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Experiences of girls involved with armed forces and groups in Eastern Africa

Emerging peace and security threats in Eastern Africa

Changing Trends of Conflicts and Response Strategies in Eastern Africa

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Foreword

The International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC) is a research and training institution focusing on capacity building at the strategic, operational and tactical levels within the framework of the African Peace and Security architecture (APSA) and has developed to be a regional Centre of Excellence for the African Standby Force (ASF) in Eastern Africa. The IPSTC addresses the complexities of contemporary UN/AU integrated Peace Support Operations (PSOs) by analyzing the actors and multi-dimensional nature of these operations. The research whose findings constitute the subject of this Issue Brief covers a broad spectrum of issues ranging from conflict prevention through management to post-conflict reconstruction. The Centre has made considerable contribution in training and research on peace support issues in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa through designing of training curricula, conducting field research and publication of Occasional Papers and Issue Briefs. The Occasional Papers are produced annually, while the Issues Briefs are quarterly. The issue briefs are an important contribution to the vision and mission of the IPSTC.

The First Quarter Issue Brief No. 1 (2015) has two articles on peace and conflict in Eastern Africa and the Great Lakes Region: "*Experiences of Girls Involved with Armed Forces and Groups in Eastern Africa*, and *Emerging Peace and Security Threats in Eastern Africa.*"

The Issue Brief provides insights into pertinent peace and security issues in the region that are useful to policy makers and aims at contributing to the security debate and praxis in the region. The articles in this Issue Brief are also expected to inform the design of training modules at the IPSTC. The research and publication of this Issue Brief has been made possible by the support of European Union.

Brigadier P. Nderitu
Director, IPSTC

Acronyms

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Events Data
ACPP	Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (ACPP)
ADB	African Development Bank
AMIB	African Union Mission in Burundi
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
ASF	Africa Standby Force
AU	African Union
CAF	Conflict Analysis Framework
CARE	Council for American Relief Everywhere
CCAPS	Climate Change and African Political Stability
CEWARN	Conflict Early Warning and Response Network
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC	East African Community
EASF	East African Standby Force
FARDC	Forces Armees de la Republique Democratique du Congo
FSI	Failed States Index
GPI	Global Peace Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICGLR	International Conference of the Great Lakes Region
ICPAC	IGAD Climate Prediction and Application Center
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development

IHR	International Health Regulations
IPCC	International Panel on Climate Change
IPSTC	International Peace Support Training Centre
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
KDF	Kenya Defence Forces
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ONUB	United Nations Mission in Burundi
PCIL	Peace and Conflict Information Ledger
PSO	Peace Support Operations
RCM	Regional Certification Mechanism
RDC	Rapid Deployment Capability
REC	Regional Economic Community
RECSA	Regional Centre for Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
RENAMO	Mozambican National Resistance
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SSR	Security Sector Reforms
STD	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TJRC	Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCC	United Nations Forum on Climate Change
UNFIB	United Nations Force Implementation Brigade
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction to Issue Briefs

The topics in this Third Quarter Issue Brief address diverse issues of peace and security in the Eastern Africa and Great Lakes Region. The first paper explores the experiences of girls involved with armed forces and groups in Eastern Africa while the second looks at emerging peace and security threats in Eastern Africa.

The first paper, *Experiences of Girls Involved with Armed Forces and Groups in Eastern Africa,* argues that girls make up approximately 40 percent of child soldiers in armed forces and groups globally but scant attention has been given to their active involvement and distinct experiences in these forces and groups, whether as combatants or noncombatants. Again, seldom are girls in fighting forces and groups viewed holistically or contextually within specific armed conflicts, geopolitical and cultural contexts, time periods, countries, or regions. Very little is known regarding the distinct physical, emotional, and spiritual long-term, even lifetime, effects of girls' experiences within fighting forces and groups. This paper, therefore, analyses the experiences of girls, looking at, among others, the circumstances that lead to their entry into armed forces and groups, their roles, needs, protection and reintegration concerns, as well as the overall effects of armed conflicts on their wellbeing. Key international legal standards protecting children in armed conflict are also examined as well as how best to support girls involved with fighting forces and groups.

The second paper, *Emerging Peace and Security Threats in Eastern Africa,* presents patterns, trends and dynamic peace and security threats in the region. The Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa experience various conflict threats. Understanding the nature of these threats is vital for effective early warning and conflict prevention strategies. There are many global conflict prediction and state vulnerability models. This study reviews conflict vulnerability in Eastern Africa using a number of existing conflict data sets and qualitative information.

The study examines conflict scenarios in the region between 2015 and 2020, revealing structural and proximate factors and triggers that will inform national and regional conflict trends. Governance, conduct of national elections, corruption, economic status, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and separation of the military from the political class are major factors that will determine countries' progression towards conflict or peace. The study also explores strategies and policies of conflict prevention, management and mitigation given the above dynamics. Foremost is conducting professional conflict research and analysis and factoring conflict-generating factors in national development plans.

Experiences of Girls Involved with Armed Forces and Groups in Eastern Africa

By Carolyne Gatimu

Introduction and Research Problem

In the words of an authority on child soldiers, *"..... There is, though, an often-overlooked point that also highlights one of the difficulties we face if we are to tackle the problem of child soldiers. Despite the dominant image of these soldiers as boys, it is estimated that globally, as many as 40 percent child soldiers are girls. This point, as much as any other, underscores why it is time to rethink how we view child soldiers..."* (Drumbl, 2015).

Hundreds of thousands of children have been associated with armed forces and groups in conflicts around the world, from South America to Africa and from South East Asia to the Balkans. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda, Boko Haram in Nigeria and recently, ISIS, have been involved in gross abuse of children (Drumbl, 2015). The recruitment and use of children violates their rights and causes them physical, developmental, emotional, spiritual and mental harm. The children comprise both boys and girls, although for a long time, girls have been invisible with the near exclusive focus on boy-soldiers. The Paris Principles of 2007[1] have tried to change this view by defining a child associated with an armed force or armed group as *"any person below 18 years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies, or for sexual purposes. It does not refer only to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities."*

The recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups has been a focus of international attention and has been widely condemned, yet children

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1   *The Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups were adopted in 2007 in Paris and are the operational guidelines related to sustainable reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces and groups.*

continue to be involved in adult wars and have died or been disabled in such conflicts. Some children are abducted and recruited forcefully while others join voluntarily. While the release and reintegration into civilian life of many of these children has been supported through interventions and programmes designed to assist them, others have returned home on their own, often to face an uncertain future and a further fight for acceptance from their family and community (Paris Principles, 2007). Girls in particular are likely to be stigmatized and even rejected by their communities if it is known that they have been used by an armed force or group. It is even more traumatizing when the children born of these girls during their engagement in war are rejected together with their mothers.

Research on girls associated with armed forces and groups is still at its infancy. This is due to the scant attention previously given to girls' active involvement and distinct experiences in these forces and groups, as combatants or non-combatants. Prior to 2000, for example, the question: "where are the girls?'' was seldom raised in discussions about children or adolescents in fighting forces and groups. More importantly, the use of child soldiers had been a largely invisible and unacknowledged international phenomenon until the efforts of members of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers[2] brought the issue to the fore. Before then, scant attention had been given to girls' distinct experiences and the effects of gender-specific human rights violations. Majority of reports and international initiatives still continue to use the ambiguous term "child soldiers" or "children" almost always meaning boys, and do not identify differential impacts for girls and boys when they are or have been members of these fighting forces and groups.

Again, seldom are girls in fighting forces and groups viewed holistically or contextually within specific armed conflicts, geopolitical and cultural contexts, time periods, countries, or regions. Very little is known regarding the distinct physical,

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[2]   Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, now renamed Child Soldiers International is a UK-based NGO that was formed to prevent the recruitment and exploitation of children in warfare and to ensure their reintegration into larger society by means of research, advocacy and capacity building. It was founded in May 1998 by six international NGOs to promote shared human rights objectives. Its primary function is to act as an informational resource centre for related NGOs, child advocacy organizations, and international legislative bodies.

emotional, and spiritual long-term, even lifetime, effects of girls' experiences with fighting forces and groups. Likewise, the varying nature of girls' role expectations and their relationships with men, boys, women, and other girls in fighting forces or groups are yet to be studied. Long-term systematic follow-up, even as soon as a year after the fighting stops, on what has happened to these girls and their babies and children, is largely absent. Consequently, policies and programs developed to address the needs of these girls are poorly informed or, too often, nonexistent (Mazurana et al, 2002).

This paper aims at analyzing the experiences of girls involved with armed groups and forces particularly in armed conflicts in Eastern Africa, looking at among others, the circumstances that lead to their entry, their roles, needs, protection and reintegration concerns, as well as the overall effects of armed conflicts on their wellbeing. Following this introduction, the next sections cover the following: objectives of the paper; conceptual and theoretical framework; girls' entry into armed forces and groups; girls' roles within armed forces and groups; impacts of armed conflicts on girls' involved with fighting forces and groups; reintegration issues and challenges for girls; key international legal standards protecting children in armed conflict; and how best to support girls involved with fighting forces and groups.

Objectives of the Study

This paper is guided by the following five objectives. These are to:

a) Examine the circumstances that determine girls entry into and roles within armed forces and groups during armed conflict;

b) Assess the effects of armed conflicts on girls involved with armed forces and groups;

c) Identify the needs and concerns of these girls in reintegration processes in their communities;

d) Assess the legal framework in place for the protection and reintegration of these girls; and

e) Recommend better policies and mechanisms for reintegration of the girls into their communities.

Theoretical Framework

Theories on Child Soldiering

The theories commonly used in child soldier research help us to understand some of the key issues surrounding child soldiers such as: why recruit children?, why forced recruitment?, why do children volunteer?, and what makes children stay in rebellious groups.? Majority of these theories however adopt an economic perspective, and the number of theories based on cultural or social perspectives are quite limited. In addition, there are so far no theories specifically addressing girl-child soldiers, only general theories on child soldiering.

The Agency Theory

A majority of scholars who write about child soldiers refer to the agency theory which postulates a principal-agent model. Agency theory has been used widely by scholars in sociology, accounting, economics, finance, marketing, political science and organizational behaviour (Eisenhardt, 1989). The agency theory provides a basic framework for examining the relationship between employer/employee; principal/agent; or, in our case, rebellion leader/child. Central to the theory are the concepts of contract (agreement) between principal and agent; incentives; and conflict resolution. In classical agency theory, the principal is presented as an individual who tries to minimize costs for organization while getting the most benefits from the agent by offering the most optimal contract. On the other hand, an agent is seen as the rational individual who seeks and enters into the best contract among all the options available. Although in its classical sense agency theory does not perfectly describe the relationship between the rebellion leader and a child, it provides a general framework for discussing all of the four questions raised above.

Why Recruit Children? - The Rational Choice Theory

Why do rebellious groups prefer recruiting children to adults? Some scholars tend to answer this question through the lenses of the rational choice theory (Becker,

1976). Rational choice theory is commonly used as a framework for understanding and modeling social and economic behaviour. The central idea of the theory is an assumption that an individual in each particular case tends to make the most optimal decision. In the case of child soldiers, rational choice theory leads us to seek answers as to "why recruit children?" and "in what situations do children become the most optimal, beneficial, and cost-effective solution?"

Child recruitment becomes the optimal decision to make in several cases. To start with, children are easily indoctrinated and misled by armed groups, so leaders can use children at low cost. Secondly, due to the high retention rates within rebellious groups, children become the core of sustainability, as it is easier to force children to stay in the group as compared to adults. Furthermore, many scholars note that leaders of rebellious groups recruit children because they (leaders) do not face any punishment or are not aware of any negative consequences. Therefore, the ease of indoctrination, higher retention rates among children, and absence of punishment for the recruiters in many cases make children the most optimal choice.

Following the rational choice theory, in order to stop the child-soldier phenomenon, it is vital to increase the cost of recruitment. In other words, it is vital to create conditions where children would become the worst or last choice for the rebellious groups to make. This calls for strengthening of policies around child soldiers and specifically reinforcing the mechanisms of prosecution and follow-up by increasing informational propaganda. It is also important to provide educational opportunities and technical training for children in the hostilities to make them less vulnerable to possible indoctrination and recruitment.

