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**The Exploitation of Children as Soldiers in the Philippines:
An Analysis of Issues and Challenges in
Social Work Practice**

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

**Master
in
Social Work**

**At Massey University, Albany,
New Zealand**

Ma. Irene Ordoña de Ocampo

2006

*Your children are not your children
They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself
They came through you but not from you
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts
For they have their own thoughts
You may house their bodies but not their souls
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
Which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you,
For life goes out backward nor carries with yesterday
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.*

- Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931)

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore and analyze how social workers directly working with child soldiers perceive the child soldier phenomenon in the Philippines. Specifically, it aims to come up with a picture of the child soldier phenomenon in the country, analyze the various factors or conditions contributory to the participation of children in armed conflict, explore the issues and challenges the child soldier phenomenon poses in social work practice and draw lessons or insights that can contribute to the improvement of current social work practice. This qualitative study used personal interview and instrumental case study methods in data gathering. Selected regional social workers of the government's welfare department, who have handled cases of children involved in armed conflict, served as the main source of information. They were selected through purposive sampling. Likewise, instrumental case study method was used to strengthen and enrich the data gathered using 31 selected case files of child soldiers. The information was analyzed using an ecological and structural framework.

This research has shown that the child soldier phenomenon in the country is multidimensional and connected with various factors internal and external to the child. The existence of the phenomenon could not be attributed solely to a single factor but rather to combination of factors in the child's environment, which serve as a cumulative force that pushes the child to participate in the armed group. This study put forth the need for a multifaceted approach in social work practice with child soldier where all systems - micro, meso, exo, macro - in the child's immediate and distant environment are considered in the entire helping process. Likewise, it stressed the need for social work actions that provides not only immediate relief to individual child and her/his family, but also longer-term solutions that targets oppressive and unjust institutional and structural order in the society. It affirmed the importance of transformative social work practice where interventions go beyond mere palliative care and the importance of reflective practice where reflection-in-action is integral to the performance of social work profession.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank the fifteen social workers who responded to my invitation to participate in this study. My interaction with them have been very fruitful not only because they have helped me gather the information I needed but also because they have inspired me with their valuable insights drawn from years of actual experiences with the less fortunate. These social workers have courageously faced the challenge of working with different sectors in the society despite the constraints brought about by limited human and material resources, complex rules and procedures in work setting and high demand for quality and professional service.

I am extremely grateful, too, to the Department of Social Welfare and Development for allowing me to conduct the interview to its selected personnel specifically the regional social workers in the field and residential centers besides giving me the access to its resources and reports, data or files concerning children in armed conflict situation. My sincere thanks goes to the management and staff of the central and regional offices that facilitated my contacts and interviews with the respondents.

A number of offices, organizations and institutions provided me with relevant information regarding my topic such as the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace Process (OPAPP) for the initiatives, actions and plans regarding government efforts to protect and promote the welfare of children, to them, I give my sincerest appreciation. I am grateful, too, to UP-CIDS- PST, PCUCS, UNICEF for sharing with me or leading me to the source of all relevant reference materials on child soldiers.

Grateful acknowledgement also goes to my course supervisor, Dr. Mike O'Brien who exerted extra effort in guiding me to finish this undertaking and in making distant supervising work for my best interest. Dr. Mike also afforded

me with the social support/ connection I needed being an international student in New Zealand. Special thanks, too, to Prof. Marilyn Waring for putting extra time clarifying my concepts during the initial stage of preparing my research proposal, to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee for the ethical approval and to the administrative staff of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences for facilitating my request for book interloan and graduate research fund.

I would like to thank NEDA and NZAID for granting me the benefits that goes with the scholarship grant and the ISO officers for the extra effort looking into my needs and understanding my shortcomings.

Lastly, to my *inay* Rosie, husband Ronald, sons Ivan and Ronelle and my relatives and friends, who in one way or the other have lend a hand to make this study possible, thank you for supporting me and believing in me.

To God be the Glory!

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AO	Administrative Order
ASG	Abu Sayaff Group
CAFGU	Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit
CHR	Commission on Human Rights
CIAC	Children Involved in Armed Conflict
CNSP	Children in Need of Special Protection
CPI	Consumption Expenditure Pattern
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSUCS	Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers
CWC	Council for the Welfare of Children
DILG	Department of Interior and Local Government
DND	Department of National Defense
DO	Department Order
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
EO	Executive Order
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
IAC-CIAC	Inter-Agency Committee on Children Involved in Armed Conflict
ILO-IPEC	International Labour Organization -International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KARAPATAN	Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights
LGU	Local Government Unit
LIW	Low Intensity Warfare
MANPADS	Man-Portable Air Defense Systems
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MSSD	Ministry of Social Services and Development

NGO	Non-Government Organizations
NPA	New Peoples' Army
NPUDC	National Program for the Unification and Development Council
NSCB	National Statistical Coordination Board
NSO	National Statistics Office
OPAPP	Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace Process
PACSA	President's Action Committee on Social Amelioration
PCSUCS	Philippine Coalition to Stop the Use of Child soldiers
PD	Presidential Decree
PNP	Philippine National Police
RA	Republic Act
RRCY	Reception and Rehabilitation Center for Youth
RSCC	Reception and Study Center for Children
SWC	Social Welfare Commission
UN	United Nations
UNCROC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UP-CIDS	University of the Philippines - Center For Integrative and Development Studies
USA	United States of America
VAT	Value Added Tax

Glossary of Filipino Terms

barkada	peer group
bayanihan, damayan	social practices of helping others
barangays	Filipino settlement, a community
Hukbalahap	people's anti-Japanese army
mag-anak	family
pakikibaka	struggle
utang na loob	debt of gratitude

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

*"Many things can wait. Children cannot.
To them we cannot say 'tomorrow', their name is today."
- Gabriela Mistral*

Background

The nature of warfare has changed. Armed conflict is now fought internally between groups of people within a nation and less frequently between or among sovereign nations (Machel, 2001). Based on UNICEF's report - *The State of the World's Children 2005*, 93 percent of the 59 major armed conflicts recorded from 1990 to 2003 was internal and only 7 percent were external. This internal war or conflict, more often than not, is destructive and causes more civilian than military casualties. Graca Machel (1996,p.9), who was commissioned by the UN Secretary General to undertake a study on the impact of armed conflict on children, claimed that in recent decades, civilian victims of war "has leaped dramatically from 5 per cent to over 90 per cent". Similar observation was also cited in the recent UNICEF (2005, p.39) report claiming further that 80 of the 90 per cent civilian casualties are women and children. The actual damage of war on children goes even beyond the following figures of casualties: "more than 2 million children death" . . . "more than 4 million have survived physical mutilation" . . . "more than 1 million orphaned or separated from their families" . . . in the last decades. In UNICEF's view (as cited in J. Myers-Walls, 2003) the evidence in recent conflict only showed that "children are targets, not incidental victims" (42).

The huge proportion of women and children casualties involved in internal conflict is not the only alarming change in the nature of today's warfare. Another major area of concern in the international community is the use of children in conflict both by the state and non-state armed groups. According to Machel (1996), this has become the trend in many war-torn countries particularly those whose internal conflict has spanned many years.

She describes the use of children as one of the “most alarming trends in armed conflict” in the past three decades (11). Her report to the UN Secretary General shows how children are recruited and how they are used. She has cited several factors that relate to the child soldier phenomenon, such as the proliferation of small light weapons, widespread poverty, the exposure of children to grave violations of human rights and the lure of ideology. According to International Save the Children Sweden, the participation of children below 18 years old was seen in 45 conflicts worldwide; 35 of those conflicts has even made use of children under age 15. The use of child soldiers is not limited only to anti-government groups, but in some countries, governments were conscripting children in armed conflict and hostilities. (Radda Barnen, 1995-1948 as cited in Hoiskar, 2001)

UNICEF (2005) has claimed that of all the regions in the world, “Africa and Asia have the highest number of children involved in conflicts as combatants” (14). The use of children in armed conflict “continues unabated”, as pointed out by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldier (CSUCS) in their January 2004 press release. The Coalition highlights that the situations becomes even worse in some countries such as in Cote d’Ivoire of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia where recruitment of children in armed groups continues to rise registering the highest recruitment in 2003; in Uganda children continue to flee their homes to avoid the forced recruitment of the opposition Lord’s Resistance Army; in Myanmar very little progress is seen with regards to the decrease in the 70,000 children in its government armed forces, in Columbia the number of child soldiers has increased to around 11,000 and in Sri Lanka the abductor of children by the opposition Tamil Tigers of Ealam are not arrested.

In the face of the growing concern for the use of children in armed conflict, international organizations like UNICEF and the CSUCS affirms that the number of child soldiers worldwide remains unascertained. This is because more often than not, the recruitment of children in the armed group is covertly done and because children’s participation in the activities of the armed group is sometimes periodic. Besides, it is difficult to monitor the cases because of the issue of accessibility of the place where the armed group holds

camp as well as the security risk involved in trying to contact the leaders/officers of the armed movement. Nonetheless, the estimated number of child soldiers worldwide is 300,000 almost twenty five per cent or one out of four are in East Asia and the Pacific Region (UNICEF, 2002, p. 8)

The Philippines is one of the six countries in Asia found to be using children in armed conflict and hostilities (UNICEF, 2002). This practice of enlisting children in armed groups is not seen in government military service but is reportedly being done by government sanctioned paramilitary group like the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGUs) and also by non-state actors such as the Communist Party of the Philippines - New People's Army (CPP-NPA), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and the Abu Sayaff Group (ASG) (Philippine Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldier [PCSUCS], 2002).

As earlier cited, it is quite difficult to get an exact figure of child soldiers in the country considering that only those cases brought to the attention of the authorities are recorded. Available information on cases of child soldiers comes from government agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). However, reports are different about the cases of child soldiers who are captured, surrendered or turned over to authorities from the government agencies mentioned (PCSUCS, 2002). In July 20, 2004 Minutes of Meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee on Children Involved in Armed Conflict (IAC-CIAC), DSWD has 64 children in armed conflict (CIAC) cases while the Department of National Defense (DND) reports 135 cases. The word CIAC is the preferred term being used by most government agencies working for child soldiers in the Philippines. The discrepancy in the number of child soldier cases from different sources is being remedied by the IAC-CIAC as they put the reconciliation of data as one of their priorities (2004 Year End Report. CIAC Program.OPAPP). The signing of an *Inter-agency Memorandum of Agreement in the Handling and Treatment of Children Involved In Armed Conflict* hopes to clear out the variations in recording and reporting procedures of agencies involved in handling such cases, as well as the variations in the interpretations of the concept.

Philippine laws, specifically *Republic Act (RA) 7610* known as the *Special Protection of Children against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act*, guarantee the entitlement of the child to a number of rights and also mandates government institutions, specifically the court and the DSWD to perform the roles expected of them. The following provision under Section 25 stipulates the following:

Any child who has been arrested for reasons related to armed conflict, either as combatant, courier, guide or spy is entitled to the following rights:

- (a) separate detention cells from adults except where families are accommodated as family units;
- (b) immediate free legal assistance;
- (c) immediate notice of arrest to the parents or guardians; and
- (d) the release of the child on recognizance within 24 hours to the custody of the Department of Social Welfare and Development or any responsible member of the community as determined by the court.

If after hearing the evidence in the proper proceedings, the court should find that the aforesaid child has committed the acts charged against him, instead of pronouncing judgment of conviction, the court shall suspend all further proceedings and shall commit such child to the custody or care of the Department of Social Welfare and Development or to any training institution operated by the government, or duly licensed agencies or any other responsible person, until he has reached eighteen (18) years of age or for shorter period as the court may deem proper, after considering the reports and the recommendation of the Department of Social Welfare and Development or the agency or responsible individual under whose care has been committed. The aforesaid child shall be subject to visitation and supervision by a representative of the Department of Social Welfare and Development. (RA 7610 Sec.25)

At DSWD, the persons directly responsible for the provision of services and the management of cases of child soldiers or CIAC are the social workers assigned in the residential centers or in the field or community. This group of professionals bring into their work their own perspectives, values and beliefs on problem situations, aside from the social work education and training and the agency's procedures or guidelines in doing things or implementing programs and services for CIAC. My study attempts to explore and analyze the perspectives of this group of social workers about certain issues concerning the child soldier phenomenon in the country and social work practice with child soldiers.

Motivation and Justification

My interest in the abovementioned topic stems out of several factors which I simply categorize as personal and professional. Personal reasons include my desire to contribute something to the understanding of a particular phenomenon that affects children in my own country, the Philippines. Working with this sector has been one of my unfulfilled interests probably because the work I have been exposed to through the years of being in the government social welfare department is focused on the women's sector. I have seen this research as an opportunity to fulfil this personal desire to understand children. I am also inspired by my two kids, Ivan and Ronelle, who remind me of the other children who fail to enjoy their basic human rights for safety and well-being because their environment have prevented them from growing and developing.

Lastly, my professional background as a social worker and my experiences in social welfare work make me choose a topic that I can relate to. Although my work in DSWD as a social welfare program officer is different from the work done by my respondents who are social workers in the frontline of service, I still believe that there are common ties that bind us together. These are the values and principles, we as social workers are bound to uphold. Such values include the worth and dignity of individuals, social justice and respect for human rights. The same values and principles being challenged in an environment where human conditions such as the child soldiering seems to be the result of a complex interplay of various forces in the child's environment and where conventional social practice of helping seems inadequate to truly address the roots of human problems.

My search for previous studies on child soldiers lead me to some multi-country studies spearheaded mostly by international organizations advocating human rights and child's rights such as the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organization - International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC) and Save the Children International. One important international study on child soldiers is *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* done by Graca Machel

with support from the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and UNICEF. Studies on child soldiers in the context of the Philippines include the *Philippines Child Soldiers in Central and Western Mindanao: A Rapid Assessment* conducted by Rufa Cagoco-Guam for ILO-IPEC in 2002; the *Child Soldiers in the Philippines*- a study done by Makinano, Merliza in 2001; and the *Children Involved in the Armed Conflict in the Philippines: Case Study of Child Soldiers in the New People's Army* by Camacho, et.al. for UNICEF. All these studies encourage further research on child soldiers.

While my study also uses the topic of child soldier in the Philippines, it differs somehow from the previous studies done by other researchers because it explores the child soldier phenomenon from the perspective of social workers handling CIAC cases under DSWD. The cases of child soldiers under DSWD were not yet subjected to a systematic study.

Objectives

This study explores and analyzes how social workers directly working with child soldiers or the CIAC perceive the child soldier phenomenon as well as the issues and challenges the phenomenon posed in social work practice aiming to draw lessons and insights that will help improve current social work practice with the child soldiers.

Specifically the study aims to:

1. Come up with a picture of the child soldier phenomenon in the country from the perspectives of the social workers and the sample cases of child soldiers under DSWD;
2. Analyze the various factors or conditions contributing to the participation of children in armed conflict using an ecological and structural perspective;
3. Explore and analyze the issues and challenges surrounding the roles and responsibilities of the social workers, the interventions and services, the collaboration or multidisciplinary cooperation, in regards to social work practice with child soldiers; and

4. Draw lessons or insights that can contribute to the improvement of current social work practice.

Fifteen social workers under the different regional offices of DSWD who have direct experience in handling child soldier cases in center-based and/or community-based setting were interviewed. They discuss their engagement in the child soldier case/s, their assessment of the factors contributing to the emergence of child soldier phenomenon, their perception of the intervention or responses done/being done by them or by other entities in regard to the child soldier cases, and the issues or challenges affecting their professional practice. The information gathered from the subject respondents is validated and enriched using available case files or agency report and other written materials on the subject of child soldiering.

Definition of Terms

For the readers to have a clearer understanding of this study, the following terms were defined.

Child soldier. As used by international organizations like CSUCS and UNICEF, the term child soldier refers to any child - boy or girl—under 18 years of age, who is recruited compulsorily, by force or otherwise by an armed group with the intention of using him or her in combat or in other capacity, including, but not limited to: cooks, porters, messengers and sentries. The term “child soldiers” and “children in armed conflict” were used interchangeably in this study as it connotes similar meaning.

Armed conflict. It refers to warfare between the government armed forces and the organized rebel armed group, which usually disrupts the normal way of life of people in certain communities.

Social work. As stipulated in the 1965 Republic Act 4373, social work is defined as the “profession which is primarily concerned with organized social activity aimed to facilitate and strengthen basic relationships and the mutual adjustment between individuals and their social environment”.

Outline

Having outlined the background scenario, motivations, justifications and objectives as well as the important terms used, the succeeding information presents an overview of the succeeding chapters:

Chapter II further explores the child soldiering phenomenon in relation to the three important issues I deemed relevant to social work practice with child soldiers. These issues are the violation of children's rights, the multi-dimensional aspects of the phenomenon and the complex developmental risks in child soldiering. The discussion on children's rights is not complete without looking back at the evolution of the concept of children and child rights. This necessitated me to include information about several international humanitarian and human rights laws mandating the protection of children in armed hostilities such as the Geneva Conventions, Resolution 3318, Optional Protocol, Rome Statute, ILO Convention 182 and the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). The second issue concerns the nature of child soldiering as a multi-causal problem citing various factors that led the child to the armed group such as harsh life condition, proliferation and misuse of small arms, policies and priorities of the State, the political socialization of the children and other personal factors. The last issue discussed in this chapter is the various developmental risks on the physical, psychological, social and moral aspects of development when children participate in armed conflict.

Chapter III is a discussion about the ecological and structural perspectives in social work practice. The emphasis given to the two perspectives is done in relation to the complex nature of the child soldiering phenomenon where various factors or conditions in the child's environment have paved the way for child soldiering. The two perspectives are the frameworks used in the analysis of the findings discussed in the succeeding chapters, specifically Chapter V and VI.

Chapter IV is about the methodological approach used and the procedures/steps undertaken in the conduct of the research. I present the

methods and strategies used in determining my study sample, in preparing the research instrument and pre-testing it, in data collection, processing and analysis. I also include a discussion on the ethical concerns in the conduct of my research.

Chapter V is about the research findings on the child soldier phenomenon in the country from the perspectives of the respondents. The discussions are basically founded on the information gathered from the respondents and are “triangulated” and enriched from secondary sources such as the sample case files, previous researches and other written materials or reports relevant to the subject. The chapter also includes a brief background of the country’s internal armed conflict. Then the discussion progresses to the research findings on child soldiers that are analyzed using the ecological and structural framework. The findings are organized according to the micro and the macro picture of child soldiering. At the micro level, I present a picture of the child soldier, his/her family and the community where the child belongs. The sharing of the respondents and the information gathered from the sample case also reveals the roles performed by the child soldier in the armed group, their reasons for joining and the developmental toll of their participation and exposure in the conflict. At the macro level, I discuss and analyze the findings that relate to the wider and deeper context of the phenomenon. These include the social and cultural pressures, economic pressures, policies and priorities of the country with regards to the budget, militarization and globalization thrust. Likewise, discussions on displacement, human abuses and injustices are included as these also serve as critical factors in the child’s decision to participate in the armed conflict.

Chapter VI deals with the issues and challenges the phenomenon posed in social work practice with child soldiers. To situate the discussion on social work practice in the Philippines, I include background information on the history of welfare and social work practice in the country, information about the existing standards or legal basis for the protection and care of Filipino children and the system of governance and institutional collaboration in the country. The aforementioned information are relevant to the understanding of the research findings related to the issues and challenges in social work practice

because these are interconnected. The findings presented covers the issues and challenges along the social worker's roles and responsibilities, social worker's interventions and the services extended or facilitated, and the collaboration work with different organizations. I laid out the problems and difficulties encountered by the respondents in their work with the child soldier cases. The findings are interpreted and analyzed with reference to the ecological and structural approach in social work practice.

Chapter VII covers the research conclusions as well as the salient recommendations for the improvement of social work practice with the child soldiers and areas needing further research. The suggestions of the respondents as to the various ways to improve current social work practice with child soldiers also form part of this chapter.

CHAPTER II

CHILD SOLDIER PHENOMENON: EXPLORING THE ESSENTIAL ISSUES

*Our collective failure to protect children must be transformed into an
opportunity to confront the problems that cause their suffering.
The impact of armed conflict on children is everyone's responsibility.
And it must be everyone's concern.*

- Graca Machel, *The Impact of War on Children*

This chapter discusses in detail the essential issues involved in the use of children in armed conflict. While there are many issues that can be covered relating to the child soldier phenomenon, I limit my choice to three important issues which concerns social work practice. The issues include violation of child's rights in child soldiering, the nature of the child soldier phenomenon as a multidimensional problem and the various developmental risks involved when children participate in the armed groups.

