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Child Soldiering and Human Development in Africa: Overview of the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Abstract

This study problematizes the impacts of child soldiering on human development in Africa's Democratic Republic of the Congo's protracted conflict. Specifically, the study examines the challenges posed by this menace on the human resource development of the DRC. Using the theory of intractable conflict and qualitative descriptive analysis, we predicated the problems of the DRC largely on communal or identity issues, deprivation of basic human needs, governance and/or state's role and the influence of external forces, particularly the western powers and their proxies. The result of our empirical analysis confirmed our hypothesis that incidence of child soldiering was responsible for the prevalent low human development index in the Democratic Republic of Congo, particularly within the period of our review. The study recommends among others the urgent need to address the disparities among the different communities that inhabit the country, promote democracy, good governance and rule of law; give educational and health institutions serious attention; ensure proper demobilization, rehabilitation, reorientation and reintegration during and after peace agreements. The UN must ensure that the optional protocol, international human right laws are fully implemented by governments and severely punish those who recruit children as soldiers. African leaders should evolve organic, home-grown and proactive solutions to the problem, emphasizing the establishment of the proposed African Stand-by Force.

Key words: Child Soldiering; Congo DR**;** Human Development; Human Development Index; Intractable Conflict.

Introduction

According to the UN Secretary-general's special representative for children and armed conflict;

> Today's warfare in Africa especially the exploitation,
> abuseand use of children, is nothing short of a process
> ofself destruction…. This goes to the very heart of whether
> or not in large portions of Africa there is promise of a future
> for those societies.(Cited in African Recovery, 2001:10)

The 2014 population estimate shows that Africa is populated bymore than 1.3billion people, about 13 percent of the world's population. The continent also holds a record paradox of highest birth rate and death rate in the world with 35.3 births per 1,000 people and 14.2 deaths per 1000 people (World Bank, 2009, UNDP, 2014). Since the beginning of the 21st century, the continent has been rampaged by instability, armed conflicts and arms proliferation, child soldiering, terrorism, poverty and disease, among others. These menaces, particularly child soldiering, in addition to their direct impact on people's lives, their moral and physical environment are serious drain on the scarce resources of the states concerned and are thus prejudicial to the continent's chances of development.

Although child soldiering is as old as the history of warfare, the intensity has increased immensely in the modern-day Africa that analysts are of the view that the continent appears to be decimating and destroying the very foundation of its future existence. Intra-state wars and insurgencies have become prevalent as the continent is generally under siege and thoroughly ravaged particularly since the beginning of the twenty first century. These violent conflicts have devastated countries such as Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR),Congo-Brazzaville, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Eritrea, Guinea –Bissau, Liberia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa and Djibouti.

These protracted armed conflicts in Africa and indeed Congo DR are not fought with only professionally trained soldiers as they are in obvious and severe shortage. The government forces, paramilitary organizations and rebel groups forcefully recruit and utilize or exploit children as combatants, militias, porters, sex slaves etc. Brett and McCallins (1998: 222) estimated that there were about 300,000 child soldiers under the age of 15 involved in armed violence throughout the globe. In fact, in more than 40 countries around the world, more than 300,000 children below the age of 18 are engaged in combat with governments, and armed groups.

The sub-Sahara Africa has over 120,000 children (some not more than 7 or 8 years of age) of this global figure fighting in armed conflicts across Africa, with Congo DR having about 30 per cent of the share. These minors participate in all aspects of contemporary warfare. They wield small and light weapons like AK – 47s and M-16s on the front line of combats. They are

also used as human mine detectors, spies, messengers or lookouts, participate in suicide missions, carry supplies and are sexually abused,(Nwoko,2011:1-2)

According to Kindernothilfe, the German branch of the International Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (cited in UN Human Rights Report, 2002:1&2), "thousands of children are fighting in wars and armed conflicts around the world, this includes both boys and girls in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Europe. The largest numbers of child soldiers however, are in Africa". The UN also estimates, that over 300,000 child soldiers are involved in armed conflicts in at least twenty countries in the world today, out of which 100,000 are particularly in Uganda, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan.