Why Forced Recruitment? - The Economics of Labour Coercion Theory

Studies show that use of force often accompanies child recruitment. All groups that forcibly recruit also employ child soldiers on an average of two to three times more than groups that do not forcibly recruit (Beber and Blattman, 2010). So, why do rebellious groups choose forced recruitment, and why is force often

directed towards children? Possible explanations are presented in the theory of the economics of labour coercion advanced by Acemoglu and Wolitzky (2010). These scholars base their theory on a coercive principal agent model, with two significant differences. First, they suggested that the agent (child, in our case), has no wealth, and the principal (rebellion leader) can punish as well as reward the agent/child. Secondly, the principal (rebellion leader) can choose the amount of coercion necessary. One of the central ideas of this model is that the principal uses force to minimize the alternative options of the agent (child), and force a child to accept the terms of "employment" that they might otherwise reject.

The model provides some important insights into coercive labour relationships. First, coercive labour minimizes the cost for the principal by enabling payment of less incentives for child recruits. This assumption seems relevant to our case because since rebellious groups usually have limited resources, they are unlikely to pay adequate or regular rewards/incentives to agents. Second, coercive labour increases the agent's efforts and productivity. This also seems to be true as in the case of Sri Lanka where children were regularly threatened by leaders in order to make them follow their commands. Therefore, as one might predict, children would put extra efforts to obey the commands to avoid possible punishment and further threats. Third, coercion is used as a means to hold the agents within the organization/group. As argued by Acemoglu and Wolitzky (2010), the principal might use actual guns as a threat against the children (in our case), or their relatives and friends in order to keep the agent within the group. This position is supported by the literature which shows that children in the case of Uganda were regularly humbled by the LRA with the threat to kill members of their families or friends in case of escape. Lastly, coercion is more likely to occur when the external options or alternatives of the agent are low. Studies show that children who are recruited by rebellious groups are mostly from poor families, with limited or no outside options for employment, or education. These children are also in most cases unaware of their opportunities unlike the adults (De Silva et al, 2001; Massey, 2000). This fact makes children more vulnerable to recruitment.

Even though the theory of the economics of labour coercion provides valuable insights into the forced recruitment/coercive labour relationships that seem relevant to our case, it does not address the question of why forced recruitment is usually directed towards children. Nevertheless, on the basis of this theory, a recommendation could be made to expand educational and employment opportunities for children so as to increase livelihood options for them.

Why Do Children Volunteer? - The Bounded Rationality Theory

The bounded rationality theory is associated with Herbert A. Simon (1955). It provides clues to the question of why children volunteer to become soldiers. The theory suggests that while making a decision, an individual is limited in mental ability and the information available. In our case, this theory is supported by many psychologists who claim that children have less cognitive ability to comprehend the world, as compared to adults. De Silva et al (2001) also argued that children could not truly realize their ambitions in war. In addition, this theory finds support in scholars who claim that children who become soldiers are usually unaware of outside options. With their list of choices limited and being unaware of other opportunities, children choose to become fighters. Furthermore, considering the fact that most of the children come from poor families, the possibility of joining the armed forces might look like an attractive alternative, as it could secure the sources of food and shelter. Therefore, taking the bounded rationality approach into account, education seems to be a long-term solution, as education opportunities would increase not only the awareness of outside options, but would also increase the chances of future employment in the labour market.

What Makes Children Stay in Rebellious Groups? - The Cognitive Dissonance Theory
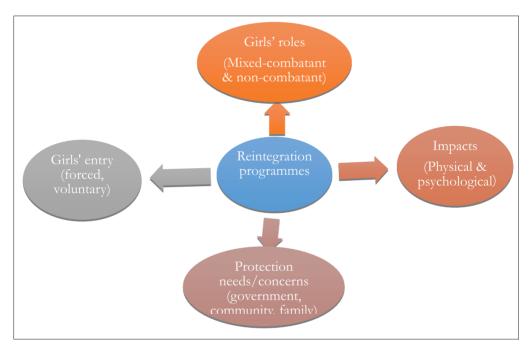
The theory of cognitive dissonance, propounded by Leon Festinger in 1957, is among the theories that explain why people, especially children, stay in rebellious groups. It explains the situations in which individuals might hold two conflicting ideas, beliefs, feelings, or values. In such cases, Festinger suggested that individuals

tend to alter one of the discordant attitudes or beliefs so as to reduce discomfort and reach a sense of inner balance or equilibrium. In our case, child soldiers are directly exposed to situations of cognitive dissonance to the extent that they are forced to kill even their family members and friends. Following the theory, one might hypothesize that children have to alter their previous beliefs and accept their new roles as killers and fighters, as it is the only means of survival and adaptation to a new environment.

Conceptual Framework

The experiences of girls associated with armed forces and groups can be understood through the conceptual framework in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on Experiences of Girls Involved with Armed Forces and Groups

Source: Author's Own Conceptualization

Figure 1 shows the interrelationships between girls' entry into fighting forces and groups, their roles, the impacts on their physical as well as psychological wellbeing, and their protection needs and concerns, which all have a bearing on reintegration efforts/ programmes designed for them.

Entry of Girls into Armed Forces and Groups

Girls enter fighting forces and groups via a variety of avenues, including active recruitment, volunteering, abduction or gang pressing. The entry methods may overlap. Verhey's (2004) study in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) found out that majority of girls associated with armed forces and groups were abducted and forcibly recruited. Throughout the small towns and villages of the Eastern provinces, thousands of girls were taken by force whilst working in the fields when entire villages were attacked. Some girls however joined the armed groups by choice. In some cases in the DRC, this was described as participating in something of patriotic value and in other cases, girls were described as being "difficult" at home and thus joined the armed groups to escape conflictual relations at home. In some cases, 'following' an armed group or a particular military official was viewed as the best opportunity to access food and other material goods.

Recruitment is here defined as the systematic targeting of girls by fighting forces or groups to join their organizations and occurs in several ways. The Angola Armed Forces, for example, operated recruitment schemes promising high pay to attract Namibian girls and boys into their ranks. Likewise, the then rebel forces of RENAMO in Mozambique promised scholarships to study abroad to attract adolescent boys and girls into its forces although few, if any, scholarships were ever given (Mazurana et al, 2002). In all countries where girls are present in fighting forces and groups, it is reported that some of the girls chose to join voluntarily. However, the notion of choosing to volunteer is highly contested. Girls' options are so limited that the idea of some of them freely making this choice is doubtful. A report in 2002 by Refugees International on the situation facing children in the eastern DRC found out that the choices facing girls and boys were "to join the military, become a street child or die." Here, girls joined fighting forces and groups because they would provide food, shelter and a sense of security like in the case of DRC. In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge deprived villages of food supplies to force boys and girls to join in, while at times, girls joined to obtain an income

or further their employment options, including government, political or military careers (Mazurana et al, 2002).

Abductions occur when girls are kidnapped or seized by fighting forces or groups and forced to serve in them. Wessells' study in Angola in 2011 found out that typically, girls were abducted during and soon after raids on villages. As resources became increasingly scarce during the war, armed groups often attacked villages to obtain food and other supplies. The abduction of young children appeared to be part of a deliberate strategy of building the labor pool that the military needed, and commanders apparently preferred young people because of their compliance. Often, during raids to capture children, men were killed and the old people were left behind. Girls appeared to be preferred because of their ability to carry heavy loads for long distances without making the noise that mechanized vehicles make, thereby reducing the chances of being detected by the enemy.

Girls' Roles within Armed Forces and Groups

As pointed out in the introduction, until relatively recently, the study of children associated with armed forces and groups was, in effect, the study of boy soldiers, as girls who had been recruited were either invisible or marginalised. The emphasis on boys probably reflected the patriarchal values that pervade most societies which systematically privilege males over females. Also, the concern with boys reflected a concern over building security in a post-conflict environment, where important tasks include confronting opposing armies, reforming the security sector, and enabling former combatants to integrate into civilian life. This security lens, with its emphasis on former combatants, relegated to the margins the girls who had not been fighters but had filled roles such as servants, porters, cooks and concubines. Regarded as "camp followers", girls were typically left out of programs on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) (Wessells, 2011).

Although at its infancy, a new generation of research is bringing girls out of the margins by shattering the view that they are passive followers and challenging their exclusion from DDR processes. Although hard figures are difficult to come by in

war zones, some studies have estimated that as many as 40 percent of the fighters in contemporary intra-state wars are girls and in particular areas, they comprise as much as half of the armed groups (Wessells, 2011; Drumbl, 2015). In addition, an expanding array of data indicates that girls serve in a wide variety of roles, including combatants and actors who make choices and exhibit significant agency. The girls' roles typically overlap and include working as spies and informants, in intelligence and communications, and as military trainers and combatants. Girls also serve as "military wives" or are abducted for sexual purposes; to fulfill the sexual needs of the members of a particular armed force or group. They also serve as health workers and mine sweepers, and may at times conduct suicide missions. Other support roles include raising crops, selling goods, preparing food, carrying loot and weapons and stealing food, livestock and seed stock. Underlying these various roles and activities, girl participation in military life is central to sustaining a competent force because of their productive and reproductive labour. As such, traditional societal gender roles and patriarchal privileges are replicated whereby girls (and women) serve men and boys (Schwartz, 2013).

Mazurana et al (2002), on the other hand, argues that gender does not necessarily dictate roles in fighting forces and groups. In Liberia and Uganda, for instance, although most girls experienced sexual violence and the majority of boys were used as fighters, some boys were forced into sexual servitude whereas some girls were front-line fighters. The authors note that almost all reports of child soldiers being forced into sex are with regard to forced heterosexual sex, with male soldiers forcing female soldiers. However, at present, forced homosexual contact and sexual abuse of boy-soldiers is an issue even more invisible than the use of girls.

Impact of Armed Conflicts on Girls' Involved with Fighting Forces and Groups

For female child soldiers, post-war adjustment is often more complex. Challenges include significant medical and psychosocial difficulties and fewer opportunities for healing and reintegration. After demobilization, sexually-abused females are often

rejected by their families and communities. Stigmatization can be more intense if they return infected with STDs or if they bring back a child born in the forests. In many cultural settings, girls are unable to get married or re-married and they also find it difficult to enter new supportive partnerships within which to bring up their children in civilian life. Hence, displacement, domestic violence, substance abuse, and prostitution are common outcomes. Gender disparities that privilege boy-soldiers over girl-soldiers largely influence the outcome that fewer girls enter or benefit from rehabilitation programs (Schwartz, 2013). This section describes some gender-specific physical and psychological health problems of girls who are or have been associated with fighting forces and groups.

Sexual and Reproductive Health Effects

Girls' vulnerability, size, and low status make them susceptible to widespread physical and psychological abuse including sexual assault by boys and men (Mazurana et al, 2002). In Uganda for example, girls abducted by the LRA were "married" to rebel leaders and subsequently sexually assaulted. If the man died, the girl could be "re-married" to another rebel after going through ritual cleansing. Inevitably, abused and sexually assaulted girls suffer from serious reproductive health problems that are often accompanied by psychological trauma. Forced sex can result in abdominal pain, cervical tearing, bleeding and infection. Forced sex also frequently results in sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Girls can become infected with Syphilis, gonorrhea, or HIV, among others. Pelvic inflammatory disease is a painful abdominal condition that can develop as a result of STDs and can cause lifelong reproductive problems. In Sierra Leone, health workers estimated that 70% to 90% of rape survivors tested positive for STDs. Abducted girls were especially at risk because of the many incidents of sexual violence. These diseases are often passed on to the girl's offspring during pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding. The result maybe morbidity or death of these infants and their mothers because usually no treatment is available.

Hygiene Concerns

Reports indicate that during armed conflict, many adolescent girls' menses stop because of malnutrition and trauma. Girls involved with armed forces and groups must manage hygienic concerns such as menstruation and cleanliness and try to protect themselves from infections that can run rampant through military camps. For many girls, acute embarrassment and even mental distress occurs because private reproductive body processes become public, especially when sanitary supplies and washing facilities are unavailable (Mazurana et al., 2002).