The Violation of Child's Rights

Children's rights gained worldwide recognition during the 20th century with the ratification of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) by almost all nations. However, prior to this period children were not seen as a distinct group possessing specific rights of their own. Rather, they were seen in terms of their use for reproduction of class, transmission of culture, maintenance of political stability and a source of labour for their families and communities (Hawes and Hiner, 1991). Alaimo (2002) believed that the evolving understanding of childhood and children were related to the changing concepts and practices of children's rights. She claimed that the provision rights emerged in the 19th century and the participation rights were a result of the strong human rights movement of the later 20th century. The protection rights had a much longer history. Landsown (1994) broadly categorized these rights into three: provision, protection, and participation rights. The provision rights include the rights

to minimum standards of life and access to parental care, health, education, social security, physical care, play, recreation, culture and leisure. The protection rights include the rights to be safe and free from physical abuse, sexual abuse, exploitation, substance abuse, injustice, conflict and discrimination. The participation rights cover civil and political rights to a name and identity, physical integrity, information, expression of views/opinions, and the rights to be consulted, taken into account and challenge decisions made on their behalf.

Evolving Concept of Children and Child's Rights

Before world war I. In early modern times, children were seen as willful and sinful. The worries or fears stemmed out of the belief that the unprotected child might become a liability to the community in the future. Hence, strict control and discipline were enforced as a form of protection of children from harm and a way of maintaining social cohesion. Ozment (as cited in Alaimo, 2002, p. 4) wrote that in the 16th century, rearing and educating children were not seen as rights of children but as a way of preparing them to be "social beings" so that they can fulfill their duties towards their parents and the society. Tower (2002) has said that children were even regarded as property of their parents. They could be sold by their parents as slaves or forced to work beyond their abilities in mining sites, factories and farms. Others were placed in indentures - a colonial apprenticeship system, where corporal punishment inflicted by the "masters" on the child apprentice was an accepted form of discipline.

At the turn of the 18th century or the Enlightenment period, there was a strong focus on childhood education and the ways in which children learn. Some of the known Enlightenment thinkers were John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau. One of Locke's (as cited in Alaimo, 2002) well-known ideas was man's *blank state* of mind, where all knowledge were presumed to stems out of experience. With this theory, Locke claimed that education played a big role in the molding of the child citing that " 'nine parts of ten are

what they are- good or evil, useful or not, by their education' ” (p.10). Locke also gave importance to a child's individuality and rationality and rejected the use of corporal punishment in raising children. Rousseau (as cited in Alaimo, 2002), on the other hand, emphasized the natural process of child development stating that “ ‘nature intends that children shall be children before they are men’ ”. He implied that children have rights to a happy childhood, where there is “more freedom and closeness to nature” (p.10).

The Romantic era covering the late 18th and early 19th century supported Rousseau's view of an innocent, natural, carefree and happy childhood instead of the Lockean emphasis on utilitarian education (Alaimo, 2002). The Romantic writers described childhood as the best part of life, which let children see truth and beauty. But this idealization had not influenced much the child rearing practices of that period, where habit formation continued to be the focus. During the French Revolution era, the revolutionaries attempted to lessen the power of the family patriarch and created a new place for children. The examples of this attempt were the legislative proposals during that time which advocated for equal inheritance rather than primogeniture or the right of the eldest son to inherit all the property of his parents, a liberal divorce law and the removal of distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate children. But the efforts did not result to much change in the legal situation of children because the fathers still retained their authority or control over their children until a certain age of maturity (Alaimo, 2002, pp.11-13).

Alaimo (2002) described the turn of the 19th century as the age of “child saving” (p. 13). During this period, many philanthropists were working for the protection of children. Social movements working for various causes affecting children relative to work, law and education were also in full swing. Edmonds and Fernekes (1996) had cited that the middle and upper class philanthropists or “child savers” continued to support the social movements. These child savers were responsible in the setting up of *orphan trains* replacing the early 19th century workhouses used in the indenture of children. Eventually, the State's authorities with their trained

professional child savers replaced the progressive Reformers. The State played persistently its major role of *parens patriae*, introducing state-sponsored child saving measures and bringing under its care not only the deprived but practically all the children of the State. The rights of the children for protection expanded to their rights for provision of service. The concept of childhood continued to evolve encompassing the development of the child's physical, moral, intellectual and social aspects.

After world war I. Children's rights were brought into the international arena after World War I. The League of Nations, the predecessor of the United Nations, adopted in 1924 the declaration of children's rights known as the "Declaration of Geneva". Freeman (1996) commented that "the child saving movement which caused the setting up of orphanages, the juvenile court and the modern school were all concerned with the children's welfare and protection, rather than with the child as an individual" (p. 1). The image of children as an autonomous person came out towards the end of the 19th century in the writings of Kate Douglas Wiggin of USA and Janusz Korczak of Poland. However, Freeman further commented that the concept of children as autonomous persons was not incorporated in the drafting of the Geneva Declaration. He argued that the concern of the Declaration was still focused on the protection of children against harm and on the access of children to basic entitlements such as education and health care.

After World War II, the United Nations came up with international standards on human rights. In 1948, the proclamation of Universal Declaration of Human Rights became the cornerstone of the International Bill of Rights for all people. However, Freeman (1996) argued that since the Geneva Declaration did not specifically identify the groups who may be in need of additional rights such as women and children, the drafters of the UN Declaration and the large number of non-government organizations who were consulted and became part of the drafting of the Declaration had pursued a separate stipulation of children's rights. The arguments for the separate declaration of children's rights were founded on the vulnerability of

children and their role as inheritors of the future. As a result, the 1924 original Declaration of the Rights of the Child was revised in 1959. Freeman (1996) cited that the new Declaration, which is wider in scope than the original, was still focused on protection and welfare. The child's autonomy, wishes and feelings and the importance of their empowerment were still not recognized. He said "the child remains an object of concern, rather than a person with self-determination" (p. 3). Similar observation was cited by Cohen (2002, p. 15) commenting that the words used in the Declaration reflect the worldview of children as "object" in need of "services". For the critics, the Declaration was a "child-caring" instrument that sustains the systematic denial of the child's rights for participation.

Children's rights for self-determination and involvement in decision making thrived during the strong liberation movement in the 1970's. Among the advocates of child's rights were Robert Ollendorf who advanced the right of the adolescent to self-determination and participation in decision-making; and Richard Farson who asserted that the root of all other rights of children was the right to self-determination (Freeman, 1996). In 1978, a year before the celebration of the International Year of the Child, Poland pressed for the conversion of the 1959 Declaration into a Convention since the new Declaration was more a statement of principles rather than an enforceable legal document that could be used to legally bind nations to implement the rights of children. The draft Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was presented by Poland to the United Nation Commission on Human Rights during the celebration of the International Year of the Child in 1979. As a result, the UN solicited comments from other nations, inter-government agencies and non-government organizations and created a working group responsible for the drafting. Adam Lopatka of Poland became the Chairman of the working group.

Cohen (2002) cited that the CRC was considered to be ten years in the making although its actual formal drafting time is less than four hundred hours. Cohen added that within the ten year period of making the CRC, from 1979 to 1989, the world's image of the child was "transformed from

that of an 'object recipient of services' to an 'individual personality' with the right to act and to express an opinion" (p. 15). The UN General Assembly adopted the text of the Convention without modification on November 20, 1989. It took effect as an international law on September 2, 1990 and became the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. I will return on the provision of the 1989 UNCROC in the succeeding discussion under the international human rights law.

Children's Rights in the International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law

Children have the rights to be protected during armed conflict. The rights are contained in the two bodies of international law: the humanitarian law and the human rights law. The international humanitarian law, commonly known as the law of war or armed conflict "seeks to regulate the methods and means of warfare and the treatment of people in times of war, who are not, or who no longer (e.g. prisoners of war, or injured soldiers), participate in the hostilities" (Harvey, [n.d]). Examples of the law of war are the Geneva Conventions, the Optional Protocols and the Hague Conventions. On the other hand, international human rights law "seeks to regulate the way States treat people who are in their jurisdiction" (Harvey, [n.d]). An example of this law is the 1989 UNCROC.

1949 Geneva Conventions. The protection of children is specifically contained in the Fourth Convention of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The other provisions of this most significant humanitarian law also relate to recent warfare. The 1st Geneva Convention addresses the treatment and protection of members of the armed forces who are wounded and sick in the field; Geneva Convention II is about the treatment and protection of members of the armed forces who are shipwrecked or wounded and sick at sea; Geneva Convention III includes the treatment and protection of prisoners of war and the Geneva Convention IV is on the treatment and protection of civilian persons in times of war, occupation and internment. The Fourth Convention is the first treaty that exclusively sought the

protection of civilians during armed conflict and its provisions for children are contained under the following articles: Article 23 - free passage of food, medicines and clothing intended for children; Article 24 - attention for orphaned children and those separated from their families; and Article 14 - the establishment of hospitals and safety zones for the protection of vulnerable groups such as women and children.

Although there were very few provisions for children in the said Convention, it is nevertheless a binding commitment as the Convention is now considered to be customary international law. This means that even the countries which does not ratify the Convention are bound to observe its stipulations. However, Harvey (n.d.) has cited that the Convention is said to be “insufficient and inadequate” in a situation of internal conflict.

Resolution 3318 and the Optional Protocols. The concern for the protection of women and children at times of internal conflict gained international attention when the UN General Assembly adopted in 1974 the “Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict” in Resolution No. 3318. Then in the succeeding year, two additional protocols to the Geneva Convention were drafted and adopted. Protocol I was a landmark achievement as it was the first binding international document to address the issue of child soldiers. It contained provisions for the entitlement of the child to education, reunification with families, removal from conflict zones to safe areas, separate detention cells and exclusion from death penalty. Aside from the cited provisions, the second Protocol (II) contained new provisions for the protection of children against recruitment in armed groups whether in the government or non-government armies. It also raised the minimum age for compulsory recruitment from fifteen to eighteen years old and prevented the participation of children below the age of eighteen in armed conflict. It also stipulated the protection of all civilians in armed conflict including the soldiers who ceased to take part in the hostilities. The Protocol II came into force on Feb. 12, 2002 and to date 109 countries had signed and thirty-five had ratified it.

One loophole seen in the Protocol was its seemingly “double standard” in the age of recruitment. For non-government forces, the age limit for non-participation of children was set at eighteen. However, the application of the provision to the state armed groups seemed unclear as it gave the States more leeway to make a declaration on the age for voluntary recruitment. Critics saw this loophole as a reason for some States to justify their recruitment of minors as happened in the United Kingdom, which signed the Protocol but maintained its intention to use those younger than 18 in the battlefield when the need arises. This could be the reason why UNICEF had strongly advocated for the “*straight 18*” ban on the direct and indirect participation of those below eighteen years old in armed conflict regardless of what kinds of armed groups recruit the children.

ILO Convention 182 and Rome Statute. Another landmark achievement supporting the standards set by the Optional Protocols was *Convention 182* of the *International Labour Organization*. The ILO had classified the use of child soldiers as a “worst form of child labour” and used eighteen as the minimum age limit for the recruitment of children in armed conflict. Under Article 3 of the said ILO Convention, the worst forms of child labor consisted of:

(a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict ; (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties; d) work which, by its nature or the circumstance in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children (ILO, Text of the Convention).

The ILO Convention 182 was adopted in June 1999 at the 87th conference of ILO in Geneva. A related development was the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court in July 2002, making the conscription, enlistment or use of under fifteen year olds a war crime.

1989 UNCROC. A significant international human rights law the 1989 *United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC)*, guaranteed the child's entitlement to the whole range of human rights - civic, political, economic, social and cultural regardless of class, gender, ethnicity, race or other distinction of any kind. The participation of children in an armed group violated their basic human rights. In some countries children were abducted, kidnapped, or press-ganged from the streets, schools and even orphanages, just as happened in Ethiopia, Myanmar, Uganda and Sri Lanka (Machel, 1996). Undoubtedly, the participation of children in armed conflict jeopardized their health and safety as they could be killed, injured and traumatized in their exposure or participation in conflict. It also damaged their moral development particularly those who had suffered from sexual abuse and other acts of violence.

Machel (1996) has said that children's performance of their roles while in the armed group, whether it be simple, such as delivering political pamphlets, or complex, such as arms courier, spy or combatant, all put them at risk. The initial supporting roles, according to Machel, "would not take long before they (children) are placed in the battle" (p. 13). Cairns (1996) stressed that what was crucial in the child's participation in armed conflict is the natural progression on the child's role where:

even in a relatively innocuous activities, the young person almost certainly grows in his or her commitment to the group and its ideals. This is because this period involves a period of learning by doing during which core values are developed (p. 132).

UNCROC also obligated all State parties to ensure that all existing national laws, policies and practices would be in accordance with its principles. UNCROC *Article 38* explicitly stated the responsibility of the State Party to undertake all feasible measures to ensure that persons who had not reached the age of 15 must not take part in direct hostilities and that the government armed forces should refrain from recruiting these children. Likewise, *Article 39* stipulated the obligation of the State to

provide the child victims of armed conflict and any form of torture, neglect, maltreatment and exploitation, with appropriate measures for their recovery and reintegration in an environment conducive to their health, self-respect and dignity.

The Multidimensional Aspect of the Phenomenon

Children's participation in an armed movement could be by choice or by force. However, Machel (1996) argued that the children's seemingly "voluntary" participation in armed forces, paramilitary groups, militia or civil defense force or an armed opposition groups was "misleading" as the child's decision to participate can be due to "pressures" relating to economic, cultural, social and political factors. Some of the factors paving the way for child soldiering were discussed but none of the factors mentioned in this chapter stood entirely on their own as the only pressure for the participation of children in armed conflict. Rather, several of the "pressures" in every level - family, community and society, worked in combination with one another and created more compelling reasons for children and their families to participate in the armed group.

Personal factors. Cairns (1996) in his book - *Children and Political Violence*, cited the views of several authors like Post and Punamaki to understand young people's involvement in a political conflict. One view was that of Post who argued that young people involved in such conflict tend to "have one or all of the personality traits of being action oriented, aggressive and /or sensation seekers" (p. 120). This view, according to her, was also held by Punamaki who did an observation of the young people in the Middle East. However, unlike Post, Punamaki gave emphasis to the connections with the social and cultural climate prevailing during the period of development of the young people in the development of their aggressive response. Cairns (1996, pp. 120 -124) further related this to Taylos' "critical element" or "an opportunity to join a terrorist group" and that of Merkles' view on the "failure of early bonding process" as a factor in young people's participation in political conflict. Others were motivated to

join because they get something out of joining such as money, prestige or glamour, sense of power and belongingness. For some, being part of a political conflict was a way of relieving boredom. According to McKendrick and Hoffman (as cited in Cairns, 1996, p. 129), a personal experience of victimization or by just being a witness to violent behaviour and attitudes that were unpunished or positively sanctioned also contributed to the political socialization of the child.

Harsh Life Situation. Armed conflict created a life condition that was difficult for people, whether they were involved in the conflict or not. According to Staub (1989), "difficult life conditions and certain cultural characteristics had generated psychological processes and motives that led a group to turn against another group"(p. 13). During hard times, there were needs and goals that had to be satisfied and failure to do so posed threats not only on the physical but also on the psychological self. Physical self referred to motives to protect one's life and safety and psychological self, to one's self-concept, values and way of life. War, hostility and political violence, as well as extreme economic difficulties such as poverty, pose a threat to people's life and safety. These also disrupted people's normal way of life and created a chaotic situation that threatens people's worldview and understanding of reality. Usually at this point, ideology became attractive because it afforded new worldview or ways of understanding reality and gave people hope and faith in the future.

Poverty was one harsh situation affecting children. UNICEF (2000) claimed that "the world has more children living in poverty now than it did 10 years ago. It is unstable and more violent than it was in 1990" (p. 9). Despite the increase in the world economy, the number of people living in poverty was growing and was believed to reach more than 1.2 billion, half of the poor were children. A study conducted by Brett and McCallin (as cited in Hoiskar, 2001) described the typical child soldier as poor, regardless of the way they were recruited. Similar observation was cited too by Machel (1996) claiming that the child soldiers were likely to come from "impoverished and marginalized background and those who had

become separated from their families”(p.11). A related inquiry into the use of child soldiers by Hoiskar (2001) showed that “ the employment of child soldiers under 15 is closely connected to poverty at the national level” (p. 351). In the rapid assessment of child soldiers in some parts of South, Central and Western Mindanao in the Philippines, Guiam (2002) pointed out a combination of two major factors paving the way for child soldiering, these were “ abject poverty and marginalization” (p. 15).

Political Beliefs/Ideologies. Cairns (1996) argued that institutions like the family and schools had critical roles in the “political socialization” of children (p.124). In some politically active families, naming their children after political leaders or fallen comrades was a subtle way of forming the child’s political views. Machel (1996) claimed that some parents offer their children for service as a result of certain pressures such as the duty inculcated by the society from its citizen to fight for its country, the lure of certain ideology and the religious belief. Barner-Barry and Rosenwein (as cited in Cairns, 1996, p.124) argued that the family’s influence on the political socialization of the children is possible under restricted conditions, such as “parents share the same political views, that politics was important to both parents and that finally the child perceived that politics was important to his/her parents”.

Likewise, the school could become a fertile ground in the cultivation of the child’s political views. Machel (1996) indicated in her report that there were schools and military academies that served as venues for recruitment of children such as in some Islamic *madrasas (schools teaching Islam)* in Pakistan that apparently became the source of child soldiers for the Taliban force in 1997 and 1998(pp. 7-12). Adams (as cited in Cairn, 1996, p. 128) claimed that in areas where social structures, for example the schools, were destroyed, what flourished is a certain kind of “people’s education”, which often stressed the fight for freedom through revolution. Cohn and Goodwill-Gill (as cited in Hoiskar, 2001, p. 343) in their study of why children participated in armed conflict as soldiers, cited

related factors such as class discrimination, children's enthusiasm, submission to authority and need for belongingness.

State policies and priorities. When a nation is engaged in conflict regardless of whether this is internal or external, the country spends more of its budget in efforts related to the strengthening of its military/armed forces rather than in services related to the welfare of its civilian population. Cairns (1996) cited that this imbalance in government budget was more apparent in the poorer countries where the increase in military spending since 1990 has been "seven fold" compared to "two and a half times" increase worldwide (p.12). This means less money to spend for basic services e.g. health and education, for a large majority of the civilian population.

Aside from the imbalance in government budget, several factors cited by Machel (2001) as contributory to the child soldiering problem also related to the State's policies. These were the policies on the recruitment of under eighteen years of age in the government armies and para-military groups; the lack of or inadequate birth registration system which hindered age assessment of some children; and the limited or non-existent educational opportunities.

Proliferation and misuse of small arms. The widespread proliferation and misuse of small arms like rifles, carbines, revolvers, self-loading pistols, assault rifles, sub-machine guns were also regarded as a factor in child soldiering. The international arms trade made arms affordable even to poorest countries. An AK-47 automatic machine gun could be purchased in Uganda for a price similar to a chicken or to the cost of a goat in Kenya (Machel, 1996, p.10). In the *Small Arms Survey 2004: Rights at Risk* which provided an annual global analysis of issues relating to small arms, salient concerns regarding the subject were discussed. This included the gradual leakage of weapons as a result of negligence and theft, the threat posed by light missile-launching weapons against aircraft which was known as MANPADS, the reluctance of many governments to be transparent on information regarding their arms trade which blocked accurate

measurement of arms transfer and the non-adherence to policing standards. All these were risk factors to the security and safety of an individual and the society. The arms survey further indicated that the States with serious violation of human rights are more likely to have no major problems in procuring small arms and light weapons. UNICEF (2001) claimed that death and disability due to small arms and light weapons were apparently higher than any other kind of weapons. The proliferation and unregulated use of the small and light weapons and their use in settling disputes in society had “fuelled the culture of violence” and made “children come to regard the weapons as necessary for safety and security”.