In the same vein, UNICEF (2012) reported that the problem of child soldiers is most severe in Africa. According to the report, children are fighting across the continent; in Chad, the Central African Republic, Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mali; worse still, some 40% of the child soldiers are girls, who are often used as sex slaves. The reasons armed groups use children as soldiers are: Children are easier to manipulate, they don't eat as much food, don't get paid, don't have highly developed sense of danger or risk, making it all too easy to send them into the line fire. They are also used because they are more docile than adults and it is easier to train them to kill. Groups also often send children in the first wave of an attack so as to draw the enemy's fire.

On the other hand, the life children soldiers lead are tough and dangerous as they are not only victims in armed conflicts – they are also perpetrators. During their abduction and training, they often have to kill members of their own families or friends in order to "harden up." This often happens under the influence of gun point, drug and alcohol. The secondary negative effect is that children have to struggle for the rest of their life to come to terms with the effects of physical and psychological acts of cruelty. The educational lives of the children are disrupted. The women and the entire younger generation are exposed to many health hazards, including sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and the economic future of the children and families are put in jeopardy.

Child Soldiering in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo is blessed with enormous mineral wealth – Gold, Diamond, Copper, Uranium, Cobalt, or Coltan and cassiterite (ore of tantalum and tin respectively) and potentially large reserves of oil and natural gas. It has the second largest rainforest in the world and is the most biodiverse African country (Clark, 1993; Mackal, 1987). "Although citizens of DRC are among the poorest in the world, having the second lowest nominal GDP per capita, the country is widely considered to be the richest country in the world regarding natural resources; its untapped deposits of raw minerals are estimated to be worth in excess of US $24 trillion" (Free online Library, July,2011; Kuepper, 2010:4).

Paradoxically, this resource rich country is also the site of the world's worst humanitarian crises. The conflicts of 1996 and specifically 1998 through 2012 and still ongoing have resulted in massive disruption of the social, political, and economic fabrics of the country (International Rescue Committee, IRC, 2008). Researchers like Collier (2007:101), Ntalaja (2005:1), Andres (2011:2), Reyntjens (2001:312), estimate the number of victims of the numerous armed conflicts that have ravaged the land, specifically between 1996 and 2008 to be at 5.4 million deaths (and still counting), out of the 68 million 2008 population estimate of the country. This implies that about 8 per cent of the population died in the conflict within that period, excluding an inestimable number of the labour force infected and rendered redundant by HIV/AIDS and other diseases, Thus IRC noted that "this is the most deadly war ever documented in Africa, indeed the highest war death toll anywhere in the world during the past half- century." (IRC, 2008:2).

Perspectives on Child soldiering in Africa

Scholars like Brett and McCallin (1998), Collier (2009), Andres (2011), Okolie (2008), Adam (2010), Betancourt et al (2008), Alannah (2011), Bayer et al (2007), Annan and Blattman (2006), Boothby (2006), made divergent views on the causes, menace and cost of armed conflicts and child soldiering in Africa, Sub-Sahara Africa and Congo DR in particular which are apt and quite revealing, and unanimously agreed on the psychological impact and the process of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of child soldiers.

Nwoko (2011), laments that in spite of the international treaties, protocols and conventions on the protection and rights of children, the intra and inter-ethnic conflicts in Africa 'mainly generated by vestiges of colonialism', and the attendant child soldiering has continued to be a source of setback to Africa's development and threat to the continent's hope and future. He argues that the future of Africa is extremely bleak when analyzed in the context of the use of child soldiers (Nwoko, 2011).