Pregnancy, Birth and Breastfeeding

Depending on variables such as age, reproductive status, and practices of a particular armed force or group, pregnancies may be carried to term or aborted (Verhey, 2004; Mazurana et al, 2002). In some situations, girls and young women who presented themselves as "good breeders", because they were already mothers of two or more babies, were sequestered in special camps to produce future fighters, as occurred in LRA camps in Southern Sudan. In Cambodia and El Salvador, girls in fighting forces were given the choice to abort or give the child to peasants to raise until they reached fighting age when the forces then reclaimed them. Potential psychological impacts of this mother-child separation can reasonably be expected to result, at least in some cases, in negligent parenting of the child. In Uganda, girls who were abducted by LRA are reported to have suffered serious complications and infections after birth and developed gynecological problems that sometimes caused permanent disability.

Excess maternal and infant morbidity and mortality and psychological distress can be expected to occur in these girls and their babies. Since the armed groups are unlikely to have trained midwives or other experienced birth attendants, these methods of managing "birth under duress" may stem as much out of ignorance as from reasons of exigency. Additionally, because of unwanted pregnancies, girls may self-induce abortions at the peril of their lives. Compounding this violence, babies have often died because their mothers were unable to obtain care during

pregnancy and childbirth and also gave birth without assistance. In many cases, the pregnant girls will not be in a position to eat the right foods and even after birth, their babies do not access the right medical attention including immunization. Even when both mother and baby survive, the babies may be rejected by their mothers or become victims of infanticide. Also, children born of forced sex may be branded as "undesired", "children of bad memories" or "children of hate" and suffer from the consequences of identity crises. The families of these girls may also reject the daughters and their babies. In the DRC for example, girls and young women who are single mothers of "rebel babies" raised these children alone, with few parenting skills and poor socio-economic prospects.

Psychosocial Effects

Mazurana et al (2002) argue that although girls' experiences are not well understood, some emotional or psychosocial effects for girls differ from those of boys, particularly because of the heterosexual violence they often experience as part of fighting forces. In the aftermath of sexual assault, girls experience shock, loss of dignity, shame, low-self-esteem, poor concentration and memory, persistent nightmares, depression, and other post-traumatic stress effects. They have been observed to withdraw more than boys, the latter being more likely to behave with aggression. The misery of girls can be compounded by taunts from boys and men who stigmatize them as "used products" that have "lost their taste." After the fighting ends or they escape, some young girls who have been repeatedly raped do not desire marital relationships. Additionally, most communities are fearful of the aggressive behaviour children are presumed to learn and adopt through their association with armed groups and such behaviour is especially ill-tolerated in girls who face additional social stigma and isolation following their return from armed groups.

Throughout the world, support for girls' physical and psychological rehabilitation and healing are inadequate or completely lacking. Instead, the girls are usually forgotten and must make their way amidst difficult circumstances of poverty, social

isolation, and physical and psychological distress. In Mozambique, for example, girls had reintegration problems because of familial conflicts about marrying. As in many African countries, not marrying can result in social stigma for families and jeopardize the future economic prospects of these girls. When they do marry, some of the girls have been observed to have difficulties bonding with their babies and in managing the household.

Reintegration Issues and Challenges for Girls

Wessells' (2011) study on reintegration of girls associated with armed forces and groups in Angola found out that following their time in armed groups, only one of the girls was recognized as a soldier and given a one-time demobilization payment as part of an official DDR process. Apparently, their noncombatant labor had conferred little military status, and many girls were considered to be too young to be regarded as soldiers. Also, the DDR planners targeted benefits for men on the assumption that the benefits would trickle down to dependent girls. Most girls, however, went with their bush husbands or the elders' family they lived with to military gathering areas. Recognizing that they would be severely stigmatized, most girls sought to enter villages quietly and on their own, although they in some cases chose not to return to their places of origin. This experience of Angolan girls demonstrates the challenges of demobilizing and reintegrating most girls with similar experiences or from similar circumstances.

Armed adult male fighters and a few boy-soldiers have been the near-exclusive priority for most DDR programs inevitably significantly marginalizing all children, and girls in particular. In the DRC, it has been widely observed that very few girls, as compared to boys, were demobilized through official processes. For example, from December 2003 to September 2004, 1,718 boys were demobilized compared to only 23 girls. In September 2004, CARE identified and verified the cases of an additional 112 girls in Maniema province. However, it should be noted that this did not represent an improvement in the willingness of armed groups to release girls. Rather, these girls had escaped and were identified at community level through a new initiative employing more creative efforts to reach girls (Verhey, 2004).

Mozambique is another good example, where, during the civil war (last half of 1970s to early 1990s), abducted girls were used as fighters; war, sex and domestic slaves; and as instruments of social capital by the then rebel forces of RENAMO, which at times gave them out to traditional leaders as a means of securing their loyalty. The leaders would select some of the girls for themselves and distribute the rest among their constituents as "secondary wives" and sexual and domestic slaves to help ensure their own power-base. Such practices have profoundly affected the lives of such girls both during and after the war. Sadly, the international humanitarian and defense communities that responded to the armed conflict did not assess, let alone address, the short and long-term effects on these girls. One result was that in Mozambique, the international humanitarian community was unable to recover the majority of the girls RENAMO had given out to the traditional leaders because humanitarian organizations were late in acknowledging the presence of such girls. When the plight of these girls came to light and international actors raised the alarm, RENAMO forces and traditional leaders were unwilling to identify the girls or turn them over. In addition, DDR programs in Mozambique did not acknowledge or address the reality of girls and women forced to serve as "wives", cooks, agricultural laborers and porters in the RENAMO forces. When demobilization occurred, no data were collected on how many women and girls were linked to soldiers, were forced to go home with soldiers, or were abandoned. Similarly, with the ending of the war in Liberia, the vast majority of girls were left by male combatants to fend for themselves and their children, often ending up in camps for the internally displaced (Mazurana et al, 2002).

Discrimination was another reintegration challenge for girls observed in Angola. This was sometimes indirect such as not being included in the welcoming and reintegration rituals that men received or being unable to matriculate in schools owing to lack of identity documents or appropriate clothing and shoes. It also included negative comments referring to "people who had come from the bush", or in observed differences in the habits of "people from the bush", or being linked to illnesses and damage caused by the war. The girls also lacked access to basic services such as health due to lack of income. Unemployment and psychosocial

distress were also major challenges for many of the girls who had left the armed groups (Wessells, 2011).

Conceptions and Obstacles to Girl Reintegration: Case Study of DRC

Verhey (2004) in a study on the DRC observed that thousands of girls remained with armed groups and thousands more who had escaped were rarely reached by reintegration efforts in the country. The study's main research question was 'why' instead of 'where' were the girls. The study concludes that some girls had been hidden by armed groups and their military hierarchy, but others hid themselves, preferring more discrete processes of re-joining their communities. Fundamentally, the girls were hidden because socio-cultural conceptions obstructed their access to the otherwise well-promoted efforts to demobilize children. In other words, gaining the release of girls from an armed group and supporting their reintegration required an approach broader than DDR.

Conceptions and Obstacles from the Military

The most prevalent reason as to why girls were not released by armed groups and forces in the DRC was because military officials viewed the girls as a form of possession and went on to claim that they (girls) were their "wives" rather than "child soldiers "to avoid demobilization. In some cases, lobbying and advocacy were used to justify the inclusion of girls in the national programme by explaining the legal definition of child soldiers as "children associated with armed groups and forces" because many such efforts were rebuffed with accusations of "breaking up families." In this sense, there was a clash between the efforts of child protection organizations and socio-cultural traditions such as polygamy and attitudes about girls and young women. On the one hand, it is illegal for any armed group to recruit and use girls or boys under the age of 28 years and many efforts have been made to seek their release or "demobilization". On the other hand, most military authorities view girls in their ranks as second, third, and fourth "wives" rather than illegal members of their group that they should feel obliged to release.

Lessons to date in the demobilization and reintegration processes which have already taken place between the DRC government forces (FARDC) and some *Mai Mai* rebel groups offer evidence of this conceptual obstacle to reaching the girls. Interviews and focus group discussions carried out by Verhey (2004) with children who had gone through these exercises reported that children (minors under 18 years) were often identified for demobilization by the FARDC official present, but girls were subsequently left behind as "wives". In other words, some girls may be identified within an armed group as being too young to be integrated into the national army and therefore fit for release but when their commanders claim they are their "wives", this is automatically accepted and the girls are not included in the group of children referred to child protection actors. The girls themselves are not consulted and neither are child protection organizations involved in these exercises.

In some cases, girls are not reached by DDR programmes due to misunderstandings or miscommunication about the requirement to surrender a weapon in order to be included in DDR efforts. Perhaps, some military officials overlook the girls because they tend to focus on the conventional conceptions of "soldier" and "disarmament" which leave out "child soldier". Further, despite written policies and procedures that children do not have to present an arm in order to be demobilized, conceptions persist that everyone must present an arm in order to participate in DDR.

Conceptions by the Girls

In the DRC, the girls themselves often did not see leaving the armed group or particular military "husband" or "partner" as a choice. This was due to the real threat of violence and recrimination as well as socio-cultural upbringing and the influence of gender relations where girls or women are expected to be submissive to men. It must be stressed that the majority of girls had been "recruited" by force and were often threatened with death and other violence if they tried to leave. Indeed, this study attested to a wide pattern in which adolescents were forcibly abducted and their parents or other relatives killed if they protested the "recruitment" of the children.

Further, there is a strong socio-cultural conception that a girl has to remain with a sexual partner, whether the relationship originated with or without her consent, including where this amounted to institutionalized rape. This is because the traditional justice approach to cases of rape or sexual relations outside marriage usually obligate the perpetrator to pay dowry or compensation to the family and marry the girl. Once a girl becomes associated with an armed group and is used sexually, she becomes identified socially as a "military wife". Most societies in Congo are traditional and view the life pathway of girls as one of maintaining virginity until the dowry is negotiated and marriage officially sanctioned. If a girl has sexual contact with a man whether voluntarily, through rape or by assumption due to being taken in by an armed group, she is considered to "no longer have any value" in society. Knowing these social views, girls may not seek to be released or demobilized in the same way as boys because they are more fearful of the social stigmas that they will face upon return to their family and/or community.

This is complicated even further if the girl becomes pregnant and bears children by these relations. Infact, some girls would view themselves as being 'lucky' if or when one is taken as the 'wife' of a particular military man, albeit the third or fifth wife, in the hope that the relationship and paternity of the children might be 'normalized' some day through payment of dowry. Further, the prospect of being the fourth of fifth wife of a particular man, rather than 'being chased' by many men, would be seen as a form of protection and 'solution' given the circumstances of their lives. Even when armed groups move on or are re-deployed to other theatres of war, groups of young women would later be observed moving behind these troops. This may be interpreted to mean that the girls felt obliged (or even desired) to continue with the armed group or their 'military husbands' because they did not seize such opportunities to flee. While the conceived lack of choice for girls in these armed group relations was strong, other findings of the study indicate that girls were not aware of the possibility to be demobilized or that it was illegal for the armed group to recruit them in the first place.

Socio-cultural conceptions appear to present more obstacles for the reintegration of girls than of boys. Generally, communities are fearful of aggressive behaviour the children are presumed to have learned or adopted through their association with armed groups. Such behaviour is especially ill-tolerated in girls who face additional social stigma and isolation following their return from armed groups. Following this pattern, communities in the DRC have a range of fears and prejudices about children associated with armed groups. To many, the experience, even possibility, of children participating in killings and pillaging goes beyond the traditional conception of children as submissive and obedient beings. There is a pervading dynamic where communities assume the children to be uniformly brutal and aggressive due to their experience in armed groups, whether or not a particular child has adopted this behaviour. As such, reintegrated children are often suspected of theft, petty crime or other infraction that happens within their family or neighborhood. This fear and prejudgment that children associated with armed groups will permanently adopt aggressive and impolite behaviour is especially an obstacle for girls. While communities continue to fear that former child-soldiers were likely to develop a habit of aggressive behaviour, this is ultimately more 'acceptable' for boys than for girls.