The Developmental Risks

Whether children are direct participants in the conflict or are mere witnesses to it, they are affected in many ways and in varying degrees. According to Cairns (1996), research relating to the impact of political violence on civilians particularly children, has received little attention. He claimed that in the past, there was no attention given at all to this subject partly because of how society regarded children, that is, not a full member of society or because of the difficulty in focusing their studies on war participants. In the recent century, Cairns observed that there is imbalance in the research profile as more research was done on military psychiatry than on effects of war to civilians. This imbalance was attributed to the aim of those countries in war to protect their image or propaganda effort. Societies have preferred to use their resources to strengthen their armed forces rather than conduct research on the impact of war to civilians because the society wanted to avoid results that would show an image of a weak citizenry. While there were emerging efforts to study the impact of war to children or civilians, Cairns claimed that the growth “has been slow and the development patchy. Part of the problem is that researchers are thin on the ground particularly in societies where political violence is prevalent -mainly in the Third World” (p. 26).

The following are the discussion of some of the impact of the child's participation in armed conflict in terms of their physical, emotional, psychological, social and moral development.

Physical risks. Muscroft (2002) says that the most immediate impact of the use of child soldiering is the violation of the rights of the child to life. The most blatant impact of armed conflict is death. Many children die as they try to resist recruitment, escape punishment, or are unable to perform the tasks laid upon them. While other children may escape death, they nevertheless suffer injuries which claim their limbs, hearing, sight or other vital body structure and organs leaving them disabled for life. Such forms of disablement in the early years also have an impact on the child's life prospects in later years. The other risk is exposure to malnutrition and health hazards that goes with the child's involvement in the armed group. There is also a possibility of acquiring sexually transmitted diseases and having deformed bones due to demands of physical strengths from the child or due to the intake of drugs and alcohol.

Emotional and psychological risks. The difficult life situations in the armed group and the psychological processes that arise from it affect the child's psychological and emotional development. Groves (2002) claimed that "traumatic events initiated by humans carry more psychological risks than do natural disasters. The fact that humans carry out the violence seems to add an extra element of terror for children" (p. 18). Writing about her experiences in the Child Witness to Violence Project, Groves shared two basic lessons on how early exposure to violence affects young children. She says that violence "changes the emotional landscape for children by distorting their emerging view of the world and their place in it" and that "young children's understanding of events is shaped by their cognitive development" (p. 31). While the changes in emotional landscape can be temporary for some children, for others it may become permanent and provide a foundation for behavioral and emotional problems in the future. Since a child's cognitive skills are under process of development, "careful adult explanation" helps a lot on how the child will appraise the

event or the reality. Fraser and Lidell et al., (as cited in Cairns, 1996, p. 51) also have similar views claiming that it is “the child’s interpretation of the event” and not the event itself that is critical in determining children’s reaction to a political conflict. Some of the early empirical studies in the subject, such as those done by Dudson; Lidell, et al., Milgram & Milgram (as cited in Cairns, 1996) have implied that not all children exposed to political violence have suffered serious psychological effects. Usually the proportion of those affected was much smaller compared with those who were seen to be resilient. Results, according to Cairns (1996) “tended to be interpreted positively” hence inquiry leans more on the “resiliency of the majority” rather than on the “suffering of the minority” (p. 51).

Moreover, the symptoms demonstrated by children exposed to similar political violence also vary. Chiementi’s study (as cited in Cairns, 1996, p. 33) of children in war-torn Lebanon cited screaming, shouting, crying, hyperactivity as symptoms while Dawes, et. al and Kinzie’s, et al., (as cited in Cairns, 1996, p. 33) study of child refugees in South Africa and Cambodia, respectively, cited symptoms which fall under the DSM III category of post traumatic stress disorder.

The psychological impact of exposure to political or armed conflict can be understood, too, by looking at the interplay of appraisal and coping processes. Cairns (1996) explained the association of appraisal and coping using the “stress and coping framework” citing that “the psychological outcome of a stressful experience depends on the way the stressor is evaluated [appraisal] and the strategy used to deal with it [coping] (pp. 49-50).” Staub (1989) claimed that a common psychological coping process adopted by human beings faced with difficult life situations are through devaluation and scapegoating. When people regards other group of people as inferior to them for various reasons such as race, color, social class, religion and gender, they are paving the way for harm doing or “just-world thinking” which justifies why other groups deserve to suffer. It is also a form of scapegoat where one group blames non-members or the out-group for their situation. Blaming others is a coping mechanism designed

to lessen one's feeling of guilt and solidify one's feeling of oneness with members of the in-group. Devaluation, on the other hand, is a coping to boost up one's low self-esteem. Other ways of coping are through belonging to a group because it gives one a new sense of identity as a group and a sense of connectedness to people who share similar views. Denial/distancing is also seen as a form of coping.

Bat-Zion and Levy-Shiff (as cited in Cairns, 1996, p. 50) claimed that the appraisal process in children is usually dependent on "parental emotional cues". Groves (2002) in her experiences with their Child Witness to Violence Project learned that the child's reaction to a particular stressful situation is also dependent on how the child's caregiver responds to the event, such that "if a parent is terrified or hysterical, this response will carry more power than the specifics of the scary event" (p. 19). Park, Cohen and Herb (as cited in Cairns, p. 53) stressed the influence of religion and political beliefs in the child's interpretation of an event and coping. The child's strong political commitment was seen as a coping strategy and was observed to "enhance self esteem" (McWhirter, as cited in Cairns, p. 54), or provide protection to the child during exposure to low-level political conflict (Punamaki, as cited in Cairns, p. 55).

Social risks. Armed conflict also impacts on the social relationship of the child. Myers-Walls (2003) cited that "growing up in war zones disrupts attachment relationships and leads to emotional exhaustion because of the constant exposure to fear, hatred and loss" (pp. 44-46). According to her, studies done by Carlsmith and Freud & Burlingham, showed that "children were more damaged by the separation from parents or by the parents' and other relatives' own reaction to stress than by the situation themselves". This relates to the observation of Punamaki (as cited in Myers-Walls) that a child's close contact with her/his most important attachment figures helps lessen the impact of war on them. In another study, Punamaki (as cited in Cairns, 1996, p. 47) cited that a stable parent is a crucial protective factor to the child in times of stressful events "but only at moderate or low levels of political conflict". A related observation was

cited by John, (as cited in Cairns, p. 48) claiming that “children suffered fewer problems if they were billeted with their siblings” and that aside from the parents, other members of the family such as the child’s grandparents can be a source of “emotional security during times of political violence” (Protacio-Marcelino, as cited in Cairns, p. 48). The importance of secure attachment relationship or a “secure base” with the child’s significant others in her “ecological social environment” is one of the three “fundamental building blocks” to resilience, according to Gilligan (as cited in Daniel & Wassel, 2002, p. 13). Secure base, according to Daniel & Wassel (2002) is an attachment relationship “whereby the young person feels a sense of belonging and security” (p. 13). The need to belong to a group is an accepted human need. According to Punamaki (as cited in Cairns) “children perhaps caught up on the fringes of political violence. . .[find] ‘their personal happiness dependent primarily on the collective well-being and political success’” (p. 55).

Staub (1989) claimed that research in human psychology shows that humans have a tendency to “divide the world into ‘us’ and ‘them’” or an in-group and an out-group (p.58). This distinction can be understood in relation to the concept of attachment, socialization and social categorization. Attachment concept supports the idea that humans have the natural tendency to form attachment relationship; however, its quality varies from one to another. Howe, et al., (as cited in Daniels and Wassel, 2002) has cited four kinds of attachments patterns: secure, avoidant, ambivalent and disorganized which are basically a product of the “young person’s sense of self and his/her experiences of others” (p. 28). He summarizes the pattern as follows:

Self (loved, effective, autonomous and competent) + other people (available, cooperative and dependable) = secure attachment pattern.

Self (unloved but self-reliant) + other people (rejecting and intrusive) = avoidant attachment patterns

Self (low value, ineffective and dependent) + other people (neglecting, insensitive, unpredictable and unreliable) = ambivalent attachment patterns

Self (confused and bad) + other people (frightening and unavailable) = disorganized attachment patterns

A secure attachment provides a sense of connection to others, which is a vital element for one to have an emphatic and caring attitude. However, in an in-group and out-group differentiation, the scope of the caring and empathic attitude will be limited only to those who are “similar, accepted and valued” by the group where an individual belongs (Staub, 1998, p. 59). This also relates to the “categorization” people make, on the basis of race, religion, wealth, power, status and political views. Stereotypes, which are oftentimes negative, are based on categorization. This social categorization and the social identity processes were seen by Tajfel (as cited in Cairns, 1996,p.7) as “critical links in the development of intergroup conflict”.

Socialization and the child’s experiences intensify the categorization or differentiation process. As stated earlier, the family, the school and other social institutions in the child’s social environment can serve as agents in the political socialization of the children and these same institutions can also reinforce the “us” and “them” differentiation. This differentiation devalues those who are not part of the in-group and makes mistreatment of people acceptable. The dehumanizing process may take place in what Death (as cited in Cairns, 1996) has termed as ‘moral splitting’ wherein a person “consider oneself as a moral person even while one engages in what would normally be considered depraved actions” (p.133).

Moral risks. There are two contrasting views on the impact of political violence on the moral development of the children. One view supports the argument that there is positive impact, that is, development of enhanced capacity for “sensitivity and moral astuteness”, as claimed by Garbarino, et al. (as cited in Cairns, 1996). The other view upholds the common belief that its impact will be otherwise, that is, socialization will be problematic. Punamaki (as cited in Cairns,p.144) argued that children’s

socialization won't succeed in a situation based on "hate" and the "denial of human values" apparent in political conflict.

A person's moral value orientation can be differentiated as rule-centered or person-centered. Staub (1989) cited that a "rule centered" moral orientation places importance on "norms, conventions and the maintenance of society" while the "person-centered" orientation focuses on the well-being of individual or the group. Both orientations can be found in humans regardless of gender, although Gilligan (as cited in Staub) believed that "rule centered orientation is dominant in males and person centered in females" (p. 57).

As persons grew up or mature, their moral reasoning is also expected to develop. Kohlberg (as cited in Daniel and Wassel, 2002) classified human moral reasoning into certain kind of levels broadly categorized as pre-conventional, conventional and post conventional or principled level. A pre-conventional level of moral reasoning is apparently typical of young children, usually up to age 9, who would be likely base their actions on the concept of rewards and punishment and would likely strive for the satisfaction of personal interests without any regard to societal rules or conventions. The conventional level, on the other hand, places importance on what is an approved behaviour or actions acceptable to other people, particularly the significant others in a person's life. There is a developing sense of trust, loyalty and justice. This level of moral reasoning is likely to be shown by young people "from middle childhood and into adolescence and often beyond childhood" (Daniel and Wassel, p.160). The post-conventional level or the principled level is a moral reasoning founded on the principles of justice, fairness, the sanctity of human life. Moral behaviour is justified on the basis of these universal human principles, which sometimes goes beyond other reasons for actions, for example laws and norms. Staub (1989) believed that the person-centered or pro-social moral orientation holds similar values to that of Kohlberg's principled level or moral reasoning.

A person's behaviour towards others is influenced not only by his moral foundation/orientation but also by the moral value orientation of the group/community or the society where he/she belongs, both of which may differ in moral orientation. In many cases, individual value orientations are subsumed in favor of the values held by the group where the person identifies him/herself with the value orientation dominant in a society. Staub (1989) claimed that "the greater the demands a group makes on its members and the more it guides their lives, the more completely the members can relinquish their burdensome identity and assume a group identity" (p. 49). As in the case of some child soldiers, their moral value orientation reflects moral values upheld by their family or the group where they belong.

Other related risks. Other personal factors such as age, sex and personality are explored to have an in-depth effect on children's reaction to political violence. The age factor is studied by Bodmans and Lyons (as cited in Cairns, 1996, p.36), and both conclude that age does not make one immune to the effects of traumatic events. Bodman has claimed that there is a similar pattern of symptoms at a certain age level such that a traumatized infant and pre-schooler will demonstrate symptoms like irritability, sleep problem, diarrhea, and separation anxiety, except that the latter will act it out in play while the school age children show symptoms that may fall under a typical PTSD, like nightmares. In the case of the adolescence, some symptoms include withdrawal and aggressiveness. With regards to gender, Punamaki (as cited in Cairns, 1996, p. 37) has claimed that generally boys are seen as highly vulnerable when exposed to varied stressors relating to political violence. However, the opposite is observed by Schwarzwald (as cited in Cairns, p. 37) in her study of some fifth graders in Israel exposed to Scud missile attacks during the Gulf War, making findings on the relation of gender to political violence "even more confusing". As to personality, children with weak personality are seen to be more at risk on the impact of political violence. It is believed that emotional impact is seen as hardest on those who are classified as introvert while the aggressiveness is seen to be adopted more by the extroverts (Punamaki,

as cited in Cairns, p. 39). Many of the studies according to Cairns, are able to “make some educated guesses” but were difficult to draw conclusion, as there is little empirical evidence to support the association of variables being studied.

Summary

This chapter has shown that the child soldier phenomenon is not a simple participation of children in armed conflict. It is a phenomenon that touches on the essential issues of the concept of children and their rights as human beings. History has shown that prior to the respect of children as having a right of their own, they are first regarded as an object and subject of their parents or other adults. Their value is seen in terms of the need they can fill for their parents and their society, such as the reproduction of class, transmission of culture, maintenance of political stability and source of labor for the family and the community. As society changes, so does the concept of childhood and child’s rights. From mere objects, children are now regarded in the international community as those endowed with a whole range of rights enjoyed by other human beings. The concept of child’s rights for provision and protection will be incomplete without acknowledging the rights of the child for participation. All these rights are at great risk of being violated when they are caught in armed conflict, much more when they are engage in it. The developmental risks will not be limited then to physical risk but will also create risk on other aspects of human development, psychologically, emotionally, socially and morally. The wide ranging impact to the child of her/his participation in armed conflict can be fully understood in the light of the issue of the phenomenon’s multi-dimensional aspects. The various dimensions of the phenomenon relate to personal, economic, political, cultural spheres where factors that compel or influence the child to take part in the armed movement can be found. This includes poverty, political beliefs of family, state policies and priorities, to cite a few.

The issues discussed provided me with a good grasp of the child soldier phenomenon in the international scene, which relate or differ from my research findings in my own country, the Philippines. The social workers should know basically the three issues earlier discussed in this chapter, and the ecological and structural dimensions of a social problem. A knowledge of these issues and dimensions is important to the holistic approach in understanding the phenomenon and to the social work practice, thus, these are given focus in the preceeding chapters (III).

CHAPTER III

THE ECOLOGICAL AND STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

"Families should not be allowed to decide for children in ways that cut off the possibility of an open future for them— that is the possibility of their making real choices about the kind of life they want to live when they are adults."

-Joel Feinberg

As cited in Chapter II, there are forces or conditions internal and external to the child that pave the way for their participation in armed conflict. In depth analysis of the phenomenon will lead one to its ecological and its structural roots. The interrelatedness of the individual and his/her social environment or the "private" and "public" issues, has become an important concept in many disciplines, which aim to understand human situation. One such discipline is social work.

The child soldier phenomenon is multi-dimensional and one needs to look at every dimension and the existing forces "within" and "across" the various dimensions. The holistic approach to sorting out a problem or a phenomenon is a key factor behind the ecological and structural framework in social work practice. The ecological framework seems inadequate to explain alone a certain phenomenon. This is because the ecological approach cannot provide any causal explanations for a problem or situation at the structural level (Mullaly, 1997). Hence, I have included the structural approach in social work practice. The theories behind the ecological and structural framework have couched my analysis of the phenomenon.

The Ecological Framework

Person-environment concept. Social work as a profession has that “dual” commitment to helping individuals with problem and changing the environment that causes or perpetuates that person’s problem. According to Germain (1979) this dual commitment to helping people and changing the environment or the person-environment concept is not that easy to implement in the early years of social work because of the “absence of knowledge from which action principles could be derived for intervening in situations” (p. 3). The development in the 1950’s in the area of social science particularly the concept of social role, social class, ethnicity, family structure, deviance and bureaucratic organizations, as well as the development in psychology of new ideas about the ego and its relation with the environment, have influenced social work practice. One such influence is in terms of the importance given to an individual’s performance of his/her social roles or what social work refers to as the *social functioning* of the individual. While this idea in social science has undoubtedly contributed to social work’s *social diagnosis* of people’s problems, it does not help much in terms of the “how” or the action principles needed in the profession (Germain, 1979). He argued that “while diagnosis took environmental factors into account, intervention continued to be directed to changing behavior for the most part - to strengthening weak ego functioning, for example, or poor role performance” (p.3).

The lack of knowledge for intervening in environmental forces contributed to the rise of negative criticism in the 1960’s for social work methods - particularly casework - failure to address the problems of people, particularly those problems relating to environmental factors such as poverty. Germain (1979) claimed that there are “understandable reasons” for such failure, citing that direct practice cannot create a great impact on problems of large magnitude such as poverty and racism but this is perhaps possible when the profession “works collaboratively with other disciplines” (p. 5). Likewise, he claimed that except for milieu therapy and family therapy, which were “limited in application and influence”, there were no other action principles pertaining to intervention in the environment that go beyond the general concept of “environmental modification”. This desire for different action principles was due to the fact that the

environmental modification concept at that time refers to some essential type of social services such as foster care and institutional care, discharge planning, provision of experiences in the environment, for example camping, that do not in anyway delve into the complex system in the person's environment.

Systems theory. The search for an action principle that relates to environmental intervention is somehow seen in general systems theory, which emerged in the early 1970s (Germain, 1979, p. 6). The essence of the systems theory as explained by Webb (2003) is that "every part is influenced by the whole to which it belongs, just as the whole, in turn, is affected by its individual members" (p. 61). A similar view is expressed by Dent-Read and Zukow-Golding (as cited in Stepney and Ford, 2000, p. 94) describing the relationship between the development of all living things and the characteristics of the environment where they live as "inextricably bound up", such that "changes in one system can have significant consequences for another system and vice versa".

Early application of the systems concept in general social work practice is seen in Pincus and Minahan's book (as cited in O'Donoghue and Maidment, 2005) wherein the four basic systems in social work practice, are discussed. The four basic systems are the change agent, client, target and action systems, aside from the three systems - formal, informal and societal systems, believed to have a contribution to people's well-being.

Systems theory is not at all perfect. It is criticized for a number of limitations such as "nonhuman" language or terms, very high level of abstraction and its inability to prescribe specific action or interventions in social work practice relating to the environmental factors (Germain, as cited in O'Donoghue and Maidment, 2005). It is also criticized because of its conservative functionalist roots. Hence, the interest shifts more to ecological theory.

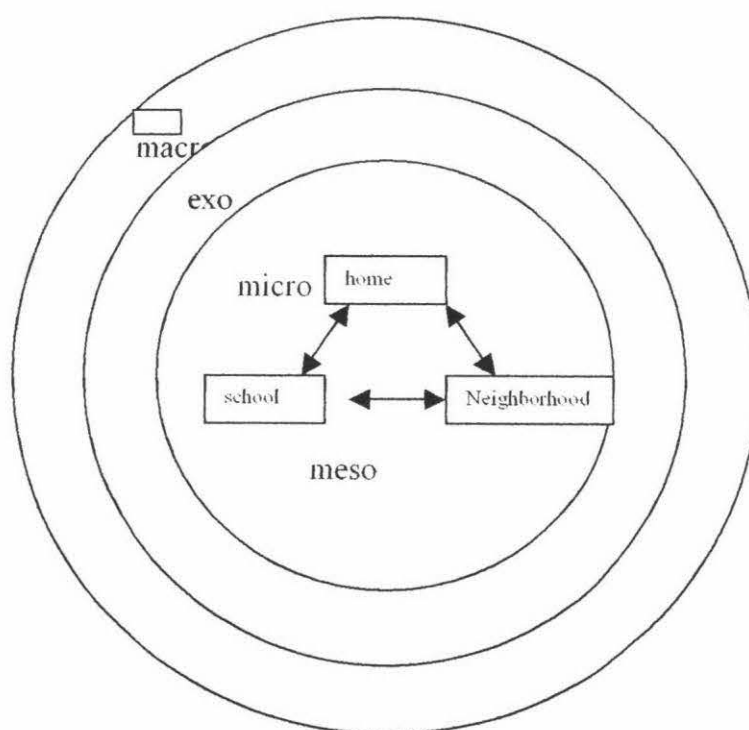
Ecological theory. It is one of the socially oriented theories that evolves out of the systems theory. The ecological theory according to Germain (1979) is "congruent with current scientific and humanistic themes and with practice trends

in service human professions” (p. 7). The positive side of the theory is also seen by Thompson (2002), claiming that the strengths of the theory are in terms of placing child and adolescent development within the wider context of factors or “human and technical systems”, while its weaknesses are in terms of having “relatively little to say about social divisions and the role of discrimination and oppression...relatively little attention to the role of the individual within those systems... the role of meaning and interpretation is given far from adequate attention” (p. 18).

