Exploring the Complexities of Child Soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Stanford Human Rights Education Initiative (SHREI): 2012 - 2013
Katie Zanoni, San Diego City College, Peace Studies Program
Human Rights Education in the Community College Classroom
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Overview

- Context, rationale, and curriculum development process
- Silent Gallery
- Critical Dialogue
- Reflections
  - Students’ response
  - Questions that arose from a pedagogical standpoint
  - Components to add in the future
Context - Peace Studies SDCC

Human Trafficking
Rationale

Human Trafficking
Democratic Republic of Congo

Congo Statistics

- Around 5.4 million people have died, either in the fighting or from disease and starvation as a direct result of the war.
- At its worst there were over 30,000 child soldiers in the country. Thousands of them have yet to be reunited with their families. The UN reports that 848 children were forced to be soldiers in 2009.
- Some 200,000 rapes have been reported since the war began, but many believe that a lot more women and girls have been exploited. In 2009, half of the victims were children.
- Over 1.5 million people in DR Congo are refugees.
- Over 5 million children in DR Congo do not go to school.

http://worldschildrensprize.org/facts-war
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Overview
Child Soldiers / UDHR / Trafficking

Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration

Article 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Source:
http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html

The Life of a Child Soldier

Forms of Violence

Reintegration

International Justice

International Criminal Court to Deliver Verdict on Thomas Lubanga, March 14, 2012
Protocol to Prevent,Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>MEANS</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
<th>= TRAFFICKING</th>
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<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>Threat or use of force</td>
<td>Exploitation, including</td>
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<td>Transport</td>
<td>Coercion</td>
<td>Prostitution of others</td>
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<td>Transfer</td>
<td>Abduction</td>
<td>Sexual exploitation</td>
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<td>Harbouring</td>
<td>Fraud</td>
<td>Forced labour</td>
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<td>Receipt of persons</td>
<td>Deception</td>
<td>Slavery or similar practices</td>
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<td>Abuse of power or vulnerability</td>
<td>Removal of organs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Giving payments or benefits</td>
<td>Other types of exploitation</td>
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Curriculum Development Process

- Strategies for teaching about child soldiers
  - Address preconceived notions.
  - Consider images of child soldiers carefully.
  - Select content that offers a realistic perspective on this global issue.
  - Use a case study approach (DRC).
  - Acknowledge the students’ emotional response.
  - Incorporate content related to peacebuilding.

- Key question: How to create a space for learning to occur around a sensitive topic such as child soldiers?
Addressing pre-conceived notions

People often underestimate quite how large Africa is, so we figured we'd put it in perspective by transposing as many of the world's other countries over it as we could. As you can see, Africa is larger than China, the USA, Western Europe, India, Argentina and the British Isles... combined!

Source: The Times Atlas
Images of child soldiers
1. What political, social and economic factors force a child into a life as a soldier?

2. How does international law define a child soldier?

3. Why are child soldiers considered trafficking victims?

4. How does the experience of a child soldier differ based upon gender differences?

5. What is the role of the international community in protecting child soldiers?
   a. What international instruments are in place to protect children?
   b. How does the international community implement the instruments?
   c. How does the international community hold leaders responsible for using child soldiers in a conflict?

6. What hope is there for child soldiers to defect from a militia?

7. How does a child soldier reintegrate back into society?

8. What additional steps should be taken to support a former female child soldier when she is returning to a life in civil society?
Silent Gallery Walk
Silent Gallery Walk
Written Debrief:
Student Response to Gallery

**Pedagogical Response**
- “a new and unique way of communication and discussing an issue for me”
- “chance to voice our opinions on the DRC in a more creative and active way”
- “was liberating to be able to write your opinion without having fear of being judged”
- “I wasn’t alone in my thoughts”

**Emotional Response**
- “shock and resentment”
- “immensely discomforted by the reality”
- “I had a hard time when we were viewing the gallery…stories…horrifying”
- “this is a very difficult problem to resolve”
Model of Success in Reintegrating Child Soldiers: Murhabazi Namegabe (BVES)

Consider the work that Mr. Namegabe is doing at BVES. What thoughts come to mind when you learn about his efforts to rehabilitate child soldiers?

Review the work of Mr. Namegabe at: http://worldschildrensprize.org/murhabazinamegabe

“The fight for children’s rights here is a matter of life and death. And I’m prepared to die in that fight, every day,” says Murhabazi Namegabe.
DDR / RR Division

Mr. Howard, Public Information / DDR Office

DDR/RR Division United Nations Organization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), Goma

DDR/RR: Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration and Resettlement

Photo Courtesy of Nadejda Marques
Critical Dialogue

Student Prompt

If your voice could be heard on a MONUSCO radio broadcast as a member of the international community, what would you say?
Questions for Reflection

1) Responsible activism – How do we evaluate our personal intentions when we would like to start volunteering for a social cause?

2) Evaluating non-governmental organizations (NGO) – What strategies can we use to assess the impact of an NGO and evaluate their professional practices to ensure it is a reputable organization?

3) A peace studies perspective on self-empowerment – What is the victim-savior complex and how can we avoid perpetuating this idea by considering the core ideas around peacebuilding through self-empowerment?
Thank you!

- Molly Aufdermauer, Public Engagement Coordinator
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- Laura Hubbard, Associate Director for Stanford’s Center for African Studies
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- Kim Rapp, Executive Director for International Comparative Area Studies
- Elizabeth Saenz-Ackermann, Associate Director Center for Latin American Studies
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- Helen Stacy, Senior Fellow, Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies (FSI); Coordinator, Program on Human Rights, FSI