

USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS IN NEPAL: A CAUSAL ANALYSIS



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ABSTRACT

Nepal has experienced more than a decade of armed conflict between the Nepal government and the non-state entity, the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M), since 1996. Children were severely impacted by the conflict and their rights were violated. During the conflict, children were used as child soldiers by both conflicting parties, and even after the peace deal, many child soldiers were not formally released and reintegrated into their families. Many child rights organizations including United Nations organizations, international non-governmental organizations and national level non-governmental organizations are working on the issue of child soldiers in Nepal. This thesis analyzes how these organizations are explaining the reasons behind the recruitment of child soldiers, and how they are intervening to protect and rehabilitate the child soldiers. In particular this study looks at the possible influences on those organizations in formulating their program strategies. From the in-depth semi-structured interviews from six child rights organizations in Kathmandu, Nepal, this study finds that the organizations explain the causes of recruitment of child soldiers in three ways: socio-economic factors, policy and/or coercion of CPN-M or community groups, and child initiated or self-motivation. According to the organizations, child soldiers are recruited through abduction or indoctrination, and some children join because they influenced by the cultural and political programs, peer pressure, forceful conscription, or because of lack of security. Many children are motivated to join the CPN-M because of the attraction of being involved in cultural programs (performing song, dance, and theater). Most of the child soldiers entered as cultural program performers, or supporters in political activities, and their duties increased from supporter to combatant. Hence, the causes of recruitment of child soldiers are multidimensional and not only based on socio-economic factor/influences. This study also finds that there is contradiction between the causation explained by the organizations and their program intervention; that is, while most groups claim socio-economic causes are the most important; their programs work in other areas, such as mainly considering the legal factors. The organizations have formed a working group, CAAFAG, to deal collectively on the issues of child soldiers. This has greater influence in formulating program strategies and in receiving funds for program implementation.

KEY WORDS: CHILD SOLDIERS/ NEPAL /CHILD RIGHTS/ CAAFAG/
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS/ MAOIST INSURGENCY

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