According to Garbarino (1992) the “ecological perspective views individuals and their environments as mutually shaping systems, each changing over time, each adapting in response to changes in the other” (p. 16). The interaction between them is reciprocal. For Urie Bronfenbrenner (as cited in O’Donoghue & Maidment, 2005), there are sufficient commonalities with the systems and ecological perspectives that can be combined together. Bronfenbrenner adds an ecological perspective to a systems theory base and comes out with his ecological model of human development. In his model, the individual is located at the center of “a nested arrangement of interacting systems, rather like a set of Russian dolls” (as cited in Jack & Jack, 2000, p. 94). At the core of this setting where the individual develops, are small unit of systems called *micro-systems*. Garbarino (1992) cited that the most immediate environment or the “actual settings in which the individual experiences and creates day-to-day reality” are the home or family, the school and the neighborhood. It not only includes the places where children live but also the “people who live there with them, and the things they do together” (p. 24). He further argued that “one of the most important aspects of a child’s micro system is the influence of other people” (p. 25). The relationships between the micro systems constitute another system called the *meso-system*. For Garbarino, the richness of the mesosystems is measured not only by the number of connections or relationships but also the quality of the relationships. He further stresses that “the stronger and more complementary the links between settings, the more powerful the resulting mesosystem will be as an influence on the child’s development” (p. 25). The *exosystems* on the otherhand is about the situations which influences the child’s health, well being and development, even though the

child him/herself had no direct involvement in it. This includes “settings that have power over her or his life” such as their parent’s friendship network, workplace relationship, or “centers of power that make decisions affecting the child’s day-to-day life.” (Garbarino, 1992). All other systems in the wider environment of an individual such as the religious, political, cultural and legal contexts of the society, are embedded in the final level called the *macro-system*. This is the “broad ideological and institutional patterns of a particular culture or subculture” which Garbarino called the “blueprints” for the ecology of human systems (p. 26). Below is the illustration of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system of human development.

Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological System of Human Development.



Source: Stepney, P.& Ford, D. (2000). *Social Work Models, Methods and Theories. A framework for practice*, p. 94.

Garbarino (as cited in Jack and Jack, 2000, p. 95) reiterated that “the ecological approach makes it clear that human development is best understood as the product of an *indivisible* mix of nature *and* nurture” (first italics added,

second original). He argued that in all of the four levels of systems, there were risks and opportunities for development. The lack of opportunities for development or direct threats to it constitute risks while opportunities came in the form of material, emotional, and social encouragement appropriate to the child's need and capacities (Garbarino, 1992, p.16). He stressed that "risk can be overcome . . . however, the more impoverished the child's world is, the more likely the child is to fail when hurt by social, economic, or psychological stress" (p. 22).

Jack & Jack (2000) argued that the interaction between systems varies, sometimes it is "cumulative", at other times it is "moderating" or "mediating" (p.94). An interaction is said to be cumulative when various factors link together and reinforce one another. If applied to environmental risks, this will mean that a combination of environmental risks creates more harm to human development compared to the harm that a single risk can create. On the other hand, an interaction is said to be mediating or moderating when the "effect of factor A on factor C depends upon the characteristics of an intermediate factor B". This means that the presence of a positive factor in the environment, for example, a supportive relationship with spouse, can moderate the harm the two negative factors - such as parent's own adverse family background and dysfunctional parenting, can create.

Germain (1979) stressed that the term "environment" for social work practice does not only mean the *physical*- natural world and the built world; and the *social*- network of human relations at various levels of organizations, but also the resulting interaction between the two and the culture. These different levels of environment were also cited by Kemp, et al. (as cited in O'Donoghue and Maidment, 2005, p. 40), and added further the "perceived" environment, that is, the "environment as constructed in individual and collective systems of meaning and belief", the institutional and organizational environment; and the cultural and socio-political environment.

According to Mullaly (1997, p. 23), social workers operating from the systems or ecological perspective adopt a conventional way of looking at the

nature of people, society and social problems. People are seen as inherently individualistic, self-absorbed, acquisitive, competitive and predisposed to creating conflict. Hence, rules and social institutions are essential to regulate, coordinate and control the social system. All parts of society including the systems and the people are in harmony. Social problems arise because of the individual's failure or due to other factors contained at the family and sub-cultural level only. An example of sub-cultural factors used in "blaming the victim" approach is the "culture of poverty". This concept was first used by anthropologist Oscar Lewis who argued that the systemic poverty prevailing in the society led to the formation of sub-culture or values that hinders the poor to move out of their situation such as the strong feeling of marginality, of helplessness, of inferiority or worthlessness. People influenced by this culture of poverty feel powerless, excluded and with little sense of history. Hence, to ensure order in the society, the response employed at the individual level is a change in the person's behavior through resocialization or the removal of the person from the society and the neutralization of his/her behavior through institutionalization or formal system of state control such as prisons, asylums, etc. Family therapy is a form of response at the familial level, while at the sub-cultural level acculturation is done usually in the forms of counseling, resocialization, cultural enhancement services, rehabilitation and community education program. Mullaly (1997) further argued that while systems theory and ecological approach are useful in providing a snapshot of the problem situation, it does not provide any causal explanation for a problem or situation. This causal relationship is possible in a structural approach.

Structural Framework

Mullaly (1997) described the theoretical basis and framework of structural social work as based on socialist ideology, a heritage that is radical, a theory base that is critical, a perspective based on conflict, an analysis that is dialectic, an inclusive form where all kinds of oppression are included and a goal is developed for transformation and emancipation from the oppressive situation. He further stressed that:

The essence of socialist ideology, radical social work, critical theory, and the conflict perspective is that inequality: (1) is a natural, inherent (i.e. structural) part of capitalism; (2) falls along line of class, gender, race, sexual orientation, age, ability, and geographical region; (3) excludes these groups from opportunities, meaningful participation in society, and a satisfactory quality of life; and (4) is self-perpetuating. (p.133)

Socialist ideology. Looking at the different ideologies contained in four societal paradigms- which are neo-conservatism, liberalism, social democracy and Marxism, Mullaly (1997) argued that neo-conservatism and liberalism are supportive of the values of capitalism while the remaining two paradigms adhere more to the values of socialism. Considering that social work values are more on humanism and egalitarianism, respect, self-determination, acceptance of people, which are congruent with the socialist values of social justice, equity, collective care and structured opportunities, Mullaly (1997) claimed that “social work ideology has much more in common with the socialist paradigms than it does with the capitalist paradigms” (p. 101).

Radical social work heritage. The critical/structural theory was developed out of anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practices, which were all part of the larger radical theory. Mullaly (1997) cited that structural social work has its heritage from the radical social work movement. According to Mullaly (1997, p. 105), Middleman and Goldberg of USA first used the term “structural approach” in 1974; however, much developmental work applying the approach was done in mid-1970s in Canada where the approach, as claimed by Payne (2005,p. 214), was said to have originated. Its pioneer Maurice Moreau, used the structural approach as an “umbrella” for other major radical themes such as radical humanism, feminism, Marxism and radical structuralism. The structural approach was seen as unique because it was inclusive of all various forms of oppression without necessarily placing them in hierarchical order. Likewise the approach was supportive of the generalist practice that covered work with individuals, families, groups, and communities. While structural social work had its origin in radical theory, it was different from other radical social work in the sense that it viewed the two competing perspective of modernism and post modernism as not totally “dichotomous” or “polarized” but each had strengths to correct the contradictions and limitations of the other (Mullaly, 1997, p. 115).

Critical theory base. Mullaly (1997) sees structural social work as part of critical theory because like the latter, it is critical of the existing oppressive political, social and economic conditions in the society and seeks to transform the oppressive situations to a life free from domination through the participation of the people in the social analysis and in political practice or action. Structural social work meets the three requirements of a critical theory identified by Leonard (1990, cited in Mullaly, p.109), which state that:

{1) it must locate the sources of domination in actual social practices; (2) it must present an alternative vision (or at least an outline) of a life free of such domination; and (3) it must translate these tasks in a form that is intelligible to those who are oppressed in society.

Conflict perspective. Integral to structural social work is the understanding of the conflict perspective. According to Mullaly (1997), this perspective views society as composed of groups with opposing interests, values and expectations. Those who dominate control the resources and exercise power over the “loser”. The dominant group imposes an ideology favoring capitalism and creates social institutions, laws, and systems to protect their interest at the expense of the other groups. The result is the vast differences in wealth, power and status between the “haves and the have-not”. The conflict theorist rejects this kind of social order, which they regard as alienating or separating people from one another and from the social system, and believe that social change and not social control is necessary to resolve inequality. Citing Howe (1987), Mullaly (1997) stressed that the social worker working with the victim of oppressive social orders “needs to know who holds the power, whose interests are being served by maintaining the status quo, and what devices are being used to keep things as they are” (p. 127). Social problems are not only contained in individual, familial or sub-cultural spheres but are interconnected to societal spheres, that is, the structural level which includes the society’s institutions and supportive ideology. Reasons and Perdue (as cited in Mullaly, 1997) believed that at the structural level, social problems are seen as “institutional defects” and “a normal consequence of the way in which a society is organized” (p.126). However, this does not mean that the individual, familial and

subcultural spheres will be rejected. Instead these “private” spheres will be connected with the much broader “public” sphere of structural order wherein the latter is regarded as the source of “private troubles”. As such, social problems cannot be resolved by mere reformation, that is, technical and administrative but by massive reorganization or transformation of the existing social system.

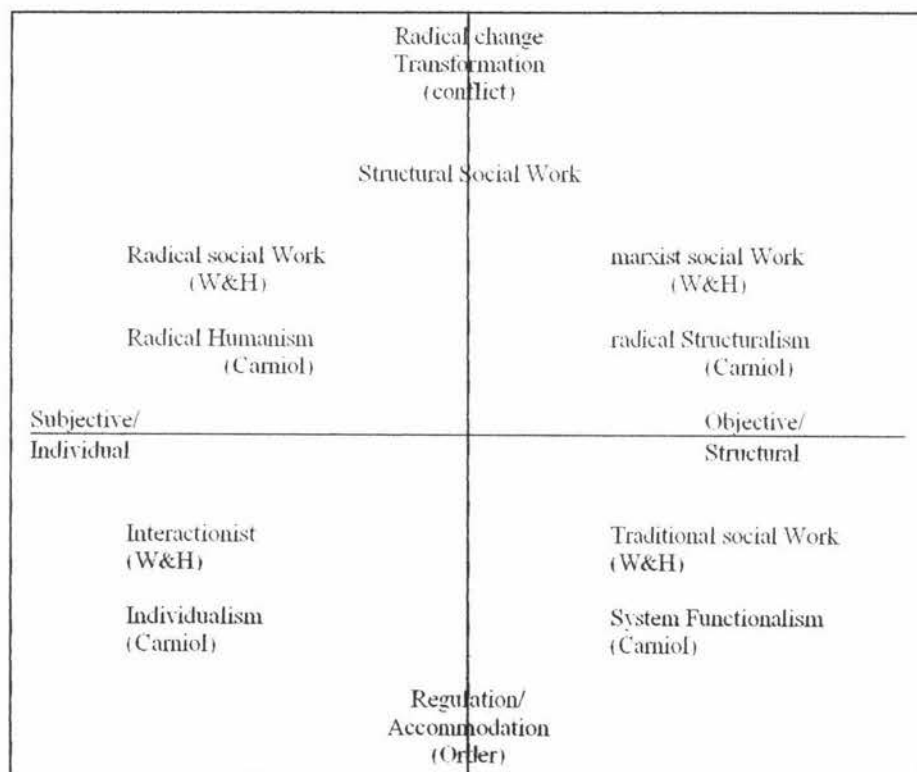
Dialectical analysis. Seen as an integral part of structural social work, a dialectical analysis and approach to practice sees individuals not only as subjects or creators of their social structures but also as objects or created by their social structures. It views society as containing both liberating and oppressive features and sees a welfare state as exercising both care and control. Mullaly (1997) stressed that “a dialectical social work theory recognizes the false dualism of orthodox social work theory and attempts to replace them with a recognition of the symbio” (p. 127). A dialectic analysis simultaneously recognizes the existence of universal truth and that is experienced differently by different people in varying localities, position, class, and culture. It incorporates both the radical tradition of radical humanism - subjectivist orientation to social change, and radical structuralism - objectivist orientation, into the theory base of structural social work.

Inclusion of all forms of oppression. Structural social work is seen as applicable to analyzing all forms of oppression by class, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability and geographical region (Mullaly, 1997). Likewise, recent interest of structural social work in other forms of oppression such as the colonialism of North American Aboriginal people, imperialism of the Third World countries by developed nations, heterosexism, ageism as well as ableism, strengthen the use of the structural approach in the analysis of almost any forms of oppression

To explain the structural approach in social work and sum up its discussion, I have used Lundy’s (2004) organizing framework. In the hereunder illustration, the vertical axis represents the theoretical dimensions of social problems while the horizontal axis represents the philosophical dimension. The structural approach bridges the two - the theoretical dimensions - which are

radical structuralism and radical humanism, as well as the objective and the subjective philosophical dimension. In addressing social problems, the structural approach draws on these various theories and ideologies. It also emphasizes the importance of response targeted to the needs of individuals and their families as well as the response aimed towards the transformation of the social structures/system (Lundy, 2004). In Mullaly's (1997) argument, "the goal of structural social work is twofold: (1) to alleviate the negative effects on people of an exploitative and alienating social order; and (2) to transform the conditions and social structures that cause these negative effects" (p. 133). This shows that immediate relief and longer-term institutional and structural change are essential parts of social work practice.

Figure 2. Organizing Framework for Social Work Approaches



Source: Lundy, C.N. (2004). Organizing Framework for Social Work Approaches in *Social Work and Social Justice*, p.54

Summary

As discussed, the ecological and structural approaches despite their limitations were both useful in social work practice. While the former provided a good snapshot of the problem situation, it could not provide causal explanation of the problem in a wider and broader context in the society. Hence, the structural approach complemented the limitation of the former as it spoused a critical analysis of the structural political, social and economic conditions in the society that contributed to the existence or perpetration of the problem. The application of the two approaches were found relevant to the multi-dimensional nature of the child soldier phenomenon, where relevant factors for its existence were not contained only in individual, familial or sub-cultural levels, but also found at the societal level as shown in the earlier chapter. Before I discuss the findings of my study, I find it proper to present first my research methodology in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

This chapter contains the methodological approaches, the methods and strategies I employed to reach the objectives. It also discusses how sample respondents and sample cases were selected as well as how data gathering and analysis were undertaken. A discussion on the ethical considerations relevant to the conduct of the research is also included.

Methodological Approach

With the aim to explore how social workers directly working with child soldiers perceived the child soldiering phenomenon and the issues and challenges it posed in social work practice, I used the qualitative approach. While there was quantitative data used in the research, it was very minimal and meant only to support the descriptive exploration of specific sub-topics such as the demographic profile of the child soldiers. The qualitative approach was found appropriate to my study since it enhances and deepens my understanding of the child soldier phenomenon. The use of both primary (interview with social worker) and secondary (case files, reports) sources was not aimed to get results that can be used to generalize beyond the particular group under study. As Mark (1996) had said, "the goal of qualitative research is to enhance our general knowledge about complex events and processes" (p. 21). Likewise, qualitative research also allowed the simultaneous conduct of data collection and analysis and it was more flexible in terms of steps, procedures and use of theories/concepts, which fits well with the needs of my study. He further claimed that "in qualitative research, the choice of research procedures is not set in advance. The qualitative researcher uses whatever research tools are best for the situation, often with reliance on a variety of methods" (p. 21).

Methods And Strategies

There were two methods used in this study: the personal interviews and instrumental case study. According to Mark (1996), the instrumental case study approach is used “to elaborate a theory or gain a better understanding of a social issue...the researcher’s primary interest is in learning about the social issue, and the case study merely serves to facilitate learning (p. 219).” The cases used in this study are those of the child soldiers handled by the sample respondents who are social workers of DSWD in the frontline of service or those involved in direct service provision. On the other hand, the main tool for the interview was the interview guide (Appendix A) which I developed after doing a preliminary review of literature or studies concerning child soldiers and social work practice with children. The tool was pilot-tested using three of my colleagues who were also practicing social workers engaged in work with children. The pilot testing was helpful as it helped me gauge the order of themes in the interview guide, the clarity or ambiguity of the topics, as well as the possible length of time for the conduct of the interview.

To strengthen validity, I used the process of “triangulation” by using multiple sources of data so that information gathered from unstructured interviews from 15 respondents could be validated and enriched in the sample cases selected and reviewed by me. As defined by Mark (1996), triangulation is used in “verifying a concept or a conclusion put forth by the researcher by looking for multiple sources of confirmation” (p. 220).

Sample

The sample respondents to this study were taken from the list of social workers involved in the case management of child soldier cases under the DSWD. The list was provided by one of the bureaus in DSWD responsible in program monitoring. Purposive sampling was used in the selection of participants. Mark (1996), defined purposive sampling as “similar to the quota sample, but it does not use specific predetermined quotas. In this method, the

study participants are handpicked by the researcher to serve the purpose of the particular study” (p. 113). From the list, the participants to the study were finalized after the researcher had completed the initial coordination with DSWD regional offices where cases of child soldiers have been reported. Coordination with the regional offices was done through telephone and fax messages with the purpose of soliciting or verifying the names, cases of child soldiers handled and the contact number of the prospective participants. The verification also revealed that the average number of cases of child soldiers handled by each concerned social workers was only two, hence, the initial plan to get participants with at least ten cases of child soldiers was modified. The criterion was changed to give priority to social workers with at least two cases of child soldiers. Likewise, another criterion, that is, social worker with at least a year of involvement in a child soldier case, was changed. I found out that more than half of my prospective participants have been handling cases of child soldiers for only a few weeks or months, that is, less than a year. The reason for this was that many of the cases were turned over to the local government or other custodian in the community in a matter of months or weeks. Social workers were able to find relatives or other respected persons in the community, such as the community priest, who were willing to take custody of the child. Placement of children in an institution or center was considered as a last resort.

When the cases were discharged from the center/institutions to the protective custody of individual or family members in the community, the social worker of the local government took responsibility in the continuation of the case management. Hence, I found the need to abandon this particular criterion to enable me to achieve at least my target of getting more respondents which could at least represent half of the current number, that was 22 of the regional social workers who have been involved in the management of child soldier cases. This provided more varied experiences and a richer source of information for my study. According to Sarantakos (1993) in using the purposive sampling technique “the judgment of the researcher is more important than obtaining a probability sample” (p. 138).

These adjustments in the selection of sample respondents were cleared first with my supervisor.

The prospective participants were given a letter of invitation (Appendix B) to participate in the study and the consent form (Appendix C). The documents were sent through mail or faxed to the regional offices where the prospective participants are connected. The invitation included information about the researcher, the purpose of the research, the data to be gathered, and the respondents' rights. The respondents were requested to affix their signatures in the consent form and to send the form back to me if they agree to participate in the study. Of the twenty-two social workers who were invited, fifteen responded positively. The date and time of the interview were set through the assistance of and the approval of their regional offices.

The fifteen respondents came from seven regions of the country. This required a good fieldwork schedule so as to maximize the time and budget for the inter-island/region fieldwork. Nine of the respondents were working at the regional center/institutions for children while the remaining six were working in the field or the community. All of them have Baccalaureate degrees in social work and have been in the Department (DSWD) for many years. The longest length of service in DSWD was twenty-five years while the shortest was seven years. Almost 70 per cent of the respondents have had training on case management but not specifically on child soldier cases.