The practice of 'pointing a finger' at or stigmatizing girls is also more pervasive because they are presumed to retain sexual relations with members of armed groups and to have lost any prospect of getting married within the community. Similar patterns are reported for victims of sexual violence such as husbands divorcing their wives who fall victim or families breaking the engagements of their sons and demanding reimbursement of dowry if a girl has been raped. It should be noted that part of the stigma for girls as compared to boys is due to attitudes about sexual relations outside of socially sanctioned marriage rather than the mere fact of having been associated with an armed group. In other words, boys have also been involved in sexual relations outside of socially sanctioned marriages during their association with armed groups but do not suffer the same social stigma for this during reintegration. The following are some of the fears and prejudices identified

by the DRC study on the part of communities towards girls associated with armed groups:

a) Assumption that all girls associated with armed groups will have been sexually abused or have had sexual partners in some manner, the community views all such girls as "having lost their value" and "having lost the possibility of getting married". More broadly, the family has been "dishonored".

b) Fear that they will return infected with all manner of transmissible and communicable diseases. HIV and other STDs feature as the primary concerns, but other transmittable and communicable diseases such as Tuberculosis were also highlighted. Even symptoms of skin diseases, malaria or losing weight in such girls are more drastically presumed to be due to STDs or that she induced an abortion.

c) Fear that their military commanders or 'husbands' will pursue the girl and that they will commit further violence against the family, neighbours or community as part of 'reclaiming' the girl or avenging her escape.

d) Presumption that the girl will have learned a "military mentality" – "being brutal", impolite, aggressive, "becoming a bandit" or collaborating with thieves. In some cases, this is described more gently as an inability of the family and community to cope with a 'traumatized' or 'disturbed' girl.

e) Fear that having learned such behaviour, including having multiple sexual partners, the girls would recruit other girls in the community to join armed groups or generally incite bad or 'promiscuous' behaviour in other girls. In some cases, a presumption was expressed that such girls automatically became prostitutes.

International Legal Instruments Protecting Children Involved in Armed Conflict

The international community first took up the issue of child soldiers in the early 1990s. Since then, a variety of measures has been taken to create a body of laws and policies to end children's involvement in armed conflict. Nearly two-thirds of UN member States are now parties to the core human rights treaty prohibiting children's participation in armed conflict – the Optional Protocol (to the Geneva Conventions) on involvement in armed conflict , which came into force in 2002 (Child Soldiers International, 2012; Save the Children, 2010). This is the most comprehensive of international treaties relating to child soldiers and contains an expansive set of obligations on states aimed at ending the use of child soldiers in both state armed forces and non-state armed groups. This Protocol does not however specifically address the plight of female child soldiers but focuses instead on raising the minimum age of lawful participation in armed combat.

The 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court also prohibits the use of children aged under-15 years in hostilities and provides for its punishment as a war crime. In 2009, a former commander from eastern DRC, Bosco Ntaganda, became the first person to be put on trial at the International Criminal Court in The Hague for recruiting children. Meanwhile, the Special Court for Sierra Leone has successfully prosecuted a number of former commanders in the 1991-2002 civil war for recruiting child combatants under the age of 15 years. The recruitment and use of children is also defined as a worst form of child labour in the International Labour Organization's Convention 182, which commits each party to the Convention to secure its elimination as a matter of urgency (Save the Children, 2010).

In 2007, at a major conference in Paris, 58 governments endorsed a specific set of legal and operational principles designed to protect children from being recruited or used in armed conflict. The so called ''Paris Commitments', which are legal instruments complemented by a set of 'Paris Principles' covering prevention

and reintegration strategies, have subsequently been endorsed by a further 26 governments. The UN Security Council has also devoted significant time to this issue, condemning the recruitment and use of children, asking for annual reports from the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict on progress in their elimination, and listing armed forces and groups still recruiting children and threatening sanctions against them. In 2005, the Security Council mandated the establishment of country-specific Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms on the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts (as well as five other gross violations of children's rights). Such Reports have a preventive and deterrent effect and constitute a trigger for dialogue and development of action plans that lead to demobilization and release of the affected children. Other measures taken include using child protection advisors in peacekeeping operations.

Although children continue to be recruited and used in armed conflicts in many countries, the measures described above have resulted in the release and demobilization of thousands of former child combatants. DDR programmes have been funded and run by UN agencies, donors and NGOs in several difficult conflict situations. Progress has been achieved despite significant challenges (Save the Children, 2010).

Costache (n.d) argues that although the topic of girl-soldiers falls within the larger issue of child-soldiers - primarily because both boy and girl soldiers legally belong to the special category of minors or children and as such are entitled to specific rights and protection - it is clear that there is an additional and disturbing gendered component to the girls' experiences and this has increasingly demanded more attention. The use of girl-soldiers is an issue yet unsolved by international law both from human rights and humanitarian law perspectives. Existing international laws addressing child-soldiers such as those discussed above have failed to address the complexities of the girl-soldier experience. Nonetheless, looking at the existing situations in many countries in Africa, Latin America and East Asia, one appreciates the creation of an emerging body of legislation in this respect with many international organizations, NGOs, and internationally reputed scholars raising the

importance of a much better defined and conceptualized legal framework with respect to the use of girl-child soldiers by armed forces or groups.

According to Costache, the international legal provisions in this respect are better defined with respect to the protection of women and children. It may be argued that girl-soldiers fall somewhere between the two. It should be pointed out that the issue of girl-soldiers is first and foremost a child-protection issue, and perhaps should only be linked to theories on women in conflict in limited ways. While according to the law the primary girl-soldiers' identity is that of a child rather than a woman, they are targeted for specific maltreatment because they are females who are vulnerable and unprotected.

Again, as underlined by the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (2007), the situation of girls can be quite different in relation to: a) the reasons and manner in which they join the armed forces or armed groups b) the potential for their release c) the effects that the experience of being in the armed force or group has on their physical, social and emotional well-being and d) the consequences this may have for their ability to successfully adapt to civilian life or reintegrate into family and community life after their release. It is therefore recommended in the Paris Principles that from the planning stage through the design of eligibility criteria and screening procedures for inclusion in release and reintegration programmes and informal release processes through to programming for reintegration, monitoring and follow-up, actors should recognize that girls are at risk of being "invisible" and take measures to ensure that they are included and their issues addressed at all stages.

How Best to Support Girls Involved with Armed Forces and Groups

On a broader level, the gendered dynamics of armed conflicts, the communities affected by them, and the roles and experiences of girls within these conflicts and their communities must be more carefully examined to assist in shaping DDR programs. The economic, social and political options that girls may have during and after demobilization should be acknowledged. This is necessary to shape programs that do not further marginalize girls. In addition, DDR processes should recognize the diversity of girls' age, experiences, and current situation, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach (Mazurana et al, 2002; Verhey, 2004; Wessells, 2011). For example, women and girls who have been raped often encounter stigma and rejection by their communities. At the same time, the devastation of the formal economy in most war-torn countries provides girls with few options to earn a livelihood. This is especially true when they have missed years of schooling due to their presence among fighting forces and groups. Such situations, coupled with (relatively) large amounts of cash routinely given for demobilizing male soldiers, may lead to girls seeing few options but to stay with their former captors or "husbands" as occurred during DDR programmes in Sierra Leone. Thus, by not being aware of the dynamics of the larger contexts within which girls were returning, and in particular the gender dimensions, many former girl-soldiers have ended up being inadvertently marginalised by programs that sought to assist them.

In addition, impediments to girls enrolling in DDR programs, or even being recognized as needing to be demobilized, which may occur especially for soldiers' 'wives' and children, need to be addressed in planning for and carrying out demobilization efforts. It is important to recognize that these girls are active agents who have developed a variety of coping mechanisms to help mitigate their negative experiences. Ideally, they should be involved in planning and carrying out any programs developed for them. Other central issues to consider include means to enable the girls' participation in DDR processes in ways that do not stigmatize them, especially when they may not want to admit they have been fighters with armed

forces and groups. This may affect girls more than boys due to the widespread belief in many countries that girl-soldiers have been sexually assaulted and may be carriers of STDs. It is also important to organize non-formal reintegration support for girls which they often prefer due to frequent denial of access to formal DDR programs. Donors and others who support DDR programs should provide flexible, long-term funding to support ex-girl-soldier reintegration. The following are some specific recommendations covering a wide-range of support areas.

Social Reintegration Support

Access to skills training and income generation projects is important for girls associated with armed forces and groups but social marginalization and isolation are just as serious concerns. Verhey's study in the DRC found out that 'returning' girls may have been accepted physically in terms of receiving shelter from their family, extended family or friends, but they were marginalised and isolated in terms of the family's social interactions, provision of food and other needs, and always suspected and criticized by their family and neighbours. Girl ex-combatants therefore need options such as girls' clubs where they can get advice and programme interventions to help reduce the stigmatization and prejudgments they face in the community. In addition, 'sensitization' of the community in combating social stigmatization and marginalization of girls needs to be undertaken more specifically and rigorously. Programmes need to more specifically emphasize mediation, conflict resolution, community dialogue, negotiation and problem-solving. This can be done through various ways such as using mass media notably radio and television; mobilizing religious leaders at the individually and through relevant religious hierarchies; denouncing stigmatization and promoting tolerance and acceptance of victims in sermons; doing door-to-door work (often employed by NGOs) especially in sexual violence programmes; and mobilizing education officials and teachers to intervene in cases where other children might tease the ex-girl-soldiers for having been associated with an armed group or having had a child, among others.

Health support

When they make it into DDR programs, clothes and sanitary supplies for girls are often nonexistent, and the security conditions in camps may put girls at heightened risk of sexual abuse, as occurred in Sierra Leone and Angola (Mazurana et al, 2002). Basic necessities for girls, including clothes and proper sanitation supplies, should be standard in all DDR programs. These programs should also have facilities where women and girls can sleep, cook, and bathe in safety and privacy. Provisions should also be made for mothers with children, as portions of returning women and girls will be mothers. More importantly, DDR programs should be demilitarized with both boys and girls spending as little time as possible within armed forces' barracks or confinement. DDR programs should also be carried out by child-rights organizations and not the armed forces.

A core health need for girls is screening and treatment for STDs and other reproductive health complications following their often violent sexual experiences and, in many cases, difficult pregnancies carried in the harsh environment of armed group encampments. Further, in many cases, the young children the girls give birth to as a result of relations with armed groups have often had no access to infant or early childhood health services. Discretion and confidentiality in accessing such reproductive health services is all the more crucial for girls.

Support for Education

Whether boy or girl, all need education but there remains a gap in the reintegration opportunities in most countries. The government and donors in every affected country should initiate sound efforts to support school-based rehabilitation as part of ensuring a community-based approach to improving access to education for all war-affected children. Such efforts would still encounter challenges in reaching the girls associated with armed groups because of gender disparities in education access generally; their adolescent age; years of conflict-affected environments. These may render enrolment in primary school grades difficult. Usually, the girls are under more pressure to focus on livelihood activities than boys, in part due to

their perceived reduced prospects of getting married. This is especially the case for girls with young children. Therefore, in post-conflict countries, special strategies and investments are needed to more creatively address the education needs of primary and secondary school generations of girls. More strategic education activities for adolescent age groups, for example, would contribute greatly to a community-based reintegration approach. Some of the most critical issues to address concerning education for adolescents are creative financing mechanisms, condensed or accelerated curriculum and modalities to help address the different shifts or hours girls may need to accommodate their livelihood tasks among others.

Socio-economic Support

Girls, especially those with babies, face higher social expectations and pressure than boys to become economically self-sufficient, because "they have lost their value" and "are no longer marriageable". As such, there is a strong community-level social expectation that girls need to engage in behaviour and activities that demonstrate, over time, that they can be "of value" and can integrate into civilian life. However, except for the traditional socio-professional occupations such as tailoring/dress-making, pottery, petty trading, etc, few other options are considered appropriate for girls and any given community can only absorb, in terms of market, a limited number of for example, trained tailors, in just a few months. This has especially been the case in the DRC.

For these reasons, more creative and pro-active livelihood options need to be developed for these girls. In addition, identifying and supporting livelihood options for girls also need to take into account and address the social marginalization they experience. Instead of communities waiting for "outsiders" such as international NGOs to provide for children associated with armed groups, they should look at appropriate roles and responsibilities across family members, extended family and neighbours, churches, local NGOs and civic authorities.

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the experiences of girls associated with fighting forces and groups, looking at the circumstances that determine their entry, roles, needs, protection concerns, overall effects of armed conflicts on their well-being, and exit. The paper notes that girls enter fighting forces and groups by a variety of avenues, including active recruitment, volunteering, abduction or gang pressing and sometimes, these entry methods overlap. Girls serve in a wide variety of roles, including combatants and are actors who make choices and exhibit significant agency. Armed conflict has significant impact on girls relative to boys. Girls suffer from both physical and psychosocial difficulties and are accessible to fewer opportunities for healing and reintegration. After demobilization, sexually-abused females are often rejected by their families and communities. Stigmatization can be more intense if they return infected with STDs or if they bring back a child from their time in the forests.

