

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

UNICEF as organization that advocates children rights has created significant steps for assisting the children based problem. The spreading of conflict in the world especially in African countries has made both state and non-state actors should care more about the children's protection. Two decades of armed conflict in northern Uganda between LRA which performed genocide to Acholian and government had caused devastating effects to the life of children. Children were involved to perform brutal actions and the female children often being sexually slaved by the rebel army.

This armed conflict has left difficult times. Lack of strong protection towards children within armed conflict has forced several of them to join as rebel soldiers to get someone who could provide them food and shelter. Even more, the recruitment of children was mostly by force. It caused the number of child soldiers increasing every year during the armed conflict.

Moreover, after the armed conflict ended in 2006, the children were very vulnerable. They lived as night commuter in which they did not have permanent shelter, enough foods, health services even less education and protection. Therefore, the former child soldiers need rehabilitation and reintegration to get their rights back.

The international framework; Convention on the Rights of the Child has encouraged UNICEF's actions in Uganda. The presence of UNICEF has two main

roles; first is UNICEF as informational function and second is as Operational Function.

UNICEF served as informational function means gathering information about child soldiers through research, library database, publication, and report. UNICEF efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate former child soldiers in Uganda were by collecting data in the form of annual report, humanitarian action report, information and research center, and innovation of UNICEF Uganda using technology as based of data gathering.

All of the data are published in UNICEF official website to influence the international actors to give supporting intervention in addressing the child soldier's issue. Therefore, there are more partnerships that can be obtained to save the children's life in Uganda.

UNICEF provides both technical and financial assistances to rehabilitate and reintegrate former child soldiers in northern Uganda in which assistances were based on UNICEF programs. All of actions rely on international framework of children rights' protection in prioritized programs such as education, family shelter and non-food items, water and environmental services, health and nutrition, HIV/AIDS monitoring, and child protection. Besides, UNICEF worked actively with its partnership to create advocacy and accelerate the programs to help former child soldiers get their rights.

However in the case of child soldiers in Uganda, there are several facts that less emphasized. There was a gap between the international regulation in Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Uganda Constitution Article 34.

The Convention on the Right of the Child stated that 'children' are person below the age of 18 while in Uganda Constitution, it defines 'children' are person 9 to 12. This is become one of serious challenge why children are often vulnerable in Uganda. More than half of population in Uganda is children that is why; during armed conflict the rebel group needed more combatants and started to recruit children to strengthen its troop.

The children that became combatants were mostly recruited through forced recruitment. However, the researcher found that there were several children who joined not only LRA but also UPDF (government army) voluntarily. The fact that, the voluntary children combatants were very poor, so did their family. During the armed conflict, their safety was threatened, food was limited, and shelter was damaged. They looked of people or group that can protect them, one of the ways was join rebel group as combatant.

International actors sometime did not realize on those fact how was difficult to solve the involvement of children in Ugandan armed conflict. Where the law regulated children is contrary with international law and children are most populated moreover the role of government to solve this problem was insignificant.

Therefore, UNICEF has given proportional role to settle the child soldiers' problem in Uganda relying on the international law related children and concerning on reintegrating and rehabilitating of child soldiers through what children's basic needs.

And this research is expected to become consideration for the readers that not all of child soldiers' problem should be viewed from the perspective of the conflict actor; the government with rebel group or other parties. It needs wider perspective to emphasize why children are joining combatants and the country regulation towards children's rights.