The cases of child soldiers handled by the respondents were reviewed, as this was also a way of validating the information gathered from the respondents. There were a total of thirty-one cases where demographic information about the child soldiers and the services given to the child and his/her family were taken. Prior to the conduct of home-located interviews, access to the case files was sought from and granted by the Department Secretary in an authorization letter dated January 2005 (Appendix D).

Data Collection

Fieldwork to the seven regions of the country were conducted towards the last week of February until the first week of May 2005 to personally interview the respondents and collect the sample case files. Preparatory activities such as the coordination with the regional offices, the pre-testing of the interview guide and its finalization were conducted in January and February 2005 prior to the fieldwork.

The primary source of data was the unstructured interviews with the social workers. An interview guide (Appendix A) containing the list of themes to be discussed was used. The interview guide focused on five major areas which I would like to get from the participants such as the respondents involvement in the case, their perception of the phenomenon, the responses available or given, the perception of their roles and the issues and challenges they encounter in their work with child soldier. The interview being unstructured allowed spontaneity on the part of the respondents and allowed further probing on the part of the researcher. The unstructured interview gave the respondents leeway and freedom to talk and share about certain issues put forth to them during the interview.

The personal interview was conducted at the agreed time and place, which was usually held at the regional office or regional institutions or centers where the social workers were assigned. The regional office of DSWD, serving as my channel of communication to the respondents, facilitated our meeting on the agreed schedule and gave us a venue where I could do the interview privately and without interruption. Prior to the interview proper I made sure that I had shared with the participants information about myself, the purpose of the study, the estimated length of time for the interview, their rights as participants and an overview of the areas to be covered in the interview. Having set the right atmosphere for the interview, the sharing unfolded like a casual conversation where the participants felt at ease. The interview lasted from 45 minutes to one hour per person. There were some

interjections on my part and these were done to clarify a point, encourage them to elaborate more, empathize with their feelings and redirect the conversation to the main agenda of the interview. All of the respondents agreed to have the interviews audiotaped and to cite their names in the research report. Three of them asked me to turn off the tape when they felt that the information they were sharing need not be cited in the study. Likewise, I took down notes as the interview progressed. Both English and Filipino languages were used in the interview. However, in the transcription of the interview, I translated the information shared by the interviewees from Filipino to English language. This was done to facilitate collation of information and for uniformity. To ensure validity, I summarized the salient points and information gathered and asked the respondents for any corrections or misinterpretation of their opinions from the just concluded interview. This immediate feeding back of information gathered from interview was done to save time and process from the usual procedure of giving the respondents copy of the transcription and the notes a few days after the interview had been completed. Besides, it would be difficult to control the return of the transcripts if I give it back to the respondents for correction, as my stay in the country for the data gathering stage was limited.

On the other hand, data collection from the case folders of child soldiers followed a certain procedure. Upon approval of my request for access to the case files, I immediately informed in writing the prospective participants through their regional offices about the procedure of the interview and the collection of case files. The respondents were asked to bring photocopies of their case files of child soldiers during the interview with an instruction to omit the name and other information that would identify the child. The photocopies were given to me during the interview. In some instances where the case files were not readily available during the interview, the photocopy of the files was sent to the DSWD central office where I had an office.

The photocopies of the case files were kept in my own secured and locked cabinet at home. After the completion of the research, the photocopied files would be destroyed and I am personally responsible for this destruction.

Data processing and analysis

To process the data, I first needed to transcribe the audiotaped interviews. I personally carried out the transcription to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the information. I reviewed the transcriptions to note pertinent data that emerged out of it. I organized the information from the transcripts by sorting data based on themes and listing direct quotes from the respondents using a “cut and paste” technique. The information extracted from the transcripts were pasted or clustered together in each thematic category covering the five major areas initially identified. As to the information taken from the sample case files, like the demographic data about the child soldiers and the respondents, I encoded the raw data using Minitab software. The same software was used to prepare simple statistical analysis of the demographic data. The information taken from interviews and the sample case files were interpreted and analysed in relation to the ecological and structural conceptual framework. I also used written articles or studies concerning the child soldier phenomenon and social work practice with children to support or strengthen my interpretation of the data. According to Patton (1990):

Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meaning, imposing order and dealing with rival explanations, disconfirming cases and data irregularities as part of testing the viability of an interpretation. All of this is expected and appropriate as long as the researcher owns the interpretation and makes clear the difference between description and interpretation (p. 423).

In data interpretation, I have used the following strategies mentioned by Patton: clustering, taking notes of the themes and pattern as well as the relations between concepts, counting and subsuming particulars into the generals.

Funding Support

In the conduct of home located research, the NZODA through the International Student Office - Massey University, Palmerston North campus underwrote my return travel to the Philippines while the Massey University Graduate Research Fund shouldered part of the expenses for internal travel related to my fieldwork in seven regions of my country.

Ethics

Ethical approval for this study was applied for and granted by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (Appendix E) in January 2006 while application for access to records or database on child soldier cases of DSWD was approved by the Secretary of DSWD in Dec. 2005.

A major ethical concern of this research was the privacy and confidentiality of information about the cases of child soldiers. This was attended to in this research through the use of pseudonyms, not divulging the full life story of the child and avoiding the disclosure in the research write up of other relevant information about a specific child. Likewise, the photocopy of the case files sent to the researcher would be destroyed once this study was completed.

With regards to the fifteen social workers, all females, who were interviewed for this study, all had given me the permission to quote them and cite their name in the study. While privacy and confidentiality seems not a major issue to them, I decided to divulge little personal information about each participants and omitted their name in quotations as some of the responses reflected the limitations of some organizations. Prior to the conduct of the interview, I sent an invitation to participate to prospective respondents stipulating among other things the rights of the social worker to decline or to accept the invitation. There was no undue pressure on social workers since I have no direct control over them whether administratively or technically. My position in the DSWD central office was in no way directly related to the work

of the social workers at the regional centers. Those who accepted the invitation have agreed to sign a consent form allowing the use of the information gathered from the interview in the research report. I did the transcribing. All audiotapes and notes taken during the interview were kept as confidential files in the researchers own filing cabinet and would be destroyed once the research is completed. To avoid potential harm this research might cause to the participants and the agency, confidentiality measures as mentioned herein were strictly followed and interviews were conducted in a manner that respected the opinion of the participants. My previous experiences in working with people, particularly in doing interviews, counseling and stress debriefing, had helped me to execute the interview with utmost care and avoidance of harm. Since my influence in terms of the data collection from social workers and analysis cannot be totally avoided being a social worker myself, this influence was avoided by summarizing what transpired and what information was gathered immediately after each interview. This allowed the respondents to check or correct my interpretation of their response. At the completion of the study, the participants would be provided with the abstract of this research.

CHAPTER V

CHILD SOLDIER PHENOMENON IN THE PHILIPPINES

*It is better that people understand the war in order to see the peace.
The way to peace lies not ignoring war but in understanding its causes.*

- *Wigberto Tanada, Waging Peace Then and Now*

This chapter presents the findings on the child soldier phenomenon in the country from the perspective of the social workers interviewed. The discussions are based on the information gathered from the respondents and are “triangulated” with and enriched by data from secondary sources such as the 31 sample case files, previous research on the topic and other related local materials from official government reports, media write up, local researchers and journals. The findings are mostly descriptive and are analyzed with an ecological and structural framework covering discussions on the various systems found in the child and his/her wider environment. The chapter begins with a background on the country’s internal conflict and documented findings on the participation of children. Then discussion progresses to the presentation and analysis of information that gives a picture or a profile of the child soldier phenomenon. Factors in the immediate and distant environment of the child are analyzed from an ecological and structural framework. The organization of findings is divided into two major dimensions, the micro and the macro dimension of the phenomenon. I have included in the micro level the relationship factors that fall under the mesosystem. I decided to integrate the discussion of the mesosystem in the micro dimension to give a more comprehensive picture of the child soldier, his/her family and the community where the child belongs. The sharing of the respondents and the information gathered from the sample case also reveals the roles performed by the child soldier in the armed group, their reasons for joining and the developmental toll of their participation and exposure in the conflict. At the macro dimension, I have integrated the exosystems or the factors which influences the child’s health,

well being and development even though he/she has no direct involvement in it. These include discussion on related issues such as the country's poverty situation; priorities and policies particularly those relating to budget in the military and social services, economic policies such as the globalization thrust; and situation of displacement, human rights abuses and injustices. Including the abovementioned national issues at the child's exosystem provides a fuller context for the discussion of the child soldier phenomenon.

The Country's Internal Armed Conflict

As cited in chapter two, the Philippines is one of the countries in the world where children are being used by non-state armies and paramilitary units in armed conflict. The country's history of armed conflict has spanned many decades from colonial time until the present. Armed conflict has been waged for various purposes and reasons and in varying forms or strategies; but it usually falls under a guerilla form of warfare. According to Hilsdon (1995, p. 15), guerilla warfare is a low intensity warfare (LIW) commonly used in the Third World countries. Armed groups who use it usually lack the weaponry, supplies, manpower and other logistic support for a conventional warfare against their enemies. Its distinguishing feature, according to Maechling (as cited in Hilsdon, 1995), is the effort of contestants "to capture the loyalty of the uncommitted majority through some combination of intimidation, promises of reform, and appeal to grievance" (p. 15). The history of the Philippines showed that the local chieftain, Lapu-Lapu of Mactan, used guerilla warfare in fighting the Spanish colonizers (Carlos, 2002). General Emilio Aguinaldo used it, too, during the liberation struggle against the Americans in 1899 and Luis Taruc -the local leader of "Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon", or *HUKBALAHAP*, (People's Anti-Japanese Army), likewise resorted to guerilla warfare (Hamilton, 1998, pp.40-41). At present, guerilla warfare is still being used, not anymore against foreign colonizers but against one's people or against one's government.

At present, there are three major armed groups in constant encounter with the government. These are the communist insurgents New Peoples' Army (NPA) the armed wing of the leftist political group called the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) which is the break away group of Nur Misuari wing Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) concentrated mostly in the island of Mindanao, and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) mostly from Muslim groups in Mindanao. These three groups are found to be using children in their anti-government activities (Guiam, 2002).

MILF is the largest armed group in Mindanao, a secessionist group fighting for what they believe are their rights to independence and self-determination as Bangsamoro (Guiam, 2002). Although a ceasefire agreement between the government and this armed group has been forged, there were reported violations of this truce (Hernandez, 2003, p. 48). On the other hand, the ASG is a bandit group doing kidnap-for-ransom activities. It is being linked to the terrorists group Al Qaeda movement, and a reason for the continued deployment of government military and US soldiers in the southern part of the country, that is Mindanao.

The third group is the CPP/NPA. It is given more focus here because most of the cases of child soldiers handled by the social worker respondents have been connected to this group. CPP/NPA is a leftist political group advocating a communist form of ideology for more than three decades. This group is known to have infiltrated many areas throughout the country particularly the economically depressed far-flung areas (Guiam, 2002, p. 1). According to Bello (as cited in Hilsdon 1995), the people behind the formation of this NPA revolutionary movement are the poor rural workers and farmers. However, a substantial portion of this group are university and college students and graduates (Hilsdon, 1995, p. 50). Hilsdon (1995) cited that the CPP/NPA was considered as "the greatest threat to government internal security, probably due to high number of members, estimated between 15000 and 30000 in 1981 and the presence of anti-state structure in national, regional and local levels" (p. 72). Although it suffered losses due to internal

disagreement and frequent encounter with the military, it was able to bounce back in the succeeding years as a result of consolidation of “reaffirmist group”, the strengthening of relation with the masses, the dissatisfaction of the people in the government and the exploding crisis in the country (Ferrer, 2003, pp. 65-66). Peace negotiation with this rebel group has been on-and-off, indefinite suspension was implemented in June 2001 after the assassination of former colonel and governor Aguinaldo. In the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist bombing of the World Trade Center, CPP-NPA was included by the US States Department in its list of “foreign terrorist organization” (FTO). This act was seen by critics as “probably the most significant and blatant US intervention as far as passing the anti-terrorism bill is concerned” (EDM, 2002 Sept.). Such a position was accepted by the Philippine government, but was strongly challenged by peace advocates in the country, because it could affect the efforts for a peaceful negotiation with the group. As a matter of policy, the government does not “negotiate” with the terrorist groups.

The use of children in various capacities in all these bandits groups as well as in the government sanctioned para-military group has been confirmed. Written articles and eyewitness accounts of journalists and some individuals, who have been in the camps of some rebel groups, have attested to the existence of children, boys and girls some as young as 6 and 10, in these armed groups (Timonera, B., 2000 April). Government reports from DSWD and the Department of National Defense (DND) also indicated the number of child soldiers taken into their custody, even though there is discrepancy in the figures reported by them.

The “lack of concrete or reliable data on the number of children being used in armed conflict” is a constraint in determining the real extent of the problem (PCUCS, 2004, p.16). Even estimates vary from each source. ILO-IPEC Rapid Assessment cites the estimates of the key informants to their study as “anywhere from 10-30 per cent of the children in any given community influenced by either the NPA or MILF are drafted as soldiers” (Guiam, 2002). The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) places the estimates at 13 per cent of the total rebel population (EO 56, Comprehensive

Framework). Nonetheless, my study uses the available data at DSWD where the respondents are employed as social workers.

A Picture of the Child Soldier Phenomenon

Social workers were asked to share basic information about the child soldiers that they have handled. The following information revealed salient description of the child soldiers, the family and the community where they belong. (The names of the children and the place of their residence and other information that would identify them were changed to protect their identity. Likewise, the real names of the social worker respondents have been replaced by a respondent code to protect their identity).

The Micro Picture

Child Soldier. The respondents gave information that characterized the child soldier and his/her immediate or microenvironment. The findings were validated and substantiated by the review of thirty-one case files of child soldiers handled by the respondents.

“Gary is unschooled while the other one had reached only grade 6 when they were captured. Both came from a tribal community”. (R13)

“She came from an indigenous tribe where most have not had any formal schooling. They are poor and highly vulnerable to exploitation”.(R15)

“Lyn, 17 years old, was trained to handle an armalite. She said she was involved in one of their encounters with the military. She was severely hurt in one of those encounters”. (R3)

“The children (child soldiers) are 17 and 14 years old; both are boys. One of them had been in an armed encounter when he was twelve years old. The children admitted that they do not regret their participation in the armed group”. (R1).

“Linda was in grade 4 while Sheila was in high school. They were studying when the rebels recruited them”. (R4)

"The boys are 14 and 17 years old. They were apparently captured by the military, but based on the information given to me by the minors, they were forcibly arrested while eating in a "carinderia" (small eatery)". (R15)

"The boy is 16 years old. He admitted that he is a combatant. In fact, he said that he had experienced killing people in an encounter with the military. He was used to carrying guns and was very vocal of the rebel's ideologies. He's been with the armed group for almost two years until his capture". (R14)

"The boy is 12 years old, both parents are active in the NPA". (R7t)

Information gathered shows that child soldiering involves both sexes of children who are mostly at their puberty stage. Nonetheless, younger children are not spared of the early exposure and participation in the activities of the armed group. Data shows that 20 out of 31 cases are male while 11 are female. Furthermore, 24 out of 31 are between 16 - 18 years old implying that many of the child soldiers are in their teens, while seven are below 16 years old. The age of the youngest child soldier in the sample is 12, and the eldest is 18, all extremes of age range are male. The median age is 17. While the boys (62.5%), dominate the age range 16-18, a significant proportion of the girls (37.5%) is also in this age range.

In terms of educational achievement, the child soldiers usually have primary education and have a very high tendency to drop out of school. The boys usually dropped-out of schooling even before finishing their elementary or secondary education. Other children, particularly those from tribal communities have no formal schooling at all. Case files show that 70.97 % of the child soldiers are not studying or are out-of school at the time of their capture or rescue. While there are more boys (14) than girls (8) who are not studying, the difference of the proportion between the two sexes is only 6 or nearly 30 %. Except for two tribal boys who have not had any formal education, 29 children or 93 % have had elementary education. Of the 29, five children have stopped schooling before reaching Grade 6, 11 have completed the elementary education but did not anymore attended high school. Thirteen have attended high school but all of them have failed to complete this educational level.

Family. As to the family where the children came from, the sharing of the respondents below shows that the child soldier's family or some members of their family like father, mother, brothers or other relatives are also part of the armed group. This findings had confirmed what was found in the study of child soldiers in the country such as the study conducted by Guiam (2002) for ILO-IPEC which shows that there are child soldiers who have been raised in the rebel's camps because their parents are, themselves, part of the armed group. Some of the child soldiers were born and/or raised in the camp of the armed group. According to Hilsdon (1995) "children were considered important as "second liners" in the revolution, and most male comrades regarded their sons as their "personal successors" (p. 75). This can be a factor as to why children are raised in the insurgent's camp and why more male than female child soldiers have left formal schooling at an early age.

Moreover, the family of the child soldiers appears to be living in dire poverty, as earning from farming or other odd jobs could hardly suffice the basic needs of the family for food, let alone the education of the children. Besides, they need to move from one place to another as a result of combat operation in their place of residence and/or place of work. The findings are similar to the local and international studies on child soldiers cited in chapter one, such as that of Brett and McCallin (1998), Machel (1996), Hoiskar (2001) and Guaim (2002) where child soldiers and their family are described as "poor", "marginalized" and "from impoverished and marginalized background".

"Freddie's father is a commander of the insurgent's group. He joins his parents in the insurgent's camp when he was 10; prior to that he lives with his grandmother in the lowland" (R7)

"The parents of the 37 children were actively involved in the NPA operation way back in the 1990s, so their children have been exposed to the operation of the armed group acting as cook, messenger, medics, courier" (R9)

"The minor's parents cannot afford to send him to school. His uncle help him support his education in return for working with him in the farm. He said the armed group used to pass by in his uncle's farm". "Sometimes they stayed for a rest or ask some food

from them. In the process of their contact with them, the minor was influenced to join the armed group. He was 14 then” (R8)

“The income of the family came from farming. But they are on survival level because they can’t get better yields from planting cassava and rice in the mountain. Besides during military operation, these peasant families flee for their safety leaving behind their crops, farm animals and other possessions” (R9)

“The minor’s parents are ordinary farm laborer. Sometimes they work as bus helper in the town. Income in this kind of job is very low and can hardly meet the needs of their family. Their poverty situation hinders the parents to give better alternative to their children” (R4)

“She came from an indigenous tribe where most of the children, just like their parents, have not had any formal schooling. They are very poor and their illiteracy made them highly vulnerable to exploitation. She said she was not forced to join the rebels; instead, she was encouraged by their teachings” (R12)

“The child has a strange relationship with his father. Apparently, the latter used to beat him. The physical battering leaves emotional scars that he is not loved and accepted. The child turned to his “barkada” or peer group for support. This peer group was part of the armed group and that’s how his involvement in the armed group started” (R2)

Likewise, case files also show that more than half (61%) of the children came from a big family that has more than 7 members. The median family size is 8. More than half (17 or 54%) of the children have one or more than one family member/s such as parents, siblings or other relatives supporting the insurgents by giving material support or by actively engaging in their activities.

The majority (77%) of the family heads are farmers, mostly landless farmers. Some (23%) are from families engaged in odd jobs like construction laborer, and contractual government worker. Considering that the farmers are tilling small portions of land, usually not their own, and bereft of modern equipment or technology, regular income to support the family’s need is a problem. While others may have a job, the income may not be sufficient to meet all their needs.

For some, there are problems in the relationship between family members as cited in the case handled by Divine. This could be a factor as to why child soldiers turn to their *barkada* (peer group) or friends for comfort or support. The *barkada*, aside from the family, also plays a critical role in the political socialization of the child soldiers. As Guiam (2002) has cited “peer groups influence one another in their idealism or adventurism” (p. 17).

Community. As to the description of the community where the child soldier resides, information gathered shows that all of the children live in rural areas which are very remote and difficult to reach. Social workers who have been in the places of some of the child soldiers described the areas as bereft of basic facilities like school, health centers, water and electrical supplies. Stories told by the children to their social workers show that the communities where the children live made it possible for them to have contacts with the armed group. The areas where they live were described by the respondents as rebel infested. The children have witnessed or have personally experienced fierce encounters of opposing armed groups in their area. For some, particularly the children from the tribal group, military operation in their area is interpreted as a means used by those in power to grab their land and the mineral resources they believed are contained in their land. May (2002, p.100-101) cited that areas highly prone to insurgency are those areas where there are more landless rural workers and small farmers and where ownership of large areas of land is concentrated only in the hands of a few individuals. This statement aptly describes the situation of the communities where the child soldiers came from.