The study also observed that although the issue of child soldiers has gained significant attention in the past, girls continue to be marginalized in programs aimed at child soldiers at both community and national levels. The issue of gaining the release of girls associated with armed forces or groups and supporting their reintegration is highly complex as it is more entwined with socio-cultural conceptions and attitudes than procedures seeking demobilization of ex-child-soldiers. Therefore, to more effectively address the issue of reintegration, it is necessary to know more about the girls' duties, roles, and experiences with armed forces and groups, including gender-specific violations, experiences, health consequences, and long-term effects, so as to develop international policies and programs that adequately recognize and address the needs and priorities of girls. Lastly, psychologists and other specialists working with war-affected children must increase their gender sensitivity so that their initiatives to promote psychosocial well-being of children, their families, and communities will be specific to the needs of both girls and boys.

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Emerging Peace and Security Threats in Eastern Africa

Joseph Kioi Mbugua

Introduction

The Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa have faced serious security threats occasioned by civil wars, cross-border conflicts, social strife and arms trafficking. State building in South Sudan has faced the predictable challenges of broad inter-ethnic accommodation and separation of the liberation army from politics. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is yet to entrench democratic tradition in governance and regime transition. The Forces Armees de la Republique Democratique du Congo (FARDC), is yet to be perceived as a-political and a defender of the people (Stearns and Verweijen, 2013). Transnational terrorism associated with the protracted conflict in Somalia is currently a major challenge in the region.

Burundi is sliding back to conflict after more than ten years of democratic consolidation since the end of the long war that culminated in the Arusha Agreement of 2000. The current conflict however is not absolutely about the old Tutsi-Hutu dichotomy but about good and accountable governance to which a continuation of the current regime is antithetical. Perceived disregard of the Arusha Agreement that set out clear presidential term limits, also provides legitimacy to the current 'rebellion' by friends of democracy in that country (Wilen, 2015).

Electoral conflict and violence are still a major concern in the region, though a number of efforts have been made to improve democratic processes. Holding free and fair elections is still a challenge. Peaceful electoral outcomes in Seychelles (2011) and Kenya (2012) provide a ray of hope while electoral violence in DRC (2015) and Burundi (2015) is yet to be managed.

There are a number of factors that still hinder regional peace and security such as inadequate and poor regional infrastructure; difficulties in managing shared water resources; weak institutions and human capacity; insecurity and political instability (African Development Bank, 2011). In terms of macro-economic indicators, Eastern Africa recorded modest economic growth averaging (6.6%); East African Community (6.1%); and (6.9%) for the Horn of Africa by 2009. Inflation remained at single digit, export growth rates were positive and external debt was sustainable (ADB, 2011).

This study surveys and highlights the current trend of conflicts in the Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa. The study looks at the nature of the threats, their inter-linkages, complexity, risks, implications for peace and security, and explores measures being put in place by governments, international and regional organizations to address the threats. The study has used a number of conflict vulnerability measurement tools to bring out current conflict trends in the region.

Statement of the Problem

The Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa continue to suffer multiple conflicts due to lack of predictive capacity and implementation of conflict-prevention and mitigation measures. The region faces cycles of violence, governance crises and instability. The relationship between different forms of violent conflict and environmental degradation, climate change, governance and political fractionalization is not well acknowledged and factored in peacebuilding systems. Development opportunities are lost when violence destroys lives, property and directs capital towards unproductive channels (USAID, 2012).

Most countries suffer endemic poverty and underdevelopment due to poor leadership or governance. Most African countries are at the tail end of global UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) as well as Global Peace Index (GPI).[1] Countries in conflict do not attract global investment capital and therefore continue to lag behind in development.

According to a World Bank report (2011), 366, 000 people were killed in wars and battles worldwide between 2000 and 2008 and 42 million people were displaced by 2009. Trans-national terrorism bred by the conflict in Somalia spread to Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda. Identity-based conflicts continue to plague the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Ethiopia and South Sudan. For development to take place and improve the standards of living of the people, the real risks of conflict emergence, escalation and recurrence need to be well understood for effective prevention, management and mitigation.

Justification of the Study

Strategic analysis of political, economic, social and security factors at work within a given country or region can inform risk management preparedness with a focus on core grievances and adaptive capacity, forecasting how these dynamics might inform conflict trends in the future, and anticipating proximate causes, triggers and catalysts, (USAID, 2012).

The quality of responses and better allocation of resources for conflict management can also be achieved. This analysis can also form a basis for informed and inclusive discussions on policy implications by decision makers. This study will provide the necessary analysis to inform governments and regional organizations to prepare adequately for conflict prevention and early response and mitigation.

Due to lack of reliable information, countries mostly react rather than prepare in advance for a proactive management of conflicts. Assessing conflict trends and threats increases effectiveness of response strategies through planning and budgetary allocations by the relevant organizations. There are cases where analysis of trends is provided but it is not properly applied in conflict prediction and neither does it inform policy. Better policy making can benefit from enhanced risk assessment.

Focus and Scope

The study surveyed the emerging peace and security threats in Eastern Africa.

Objectives

- To survey the nature and dynamics of current conflict threats

- To identify challenges of addressing emerging conflicts threats

- To assess appropriate strategies and measures for responding to the conflicts

Research Questions

- What is the nature and dynamics of the emerging conflict threats in Eastern Africa?

- What are the challenges of addressing these conflicts?

- What are the appropriate strategies and measures for addressing these conflicts?

Methodology

The study began with a desk-top review of various conflict prediction models and conflict trends in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa. The study has used both quantitative and qualitative data from secondary sources to analyze conflict dynamics and postulate future trends of conflict in the region. To achieve this, the study used indicators of structural and dynamic conditions (proximate, intervening factors, accelerators/decelerators, signals and triggers).

Literature Review

This section surveys the literature on conflict trends in Africa to identify approaches that have been used to predict conflicts. The section identifies useful conflict trend analysis and also evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of some of the techniques employed.

Substantial literature on conflict has dealt with its causes, motives, and incentives, and not its dynamic, complex and variable nature. There is hardly a general agreement on the causes of conflict and how to predict trends in armed conflict. However, many scholars identify state weakness as the main source of contemporary conflicts, especially those related to underdevelopment, social fragmentation, state legitimacy and efficiency in public service delivery (Gome, 2002). Gome examines the relationship between conflict and ecology in areas such as access to and control of valuable natural resources including minerals, timber, pasture and land. He notes that these are significant sources of conflict (in terms of greed and grievance) in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The current regional conflict threats are multiple and multi-dimensional. The theories offer general explanatory reasons for the emergence of conflict but the actual onset of conflicts depends on the socio-economic, political and historical contexts (Sandole, 1999). A number of theories attempt to explain the emergence of given conflicts citing the relative contribution of economic factors such as poor economic conditions or low economic growth (Hauge and Ellingsen, 1998); or reliance on vulnerable primary commodity exports and scarce resources (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). Other authors examine the causes of armed conflict as: relative deprivation (Gurr, 1970); ethnic conflicts based on group entitlement theory (Horowitz, 1985; Rapoport, 1989); environmental degradation and conflict (Homer Dixon, 1994); democratic peace theory (Hegre et al, 2001); and transition towards democracy (Jaggers and Gurr, 1995).

Marshal (2005) examines African trends in armed conflict focusing on: forcibly displaced populations, political instability, bad governance, exclusionary politics and discrimination, inter-communal conflicts, and sub-regional conflicts. Others are marginalization, external involvement, political factionalism, elite ethnicity, dependency, polarization, leadership transition, neighborhood effects and peace-building incapacity. He describes how changes in any or a combination of the above factors influences the onset or escalation of conflict.

Although many researchers have identified various causes of conflict, Kenneth Waltz in *Man, the State and War* (1959), avers that conflicts are not caused by any one single factor. Sandole (1999) argues that conflict can be caused by given factor but its dynamics and progression will be informed by other factors. Explanations of possible emergence of conflicts will need to analyse structural and proximate causes (Dessler and Parson, 2010). This means examining the background, structure, system and political mobilization strategy alongside the conflict objectives such as justice, style of mobilization and grievances. The timing and catalysts (factors that increase intensity and duration of conflict) also come into play.
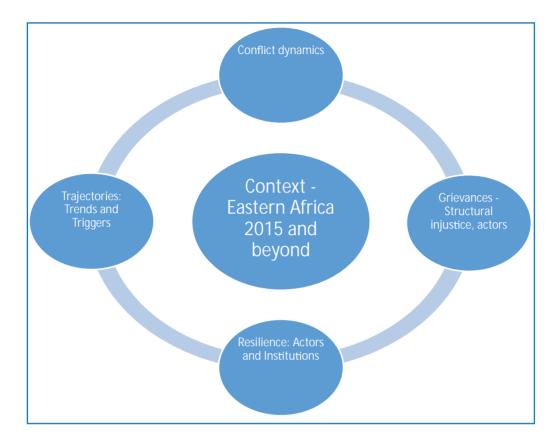
Conceptual Framework

Conflict Analysis Framework (CAF)

This study is based on USAID's Conflict Analysis Framework (CAF) which is a tool for collecting and organizing data, identifying connections and distilling patterns.[2] It is used to analyze current conflicts and identify future trajectories and triggers. A number of factors are taken into consideration, such as grievance, resilience and key mobilizers. This tool can also be used to generate response options for conflict management. The concept is based on the idea that performance of institutions (attitudes, structures and processes) can lend legitimacy to governments and therefore mitigate against the emergence of conflicts.

If institutions perform poorly, they create disenchantment with the government and therefore create conditions necessary for conflict. This approach also recognizes that no single factor is solely responsible for the emergence of conflict and that it is the interactions of different factors in a given context (historical, economic, geographic, and socio-political) that create the necessary conditions for the emergence of conflict. When grievances occur, the emergence of conflict will depend on how the system is able to manage the ensuing threats (resilience).

Below is an analytical tool for exploring conflict trends in the region, tracing sources of injustice and the nature of mobilization[3]. This tool can assist in identifying effective conflict prevention and management strategies.

Figure 2: Conflict Trends Diagnostic Tool

Source: Adapted from USAID's Conflict Assessment Framework Tool

Conflict Dynamics

Conflict dynamics determine why, how and when conflicts occur. They also indicate the relationships and interactions of different actors and institutions. This is based on the theories explaining causes of conflict above. The conceptual framework indicates that the actions of actors and institutions will determine conflict trends and triggers (USAID, 2012).

Context

Context refers to environment, economic changes, demographic shift, urbanization, migration, growth rates, poverty, unemployment, income distribution, access to

natural resources, governance, government capacity to respond to grievances, inter-group trust or hostility, social media technology, globalization, climate change and international norms of responding to conflict).

Triggers

Triggers are positive or negative originators of conflict (natural disasters, assassination of political figures, new constitution, elections, controversial court decisions, economic changes such as increase in food or energy prices, etc.).

Mitigating Factors

These include peace building, civil society, public dissatisfaction with the cost of conflict, influence of reformists within governments and diplomatic influence from regional organizations and neighboring countries.

Grievances and Resilience

Grievances are claims that emanate from factors such as exclusionary politics and discrimination, quality of governance, political instability, population displacement and refugees, inter-communal conflict, sub-regional conflict and external involvement. Resilience refers to the ability of the system to bounce back after conflict.

Variables

- History of conflict
- Low level of development
- State discrimination/injustice
- Conflict-stressed neighborhood[4]

Eastern Africa's Security Vulnerabilities

There are a number of structural deficiencies that have made the region vulnerable to conflicts. These include weak democratic consolidation, porous borders that make it easy for international terrorists to set up base, poor administration of justice, and inadequate and/or ineffective coordination of security agents and information.

Institutional Inconsistency

Societies get dissatisfied with long autocratic governance and low economic performance, unemployment and inflation. Where there is widespread corruption among economic elites, popular protests can emerge, (CCAPS, 2013).