Using Uganda as an example Boyden (1994), pointed out that within the context of violence, children's participation in conflict can be seen as an appropriate adaptive strategy – "an extremely practical survival mechanism" given that the armies they join provide them with "food, shelter, companionship, clothing and security, with some protection from actual combat for the youngest recruits". He noted that child soldiering is a fundamental feature of civil wars, which is the making of the civilian communities into battlegrounds as a strategy of securing political control. This in consequence, he argued, takes over people's lives and homes, and the young people forcibly conscripted and abducted into armed groups have their lives and future destroyed.

Okolie (2008) examined the incidence of child soldiering and its psychological impact on African security. Using the Democratic Republic of Congo as an example, he explored the incidence and traumatic experience of child soldiers and observed the precarious situation of the security and survival of the African continent in view of the fact that the future African leaders

would largely be products of "mentally-derailed, insane, disoriented revenge-mongers, whose motivation begins and ends in violent behaviour" (Okolie, 2008:13-14).

Writing on the effect and advocacy to stop the use of child soldiers in eastern Congo DR, Adams (2010) argued that Mai Mai child soldier recruitment and use in Congo DR is entrenched and unending. She contends that the lives of many children in the conflict-affected areas are additionally blighted by poverty, lack of access to education and few economic opportunities. Apart from the common forceful recruitment of children by the Mai Mai militia, for some children, joining a Mai Mai group is seen as a way out of poverty or 'just another job'. She concludes that the politics of conflict have taken precedence over the welfare of children, with the result that the future of the next generation of Congolese children is being jeopardized. (Adam, 2010:1)

Betancourt *et al* (2008) explored the complexity of providing education to former child soldiers in Sierra Leone as a means of reintegration and the potential challenges that are associated with their return to school. They maintained that access to educational and training opportunities are the only hope of proper reintegration of psychologically depressed former child soldiers. According to them, education plays the role of psychosocial adjustment and community reintegration and supports them to achieve greater self-sufficiency and increased productivity within their communities.

Alannah *et al* (2011), quoting Human Rights Watch, stated that children are most likely to become child soldiers, if they are poor, separated from their families, displaced from their homes, living in a combat zone or have limited access to education. The children are sometimes forced to commit atrocities against their own family or neighbours in order to ensure that the child is "stigmatized" and unable to return to his or her home community, and render the process all more abhorrent.

Bayer *et al* (2007), cited in Schauer, (2009:7),in a study of 169 former child soldiers in Uganda and Congo at a mean age of 15 years, who were abducted by armed forces reveals that all the children had been violently recruited by armed forces at a mean age of 12 years, and had on average served 38 months in captivity. It also shows that the most commonly reported traumatic experiences were having witnessed shooting (92.9 percent), having witnessed somebody wounded (89.9 percent) and having been seriously beaten (84 percent). "A total of 54 percent of the children reported having killed someone, and 28 percent reported that they were forced to engage in sexual contact, worse still, 35 percent of the interviewed children had fully developed post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a debilitating mental health disorder".

In the same vein, Annan and Blattman (2006), observed that loss of educational and economic opportunities, joblessness and disabilities that child soldiers face are fundamental threats to their long term stability. They also noted that when compared to children not associated with fighting forces, the longer children spent in the captivity of rebel groups, the

larger the gap in education outcomes. Furthermore, those who were abducted at younger ages were less likely to return to school after their release.Also Boothby, Crawford and Halperin (2006), in their research on child soldiers from Mozambique and El Salvador suggest that post conflict educational and economic challenges are tightly linked to former child soldiers perhaps more so than their experiences with war itself. They found that majority of the ex child soldiers had adult goals in mind, such as making money and marrying, rather than the desire to return to school.

Theoretical Approach

Scholarly works on the problem under interrogation usually anchor their theoretical propositions on the theory of anomie; power theory; post-colonial state theory; elite theory and psychological theory, etc. While not vitiating the methodological potency of these approaches, we argue that such analyses propose economic and class competition and of course behavioural view point, and cannot satisfactorily advance possible explanation to the central problem of our study.

