages and disadvantages of their works.

The role of INGOs related to child soldiers is very helpful. Some areas are very remote, where government staff does not want to go and work. On the other hand when INGOs are in fields, they only concerns about the needs of the people specially poor and needy people. Only INGOs sent their members in coordination with local NGOs to work in remote areas and respond to people's needs. Another problem is governmental organisations and governments are very slow to do humanitarian work because of political restrictions. Due to hierarchy of powers in governmental organizations there is lots of paper work for take permission to do any project. Most of the projects of INGOs focus on the needs of poor people so with help of local staff they become close to native people and the ground situations. They use many means to become close with needy people such as drama, short films, screen play, storytelling etc. To do so, INGOs become aware of the customs and practices of the native people because of working amongst them. INGOs listen to their problems and also ask their suggestions to solve problems, so that they also become part of decision making process. That is why INGOs are more trustworthy than governments or governmental organizations. But the only problem is that INGOs do not have sufficient resources to fulfil their requirements, for this they forward reports to governments and request for change. Many times governments ignore the request of INGOs and their work bring down. Some INGOs get funding from governments that make INGOs accountable to them and funding agencies start pressurise INGOs to work where their interest lies. Due to lack of funds the INGOs place volunteers for work and their work go slow down because unpaid workers do not focus properly on given tasks.

INGOs are also not free from hierarchical power structure and politics also involved in works of them. Amnesty International considers itself independent of any political ideology, economic interest or religion. But it is considered as a promoter of Western ideology, foreign policy and partial towards Western countries. It has been observed that its agenda tends to fit nicely with the political needs of the United States and Great Britain (Bernstein 2002). Amnesty has made huge mistakes in the Middle East and these cannot be overlooked in any fair and balanced assessment of Amnesty's role in international politics. For instance, as the first Bush administration was manoeuvring the nation toward war in Iraq, Amnesty played a crucial role in preparing U.S. and international public opinion by lending credence to the notorious Hill & Knowlton "Kuwati dead babies" scam (Bernstein 2002: 2).

Human Rights Watch (HRW) considered itself as an independent, nongovernmental organization, supported by contributions from private

individuals and foundations worldwide and it does not allow government funds, directly or indirectly, but this is not true. Annual budget of HRW in 2010 was \$48 million; and in September 2010 it got \$100 million donation from billionaire George Soros (ngomonitor.org). It is also criticized on the basis of biasness and promoter of US foreign policy. Robert L. Bernstein a former chairman of Human Rights Watch criticized it on the behalf of a poor research or inaccurate reporting and bias. Bias basically being influenced by United States government policy, particularly in relation to reporting on Latin America; ignoring anti-Semitism in Europe, or being anti-Semitic itself; the Arab-Israeli conflict; and the misrepresentation of human-rights issues in Eritrea and Ethiopia. An accusation in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict include claims that HRW is biased against Israel, demonstrated by its requesting (or accepting) donations from Saudi Arabian citizens, but has also been accused of pro-Israel bias. HRW has publicly responded to criticism of its reporting on Latin America and the Arab-Israeli conflict (wikipedia.org).

Conclusion

It is widely accepted that prevention is the best way to protect children from participation in hostilities. INGOs emphasize on prevention of recruitment and supporting children affected by armed conflict. They address the needs of child soldiers in zones of conflicts and provide assistance to them, both material and medical. INGOs not only provide them assistance but also generate sensitivity towards the problem through popular media, movies, screenplay, videos, campaigns and contests etc. These awareness-generation instruments are very significant contributions to finding long-term solutions to the problem. Because of the closeness with people, INGOs are perceived to be more trustworthy than international governmental organizations. Another reason is that they work independent of government influence and focus on specific issues and needs of poor and needy people. They are better positioned to provide primary monitoring to child soldiers because they are easily trusted by local people more than governmental organizations. But INGOs have also some weakness and limitations such as lack of funding which make their work slow. Due to lack of funds sometimes INGOs stop their project in between and many of the DDR programs has been shut down. Such limitations create many challenges to INGOs in contributing to addressing the problem of child soldiers.

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