

Interests of the children and government of nigeria



The government of Nigeria believes in the protection of the interest of the children. Unfortunately, one can notice the use of child soldiers in Nigeria. Why there is the problem of child soldiers in Nigeria? During the 19th century and 20th century there have been interstate conflicts in the African continent. This led to the use of children as the soldiers in the warfare. There are many reasons for the wars fought between different states of Africa. Two important causes of the wars are poverty and orphan rates. (Reich and Acharina, 2005) In fact, the study of UNICEF data reveals that in Africa there is the maximum use of child soldiers in the wars.

It is known that 40 percent of the world child soldiers are found in the African continent. All the countries of the African continent particularly the third world countries are severely affected by the child soldier problem which is found in a poor country like Nigeria. Recently, international community has responded to this emerging problem. Great powers such as USA and UK have opposed the use of child soldiers in wars. In fact, international community has been shocked by the extent of the use of children as soldiers which has affected the future of the children of Nigeria.

UNO has taken this problem seriously which is proved by the fact that UNO has constituted committees to monitor the extent of the use of the child soldiers in the wars particularly in the African continent. The use of child soldiers can be seen in the African countries such as Nigeria, Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Uganda. The Nigerian government is also aware of the fact that there is need to guarantee the rights of the children. However due to economic backwardness, there has been growth in the use of the children as soldiers. Obviously, this led to loss

of life of many children. However, it is found that due to food shortage and lack of productive resources, the parents are forced to send their children to help the military of their nation. Hence, poverty of the third world nations is the main cause of the participation of children in wars. (Reich and Acharina, 2005)

UNO and the various agencies of UNO such as UNICEF have taken this problem of child soldiers seriously. UNO was initially involved in this problem in an attempt to resolve the interstate conflicts in Africa. However, later it was known to the UNO members regarding the impact of the use of children on the children of Africa and the international community. In order to counter this problem, UNO has expressed its displeasure through the various conferences and by publishing reports concerning the efforts of the individual nations to curb the root cause of the children's participation in the wars.

In 1999, the coalition forces decided to publish a worldwide report regarding the plight of the children as soldiers. In fact, UNO has urged all the member nations to protect the rights of the children. Recently, Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General has urged the Security Council to impose sanctions on the nations indulging in the use of child soldiers in the wars leading to the violation of the international law. The coalition forces have decided to prohibit the use of children as soldiers. The UNO noted that more than 250,000 children are used as soldiers. The suggested sanctions include ban on the sale of armaments, sanctions on financial assistance, and so on.

The UNO has also urged the NGOs participating in this anti-child soldier policy to implement the policy decisions on the UNO which has been

discussed in the various conferences and UNO publications. The UNO committees on the children issues have submitted their reports regarding the position of the children in the underdeveloped countries. The imposition of sanctions is expected to curb the number of the child soldiers in the countries such as Nigeria. However, the UN report noted that there has been decline in the number of child soldiers worldwide. The UNO also decided to give financial and other kinds of support to the poor countries to help curb poverty so that there would be decrease in the number of children used in the warfare. The UN Under-Secretary Olara Otunnu also believed that children should be protected from military conscription. (Africa Renewal, 2005) In fact, the UNO members have urged the different nations to increase the minimum recruitment age to 18 years. (Maslen, 2002)

The UNO suggestions regarding the protection of the children's rights have been implemented by most of the African countries including Nigeria. In fact, legislations have been passed by Nigeria to curb the incidence of the use of the child soldiers in the wars. Although, till 2002 Nigeria did not sign ' the African charter on the rights and welfare of child', the government has supported the voluntary recruitment of the soldiers as there is no conscription in Nigeria. Minimum age for the recruitment of the voluntary soldiers is 18 years. The Nigerian youth have participated in the ethnic conflict in the region. This conflict involves the various political and economic issues. However, Nigeria has participated in the several conferences organized by the UNO to oppose the violation of the children's rights.

For instance, in the year 1999, the African countries including Nigeria attended the African Conference on the Use of Children as Soldiers. In the

conference the various facts concerning the child soldiers was discussed. In 2001 Nigeria attended the United Nations conference on the illicit trade which also discussed the issue of the child soldiers. Nigeria became the party to the resolution of this conference. The members understood the impact of the use of arms on the children and it was resolved to protect the rights of the children. The Nigerian government has realized that the main reason for the use of the child soldiers is the existence of poverty in Nigeria. Due to food shortage and productive resources, children have been sent to the battle field.

In order to curb the incidence of the use of children as soldiers, the Nigerian government has devised plans to improve the economic conditions of the families. The Nigerian government urges the international communities including UNO to understand the causes of the phenomenon of the child soldiers in Nigeria. Hence, international organizations should provide more economic support to bring the economic advancement of the region which will reduce the incidence of the use of children as soldiers. The government of Nigeria believes that necessary actions should be taken to ensure the protection of the children's rights.

It is understood that involvement of children in wars negatively affects the relation between Nigeria and international community. However, in order to introduce these measures, the international community, through the organizations such as UNICEF, should strengthen the polity and economy of Nigeria. Nevertheless, in the name of the protection of the children's rights the integrity of the nations should not be threatened. Therefore, this is to request the organizations such as UNO to provide the positive support to

Nigeria to prevent the incidence of the use of the child soldiers in the wars. The Nigerian government plans to introduce and implement legislations and programs to reduce the use of children as soldiers in the wars. (Maslen, 2002)

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