The theoretical perspective adopted to concretely explain our problem is the theory of intractable conflict. The theory is akin to what Edward Azar refers to protracted social conflict (Burgess and Burgess, 2003). The major proponents of this theory include Azar (1974); Coleman (2000); Burgess and Burgess (2003); Bercovitch (2003); Fisher (2001).

The basic propositions of this theory are that it involves states or other actors with long sense of historical grievance, and a strong desire to redress or avenge. It is almost inevitable when a group's identity, sovereignty, values and beliefs are threatened or frustrated. Intractable conflict situation involves prolonged and often violent and destructive struggle by communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition, acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation. It involves polarized perceptions of hostility and enmity. In terms of management, intractable conflicts resist many conflict management efforts and have a history of failed peacemaking efforts. Azar (1974:85-87), argued that the denial of basic human needs to a large portion of the population initiated instances of protracted or intractable conflict. He isolated four preconditions that are predominant sources of intractable conflict as communal content, deprivation of human needs, governance and the state's role, and international linkages.

Notably, it is the relationship between identity groups and the state that is central to the problem in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This disarticulation between the state and society as a whole can be linked to the colonial legacy, which artificially imposed European ideas of territorial statehood onto a multitude of communal groups. In the same vein, human needs of security, development, political and economic access and identity in terms of cultural and religious expression are non-negotiable; therefore, if these needs are not met, people will inevitably want a structural change to take place. Such a need for structural change is likely to result in a protracted violent conflict as in the DRC. This emphasizes Azar's theory that the

deprivation of human needs is the underlying source of protracted social conflict (Ramsbotham, 2008:85)

Azar (1974:87), also states that governments being endowed with the authority to govern and use force where necessary to regulate society, to protect citizens and to provide collective goods, "plays a leading role in the satisfaction or lack of satisfaction of minority and identity groups". He contends that a government that is characterized by incompetent, parochial, and authoritarian tendencies and fails to satisfy basic human needs could lead to intractable conflict. The government of Congo DR since independence is characterized by the foregoing infirmities and therefore has created a "crisis of legitimacy" in the governance of the country. Weaker states like those often involved in intractable conflict as Congo DR tend to be more influenced by outside connections both economically and politically; and are equally dependent on an external supply of armament.

Coleman (2000:428-450), notes that three types of issues are especially likely to produce intractable conflict: "conflict over irreconcilable moral differences, high-stakes distributional conflict, and conflicts over relational power or place in a power hierarchy". He also emphasized that intractable conflicts often arise in context of "extreme power imbalance, social injustice or structural violence, where people find it difficult to satisfy their basic needs and values, and ultimately focus on survival. They adopt a win-lose attitude or lose-lose attitude where the goal is to inflict as much harm on the other as possible". Coleman's view captures the situation in theDRC as it confirms the crisis of confidence in identity and moral differences, resource control, power relations and social psychological dynamics like hatred, anger, distrust, dehumanization, persecution and fear of extinction which contribute to escalation and persistence of the conflict.

Burgess and Burgess (2003:1-5), agree with their conference participants that some conflicts are hard to deal with as they are:

      "Protracted" "Destructive" "Deep-rooted"
      "Resolution-resistant" "Intransigent" "Gridlocked"
      "Identity-based" "Need-based" "Complex"
      "Difficult" "Malignant" "Enduring"

They argue that intractable conflicts can be particularly paradoxical, as "they cause disputants to destroy themselves and the things they value in an effort to destroy the other. They (actors) even realize that this is happening but they will continue, because the goal of destroying the other is seen as supreme". The situation in the Congo DR is not far from the above assertion as the parties in the conflict are ironically destroying the human and material resources of their own country and particularly their younger generation.