Regimes with a mix of democratic and autocratic features are more unstable than regimes that are consistently autocratic or democratic (CCAPS, 2012). Where an autocratic figure has been in power for a long time, chances of conflict during transition are high. Where there is a high rate of youth unemployment and youth bulge, urban youth can easily mobilize especially with external support and domestic vulnerabilities.

Growth of political associations in autocratic countries can also build grassroots awareness on the need for change through social media. Management of elections is a significant indicator of the likelihood of conflict eruption. Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi and South Sudan have had violence related to elections. Violence based on elections and regime transition is currently being experienced in Burundi and threatens to reverse the gains made since the Arusha Agreement of 2000 (Nina, 2015).

State Repression

A number of governments in the region have been accused of authoritarianism and limiting freedom of the press, civil society and opposition parties (see the tables below). There is also high impunity due to disregard of the rule of law.

Neighborhood Effects

Where a state borders a country that is already experiencing political instability, the likelihood of spill-over effects is high and more so when there are ethnic groups that transverse borders (Collier and Sambanis, 2005; Goldstone et al, 2005). Kenya has suffered terrorist attacks partly due to the cross-border effects of the protracted Somalia conflict.

Military Factionalism

Some civilian leaders have been deposed by their militaries in the recent past such as Guinea, Mali and Madagascar, (CCAPS, 2013). Military intervention in politics is sometimes associated with ethnic divisions and competition for power. Tutsi soldiers in eastern DRC who had been integrated into the DRC army mutinied in 2012 and formed rebel group, M-23, posing serious security challenges. Some countries have militaries that emerged from rebel groups (South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi and DRC). Moreover, there are countries where the military plays a significant role in providing domestic security e.g. Uganda, Burundi and South Sudan.

Electoral Violence

There have been contested national elections in Kenya, Tanzania (Zanzibar), Uganda, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Such an atmosphere affects government legitimacy and ability to maintain peace and security. Elections in Africa especially the-winner-takes-all model provides avenues for exploiting socio-economic grievances and ethnic divisions. Where the judiciary has not been reformed, it lacks legitimacy and hence cannot be taken as a neutral arbiter in electoral disputes.

Economic Grievances

Where countries have closed economies that are not well linked to international trade, there is likelihood of conflict. High infant mortality rates are an indication

that the standard of socio-economic well-being is low. Countries that are too dependent on foreign funding or on export of few and vulnerable primary commodity exports are also vulnerable to conflict.

International Terrorism

The rise of Al Qaeda and Al Shabaab in the Horn of Africa has elevated the hitherto internal clan-based conflict in Somalia into an international conflict. Neighboring countries have contributed troops to the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in contravention of the 'old foreign relations paradigm of non-interference in the internal affairs of independent and sovereign states', and have moved toward 'non indifference' in light of the changing global perspectives on sovereignty enshrined in the 'Responsibility to Protect' principle, (AU, 2002). The collapse of the state in Somalia, poverty, unemployment, rise of radical ideologies in defiance of Western-based globalization pitting mostly the Western world against some elements in the Muslim-dominated countries have raised the spectre of terrorism-based conflicts in Eastern Africa.

Somalia has confounded both friend and foe alike with resilience of over 25 years' of state fragility. Al Shabaab, the Islamic youth militant wing of the former Islamic Courts Union (ICU) that reigned in South-Central Somalia briefly after the departure of Ethiopian forces in 2007, continues to lead the mosaic of resistance to state stabilization. Though its leadership has been eliminated by combined international anti-terrorism networks, small cells are still able to conduct soft but high profile attacks on civilian population as demonstrated in attacks in Kampala, Uganda in 2010 and on Westgate Mall, Nairobi (2013) and Garissa University (2015) in Kenya. The strategic domestic security gains that were expected with Kenya's entry into the murky waters of Somalia politics may need to be continually appraised against the high costs (loss of lives, property, socio-political, economic and reputational loss) so far inflicted by the terrorists. It is interesting to note that Al Shabaab has not managed to stage any successful raid in Ethiopia. This may be due to Ethiopia's long history of people-centred security approaches and swift response against perceived enemies.

The Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) entered Somalia in 2011 to protect its security and economic interests. The force was later absorbed into AMISOM where it has continued to facilitate observance of law and order in Jubaland. There may be a case for redefining AMISOM sector operations, since Sector 2, where Ugandan forces operate, is the region through which Al Shabaab has been making incursions into Kenya's north eastern region.

Globalization

Globalization has increased interconnectedness between societies and states thereby contracting time and space and decreasing the capacity of any state to determine global security alone. The ease of interaction of people through new technologies and social platforms has transformed the nature of war leading to fewer inter-state wars and more of non-state actor, insurgent, and low- intensity intra-state wars (Kaldor, 2012). Networks of global insurgents have become central actors in international conflicts (Slaughter, 2012). The idea of human security has also emerged to reflect these changes where security is people-centred, non-military and takes consideration of poverty and deprivation (UNDP, 1994; Commission on Human Security, 2003).

Human and Drug Trafficking

The trafficking of drugs (mostly heroin and cocaine) in the region undermines state security through corruption and creates opportunities for funding terrorism. It also exacerbates inequalities and increases ostentatious or conspicuous consumption that may raise disaffection in society (UNODC, 2010). The drugs trade also facilitates illicit arms trade and a combination of the two undermines the operation and sustainability of fragile states. High levels of youth unemployment/youth bulge, weak policing and socio-economic disaffection that are exploited by armed groups and ethnic-based political mobilization are also significant challenges. In 2014, Kenya's president, Uhuru Kenyatta, ordered the bombing of a ship suspected of transporting drugs (Daily Nation, 20 August 2014).

Environmental Insecurity

Climate risks will be a major source of vulnerability because of dependence on rain-fed agriculture, weak infrastructure and limited safety nets. Global warming has been associated with resource scarcity, low rainfall, more floods, rise in sea level and intensification of natural disasters (IPCC, 2007). Eastern Africa has experienced increased droughts which have threaten food security and fuelled conflicts among pastoralist communities. Poor countries bear more impact of such disasters due to weak adaptive and resilient capacity.

Environmental scarcity is perceived as a cause of insecurity (Floyd, 2008). Though there have not been any interstate conflict fought purely over water, some scholars have pointed at the potential of water becoming a major source of conflict (Klare, 2006). Resource scarcity can undermine the ability of the state to deliver its services especially where there is high dependence on export- based primary raw materials. This can erode state legitimacy and raise the opportunities for insurgency (Herman and Treverton, 2009). Some researchers have linked these negative occurrences including food insecurity to the "Arab Spring" (Johnstone and Jeffrey, 2011).

Countries such as Rwanda, Ethiopia and Kenya are developing climate resilient strategies to raise productivity and cut green-house emissions (APP, 2015). A number of countries in the region have discovered vast amounts of oil and gas, such as South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Somalia and Rwanda. Given the experience in Sudan, Nigeria and Angola, this windfall may not necessarily translate to development. Whether these resources will bring peace to the region will depend on their governance especially consideration of equity in the sharing of resource-based wealth.

Pandemics

The WHO definition of an epidemic is a sudden outbreak that becomes very widespread and affects a whole region, continent, or the world due to a susceptible population. In the recent past, the world has witnessed the spread of highly

infectious diseases such as Avian Flu, Swine Flu, HIV/AIDS and Ebola. It is estimated that globally, about 34 million people are living with AIDS and out of these, 1.8 million succumb to HIV-related illnesses annually with Eastern Africa being heavily affected (UNAIDS, 2010). Ebola caused havoc in a number of West African counties including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Guinea in 2014/15. Ebola also interrupted international flights and migration with major effects on national economies. These diseases have had far-reaching effects on the political and socio-economic status of communities (de Waal, 2006). Pandemics have increasingly been treated as security threats with the military being involved in enforcing quarantines during the Ebola attack in Liberia. They have also increased international cooperation with remarkable medical assistance flowing from Cuba to West Africa in 2015.

Cyber Attacks

Global attacks on security, economic and information networks cost countries and businesses millions of money. Though countries in Eastern Africa have put a lot of investment on information technology and infrastructure and have increasingly adapted mobile money and data transfer, cyber security remains a major challenge. Countries in the region need to develop capacity to prevent, detect, correct and minimize risks of cyber-attacks. This calls for development of cyber security policies, laws and strategies for managing and auditing cyber security.

External Involvement

The conflicts in Eastern DRC trace their origin to the Rwandan genocide of 1994 where the defeated armed forces migrated to the DRC with their weapons. They displaced local populations while looting their properties. With increasing globalization and liberalization in Africa, national sovereignty has been relegated to the back burner. With the introduction of the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect and its genuine desire to bring an end to genocide and gross violations of human rights, this noble opportunity can also offer legitimacy to purely foreign-based interests. The African Union is yet to come to terms with the NATO invasion of

Libya in 2011 and French intervention in Cote d' Ivoire on April 2011 and Mali in January, 2013.

Africa is also poised to be a global competition ground for primary raw materials such as oil and gas pitting the West against China. How this competition will be played out will also determine security and peace in the region.

Country Assessments

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is currently experiencing political tension due to the perceived plans by President Joseph Kabila to change the presidential term limit so that he can serve another term (3rd) term. He has served for two 5-year terms as per the constitution. Currently, eastern DRC is relatively stable since the defeat of M-23 but there are still challenges posed by the continued presence and resistance of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and other armed groups. The national elections are scheduled for 2016 and the current constitution does not provide space for President Joseph Kabila to run for office for an additional term. Parliamentary attempts to alter the constitution were thwarted by popular riots in Kinshasa and Goma. Kabila's attempts to constitutionally alter the presidential term limit therefore pose a significant hurdle to DRC's transition towards democratic consolidation.

South Sudan

Though many political analysts thought there would be more conflicts associated with the secession of South Sudan from Sudan, internal conflicts within South Sudan have taken more prominence with the split of SPLM/A (de Waal, 2012). Like many African countries before it, the country is faced with a herculean task of establishing legitimate internal political and economic institutions that will unite key political elites and communities. After independence, many African countries opted for strong-man one-party regimes but the political atmosphere after the cold

war does not favour that direction any more. Given the unenviable mixture of political and military elites and the long history of armed struggle in the country, a strong inclination towards the use of force among the competing groups hinders negotiated solutions to problems of state and nation building. The apparently irreconcilable differences between the factions led by sitting president, Salva Kiir, and rebel leader, Riek Machar, have lately attracted the intervention of the AU and UN to prevail on both parties to sign agreements to stop the hostilities.

The challenges of state and nation building are not new and the country can benefit from well-established strategies and measures that have been applied in countries such as South Africa (constitutional guarantees of minority rights), Kenya (devolved government to address marginalization), Ethiopia (recognition and accommodation of ethnic nations through regionalization) and Mozambique (accommodation of major armed opposition into mainstream politics).

Burundi

Having offered a good model of post-conflict stability since the Arusha agreement, Burundi is presently experiencing political instability associated with presidential term limits. President Pierre Nkurunziza run for a third term on a technical argument that he was first elected to the presidency by parliament not through universal suffrage (Nina, 2015). The fallout of President Pierre Nkurunziza "re-election in his 3rd term is still unfolding. Burundi scores poorly on many state fragility indicators such as human rights and corruption (see tables below). A peaceful resolution of the current conflict will determine whether the country builds on the gains of the Arusha agreement or takes a few steps backward.

Kenya

Kenya experiences a number of systemic conflicts associated with climate change, natural resources, governance, and cross-border spill-overs of conflicts from Somalia. The competition for power during elections has repeatedly informed the emergence of ethnic-based organized armed groups. Hitherto, they were used to

influence electoral demography by dis-enfranchising communities perceived to be against the ruling regime, (Kagwanja, 1997; Oucho, 2002).

The 2007/8 post-election violence was ethnic-based and was caused by perceived electoral fraud (CIPEV, 2008). Kenya is still vulnerable to electoral conflicts. Though the judiciary has been reformed, the legitimacy of the election management system has not been fully achieved. Due to proximity to Somalia and having sent Kenya's military to Somalia in 2011, Kenya has been entangled in global fundamentalism-based terrorism. Al Qaeda and Al Shabaab have staged a number of attacks in the country with increasing fatalities (e.g. Westgate in 2014 with 67 casualties; Garissa University in 2015 with 148 casualties). Domestic insurgent groups such as Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) and their possible strategic collaboration with Al Shabaab also pose a more significant threat (Assamoah, 2015).