“In my home visit, I found out that Sheryl and her family live in far-flung area. The travel to reach their place took me almost 5 hours ride and another couple of hours hike. The only means of transportation in going to their place is a single motorbike because road is rough and hilly. There were very few houses in that thickly forested area. I have not seen any government facilities like health center or school. According to Sheryl’s father their place is an access point going to the camp of the rebels. Sheryl used to trek the same road as it is the “shortcut” to a small school in another village” (R6)

“The children came from a small barangay, quite far from the town and known to be a rebel infested area”(R4)

"Most of the children lived in an area highly vulnerable to the recruitment of the insurgents because of its proximity to the insurgents training camp" (R9)

"Garry said that the insurgents used to pass by in his uncle's farm. Sometimes they stayed for a little conversation or ask some material support from his uncle. It was the beginning of his contact with the insurgents" (R8)

"In the eyes of the child soldiers, the military operation in their area is a way of forcing them to leave their ancestral land because the government is interested in getting the mine of gold of their place. So, many of their tribesmen have to fight back and protect themselves from the aggressors. In their tribe, even children were apparently encouraged to carry guns" (R15).

"The children were from communities where there is no electricity, no modern gadgets like television. In fact, the children said that it was their first time to see a television, because at the center we allow them to watch TV shows at a certain time of the day" (R13)

Roles Performed

In terms of the kind of participation the children had in the armed group, the information shared by the social worker respondents shows that children played varied roles in the armed group. Some have performed peripheral roles such as cook, courier, sentries, while others were already involved in combat handling and firing guns. There were instances like that of Gary (not his real name) where the role progression from support roles to involvement in actual combat took only a matter of few months. This case corroborated the position expressed by Graca Machel (1996) and Cairns (1996) cited in chapter one on the progression of the roles played by the children in the armed group and its impact on the development of the child's commitment to the group and its ideals as well as the development of their values.

"The insurgents recruited Gary when he was 14. He acts as a courier doing errands for the group. Then he was put in the education committee usually involving propaganda and recruitment work. He assisted too in the medical team doing medical mission like circumcision in different villages. Then he was trained to handle gun and at age 15 he was sent to combat" (R8)

“Based on the military’s record, the child was suspected as part of the armed group as he was able to identify members of the armed group during the questioning. He was suspected of acting as courier of the rebels” (R11)

“Ray can explain well the armed group’s ideologies maybe because of the role he played while with the group. He said he used to conduct “teach-in”, lectures to educate the masses about the economic and political roots of poverty. You won’t expect such a young person to be well verse of the rebels’ ideologies” (R14).

“Peter and John went together to the rebel camp for meeting or errand. They don’t live there (in the camp). They went back to their families afterwards. Their parents did not know their contact with the insurgents not until their capture by the military” (R4)

“Some of the children act as watchman or look out and they carry heavy bags containing guns and ammunitions when they are on foot patrol or mission” (R6)

“Winnie is a combatant while Juan is in the education committee of the armed group. Both of them were charged with illegal possession of explosives” (R10)

The information gathered from thirty-one case files also shows that child soldiers perform varied roles in the armed group. They are usually involved in simple supporting roles acting as courier or messenger, cook, sentries, member of medical team and helper. However for some, these seemingly simple duties and responsibilities progress to complex and risky roles in a short period of time. Others are immediately involved in combat operation, mass education and other risky missions like acting as platoon/squad leader or spy. While there are child soldiers who have been born and raised in the rebel’s camp, there are also children who go to the camp only when needed or asked. In the sample, there are two kids who perform their duties in the armed group on an irregular or part-time basis. They return to their normal way of life in the lowland immediately after the completion of their tasks, which usually involve errands for the group. Young girls in the armed movement, like that of the boys, also undergo combat training and are send to actual combat operation. While there are child soldiers who have not completed formal schooling, social workers have observed that they are very vocal of their ideologies and very critical

of the government. The explanation for such ability can be related to the views expressed by Hilsdon (1995) that in CPP/NPA all recruits undergo intensive training and indoctrination, which he described as a “Filipino Marxist analysis” where recruits “come to understand national and global constructions of poverty and the possibility of its alleviation through revolution” (p. 50).

Developmental Toll

The presence of the children in the armed group, whether as combatants or not, places them in a very difficult life condition that poses a threat not only to their life and safety but also to their self-concept, values and worldview. Here are the information shared by the social workers on the developmental toll exacted by the exposure and participation of children in armed conflict:

“We had a hard time feeding them at the center because they are not used to eating polished rice, meat and milk. In the community where the boys came from, they used to eat root crops such as cassava and rarely have viand in their meals. The children look pale and weak” (R13)

“Garry was 15 then when sent to combat operation. It was in his second combat operation when he was captured badly wounded by the military” (R8)

“The children expressed that they are always on the move, hiking mountains, carrying guns, sleeping under tree shades and oftentimes with empty stomach. In fact one of the minors has bullet wound in his body which he said he got from one of their encounters with the military. According to our in-house physician, the wound is not yet totally healed, which means that the child had been in an armed encounter prior to his admission at our center (institution for children)” (R1)

“At first he was shy, he doesn’t want to share any information about his life in the mountain. He doesn’t have trust in us because we are government workers. And when he finally does, he told us about his training in the fast dismantling and handling of armalite rifle, a skill which amazes even the military because he can do it in less than 5 minutes. In the camp, he said that everyday he always bring armalite rifle with him to protect himself and his family. The boy said that he feels safe when he has a gun with him” (R7)

"The girl child soldier is a combatant. She said that she was already involved in armed encounter with the military. In fact she was severely wounded in one of those encounters" (R4)

"Part of the trauma they had experienced was seeing human bones, dead bodies, and severely injured comrades resulting from armed encounter with the military. Some of them have seen their parents shot to death. It brought a devastating effect on them. They have a deep feeling of hatred against the government. They feel that the government is not responding or addressing their sad plight and cries for justice" (R9)

"The child was wounded and emotionally disturb when she came to our attention. She always wanted to be alone and oftentimes she is crying intensely" (R12)

"Charlyn was 17 when she joined the armed group. She said she is the one doing the talking to be able to recruit. She stayed in the center only for a few weeks because she absconded. She even brought one of the wards with her. I remember the minor saying that she preferred to be in jail rather than in the center so that she can interact with those who were abused. She felt that atrocities against them gets no attention or action from the government, hence they will get justice their way" (R3)

"He said that he was awakened from sleep by the sounds of guns and when he woke up his parents are no longer by his side. The military got him; he was nine years old then. His father died in that incident but his mother apparently escaped and up to the time he was with us, the whereabouts of his mother was not known. He said that just one more encounter and he will surely die. I saw him trembling when he is telling me that story. He was still in fear. One of his brothers came out to claim custody of him. But the child does not like to go home because of fear that his former comrades will kill him. Uncertainty of his safety and his future overwhelms him" (R11)

"The child is afraid to go back to his parents because he believes that the armed group will get back to him for suspicion that he already cooperated with the military" (R10)

The findings confirmed the development toll exacted by the child's exposure and participation in armed conflict in all aspect of his/her development. On the physical side, the most common toll is body injuries as bullets hit children. Others showed signs of malnutrition and other health problems. The children are emotionally affected too as manifested in their

intense feeling of fear for their safety and their deep feeling of hatred and distrust against the government, which in many instances are transferred to any workers connected with the government such as the respondents. Some children expressed fear, which goes even beyond the present situation. They fear for their future. This impact on the child clearly illustrates what Groves (2002) has claimed about the changes in the emotional landscape of the children exposed to violence. The change encompasses the children's emerging view of the future and their place in it.

Following the discussion in chapter two about Groves' (2002) views on the effect of traumatic events carried out by humans as creating more psychological risks than do natural disasters, then the above instances of violence which child soldiers were exposed to such as the loss or death of loved ones, dead bodies, severely injured comrades and the devastation caused in humans and in properties, created more psychological effect on the child. The psychological impact was demonstrated in the following behavior or coping mechanism of the child such as isolating oneself, intense crying and confusion. There were children who regarded guns or other deadly weapons as vital to ensuring their safety and security hence they often bring or carry it with them. The child's exposure to "gun culture" or to violence or human rights abuses that remains unpunished have sent wrong signals to their moral development. In the above cases of child soldiers, they regarded the attainment of justice not through the existing justice system in the country but through their "own way" of bestowing justice. This then justifies their commitment of atrocities against those they considered as enemies. This strong in-group and out-group differentiation strongly imbedded in an armed group partly explains why the individuals subsumed their values in favor of the values held by the group where the person identifies himself/herself. The moral values of the child soldiers such as his sense of fairness and justice was influenced by the moral orientation of the family and the armed group where he/she belonged. In the case of child soldiers who were raised in the armed group, the values learned from the family were reinforced or fortified in their environment.

Reasons for Joining

Child soldiers have various reasons for joining the armed group as shown in the following information shared by the respondents:

“Parents of the children were already in the armed group and the children were born and raised in their camp. Naturally they have to follow their parents. But when I asked these boys of their dreams and desires, they expressed that they do not like the way they live in the mountains with the rebel group. They said that they are tired of walking everyday, running and hiding from the military” (R6)

“According to the child, his father gave him a name that signifies the role he will play in the armed movement. Indeed, the child at his very young age already acted as leader of the group of young children in their camp” (R5)

“She said she do not regret her participation in the armed group because they found in them the sense of belonging and caring which her family failed to give to her. She said her parents have spent more of their time in their work than in caring and listening to them as their children” (R3).

“John told me that he joined the rebel group out of curiosity. He was curious and wanted to experience handling different kinds of guns. He believed that gun gave him a sense of power. He was undergoing training as a combatant when he was captured” (R4)

“Sheryl’s father told me that Sheryl was offered Php 1000 (more or less 30 NZ \$) a month to serve as medic of the group. She was out of school so her parents accepted the offer. Besides, the insurgents’ group assured them that nothing will happen to Sheryl because her role was not that risky” (R11)

“The minor ran away from pre-arranged marriage, a tradition of their tribe. She join the armed group and she proudly shared that the group had given her opportunities to learn many things. She was trained to be a medic, a combatant and a lecturer for the movement. She said she finds satisfaction in the opportunities given to her in the armed group because she did not get it from her family. She enjoys what she is doing, one of which is acting as the squad leader. That was her position in the group when she was wounded and captured in an encounter with the military” (R9)

The above findings show that children participated in the armed group for various reasons such as in terms of the little monetary compensation they were promised to get for the service they do for the

movement, the protection the armed group can give to their family and their livelihood, the fulfillment of the child's desire to be in "power" by having guns and group to protect them, and the meeting of their need for acceptance and belongingness. Some regard their participation in the armed group as a way to escape a tradition, while others regard it as their natural way of life as sons and daughters of a rebel family, a way of showing respect and obedience to their family. One child was even named after the mission his family believed is to be his future role in the movement. This is regarded as a subtle way of forming the child's political views. The abovementioned reasons somehow confirms what Machel (1996) has termed as "pressures" related to the political, economic, social, cultural factors, behind the child's decision to participate in the armed group.

Summarizing the micro picture of the phenomenon using the first two major dimensions, micro and meso ecological perspective, findings show that the child's microenvironment has been filled with critical factors threatening his/her full development. The micro units such as the family and the community where the child belongs are characterized with impoverishment or inadequacy to provide the child with the opportunities he/she needs to grow and develop to the fullest. As the child interacts with the micro units she/he is also influenced by them. This interaction is evident in the formation of the child's thoughts, views and values, which also resembles the views and values of the family and the group where they belong.

The situations faced by the children and their families are further affected by the resulting relationships existing in the parent's workplace or friendship network or the mesosystem. The families of the child soldiers are mostly landless agricultural farmers whose income could not guarantee the adequate provision of basic needs for the family much more the need for the education of their children. Relationship among family members is affected by the demand to spend more time looking for a living or starting life anew at another place as a result of frequent displacement due to

armed conflict. Moreover, the community where the child resides fail to provide other alternatives to improve one's life condition as health, educational and livelihood opportunities were non-existent. The proximity of the communities to the training ground or camp of the armed groups facilitates the formation of a relationship with these groups whose ideologies did not conform with the existing ideologies in the wider society. Indeed, the life condition is too harsh for the children who are forced to defy the natural course of their development as children by the forces or conditions existing in their environment such as those connected to culture, economy, political and social forces within the broader ecological system of the society. These factors at the child's broader environment, particularly the exo and macro systems, are the focus of the succeeding discussions.

The Macro Picture

"Minors expressed that their parents are members of the armed rebel group and they were born into it...it was the kind of life they have known since they were little children, living in the mountains with their parents and comrade. One of the children said that his parents had inculcated in him the importance of "pakikibaka" or struggle to set free the nation from poverty, which they believed, was caused by the government and its corrupt system" (R1)

"Elaine ran away from pre-arranged marriage, a tradition of their tribe. She joined the armed group and she proudly shared that the group had given her opportunities to learn many things. She was trained to be a medic, a combatant and a lecturer for the movement. She said she finds satisfaction in the opportunities given to her in the armed group because she did not get it from her family" (R9)

"Child soldiering roots lie within the family, like lack of care and attention for the children" (R3)

Social and cultural pressures. The above findings relate to the bigger picture of the socio-cultural beliefs, norms and tradition of a typical Filipino family in regards to children and the rearing of children. Generally, Filipinos are child-oriented people. A child is valued in a Filipino family regardless of the social class where he/she belongs. The birth of a child to a couple solidifies the marriage and gives rise to the use of the word "mag-anak"

(family). The *mag-anak* in the Filipino family is composed of the parents and the children and oftentimes includes the relatives. Hence, the joy and fulfillment that come along with the birth of the child is an experience shared by his/her parents and the entire clan of relatives. According to dela Torre (1992):

The Filipino newborn means another person to carry the name, another offspring to assure the care of the parents in their old age, an extra hand to help in the field or at home, an heir to a lifetime of good honest toil or unmitigated plunder. To a Filipino couple, a child is like manna from heaven: this is probably why the Philippines population gallops at a pace only God knows or understands why. (p. 18)

Members of the family extending generations back usually rear the Filipino child. Their older siblings, grandmothers, in-laws, aunts and even neighbors act as surrogate caretakers of the child. This kinship is highly valued and "has been held sacred then and now" (dela Torre, 1992, p. 18). Citing Bresnan, dela Torre (1992, p.32) further emphasized that this deep sense of loyalty to immediate kin - that is the family and the relatives, extends to the fictive kin such as the godparents - molds the Filipinos' social environment. She further explained that social relationships to a Filipino are very important such that "most Filipinos see themselves embedded in a plural and interlocking web of obligations in which individual desires and priorities are subservient to family and communal goals" (p. 32). Unlike other ethnic groups, the ties of the Filipino child to his parents do not cease after reaching the age of maturity - that is eighteen years old, or marriage. Oftentimes, unmarried offspring and in some instances even the married ones, continue to live with their parents. Dela Torre (1992) explained that "probably the fact that one's children are not, essentially, one's own has not sunk into the consciousness of Filipino parents" (p. 111).

A Filipino child is not only influenced by his family/kin but also by his/her *barkada* (peer group). For youth in rural areas, his/her *barkada* are often one's kin or those related to the child by affinity or consanguinity; whereas, for teenagers in urban areas the peer group often comes from school, parish and neighborhood. According to dela Torre (1992) "the

barkada serves as an alternate vessel of a Filipino teenager's aspirations, fears, triumphs, disappointments, joys and passion" (p. 105). Sometimes, the child looks up to the *barkada* for something that she/he cannot find at home such as concern, acceptance, confidence, camaraderie, friendship, communion, trust, and other material or non-material things the child needs.

The Filipino children have high regard for authority. The immediate figures of authority are their parents and generally the child's social environment expects them to follow and respect elders. Children look up to figures of authority and oftentimes make them their role models. In a Filipino family, children are expected to be obedient to their parents which according to dela Torre (1992) "covers compliance with specific requests, admonitions, advice and warnings, and, this is more difficult - compliance with family expectations"(p. 139).

The above information only strengthens the opinion of the respondents on the influence exerted by people and culture on the current and future situation of children involved in armed conflict. Social and cultural pressures appear to be one of the probable reasons behind the strong influence exerted on the child by the parents, family members, relatives, peer groups, neighbors and other immediate micro units. To cite an example, the regard of the children as "successor" of their parents or the adults in the armed group can be merely out of submission to authority or compliance to the expectations of the group where they belong which is connected with the existing culture. This also relates to the child's *exosystem* where the center of power resides in the adults or the parents.

Economic pressures . As cited earlier, child soldiers mostly come from poor families where family heads are usually landless agricultural workers or laborers in odd jobs earning meager income and facing unsecured tenure. This family situation relates to the bigger picture of poverty and inequality in the country. Respondents to this study believed that poverty is a vital factor in the existence of child soldiering phenomenon, as implied in the following responses:

"The problem of child soldiering is rooted in poverty. Parents can not send their children to school. They can not even provide them their needs because family income is insufficient" (R12)

"The participation of the children in the armed group is rooted in poverty and illiteracy particularly among the indigenous people who are often marginalized" (R15)

"Child soldiering is a matter connected to the economic constraints being encountered by the family ...they join the armed group so their livelihood will be spared. They are uneducated too; hence, they are easily lured because they can not weigh things up properly" (R1)

"I would say that the number one factor in child soldiering is poverty. The child has a lot of ambitions but the circumstances gave her no other choice in life. Her situation made it difficult for her to finish her schooling. Her family does not have a land of their own, so they stay in the mountain where they are free to cultivate the land" (R11)

"Poverty is a factor, poor education too" (R9)

"In my perception, child soldiering happens because of poverty.. if only the children were well provided for, particularly in their schooling, they will not be tempted or motivated to work for the rebels. They will be going to school instead" (R4)

"The poverty situation in the family and the community hinders the full development of the child" (R3)

Marcelino, et al.(1996:2) had cited that armed conflict in the country has "intensified to nationwide proportions as the populace reeled under grinding poverty and socio-economic inequities" (p. 2). A related view was expressed by former Senator Wigberto Tanada (2003, p. 54) in "Waging Peace, Then and Now" . He argued that "poverty and economic inequity" are some of the root causes of armed conflicts in the country, aside from acts of injustice or abuse and problems with the administration of justice, poor governance, structural inequality in our political system, and exploitation and marginalization of cultural communities.

The concept of poverty is often related to the idea of deprivation. It usually refers to the lack of basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing as well as those relating to health and education. The traditional yardstick used

to measure poverty in the country is in terms of income and expenditure. The government usually comes up with poverty line “usually expressed in terms of the minimum level of income or expenditure necessary to purchase a basic caloric intake” (Racelis, M.& Castro Guevarra, M.C.,2003, p. 41). This traditional measurement was challenged for its failure to reveal other dimensions of poverty, particularly those concerning socio-cultural aspects of needs and deprivation. However, for many people poverty may not only mean the material deprivation but also the absence of opportunities for the enhancement of human potential and equal participation in decision making in society, and powerlessness to exercise control over ones’ life, now and in the future (Racelis & Guevarra, 2003, p. 41).

Balisacan and Edillon (2005, p. 221- 223) cited that the country’s economy has “an almost regular pattern of boom and bust” and in each period of “boom”, bust and stagnation follows. It is usually brought about by huge foreign loans, heavy reliance on importation, political instability, natural disasters, heavy economic regulation and shocks in global trade and finance. They further stressed that “high inflation during a period of low growth increases poverty” and the most vulnerable to the inflationary surge of basic commodities like food are the numerous small-scale farmers and producers and landless workers.

The poverty situation is one of the highest in areas where there is a fierce battle between state and non-state armies such as the Western and Central Mindanao. Balisacan and Edillon (pp. 224-225) claimed that “in two regions, Central and Western Mindanao, poverty - in all three dimensions - was higher in 2000 than in 1985. Toward the close of the 1990s, these two regions, particularly Western Mindanao, were at the center of violent confrontations between the military and army dissidents.” The three dimensions referred to incidence, depth and severity of poverty. It is significant to note that the three armed groups NPA, MILF and ASG, found to be using children in their group, exist in Mindanao, one of the three major island groups of the country.