Meanwhile, Bercovitch (2003:1-2), enumerated characteristics of intractable conflicts in terms of actors with long sense of historical grievance, self serving, external issues, intangible

issues such as identity ,values and beliefs; relationships like polarized perceptions of hostility and enmity that lead to violent and destructive behaviours; geopolitics, which not only threaten their immediate environment but entire region or large parts of the world too; and in terms of management and duration; which he says it resists many management efforts and persists over a long period of time. The DRC conflict has all the foregoing attributes enumerated by Bercovitch. Thus the actors in the DRC conflict (rebels, warlords, government) as a result of distrust, self-serving interests in resource and power control have dragged the country into a prolonged war of attrition that has resulted in the prevalent loss of human resources and low human development index, per capita income and general impoverishment. The conflict has also had a spill-over effect on the countries of the Great Lakes Region and defied most conflict resolution effort.

Fisher (2001:307), agreed with Azar's position that "intractable conflicts are commonly complex, severe, enduring, with sporadic outbreaks of violence". He maintained that when a groups' identity is threatened or frustrated, intractable conflict is almost inevitable. The Congo DR conflict represents identity-driven rifts, racial and cultural hatreds which are products of self-serving Warlords and ethnic chauvinists in collaboration with foreign powers and their transnational criminal networks, perpetrating inhuman and exploitative insanity on the people of Congo DR and their natural resources.

Application of the Theory: This theory is justified in the analysis of our study as the Congo DR conflicts have defied all the conflict resolution efforts as a result of the irreconcilable interests of ethnic chauvinists, selfish warlords, politicized military, foreign interests in the vast mineral resources, state degeneration caused by the few elites who mismanage the country's wealth. These deep-seated cleavages created by the foregoing actors result in an underlying fear of extinction that often grows within vulnerable ethnic groups who live with memories or fear of persecution and massacre. The ethnic divisions and perceived threats often result in the domination of the state machinery by a single or coalition of elites who deny access to basic human needs like food, shelter, education, health, security and distributive justice to the majority of the population. Hence, the frustration, coupled with external intrusion has kept the country in continuing hostility with sporadic outbreak of violence that had and still having its toll particularly on the younger generation of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Consequences of Child Soldiering on Human Development Index in DRC

Child Soldiering and Life Expectancy: The International Rescue Committee reported that by the end of the second Congo DR civil war, 5.4 million people have died, about 8 percent of the country's population of 66 million then. According to the estimate, 45,000 Congolese die every month (half of them children), from hunger, preventable diseases, and other consequences of violence and displacement (Enough Project, 2013:2). According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 800,000 civilians were displaced in the DR Congo's conflict by 2008 (UNOCHA, 2012). By 2012, between 1.5 and 2 million people have fled their

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homes within Congo,some 60,000 people fled into neighbouring Uganda and Rwanda, while Eastern Congo perhaps remains the worst place to be a woman on earth. The Guardian estimated abduction, gang rape and sex slavery of between 200,000-300,000 girls and women from 1998-2008 (Guardian, 2008). According to WHO Eastern Congo in particular, has one of the highest cases of HIV/AIDS, STD/STI in the world. Between 1980 and 2012, DR Congo's life expectancy at birth only increased from 45.9 to 48.7 years. In spite of the increase, the country's progress in this area was still below sub-Sahara Africa's life expectancy of 54.9 and UNDP benchmark of 59.1 years.

Child Soldiering and Gross Domestic Product (GDP): According to Collier's economic analysis of conflicts worldwide, the average length of a civil war is seven years while its average economic cost is put at a growth reduction of 2.3 percent per year. What this means is that by the time the conflict is stabilized, there is a high likelihood that the average country would be about 16 percentage points poorer than it would otherwise have been had it not grown at all during that same time span. (Collier, 2009: 102).

The implication is that if we consider that according to some estimates, the average low-income country should grow around 7 percent a year for at least a decade in order to enter a middle-income bracket, then we can say that for those societies like Congo DR, stuck in perpetual state of conflict, significant development seems to be decades away. One can imagine the implications of this on human resource development for one of the poorest countries of the world like Congo DR, which has suffered and still passing through decades of protracted conflict.

