

5681212024 : MAJOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

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NI NI WIN: PROTECTION OF CHILD SOLDIER'S RIGHTS IN ARMED CONFLICTS IN MYANMAR. ADVISOR: PROF. SUPANG CHANTAVANICH, Ph.D., pp.

This research explores the reasons why the State Party faces challenges in respecting and protecting the rights of child soldiers in Myanmar. It also identifies the root causes of underage recruitment and its violation of child rights, and emphasizes the actions duty bearers should take to protect children's rights. Finally, it analyzes the challenges of implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs to provide economic and social services for child soldiers. The methodology of research is a qualitative approach of key informants and in-depth interviews with a concerned range of key stakeholders and child soldiers with review and research based on available secondary data.

Research findings indicate that ethnic armed conflict, lack of education opportunities, poverty, and unemployment are root causes that draw children to become child soldiers. Most cases examined were recruited into the army at age 15. Recruitment methods include force or coercion, voluntary recruitment for their ethnic identity, and persuasion or attraction with incentives by law enforcers and civilian brokers. In the army, child soldiers experienced various violations, ranging from being assigned to the front line of battle, hard work in the battle field, impunity, and severe injury by fighting. After recruitment, most of those from Myanmar's National Army, Tatmadaw, received USD 500 for reintegration.

When comparing what they have experienced against Articles 4, 19, 24, 27, 28, 32, 35, 36, 37, 38 and 39 to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), many of the rights were violated, especially Article 38 which indicates that "children under 15 should not be forced or recruited to take part in a war or join the armed force" (CRC, 1989). Duty bearers, who are supposed to protect children in this case, are the Myanmar Government (including the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Social Welfare) and the Kachin Independence Army, civil society organizations, parents, and community. It was found that duty bearers exercised limited roles and responsibilities on the child soldier issue due to weak child protection mechanisms in place and challenges in implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs to improve socio-economic opportunities for ex-child soldiers transitioning from military to civilian lives.

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