While people all over the country generally experience poverty, it is more severe in the rural than in urban areas. Government statistics showed that the poverty incidence of families in rural area had increased from 44.4 percent in 1997 to 46.9 percent in year 2000, while in urban areas, poverty incidence was 17.9 percent in 1997 and 19.9 percent in 2000. Note that 48.05 percent of the population lives in rural areas (www.census.gov.ph/census2000/index.html). The following information was used in Balisacan and Edillon (p. 224):

Figure 3.. Incidence and Depth in Urban and Rural Poverty, 1985- 2000 (%)^a

	1985	1988	1991	1994	1997	2000
Urban						
Incidence	21.7	16.0	20.1	18.6	11.9	13.2
Depth	5.9	3.8	5.7	4.4	2.6	3.0
Rural						
Incidence	53.1	45.7	48.6	45.4	36.9	41.3
Depth	17.8	14.0	15.6	13.0	9.8	11.3

Note: a-Poverty and inequality estimates are based on per capita consumption expenditure adjusted for provincial cost-of-living differences. Poverty lines employed to calculate poverty indices are fixed in terms of living standards.

Source: Extracted from Table 6.2 Poverty and inequality in urban and rural areas, 1985-2000, Balisacan and Edillo (2005) p.224.

Looking at the poverty incidence of population in 1997 and 2000, National Statistics Office (NSO) reported an increase from 36.8 percent in 1997 to 39.4 percent in year 2000 (www.census.gov.ph/census2000/index.html). However, in year 2003 the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) report for the year 2003 showed an 8 percent decrease in the number of Filipinos living below the poverty line, from 25.4 million families in 2000 to 23.5 million in 2003. Likewise, it reported a decrease on figures of poor families, from 4.1 million in 2000 to 4 million in 2003. The decrease in poverty pictures, according to the critics, was due to the new average family size used by the government

in its computation - that is five members from the previous six and the changing of poverty threshold figures, which they said “only obscure the true extent of poverty in the Philippines” (Yu, EDM, April 2005, p. 4).

The poverty situation is a harsh life situation that affects mostly the children in the poor families. As more and more families suffer from poverty, more children would be encouraged to join an armed group that promises them reform and gives them something better to hope for. Here are some of the policies and priorities in the child’s wider exosystem and macro environment that affect the poverty situation of their family and community in one way or another.

Policies and Priorities

Fiscal Concerns. Poverty is closely related to the policies and priorities made by the government with regards to its budget and spending. Critics argued that while the government had adopted the “Children First” policy in budget priorities and fund allocation, it follows a different course of action by prioritizing debt service and military spending in the national budget over delivery of social services. According to IBON Foundation, a non-government research institution, (IBON,2001 June 30), the percentage share of the social service budget to the overall budget of the national government in the last three years (2004-2006) has actually declined from 28.9 percent share in 2004 to 27.9 percent share in 2006. Although there is a 15.6 percent increase in the social service budget under the 1.7 Trillion budget for 2006, the amount is still considered too small to provide social services to its growing number of poor families. The social services budget which is usually subdivided into several expenditure items covering education, health, social security, welfare and employment; land distribution, housing and community development; other social services and subsidy to local government units, also include significant expenditures for the military. These are the budget share for the Veterans Memorial Center and AFP Medical center under health sub-sector allotment. In the same way, budget for education also covers expenditures of National

Defense College of the Philippines, Military Shrines Services and Philippine Military Academy. The social service budget increase of 15.6 percent is still too small compared to the budget increase of 18.7 percent given to defense. (Balangue, G. , 31 August 2005).

This reality in the country exemplifies what Cairns (1996) had implied in terms of the imbalance in government budget for military and social services in countries suffering from internal armed conflict. Government tends to spend more in military and armed forces rather than in social services that is badly needed by the people faced with grinding poverty. Likewise, the 27.9 percent budget share for social services fare too low compared to the 32.3 percent budget share for the payment of foreign debts. The priority given by the government to debt servicing faced strong rejection from the organized civil and militant organizations claiming that such debt accrued mostly by past administrations such as the Marcos Regime are “onerous and illegitimate loans” and are private debts which should not be assumed by the public. With Php4.02 trillion outstanding debt as of Sept.2005, the country still attempts to borrow from the International Monetary Fund (IMF)-World Bank to meet its budget deficit (Africa, 2006, p. 17). One of the fiscal measures adopted by the government to increase its revenues and meet its expenditures is the imposition of Value Added Tax (VAT), an indirect business tax being paid by the consumer of goods and services. It is imposed to the seller who passes the burden of shouldering the VAT to the consumers of their goods and services. The imposition of VAT to all consumers regardless of their capacity to pay is “regressive in nature” and “is in violation of the constitutional precept that taxation should be equitable” (IBON, 31 August 2005, p.7). Hence, in my opinion the families of the child soldiers and other families who are in similar circumstances - whose income can barely meet the daily needs of their children for food, health and education, are those mostly affected by these fiscal measures adopted by the policy makers.

Economic globalization. How is the economic globalization thrust of the government connected to the life condition of the families? An explanation cited in *IBON* (30 June 2001), refer to globalization as “the rapid economic restructuring and integration of various economies into the ‘free market’ system. It is also called the ‘new global order’ that implements the policies of liberalization, deregulation and privatization worldwide.” In the view of the government, free trade is good for the country because it bring cheaper goods to the consumers, which assures the country of food security. In adopting a liberalized market, the government opens up the country’s economy to the entry of foreign products and investment “even in sensitive industries”. Government control in economic sectors is lifted making it more difficult for local industries, particularly the small-scale ones, to compete with foreign corporations. IBON Foundation claimed that it is the agriculture sector that is greatly affected by economic liberalization. This is because the agriculture sector of the country is generally “backward...without government support... and subjected to undue competition with heavily subsidized commercial crops” (IBON, 30 June 2001, p. 8). It is this sector where the parents of most of the child soldiers could be found.

Privatization, or the transfer of government-run facilities or utilities to private companies, apparently for lower rates and improvement of services, is part of the structural adjustment program being espoused by IMF-WB. In the country, the government already privatized water and power facilities and utilities to big corporations with foreign investors. Critics insisted that “these privatization schemes have failed in providing cheaper water and electricity but have resulted in monopoly pricing” (*IBON Facts and Figures*, 31 August 2005:6). Aside from water and power, oil industries in the country are deregulated. These three items are essential in the everyday life of people, rich and poor alike. Any changes in prices, particularly oil, have a corresponding effect on the prices of most of the goods and services needed in daily living.

In *IBON Facts and Figures* issue of 15 December 2004, the computation of the consumption expenditure pattern (CPI) being done by the government was criticized for not accurately showing the real picture of the expenditure pattern of the majority of the poor families. The argument was “the moneyed few who consume lavishly distort the consumption pattern of the average family by pushing the median upward” (p.3). They claimed that the impact of inflation could be seen more precisely if the CPI is based on the CPI of the poor majority, rather than the ‘average household’. The argument showed that:

“The consumption expenditure pattern of the poor is considerably different from the average pattern of the aggregate population. The 2000 FIES shows that the total family expenditures on food shrunk from 44.2% in 1997 to 43.6 percent. But if one looks at food expenditures per income class, food accounts for 57.8% to 65.5 % of expenses of families whose income is below P80,000. These poor families, who comprise 45.4% of the total, also spent more on fuel, light and water, with the bottom income class spending 7.3% while the total family expenditures for these necessities was at 6.3%. On the other hand, total family spending for rent (14.2%), transportation and communication (6.8%) and education (4.2%) are much higher than what families earning below 80,000 spent for these - 8% to 9.7% for rent, 2.2% to 3.6% for transportation and communication, and 0.7% to 2.3% for education.” (p.3)

Inflation rates accelerated in the last three years from 3.0 percent in year 2002 to 7.7 percent in 2005. *IBON Economic and Political Briefing* (12 January 2006: 7) further revealed that “prices shot up faster last year than they did in any of the seven years before it” based on the following annual inflation average: in 1999 the annual inflation rate was 5.9 percent, then the following year it went down by 4 percent, then in 2001 it went up to 6.8 percent and down again to 3 percent in 2003. In 2004, the inflation average was recorded at 6 percent and in year 2005 it was recorded at 7.7 percent. While all consumers felt the impact of inflation, the most affected were the low income earners such as the farm workers, like the families of the child soldiers.

Militarization. Hernandez (2003, p. 46) stated that based on IISS 2001 chart of Armed Conflict, the estimated cost of internal conflict in the Philippines was US\$ 5,100 million between 1968 and 1997 while the recorded fatalities between 1968-2001 reached 122,000. This showed that armed conflict depletes human and material resources of a country. Under the current administration of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, the costs of conflict continue to rise as the government pursued its counter-insurgency and anti-terrorism policy, which Tanada (2003) criticized as pro-US. Examples of current policies is the “Balikatan” exercises and now the US-RP Mutual Logistics Support agreement (MLSA) which is expected to bring military assistance in terms of training and hardware as well as promotions, medals or salary increase to concerned military personnel. However, for former Senator Wigberto Tanada, the “military operations are only further igniting, as elsewhere in the world, the dormant fires of Christian-Muslim strife” (p. 53).

In an intensive militarization, particularly in rural areas, some families may opt to join opposing armed groups to protect themselves and their livelihood. Related to militarization is the proliferation of guns in the country. Written articles as cited in Hilsdon (1995) reported that “in 1988 the AFP had an estimated 200,000 firearms while civilians had over 500,000 of which 184,000 were unregistered and therefore illegal” (p. 13). The proliferation of weapons in the country, both registered and unregistered, supports the idea the idea cited by Hilsdon that “the Philippines is considered a ‘gun culture’” (p. 13).

Displacement, human abuses and injustices. Former Senator Wigberto Tanada stated that (2003, p. 54) “acts of injustice or abuse and problems with the administration of justice” are another root causes of armed conflicts aside from poverty and economic inequality, poor governance, structural inequality in our political system, and exploitation and marginalization of cultural communities. In 2005 alone, 178 incidents of armed engagements between the NPA and the government forces were monitored by IBON Databank as of 21 December, 2005. In this fighting, the number of dead and wounded from warring parties were not yet all

accounted for, but partial figures showed 436 dead and 226 wounded, including the 20 civilians. (IBON, 12 January 2006, p. 44) The toll exacted by armed confrontation to people's life does not yet include the dead and wounded from the fighting between the government and other armed groups like the MILF/MNLF and the ASG/ Misuari's followers.

Human Rights violations in the same year were also high as there were 874 cases with 99,011 victims, 14,302 families and 288 communities compiled by KARAPATAN (cited in *IBON*, 12 January, p. 39). The above cited macro picture of displacement, human rights abuses and other injustices were demonstrated in the following real life experiences of the child soldiers as shared by the respondents:

"Freddie's village was raided by the military. At that time he was not at the camp because he was in the field checking the makeshift trap he made for catching birds. All his family members were killed in that raid" (R7)

"According to the child, he was with his parents and other comrades taking a rest in one village from one of the missions they had when the place was raided by the military. He said he was awakened from sleep by sound of guns and when he woke up, his parents are no longer at his side. That was the time when the military got him. He was nine years old then" (R6)

"Gary had traumatic experience in life, when his uncle was tortured. He once said to me that he wanted to take revenge for the injustices that his family had experienced" (R8)

"Most of the cases of child soldiers that we have handled had experienced injustices in their life. Some personally experienced the injustices; others were exposed to it in their community. Their youthfulness and their being idealistic were used by other people to instigate their desire to take justice in their own hands. Their exposure to gun influenced their thinking that they cannot have justice without resorting to violence. For them having guns means having power" (R10)

"The injustices and abuses done to the loved ones of the child soldiers is a force that pushes the children to stay with the groups who, they believe, can provide them protection and support" (R12)

The real life story of displacement, injustices and other forms of human rights abuses contained in the above cited information shared by the respondents are but a few stories of unfortunate life experiences of child soldiers covered in this study. A big proportion (93%) of the respondents have actually experienced the displacement and have personally witnessed the human rights abuses to their family or other significant people in their life. The impact of the tragic events had left various developmental risks to the child, as discussed in this chapter. As expressed by the respondents, some of the child soldiers have seen weapons as necessary for their survival and safety. The inaction or complacency to human rights violation, acts of injustices and abuses sent wrong signals to the child soldiers that these acts are sanctioned in the society and would likely instigate them to take justice in a violent way. Former Senator Wigberto Tanada (2003) cited that the Filipinos need to learn from the lessons of the past where “all-out war only brings us away from our goal of finding a just resolution to one of the longest running insurgencies in the world...” (54). This stressed the importance of peace negotiations with the armed group rather than resort to intensive militarization. This also stressed the importance of the participation of concerned people in the resolution of their problem.

Summary

The child soldier phenomenon in the Philippines is not far different from that in other countries. The findings in this study have confirmed what have been found in other studies on child soldiers such as those relating to the use of both sexes of children in the armed group, the roles given to the children, the motivations or “pressures” in life that influence them to be in the armed group and the impact of their experiences to their development. This study further affirmed that child soldiering is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and requires probing beyond its present face value, which is the difficult life condition of the child soldiers, their families and communities. Using the ecological perspective, this study had attempted to

establish the link between the various forces in the child's microenvironment with that of the macro or the wider environment.

Admittedly, this research had presented only some of the issues of national concerns such as poverty, injustice, economic policies and other macro issues that are link to the child soldier phenomenon. Nonetheless, the attempt had shed light on the importance of these issues in the understanding of the main topic, that is the child soldier phenomenon. Following the view of former Philippine Senator Wigberto Tanada that "war thrives on the institutionalized violence of poverty and inequity, landlessness and homelessness, injustice and oppression" (Tanada, 2003), an understanding of the factors that gave rise to the existence of child soldier phenomenon offers a wider perspective and a stable grounding, too, to those who want to address the phenomenon at its roots. In the succeeding chapter I have explored how a group of professionals, that is the social worker respondents, have faced the phenomenon in their actual practice with child soldiers.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH CHILD SOLDIERS: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

To give people help, while denying them a significant part of the action contributes nothing to the development of the individual. In a deeper sense it is not giving but taking their dignity. Denial of opportunity for participation is the denial of human dignity and democracy.

- Saul D. Alinsky

Webb (2003) described social work with children as “a demanding, all-inclusive field of practice” (p. 16). She said that focusing professional’s assessment and action only on the child as an individual or the professional response on the child’s family or social environment is not anymore adequate to address problematic situations. This was because various factors within the child such as his/her genetic endowment, temperament, physical health, developmental stages as well factors in the child’s physical and social environment such as the culture, status, roles, religion, etc. continuously and mutually influence each other. She argued that it was essential to adopt a “multifaceted approach” in the entire helping process from assessment, to planning and implementing intervention plans. This necessitated a broader focus, rather than a narrow or oversimplified view of the problem situation, in all levels or systems.

In the previous chapter, the child soldier phenomenon in the Philippines was established as multi-dimensional. The factors that relate to its existence or perpetration were explored from the individual to societal dimension. In this chapter, I analyzed the response or interventions made in regards to the multifaceted needs and problem of child soldiers as well as the issues and challenges in regards to the respondents roles, interventions and institutional collaboration. To put the discussion in context, I found it necessary to commence this chapter with a brief background of the roots of social work and welfare practice in the country.

Background of State Welfare Practice And Social Work in The Philippines

Before the 2nd world war. Foreign countries colonized the Philippines before it became an independent state in 1946. The influence of colonization could be seen in the way of life of the Filipino people as well as in the social welfare practice in the country. Social work as a profession in the Philippines existed only after the colonial period. The legal basis for its practice was contained in Republic Act (RA) 4373 passed in 1965, which is defined in chapter one as a profession “primarily concerned with organized social activity aimed to facilitate and strengthen basic relationships and the mutual adjustment between individuals and their social environment”. However, according to Vilorio and Martinez (2003), even before the colonization of the country the Filipino culture already exhibited a form of social work in the social practices of helping other people in need like the *bayanihan, damayan and tulungan*. This sense of community solidarity and the spirit of caring for each member of the group are natural way of life for our early ancestors where community’s sense of general well-being is “concentrated on economic productivity for consumption, mutual help and protection” (Vilorio and Martinez, p.22).

Kuitenbrouer (1994) described the early Filipino settlements or *barangays* as “basically self-sufficient and self-reliant...marked by a relatively high degree of equality and cohesiveness” (p.129). He claimed that the colonization of the country by the Spaniards introduced the people to Christianity, feudal systems and the tradition of helping through religious and charity work. The feudal order in the society was believed to have paved the way for inequality in the economic, political and social aspects of life of the people and to the notion that poverty is inevitable. Religion was believed to have reinforced the existing order as people surrender their fate to Supreme Being and accept poverty as a “will of God”. Welfare primarily became the church activity. Similar view was expressed by Vilorio and Martinez (2003), who described the period 1565 until the turn of the 19th century as

characterized by the “rise of almshouses, hospitals, asylums and reformatories to aid the poor, the sick, the aged, the mentally ill and defective, the orphans, and youthful delinquents” (p. 24).

At the time of American colonization, acts of helping became more structured and more private organizations became involved. Kuitenbrouer (1974) claimed that during this period individual freedom was highly promoted rather than communal responsibility. Social welfare was seen “not as the responsibility of an organized community as a whole, but as the task of private groups of citizens, whether religiously or otherwise inspired” (p.130). He added that the notion of social problem, like poverty, as a “will of God” was gradually replaced by the perception that it was the result of “individual characteristics of individual groups of people” (p. 130).

Towards the end of the colonial period, the state became actively involved in welfare activities. One of the state’s first concrete efforts on public welfare was the creation of the Public Welfare Board in 1915. With the passage of Jones Law in 1917 mandating the separation of the church and the State, the state built its own orphanages. Veneracion (2003) cited that it was during the American regime when some “government pensionadas” were sent to the United States to study social work and when tours of international civic organizations with Philippines chapters were held. The American colonizers were apparently the ones who “introduced a theoretical basis for helping” in doing social welfare in the Philippines. Moreover, during the Japanese occupation, welfare activities then were focused on relief services for prisoners of war and displaced persons.

After the 2nd world war. The relief and rehabilitation service were the priority welfare activity after the war. The institutionalization of the state’s public welfare took many forms as the years passed by. The first concrete state effort was the creation of a Public Welfare Board, which serves as a government agency tasks to coordinate the implementation of social welfare services. After some years, the office of the Public Welfare Commission took the powers and functions of the Public Welfare Board. After almost 10 years of

existence, the Commission was replaced by the Bureau of Public Welfare placed under the Department of Public Instruction and then later transferred to Department of Health and Welfare. In 1947, the Bureau was abolished when the Social Welfare Commission (SWC) was set up by virtue of Executive Order No.97. The welfare effort of the government became national in scope necessitating the putting up of SWC branch offices in several areas nationwide. Welfare activities of the government during this period of high agrarian unrest were undertaken by the SWC and by the President's Action Committee on Social Amelioration (PACSA). In 1951, PACSA and SWC were merged into one government agency called the Social Welfare Administration (SWA). The focus of social welfare at that time was the delivery of social amelioration programs particularly in the agrarian areas (Viloria and Martinez, 2003).

In the 1960's, the SWA was elevated to a cabinet department named Department of Social Welfare (DSW) with the passage of RA 5416 or the Social Welfare Act in 1968. This signaled the wider role the welfare department played in the lives of its target clientele -the poorest of the poor. As the years passed by, there were changes in goals and thrust as well as in the form of the government necessitating corresponding changes not only in the name and structure of the department but also in its functions. The goals and directions of the welfare service changed from dole out, to self-help, to development, empowerment, and to decentralized thrust. Likewise, the name of DSW was changed from the Department of Social Welfare to Department of Social Services and Development in 1976 to the Ministry of Social Services and Development (MSSD) in 1978 (Viloria and Martinez, 2003). On January 30 1987, Executive Order (EO) 123 mandated the change from MSSD to the DSWD. From its major role of direct provision of service to the poorest of the poor, the department made a "paradigm shift" when the Local Government Code of 1991 took effect with the passage of RA 7160. The Code provided for the decentralization of governance and the decentralization of the substantial basic services such as in health, education and social welfare. This necessitated the Department to devolve its basic social welfare programs and services, directs service workers, assets, records as well as funds for the

devolved staff and programs and reorganized itself to its new mandate, which is to:

provide assistance to local government units, non-government organizations, other government agencies, people's organization and other members of civil society in effectively implementing programs, projects and services that will alleviate poverty and empower disadvantaged individuals, families and communities for an improved quality of life. (On-line www.dswd.gov.ph)

The change from direct service provider to policy and program developer necessitated structural and functional adjustment in DSWD. In the process of adjustment, there were regional centers and institutions for different clientele like those for the children sector where devolution to the local government is still being worked out. Hence, DSWD personnel like the social workers are still continuing the provision of direct services to clientele. It is at this stage of transition when this study was conducted with selected social workers of DSWD.