To drive our point home, we shall analyze the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP's) Human Development Index (HDI) reports to demonstrate the level of drain on human resource development. The Human Development Index (HDI) offers a summary for assessing long-term progress in three basic areas of human development viz: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and decent standard of living. According to the 2011 Human development report (HDR), a long and healthy life is measured by life expectancy, access to knowledge is measured by mean years of schooling for adults, which is the average number of years of education received in a life-time by people aged 25 years and older; and expected years of schooling for children of school-entrance age, which is the total number of years of schooling a child of school-entrance age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates stay the same throughout the child's life. Standard of living is measured by Gross National Income (GNP) per capita expressed in constant 2011 international dollars converted using Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) rates.

In analyzing the three basic dimensions mentioned, we shall assess the immediate and long-term effects of the variable under study - child soldiering as it has chain-effect on the human resource development., In other words, we shall review Congo DR's progress in each of

the HDI indicators between 1980 and 2013 to enable us understand the situation before the conflicts, peak of the conflict and low conflict period. (See table I)

Child Soldiering and Educational Attainment: Apart from the negative socio-economic implications of child soldiering on the country, a review of the DR Congo's progress in each of the HDI indicators shows that the country has suffered reverse in development in human resource developments. A close assessment of the human development indicators in the table shows that the period of 1995 to 2003 which fall within the peak period of the conflict witnessed retrogression in all the human development indicators. This is a reflection of the impact of the armed conflict and the attendant child soldiering which have deprived children of school age from attending schools. Homes, residents and communities were deserted as a result of armed attacks, resulting in displacements for working class and their families, who ran into refugee camps and bushes. These exposed them to more torture in the hands of other armed groups, forced recruitments, rapes and sex slavery, insect and snake bites, diseases and incessant death in numbers. All these reflected as well in the lowest human development index value of 0.285, 0.274 and 0.292 of the period under review, and ever recorded in the country.

Mean years of schooling increased from 1.2 to 3.5 years and expected years of schooling increased from 7.1 to 8.5 years, as against Sub-Sahara Africa's mean year of schooling of 4.7 years, expected years of schooling of 9.3 years and UNDP's 4.2 years and 8.5 years respectively. Also Congo DR's 2013 HDI of 0.338 is below the average of 0.493 for countries in the low human development group and below the average of 0.475 for countries in sub-Sahara Africa. (See Table II)

When compared to other countries in the ranking of Human development Index, DR Congo ranked 187 out of 187 countries in 2011 and 186 out of 187 countries in 2012, again 186 of 187 in 2013 (UNDP Report, 2014:2).

From Sub-Sahara Africa, countries which are close to the Congo DR in 2013 HDI rank and population size are Nigeria and Ethiopia, which ranked 152 and 173 respectively, while DRC ranked 186 out of 187 countries and territories with Niger Republic ranking last. This also could be attributed to the effect of child soldiering which affected human resources development of the duo - DRC and Niger Republic.

Child Soldiering and Social Indicators: A long-term progress assessment of Congo DR's human resource development in relation to other countries in terms of geographical location and Human Development Index value will also show a clearer picture of the impact of the variables under study - child soldiering and human development, on the country. For instance, during the period between 1980 and 2013, Congo DR, Central African Republic and the Gambia experienced different degrees of progress towards increasing their HDIs as represented in graph. (See figure I)

A look at the human development index graph above shows clearly that DR Congo suffered sharp decline in human resource development between 1998 and 2003, and continued to drag far behind Central African Republic which suffered the same crises of a lower dimension. The Gambia which has not experienced any major incidence of armed conflict and child soldiering has kept stable increase in human development index, all the time. (See figure II)

Figure two shows the contribution of each component index to Congo DR's Human Development Index (HDI) since 1980. A look at the graph shows that all the component indicators curved downwards at the peak of the conflict (between 1998 and 2012), with the HDI indicator showing a sharp decline in human resource development within the conflict peak period. Worse still, even the life expectancy indicator which appeared highest among the component indices was at 50.0 still below the sub-Saharan Africa's 54.9 and UN average low HDI of 59.4.