The persistence of pastoralist conflicts in northern Kenya require a comprehensive regional zoning approach. The Karamoja conflict complex where disarmament is supposed to be comprehensively implemented in North eastern Uganda, North western Kenya, South-eastern South Sudan and the southern nationalities of Ethiopia is still work in progress. Disarmament in Kenya remains ad hoc, political and not well informed by current best practices on the subject (Mbugua, 2015).

Uganda

Uganda has registered impressive economic development and political stability since President Yoweri Museveni took power in 1986. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel group does not currently operate in Uganda and is no longer a significant threat to peace in that country. Other armed groups in the western parts of Uganda are more of a nuisance to the peoples of eastern DRC than those of Uganda.

However, a post-Museveni Uganda is being contemplated with mixed expectations. Having ruled for close to 30 years, Museveni is so far one of the longest serving African Presidents. Like Gaddafi, Mobutu, Biya and Mugabe, long service is

not associated with state stability. How Uganda manages to handle presidential transition will determine the future of peace and stability in the country.

Rwanda

Like Uganda, Rwanda has made remarkable economic recovery after the 1994 genocide. President Kagame has maintained political stability in spite of cross-border problems in eastern DRC. Rwanda contributes significantly to African peace keeping missions and it is part of the Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF). Rwanda is a member of EAC and ICGLR. The country has built an empowered workforce with adoption of modern information technology.

Somalia

Somalia has made significant political progress since the formation of a transitional government and the current elected government. The country is building a capable national army and police force. Though the government has not managed to pacify all the regions, it has made considerable progress in taking public services to South Central Somalia. The AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is making inroads into Al Shabaab held areas but with significant resistance.

If the country, together with neighboring countries, manages to pacify Al Shabaab, it will have set the country on a path of peace. Somalia requires long-term support from the international community to maintain momentum towards peace.

Measurement of Conflict Trends

The measurements for conflict trends make political risk assessment and early warning of conflict accessible to parties with responsibility and capacity to respond especially governments, international organizations, civil society, academia and the public at large. They provide data on social conflict events such as demonstrations, riots and armed attacks in Africa and also a number of explanatory variables such as unemployment and inflation that inform conflict trends. The Fund for Peace produces an annual ranking of fragile states. Most countries in Eastern Africa are rated as Very High Alert (VHA) High Alert (HA) and Alert (A). In other words, the higher the index, the higher the rate of conflict vulnerability. In the table below, 112.6 is very high alert while 90.5 is the lowest alert.

Table 1: Failed States Index (FSI), 2014

Country	Rate	Category
South Sudan	112.9	VHA
Somalia	112.6	VHA
Central Africa Republic	110.6	VHA
Congo (DR)	110.2	VHA
Sudan	110.1	VHA
Chad	108.7	HA
Zimbabwe	102.8	HA
Guinea	102.7	HA
Cote D'Ivoire	101.7	HA
Guinea Bissau	100.6	HA
Nigeria	99.7	A
Kenya	99.0	A
Ethiopia	97.9	A
Niger	97.9	A
Burundi	97.1	A
Uganda	96.0	A
Eritrea	95.5	A
Liberia	94.3	A
Cameroon	93.1	A
Mauritania	93.0	A
Egypt	91.0	A
Rwanda	90.5	A

Source: Failed States Index (FSI), 2014

There are a number of factors that make states fragile. Key among these are competition over resources; predatory or fractured leadership; corruption and unresolved grievances. These conditions can be prevented or their effects mitigated if they are identified by the concerned parties (Fund for Peace, 2014).

There are a number of democracy indicators that predispose a country towards either conflict or peace. Freedom House rates countries according to the level of freedom accorded to the press. This indicator can be combined with others to show a close correlation between lack of press freedom and conflict.

Table 2: Freedom of the Press Indicators in Africa, 2015

County	Democratic Status
Algeria	Partly Free (PF)
Angola	Not Free (NF)
Benin	Free (F)
Botswana	F
Burkina Faso	PF
Burundi	NF
Cameroon	NF
Congo (Kinshasa)	NF
Congo (Brazzaville)	NF
Cote D'Ivoire	PF
Djibouti	NF
Egypt	NF
Equatorial Guinea	NF
Eritrea	NF
Ethiopia	NF
Kenya	PF
Madagascar	PF
Mozambique	PF
Rwanda	NF
South Sudan	NF
Tanzania	PF
Uganda	NF

Source : Feedom of the Press Indicators in Africa, 2015

Other organizations such as ACLED (Armed Conflict Location and Events Data) rate countries according to the intensity of conflict or violence. Though Somalia and South Sudan were not rated, the most fragile states such as DRC are also the ones with high levels of violence.

Table 3: Cases of Political Violence

Country	Events from 1997-2012	Fatalities 1997-2012	Number of Distinct Conflict Groups	Main Type	Similar Cases
Nigeria	Low	High	Low	Multiple type of actors, activities and goals	Sudan, Ethiopia and Ivory Coast
Zimbabwe	High	Low	Low	Government repression and suppression	Swaziland, Namibia, Guinea Bissau
Kenya	High	High	Low	Inter-communal and political militia violence	Uganda, South Sudan
DR Congo	High	High	High	Post-civil war but multiple and persistent threats	South Sudan and Somalia

Source: CCVRI-ACLED, 2013

The Global Peace Index (GPI) rates countries according to peace-producing factors. There is a close connection between level of fragility and lack of peace. In the following table, H stands for High; M for Medium; L for Low and VL for Very Low. The rating refers to the intensity of conflicts within a specific period.

Table 4: Most Peaceful Countries in Africa

Country	Rating
Botswana	High (H)
Togo	H
Mozambique	H
Liberia	Medium (M)
Swaziland	M
Equatorial Guinea	M
The Gambia	M
Benin	M
Angola	M

Congo (Brazzaville)	M
Uganda	M
Cameroon	M
Algeria	M
Guinea	M
Tanzania	H
Burundi	M
Kenya	M
Rwanda	Low (L)
Ethiopia	L
South Sudan	Very Low (VL)
Congo (Kinshasa)	VL

Source: Global Peace Index (2014).

Peace and Conflict Instability Ledger (PCIL)

The Peace and Conflict Instability Ledger ranks 163 countries based on estimated risks of experiencing political instability. It is a forecasting model that takes into consideration the most likely variables to determine political instability in any given country. Regime consistency refers to whether a country is consistently democratic or autocratic; economic openness refers to the level of a country's economic integration with the global economy; infant mortality rate provides a glimpse of socio-economic status; militarization refers to propensity for the military or non-state actors to organize armed groups; and neighborhood war refers to the existence of a violent conflict in bordering states.

Countries rated 'Very High' in one or more categories such as DRC, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia and Somalia experience high levels of conflict or have the potential to slide into violence.

Table 5: Peace and Conflict Instability Index Ledger (PCIL)

Country	Risk Score	Regime Consistency	Infant Mortality	Economic openness	Militarization	Neighbourhood war	Risk category
Kenya	11.5	High (H)	H	H	L	Very High (VH)	L
Uganda	10.7	H	VH	H	L	VH	H
Tanzania	9.5	H	H	H	L	VH	
Rwanda	4.6	H	H	VH			
DRC	29.8	VH	VH	VH	H	VH	VH
Burundi	24.5	H	VH	VH	H	VH	VH
Ethiopia	21.2	VH	H	VH	L	VH	VH
Somalia	17.6	H	VH	VH	L	VH	VH

Source: Adapted from CIDCM, 2005 -2012.

A country's inability to provide high standards of living to its citizen is an indicator of conflict vulnerability. Countries with low HDI are the most fragile countries that are already experiencing violence or have the potential to erupt into violent situation.

Table 6: UNDP Human Development Index, 2014.

Country	Rank	HDI
South Sudan	-	-
Somali	-	-
Democratic Republic of Congo	186	0.338
Burundi	180	0.389
Ethiopia	173	0.435
Uganda	164	0.484
Tanzania	159	0.488
Rwanda	151	0.506
Kenya	147	0.535

Source: UNDP, 2014.

Many countries with low HDI are countries coming from a conflict situation or still going through conflict. Thousands of people have recently been displaced in South Sudan and Burundi due to the current internal political instability. The situation in South Sudan and Somalia is still not ripe for an effective HDI assessment.

Table 7: Human Rights Report, 2015

Country	Human Rights Abuses
DRC	-Numerous armed groups still active in the East. Government crack-down on freedom of association, assembly and media -Impunity for past atrocities -Government security agencies accused of extra judicial killings, rape and disappearances
Burundi	-Restriction on freedom of expression, association and assembly for opposition parties, civil society and journalists
Ethiopia	-Restricted freedom of expression, association and assembly -30 journalists and opposition leaders behind bars -Forced relocation of rural dwellers
Rwanda	-Freedom of expression and assembly severely restricted -Prominent opposition leaders have been killed or jailed -Unlawful detention and disappearances
Kenya	-Al Shabaab attacks on civilians and police -Arbitrary beating and arresting of Somalis in Dadaab refugee camp
Uganda	-Restricted freedom of expression, assembly and association against journalists, civil society and the opposition -Impunity of the security sector for human rights abuses
South Sudan	-Horrific attack on civilians since 2013 -Public facilities and infrastructure destroyed -More than 1.5 million people displaced -Famine looms and conflict continues

Source Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2015.

Rwanda's economic performance and low corruption rate are impressive but the image of the country is tarnished by authoritarianism (HRW, 2014). There is also a notable correlation between countries that are prone to corruption, abuse of human rights and state fragility. Burundi, South Sudan, Rwanda, DRC and Ethiopia register high levels of corruption and human rights abuses.

Table 8: East Africa Bribery Index

Rank	Country	Score % (2014)	Score % (2013)
1	Burundi	19.4	18.6
2	Tanzania	19.0	12.9

3	Uganda	17.9	26.9
4	Kenya	12.3	7.9
5	Rwanda	2.9	4.4

Source: Transparency International, 2014.

These corruption trends are closely connected to other fragility indicators. Tanzania is becoming more corrupt, perhaps, an indicator of economic change towards capitalism since the collapse of *Ujamaa* (socialism) in 1985, (Ayittey, 1990). The different states instability measurements systems can in combination produce a closer picture of current and future conflict risks. Countries that are not free according to Freedom House Indices such as South Sudan, Burundi, and DRC are also the most at risk with respect to the FSI, ACLED and PCIL indices and have the least HDI and GPI indices.

Table 9: Trajectories/Possible Scenarios by 2020.

Country	Best Case Scenario Likelihood of diminished conflict – Justice, security and employment, trade vulnerability	Status Quo No peace, no war, poverty, weak governments, ethnicity, religious differences, conflicts in the neighbourhood	Worst Case Scenario Likelihood of conflict and their patterns – prevalence of organized crime, mismatch between human security, regime security and national security, civil wars, coups
Somalia	The government of Somalia is still nascent but it is offering a foundation that has not existed in the country for a long time. Continued government outreach to all areas of Somalia with support of AMISOM and international community in the long run can turn the tide in favour of peace	The renegade forces such as Al Shabaab may continue to derail peace. The government may remain weak and without reach to other parts outside Mogadishu	The renegade forces such as Al Shabaab may gain more ground and prevent more consolidation of peace. The government of Somalia, the international community and AMISOM may lack a common vision thereby creating more space for vulnerability

South Sudan	The country may re-unite and continue the path of nation building. Oil flow may resume providing much needed funds for development	The low intensity war may continue claiming human lives and retarding development	The country may be further subdivided according to existing states. The oil rich regions such as Bentiu, Upper Nile and Jonglei may secede and form their own state. This will escalate the conflict and provide little space for development and peace
Burundi	No fallout from president third term The press is granted freedom and there is less human rights abuse	Continued political stalemate, state repression and organized armed group activities	The president is elected through unfair process. Continued intensification of internal human rights abuse and formation of armed groups. Sporadic fights between police and armed groups. A fractured army
DRC	The president opts out of the third term; Free and fair elections that produce clear winners; Democratic consolidation and development; Peaceful neighbourhood.	Continued political stalemate, state repression and organized armed group activities.	President runs for the third term; Human rights abuses as the Opposition is crashed; Low intensity conflict in Kinshasa, the East and other parts of the country.
Ethiopia	Democratic consolidation and development; More freedom of the press and protection of human rights.	Continued authoritarianism and lack of democratic freedoms.	State repression and low level of human rights protection; Re-emergence of strong organized armed groups.
Rwanda	Impressive development track record and opening up of more democratic space.	Continued authoritarianism and lack of freedom and democracy.	Continued authoritarianism and re-emergence of strong organized armed groups; Neighbourhood conflicts.