The phenomenon (child soldiering) has not only taken toll on the younger generation of Congo DR in education, health, employment, income and productivity, but have brought the country to almost a total collapse from the following facts of our empirical indicators:

Between 1980 and 2013, Democratic Republic of Congo's Human Development Index (HDI) only rose by 0.4% annually from 0.336 to 0.338, which gives the country a rank of 186 out of 187 countries with compatible data. The HDI of Sub-Sahara African region increased from 0.366 to 0.475 between 1980 and 2013, placing Congo DR below the regional average. Annual per capita income in the DRC plummeted to $120 in 2005 (current 2005 international $) as against $380 in 1985 (UNDP Human Development Report, 2012:1) published in 2013. According to the same report, Congo DR is ranking low in the entire three major human development indicators of health, education and income as follows: while the life expectancy at birth in Congo DR is 48.7 years, the regional rate of Sub-Sahara Africa is 54.9, whereas the UNDP benchmark for low human development index (HDI) is 59.1. In education, the mean year of schooling in DRC is 3.5years as compared to the Sub-Sahara Africa's 4.7, while UNDP's low HDI on education is 4.2. Economically, the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita income, in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) of Congo DR is $0.319, while the regional benchmark for Sub-Sahara Africa is $2.010 and UNDP's low HDI is $1.633 respectively (UNDP, 2013:2).

The conflicts which led to the forceful recruitment and deployment of child soldiers in war fronts by both government and rebel forces, torture and inhuman treatment of the populace have accounted for premature death of children and adults (low life expectancy), low level of education, as children who are supposed to be in schools are forcefully recruited into armed forces, thereby disrupting their educational life and showing negative effect on mean years of schooling and percentage of children in schools.

The displacement of the civilian populace by soldiers and rebels in their fight over mineral wealth and other war crimes have also resulted in creating and/or escalating unemployment, hunger, poverty, general low GDP and productivity in the country. The devastation caused by the conflicts has as well been responsible for the deplorable state of the health sector as the health conditions and facilities remained in ruins. As earlier pointed out, Congo DR according to WHO has one of the highest cases of HIV/AIDS, STD/STI in the world. This is as a result of high incidence of gang rape, sex slavery of girls and women. Besides, the health facilities and health care system are devastated by the war situation.

From the foregoing discourse, we therefore validate our hypothesis; hence, the incidence of child soldiering was responsible for the prevalent low human resources development in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Conclusion

There is urgent need to address the disparities among different communities that inhabit the country and promote democracy and rule of law, which can combat corruption, promote good governance and strong state.Parties that seek to satisfy their identity and security needs through conflict should realize that conflict resolution can truly occur and last if satisfactory amelioration of underdevelopment occurs as well. Experiencing protracted conflict should lead one to understand that peace is development in the broadest sense of the term.The educational and Health institutions and services should be given serious attention by the government to ensure that children of school age are given adequate education, and health services adequately provided.Peace agreements between government and conflict parties must include measures for the demobilization, release and rehabilitation of child soldiers for proper reorientation and reintegration into the society.The UN Security Council must ensure that the optional protocol, international humanitarian law and international human right law are fully implemented by government, and those who recruit children must be prosecuted by the International Court. Since most of the conflicts in Africa have international dimension as a result of the developed countries' interests in Africa's natural resources, there is urgent need for Africans to assume full responsibility for their own problems by establishing a proactive African Stand-by Force. The African Union's Proposal in this direction is a welcome development and deserves the support of all Africans.