Uganda	Remarkable development track record and political stability; Opening up of more democratic space.	Continued lack of democratic space.	Political crisis amidst presidential succession; Neighbourhood conflicts.
Kenya	Continued implementation of the new constitution; More development, reduced corruption, national cohesion and integration; Legitimacy for public service especially the Judiciary and the Electoral Commission; Defeat of Al Shabaab and attainment of Somalia's stability.	Slowed down by slow implementation of the constitution, low economic growth, corruption, legitimacy of institutions, and lack of national cohesion; Al Shabaab violence and Somalia's instability.	Poor implementation of the constitution; Reduced development; increased corruption, social disintegration, lack of public confidence in the public service especially Judiciary and Electoral Commission; Continued Al Shabaab violence and instability in Somalia

Source: Author's Estimation of Possible Scenarios by 2020.

Towards a More Secure and Peaceful Region

There has been significant investment in peace building in Eastern Africa by the member states, the African Union (AU), United Nations (UN) and development partners. The establishment of the AU in 2002 provided a new impetus for renewed efforts to maintain peace and security on the continent (Powell, 2005). Currently, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is being implemented. Conducive political climate and integrated international development support are required to raise the standards of living in the region and forestall outbreak of conflict.

Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience

A number of mitigation and adaptation strategies against climate change are being implemented in Africa. Some of these strategies are conflict-sensitive and human rights-compliant. These include changes in agricultural practices such as introduction of new varieties of crops and fodder that are resilient to drought. Others are; livestock, crop insurance and innovations in natural resource management including land, soil, water and livestock management (Schilling et al, 2014; Omollo, 2010). Implementation of regional and global treaties such as UNFCC and building capacity for predicting climate change patterns are being enhanced through institutions such as IGAD and its Climate Prediction and Application Center (ICPAC).

Consolidation of Democratic Governance

State and nation building are continuous long-term strategies for conflict prevention and management. Government legitimacy will continue to depend on democratic elections, provision of public services and security. Countries in the region are at different stages of democratization and development and therefore there is need for continued strengthening of state presence in the periphery such as borderlands and areas far removed from the capital. Incorporation of local governance structures in community security is vital. Greater citizen participation, fair competition for leadership positions and expansive civil liberties are prerequisites for peace (Hewit et al, 2012).

The UN, AU, EU and bilateral donors need to put more efforts to prevent electoral-related violence. Development partners can support capacity building in electoral management (voter and civic education, election monitoring by local civil society organizations, and improving operational structures of election management bodies).

Transitional justice through prosecution and compensation of victims of past atrocities is necessary for effective reconciliation and sustainable peace. Kenya had a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) that handled a number of cases that occurred since independence. The commission did not however enjoy a lot of credibility due to leadership problems.

Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, DRC, Ethiopia and Somalia are yet to come to terms with their past. Impunity is the order of the day where hate speech is not criminalized. Kenya's transitional justice case also did not bring an end to impunity against politically motivated violence.

Creating accountable institutions including human rights and respecting the security sector is a continuous exercise. Security Sector Reforms (SSR) are necessary in the region to establish democratically-controlled armed forces. In some countries there are no clear procedures for promotion in the military and police. In eastern DRC, the military is accused of committing human rights abuses with impunity. Effective judicial and parliamentary oversight mechanisms are required to streamline operations of the armed forces. Efforts should be made to improve civil-military relations in the DRC, so that the army is seen by communities as a protector of the people rather than an aggressor.

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) of pacified armed groups in the region is necessary to prevent cycles of violence. In eastern DRC, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia, there are still armed groups in operation. They are involved in illicit natural resource trade, cattle raiding, terrorism, arms trafficking and highway banditry. There have been various efforts to implement

DDR in the region but the problem persists and it has become one of the escalators of conflict.

Sustainable development models based on clean energy and commitment to international environmental treaties is required for the region to mitigate the negative effects of climate change.

Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

The region has developed institutional capacity for conflict prevention through various integration mechanisms such as East African Community (EAC), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and regional peace-making institutions such as International Conference of the Great Lakes region (ICGLR), Regional Center for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation (RECSA) and Inter Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

The EAC became a common market in 2010 and has developed strategies for enhancing peace and security cooperation in the region. EAC has a policy and strategy for the control of proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and counter-terrorism (EAC, 2015). COMESA, a customs union, has enhanced economic cooperation in the sub-region and has also developed mechanisms for enhancing peace and security (COMESA, 2015).

IGAD plays a significant role in peace and security in the region. IGAD-led peace negotiation and mediation successfully ended the conflict in Sudan and started state rebuilding in Somalia. The organization also developed counter-terrorism and piracy-combating strategies that have been implemented in the region (Finlay et al, 2011). IGAD's Conflict Early Warning and Response Unit (CEWARN) has developed capacity in early warning but there are still gaps in national and regional early response (USAID, 2012). CEWARN has also created systems for cooperation with civil society and community-based organizations.

ICGLR has played a major role in resolving conflicts in the Great Lakes region especially by introducing the Regional Certification Mechanism (RCM) for mineral trade in eastern DRC to prevent illicit mineral-based conflicts.

Though most countries in the region have indicated willingness to implement the requirements of revised International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) to face the challenge of epidemics, the capacity for timely disease detection and response is low. Recently, Kenya sent a volunteer medical team to Liberia and Sierra Leone to respond to the Ebola threat, which has given the country the necessary experience to prepare for such outbreaks (Daily Nation, June 24, 2015).

Peace Support Operations

The AU deployed its first peace support operations, dubbed African Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB) in 2003. The success of the mission provided added value and credibility to the reformed AU. The mission was later absorbed by the UN as United Nations Mission in Burundi (ONUB) in 2004 (Powell, 2005). Under the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the region reached full operational capability for the East African Standby Force (EASF) in 2014. Each country has a Rapid Deployment Capability (RDC) brigade ready for incorporation into EASF operations.

Uganda, Burundi and Kenya continue to support peace building efforts in Somalia through AMISOM which has been hailed as a success and a role model for future peacekeeping in Africa (Chitiyo, 2012).

The success of UN Force Implementation Brigade (UNFIB) made up of troops from Tanzania, Malawi and South Africa in neutralizing M-23 in eastern DRC also points to new peacekeeping directions. Given the asymmetric operations of terrorists, AMISOM has adapted to new tactics to face Al Shabaab attacks on non-military targets and master its mutating patterns of aggression. PSOs continue to evolve to face the changing conflict threats and dynamics. However, these changes

need harmonization between the UN, AU, and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and national security arrangements.

There is still need for adoption and adaptation of balanced, sequential political reforms for integration of support from international organizations with regional as well as national security plans. Professionalization of the military especially in South Sudan, Somalia and Burundi is necessary for long-term democratic transition. There is also need for effective, human rights- compliant and sustainable strategies, appropriate policies and tools for responding to conflict at various levels.

Conclusion

This study has presented a review of conflict threats and trends in Eastern Africa using a number of indicators from global conflict assessment reports. The paper suggests that peace and security threats in Eastern Africa can be anticipated and the relevant response measures enacted through knowledge and reasonable expectations derived from past and current trends.

The study presents scenarios of conflict vulnerability in the region within a specific timeframe. Individual country cases have been analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively to indicate national trends. However, being an Issue Brief, the paper does not provide details of the nature of conflicts that might occur, the triggers or when and for how long conflict may take. In spite of this limitation, the study offers a sense of the general trends of conflict in the region and how decision makers can intervene.

If the above measures are well implemented, they can make significant improvements in security and development in Eastern Africa and change the current conflict threats. A deeper understanding of regional peace and security priorities can inform more appropriate security contingency plans and resource allocation.

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Highlights of Key Messages in the Issue Briefs

Experiences of Girls Involved with Armed Forces and Groups

- Hundreds of thousands of children have been associated with armed forces and groups in conflicts around the world, from South America to Africa and from South East Asia to the Balkans. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda, Boko Haram in Nigeria and recently, ISIS, have grossly abused and continue to abuse children.

- Research on girls associated with armed forces and groups is still at its infancy. This is due to the scant attention that has previously been given to girls' active involvement and distinct experiences in these forces and groups, whether as combatants or non-combatants.

- Girls enter fighting forces and groups via a variety of avenues including active recruitment, volunteering, abduction or gang pressure and these entry methods may overlap. Girls serve in a wide variety of roles including as combatants and as human agencies supporting insurgent commanders in a variety of ways.

- Armed conflict has significant impact on these girls. They suffer from both physical and psychosocial difficulties and fewer opportunities for healing and reintegration. After demobilization, sexually-abused girls are often rejected by their families and communities. Stigmatization can be more intense if they return infected with STDs/STIs or with children born in the forests.

- The issue of releasing girls associated with armed groups and forces and supporting their reintegration is highly complex as it is more entwined with socio-cultural conceptions and attitudes than procedures seeking the demobilization of children.

- To more effectively address the issue of reintegration, it is necessary to know more about the girls' duties, roles, and experiences with armed forces and groups, including gender-specific violations, experiences, health consequences,

and long-term effects, so as to develop international policies and programs that adequately recognize and address the needs and priorities of such girls.

Emerging Peace and Security Threats in Eastern Africa

- The Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa continue to suffer immense conflicts due to lack of predictive capacity and implementation of conflict prevention and mitigation measures.

- Conflict threats should be well understood to inform policies and strategies for early warning and response, conflict prevention and mitigation.

- Many international state fragility measurements can be used in combination to reach a clearer conflict prediction model.

- Peace Support Operations (PSOs) are crucial components of general conflict management, prevention and mitigation and EASF has reached Full Operational Capability (FOC).

- Harmonization of national, regional and international conflict prevention strategies is necessary to raise the level of impact.

(Endnotes)

1   Human Development Index, UNDP, 2014; Global Peace Index, 2014

2   USAID (2012). East Africa Regional Conflict Assessment (Final Report).

3   Smith, Dan (2004), Trends and Causes of Armed Conflicts, in Berghof, 2004

4   Adapted from Blattman and Miguel (2010), Goldstone, et al (2005, 2010); The World Bank's World Development Report 2011 – Conflict, Security, and Development: A critique through five vignettes: Journal of international development, 23 (7). pp. 980-995

About the Authors

Carolyne Gatimu is a Social Science/ Development researcher. She holds a Master of Arts degree in Development Studies and a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of Nairobi, Kenya. She has been involved in various research projects and is well versed with matters of research, particularly qualitative research techniques. She has previously worked at the Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, where she has researched on industrialization in Kenya. She has also consulted for Oxfam International and Institute for Development Studies at the University of Sussex, U.K on food security issues in the country and is currently working as a researcher at the Peace and Security Department, IPSTC.

Mr. Mbugua is a researcher at International Peace Support Training Center (IPSTC) where he has published a number of Occasional Papers and Issue Briefs. Mr. Mbugua has extensive experience in peace research and training. He has previously worked as a writer, editor and consultant with many reputable organizations including UNDP and UN Women. He has also trained in colleges and Universities in Kenya and Zambia.

Mbugua was a long serving resident writer and editor with Jacaranda Designs LTD, publishing firm. Mbugua is the author of *Inkishu: Myths and Legends of the Maasai*, a book that appears in the 1996 New York Public Library's list of best books from Africa for teenagers.

Mr. Mbugua was active in the peacebuilding activities in aimed at preventing ethnic clashes prior to the 2002 and 2007 general elections, specifically in Isiolo, Marsabit, Moyale, Samburu, Tans Nzoia, Bungoma, Kajiado, Nakuru, Meru, Nairobi and Turkana counties.

Mr. Mbugua holds a Master degree in peace and justice from the University of San Diego in California and he is also a recipient of the prestigious Fulbright and Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarships from the United States.

International Peace Support Training Centre
P.O Box 24232-00502 Karen, Kenya
Tel: 254 20 388 3157/58
Fax: 254 20 388 3159
Email: info@ipstc.org
Website: www.ipstc.org