TABLE I; DR Congo's HDI trends based on consistent time Series data, new Component indicators and new goalposts

	Life expectancy at Birth	Expected years of schooling	Mean Years of Schooling	GNI per capita (2011 PPP $)	HDI Value
1980	46.1	7.3	1.2	1.337	0.336
1985	47.0	7.2	1.5	1.487	0.348

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1990	47.5	6.7	2.0	0.743	0.319
1995	46.5	6.6	2.7	0.398	0.285
2000	46.4	7.2	2.9	0.307	0.274
2005	47.9	7.8	3.0	0339	0.292
2010	49.0	9.1	3.1	0.386	0.319
2011	49.3	9.3	3.1	0.396	0.323
2012	49.6	9.7	3.1	0.422	0.333
2013	50.0	9.7	3.1	0,444	0.338

Source: UNDP, HDI Report 2014

Table II: DR Congo's HDI Indicators for 2013 relative to selected countries, Sub-Sahara Africa and UNDP benchmark for low HDI

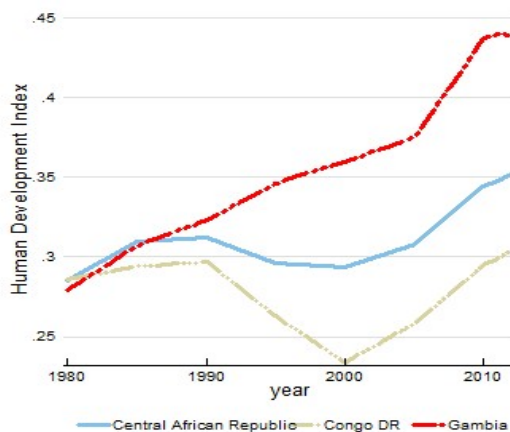|	HDI VALUE	HDI RANK	LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH	EXPECTED YEARS OF SCHOOLING	MEAN YEARS OF SCHOOLING	GNI PER CAPITA (PPPUS$)
Congo DR	0.338	186	50.0	9.7	3.1	0.444
Nigeria	0.504	153	52.5	9.0	5.2	5.353
Ethiopia	0.435	173	63.6	8.5	2.4	1.303
Sub-Sahara Africa	0.475	-	54.9	9.3	4.7	2.010
Low HDI	0.493	-	59.4	9.0	4.2	2.904

Source: UNDP, Human development report, 2014.

Figure I: Trends in Congo (Democratic Republic of the)'s HDI 1980-2012/2013
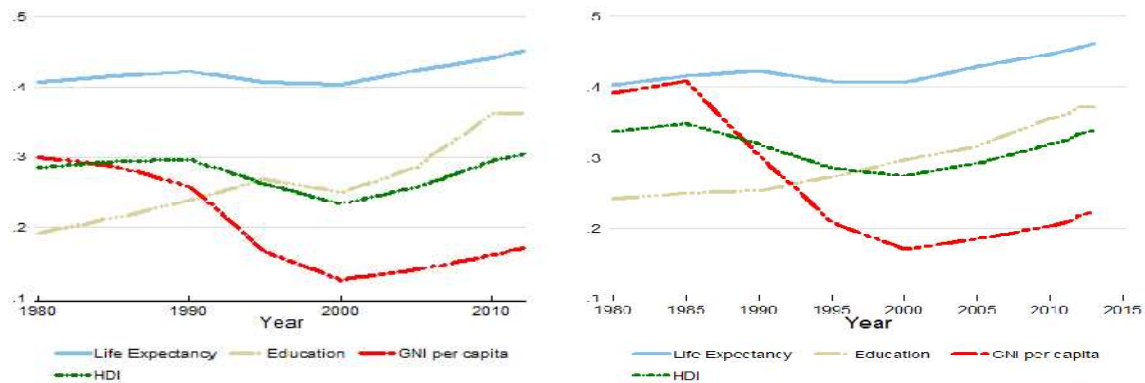Source: UNDP, Human development report, 2014

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Fig. II: Trends in Congo (Democratic Republic of the)'s HDI component indices 1980-2012/2013
Source: UNDP, Human development report, 2014.

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