Into the government's care. The preferred term for child soldiers among government agencies working for children is "children involved in armed conflict" or CIAC. As mentioned in chapter one, the term CIAC and child soldier is used interchangeably in this study as both terms have the same meaning, which is "children recruited by armed rebel groups to serve as combatants, couriers, guides, medical aides or spies". The CIAC is one of the categories of children clientele under the bigger umbrella called "children in need of special protection" (CNSP). The CNSP apparently comprises one-third of the total children population of the country (*The State of Filipino Children*, 2002, p. 60). As of the national census for year 2000, the child population (below 18 years old) comprises nearly 40 per cent of the 76.5 million Filipinos nationwide (National Statistics Office [NSO],2004).

The following information shows how the child soldiers were brought to the respondent's care and attention:

"I handled two child soldier cases, both were referred by a priest. The military was with the priest when they brought the children to our sub-field office. There were also some people with them like the local councilors and representatives from human rights" (R15)

"The children were apparently gathering rattan poles when the military operation occurred. The children were taken by the military to their camp, stayed there for a few days, before they were brought to the social welfare officer of the province. The child soldier cases were then given to the field social worker of the region who was based at the provincial social welfare office. Seeing the immediate need for temporary shelter, the social worker referred the children to us at the regional institution for children" (R13)

"Our first child soldier case in the center was a girl combatant who was captured by the military in an armed encounter in one of the remote areas. The minor had very serious injuries and had to undergo three operations due to a bullet wound. The girl was placed for a time in a military hospital and then upon a court order, she was brought to our care" (R3)

"The local government unit of a certain municipality brought to our attention the case of 37 former child soldiers in their area. The children came from 3 remote barangays (village) near the training ground of the rebels" (R10)

"I was sent by my office (DSWD Regional Office) to visit the girl minor in a military hospital after receiving a report from the military about the child combatant who was captured in their operation. My contact with the child revealed that she was injured in the fighting between government armies and the revolutionaries. She was brought by the military to the nearest hospital for treatment and was apparently transferred from two military camps for more than a month before she was reported to the social welfare department" (R11)

"I have seen the minor in one of my jail visits. I was informed that the child was facing a charge of illegal possession of explosives after he was caught in a raid done by the military in their barangay. He was resentful, does not want to cooperate and very vocal of the ideologies usually identified with the NPA. There was no separate detention cell for the child in jail. DSWD filed a petition to the court to release the child to our care" (R6)

"The minor was captured by the military during an encounter. He was turned over by the military to the Mayor who then instructed his local social worker to refer the case to DSWD.

When I coordinated with the local social worker, I learned that there was already a case filed against those captured, illegal possession of firearms. To pull out the child from the custody of the Mayor since he was released on recognizance to the Mayor, DSWD filed a petition to the court to turn over the case to us" (R5).

"The case of the minor was brought to our attention by the military. Apparently the child was rescued when the military raided the place where the minor lived. The turn over of the child to our care was not done within the 24 hour period it but took 5 days. The child claimed that he was brought in military camp in Manila and was even presented to the media" (R7).

As indicated in the information gathered from the respondents, the CIAC cases under the care of DSWD were referred by the local government units, the military and concerned individuals or groups in the community such as the priest and the human rights group. Other child soldier cases were discovered when the respondents conducted coordination or visits in jails and hospitals. The children brought into the care of the social workers were mostly reported as captured or rescued by the state armed groups during military operation. In fact, at the time of referral to DSWD social workers, six of the cases handled by the respondents have had body injuries due to gunshots. Aside from body injuries, other children were facing criminal charges. The sample cases showed that 68 percent of the 31 cases have criminal offence mostly for illegal possession of firearms and explosives. The usual purpose for referring the case to DSWD is for temporary shelter as there are no institutions for children in the areas under the jurisdiction of the concerned LGUs. As expressed by the respondents:

"The local government does not have appropriate residential facility or space specifically for child soldiers. They are often placed together with other disadvantaged kids in whatever facility is available in the area. This lack of appropriate facility oftentimes make us worry of the child's security and our security, too, as their social workers" (R14)

On the other hand, children who were not captured or rescued in military operation are nonetheless believed to have been exposed to the activities of the armed group because their communities were located near the rebel's former training camps. The situation of the children in areas used to be highly influenced by the rebel armed group was also brought to the attention of DSWD by the local government units. In this case, the purpose is not merely for temporary shelter but also for provision of rehabilitative and developmental programs and services in collaboration with other concerned government offices and non-government organizations as well.

The above information also revealed that the professional help of the social workers commences immediately once a child soldier case is brought to their attention. The social worker intervenes as the official representative of the government's welfare department (DSWD), which was mandated and recognized as provider of welfare programs and services. They have to ensure that the rights of the children as provided for in laws have been observed. There were reported instances when the turn over of the child soldiers as minors to the care of DSWD was not done within the 24 hour period prescribed by the law. The information shared by one of the respondents revealed that a case of a girl child combatant was brought to DSWD's attention after a month of placing the child in two military camps. Another case was also turned over to DSWD five days after the rescue and after the child has already been presented to the media.

The abovementioned circumstances in the actual professional practice of the social worker had inspired me to include a discussion of the important standards and procedures that control and influence the practice of social work. This includes the standards and procedures in regards to the local laws, order or issuances on children, the governance system in the country and the institutional collaboration. Social workers are expected to act not only according to his/her professional background, experiences and personal commitment but also according to the existing standards and procedures.

Standards and legal basis. There are various laws in the country with regards to the protection of children. The 1987 Philippine Constitution, specifically Section 3, Article XV, provides that children have a right to assistance, including proper care and nutrition and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development. There are special laws, too, for the children in cultural minorities or indigenous groups, which is enshrined in RA 8371 known as the *Indigenous People's Rights Act*.

The transfer of a minor to the care of DSWD is mandated by RA 7610 known as the *Special Protection of Children against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act* (1992). Article X, Section 22 of the same law mandates that children should be designated as “zones of peace” and as such they should “not be the object of attack . . . not to be recruited in the government forces or its civilian units or other armed groups, nor be allowed to take part in fighting, or used as guides, couriers or spies”. Moreover, Section 25 provides for “the release of the child on recognizance within twenty-four (24) hours to the custody of the Department of Social Welfare and Development or any responsible member of the community as determined by the court”. This law also stipulates that children who are arrested for reasons related to armed conflict must have separate detention cells from adults except where families are accommodated as family units, immediate free legal assistance, immediate notice of such arrest to the parents or guardian.

Aside from laws, there are important issuances, too, for children. The incumbent President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo also issued EO 310 and EO 56. EO 310 series of 2000, which mandates the adoption of the *Philippine National Strategic Framework Plan for Children* or the *Child 21*. The *Child 21* provided the over-all framework from 2000-2025 in planning programs and interventions as well as the focusing of resources for the development of children. One of the key goals and targets for children in need of special protection as stipulated in *Child 21* was the provision of basic services to 80% of children in situations of armed conflict. On the

other hand, EO 56, signed on Nov.26, 2001 mandated the adoption of the *Comprehensive Program Framework for Children in Armed Conflict* which covered a comprehensive program consisting of three components -1) prevention, 2) advocacy and mobilization and 3) rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration program. It is in component 1 and 3 where DSWD has a major role. EO 56 directed national government agencies and local government units to develop and/or implement plans, programs and projects consistent with the framework and encourage non-government organizations (NGOs), civic, religious and private entities to participate and be involved.

The attention given by the government and the country as a whole to the promotion of children's welfare and protection of their basic human rights is in line with the various international conventions and treaties, to which the Philippines is a Party. The country ratified pertinent international humanitarian and human rights laws containing provisions for children in armed conflict. These include the UNCROC ratified by the Philippines last July 26, 1990 , the Optional Protocols ratified on 26 August 2003, the 1999 ILO Convention No. 182 ratified on 28 November 2000 and the signing of the 1998 Rome Statute on International Criminal Court on 28 December 2000.

The above information showed that the protection of children from harm and all forms of abuse and exploitation, such as their participation in armed conflict, was contained in national laws, presidential issuances or orders. These national laws and standards were usually in line with several international laws or conventions to which the country is a party such as those mentioned above. The issues concerning the laws and standards on children as deduced from the sharing of the respondents showed gaps in terms of implementation of laws on children specifically the non-observance of the provisions of RA 7610, PD 603, RA 8371 particularly in terms of recruitment and participation of children in armed conflict, the recruitment of indigenous children in armed groups, the non provision of separate detention cells for children, the non-observance of the 24 hour turn over

period of the child to DSWD, the exposure of children to the media and the filing of criminal charges against the children. The gaps were evident in the following situations seen by the social workers:

“There was no separate detention cell for the child in jail. They are often mixed with adult detainees. DSWD filed a petition to the court to release the child to our care” (R5)

“The girl child was brought by the military to the nearest hospital for treatment of gunshot wounds. The girl told me that she was transferred from two military camps during the period of her stay with the military. Her stay in the military camp apparently lasted for a month before she was reported to the social welfare department” (R9)

“I have seen the minor in one of my jail visits. I was informed that the child was facing a charge of illegal possession of explosives after he was caught in a raid done by the military in their barangay” (R11)

Aside from this, I have observed, too, that the social worker respondents are very knowledgeable of the local laws and standards concerning the protection of children, however there seems to be a gap in terms of the knowledge of international laws or standards covering the rights of children, specifically those relating to children in armed conflict situations. This limitation in terms of knowledge was expressed particularly by 53 percent of the respondents who claimed that they have heard about the international laws or conventions for children but was not really well informed about their provisions. This knowledge gap has limited the perspective of the social workers in terms of connecting the local efforts on child's rights to the broader efforts carried out in the international community, such as the advocacy campaign pertaining to the ban against the recruitment and participation of children in armed conflict. One of the respondents has expressed:

“My experienced in the past years with the two child soldier cases made me realized that my social work background is not enough for me to effectively carry out my role as social worker. I knew I need to widen my knowledge in terms of many things particularly current policies concerning the rights of child soldiers. I heard something about the UNCROC and the Protocols but I'm not really knowledgeable about it.” (R9).

Governance System

Another important factor in the understanding of the child soldier phenomenon in the Philippines is the governance system in the country. The governance system sheds lights on how policy or political affairs and decisions of the country are directed and controlled. It also gives information on the relationships that exist between or among systems or political units, like the relationship that exist between national government agencies like DSWD with that of the local government.

The governance structure of the country is divided into four levels - these are the national, provincial, municipal and *barangay* (settlement/communal). The three levels under the national are commonly referred to as the local government units (LGUs). There is a set of elected government officials in each level such that in the province for example, the elected governor, vice governor and the legislature exist. Almost similar political arrangements could be found in the municipal, city and *barangay* level. There are 78 provinces, 1,521 municipalities, and 88 cities, and 41,940 *barangay* in the country. The country has 16 administrative regions, which serve as the basis for policy planning and implementation (May, 2002, p. 92-97).

In the case of DSWD, a regional office exists in every region. The regional offices work closely with the local government units in each level, that is regional, provincial, municipal, in the implementation of programs and services for its target clientele. The collaborative work undertaken by the regional and the national offices of DSWD with the LGUs is in line with the Local Government Code of 1991. The Code provides for the decentralization of governance and the decentralization of the substantial basic services such as in health, education and social welfare (May, 2002, p. 98). As mentioned in the early part of this chapter, the devolution of basic welfare services to the LGUs and the focus given by DSWD on capability building and developing programs to improve the delivery of basic services by its stakeholders such as

the LGUs, are parts of the paradigm shift currently adopted by DSWD. DSWD's regional offices still serve as the link of the national office to the local government units. They also maintain the management of regional centers and institutions which caters to the needs of different clientele . Current situation shows that DSWD has no specific center for child soldiers. The child soldier cases are placed in available center for children deemed appropriate by the social workers handling the case.

With the decentralization, DSWD regional and national offices do not have administrative clout over the social worker of the LGUs. Nonetheless, DSWD could provide technical assistance to the social worker in the implementation of programs and could also augment funding support of the LGU for the delivery of service. The current situation in DSWD showed that funded support for services given to child soldiers are taken from funds allotted for the programs and services for children sector. Likewise, child soldiers are given access to whatever programs and services are available in the department. This situation poses an issue in social work practice as implied in the following sharing:

"I have a hard time sourcing out funds to ensure the continues education of the child because most of the assistance I was able to solicit was short lived. The temporary assistance given to the child could not assure that he will finish his schooling because we do not have a separate funding for them. I fear that if we fail in this first case of child soldier in our region, we will have a hard time convincing other children in the armed group to surrender." (R7)

"We have a problem of where to place the CIAC particularly when existing temporary shelters are fully occupied. I preferred to have a separate facility or even a cottage for child soldiers. One that would provide them better security." (R5)

"In my view the CIAC should be treated separately or not to be mixed with other cases of children because they can transfer to other children their beliefs and ideologies. The sad experienced of other children further instigate their desire to take revenge for the atrocities committed. While they may be provided with the usual services available in the department, there need to develop more services particularly those aimed to transform their negative feelings and attitudes into positive ones" (R3)

Aside from the issues concerning the lack of specific budget and facilities specifically devoted for child soldiers in most levels in the national and local governance structure, other related issues are those concerning the existing human and material resources in the area, the thrust and priorities of the LGUs and the prerogative of those making the decisions. These are the core issues in the following sharing:

"I am the lone social worker in the area handling a number of cases in many municipalities. Our manpower is limited. Although child soldier cases are unique, I could not devote more time handling this case as I am expected to attend too the needs of other clientele such as women, youth, elderly and the disabled." (R15)

"When the child soldier case I handled was released from our care at the institution, there are still part of the rehabilitation plan which remains to be implemented. It depends now on the social worker of the local government to ensure the realization of the remaining plans. At this point it seems that nobody is on-top to ensure that what was planned and agreed upon during the case conference for the discharge of the child is being adhered too by all concerned parties" (R2)

"I submitted a project proposal to the office for a certain group of child soldiers. The proposal was for a livelihood project and grassroots' training on leadership. It was not funded. Apparently, our office does not have the funds. I was asked to tap funding support from the local officials. It was turned down apparently because the beneficiaries are not from the priority areas of the current administration." (R9)

Institutional Collaboration

The concept of cooperation or collaboration by all agencies, government and non-government alike working for children's welfare, is an integral part of the work for child soldiers. The respondents as social workers of DSWD are expected to observe the protocols or the existing procedures or systems of coordination. Coordination with other government agencies, non-government entities, the local government units and other stakeholders in the case of child soldiers is being done to link clients to services, to generate resources not internally available at the social worker's work setting or to

transfer the care and management of the child soldier cases to the local government units.

Usually, inter-agency groups or committees are formed in each levels of government structure from the national down to the municipal level to facilitate implementation and monitoring of specific undertaking. In regards to child soldiers, there is also an inter-agency committee specifically working for CIAC. The inter-agency committee is composed of different government agencies involved in welfare, defense, local governance, justice, human rights, immigration, labor and employment, tourism and foreign affairs as well as representatives from other civic organizations.

In the inter-agency committee, DSWD acted as the lead in the prevention effort working closely with the LGUs and the non-government organizations (NGOs) and also in the rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration effort working closely with defense - Department of National Defense (DND), Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine National Police (PNP) - and in interior and local governance - Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). The responsibility of coordinating and monitoring the overall implementation of the program was given to the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace Process (OPAPP) and the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC).

One concrete document covering inter-agency collaboration is the Memorandum Of Agreement (MOA) On The Handling And Treatment Of CIAC. Based on this document, the rescue of children during armed conflict is the role of the military (AFP) and civilian law enforcers (PNP), but they need to report the rescue or surrender of minors to DSWD and/or to the chief executive covering the area such as the City or the Municipal Mayor "within twenty-four (24) hours upon receipt of the child, under the normal conditions, and within seventy-two (72) hours when the situation does not warrant" (MOA). The exposure of the children to the media and to tactical military interrogation and the likes are strongly discouraged.

The management of CIAC cases is DSWD's responsibility in coordination with the LGUs and with other intermediaries. Likewise, DSWD is expected to develop or enrich programs for CIAC, extend technical support to LGU social service unit/department, advocate for policy change and strengthen its alliance with various entities working for the welfare of child soldiers. In the case management, DSWD social workers form part of the rehabilitation team composed of other professionals like doctors, teachers, psychologists, law enforcers, the local officials, and the civic or religious entities such as the priest and human rights groups. The team meets to discuss the progress as well as the problems involving the case of child soldiers. Respondents find the collaborative work with other groups and disciplines as beneficial in the helping process.

"Negotiating and networking with existing resources in the area is useful in working with CIAC. I'm part of the technical working group (TWG) at the local level. The group holds meeting and case conference to discuss the concerns of child soldiers"
(R15)

"I found networking with other professional very helpful such as the tie-up with the psychologist as child soldiers often has trauma. In our regional office a newly established region, we do not have yet a psychologist in our centers. Hence, we use to request psychological service for the children from other agency"
(R13).

The respondents have also expressed issues and concerns in regard to collaborative work for children. As implied in the sharing, there are agencies that failed to deliver their commitment such as in terms of material support for the child soldier. This happens despite the existence of a signed memorandum of agreement. As cited by Guiam (2002) there were claims that "MOAs, charters and other legislations protecting the welfare of children involved in armed conflict have been observed more in breach than in performance" (p. 79). There are many interested parties in CIAC cases particularly with regards to the custody of the child. There are instances when the interest of the parties jeopardizes the child's rights for privacy and confidentiality as some group brought the case to the attention

of the media. Others are giving undue pressures to the social worker handling the case through threats and security risks.

“ The convergence effort at the field level is weak. For example, the educational support promised by local officials did not materialize. The child is now out-of-school.” (R5)

“ There are many instances when certain organizations apparently fighting for the child soldier hold rally and demonstration in front of our center. The words they utter are really threatening. Since our center is not well secured I fear for the child's safety and my safety too.” (R7)

“ I have a hard time asserting my role as social worker because of the pressures and the factions from different groups interested in the case. The local priest in the area where the custody of the child soldier was granted by the court, was not in good terms with the local officials allegedly behind the activities of the armed group. ” (R15)

“The difficulties I encountered in handling CIAC cases have something to do with the interference with our work by different groups having interest in the case such as the media and some non-government organizations identified with the leftist group. Some agencies are too concerned of the details of the case, which jeopardize the child's privacy and the case confidentiality. Likewise, sometimes it takes time before our request for assistance of some professionals e.g. psychiatrist, could be granted because of the long process or red tape in some government offices” (R11)

“There are too many interested parties giving pressures on our work with CIAC cases such as the leftist group, religious group, political group and the media” (R9)

Orders, directives or issuances in the work setting also bound the practice of social workers. The following are some of the important orders, directives or issuances from the Department, which set the boundaries for the social worker's practice/ action.

Social worker's roles and responsibilities. The responsibilities of a social worker in a child soldier case are stipulated in DSWD Department Order (DO) No.44 Series of 1994. It stipulates that upon receipt of information about the minor arrested due to armed conflict, the assigned social worker is expected to:

1. inquire from reliable sources where the child is detained
2. visit the child and ensure that the child is being treated humanely or in quarters separate from adult offenders
3. inform the child's parents and other members of the family of the fact of his arrest and ensure that he is given all the facilities to communicate with his/her family. See to it also that he undergoes medical examination
4. conduct a case study and prepare the needed case study report
5. work for the child's release on recognizance by facilitating provision of his legal counsel
6. see to it that detention pending trial is used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest period of time
7. conduct an immediate and thorough study of relatives and other responsible persons to be recommended as custodian of the child pending trial
8. request for the speedy trial of the case so that the court order the suspension of all proceedings and commitment of the child to DSWD on suspended sentence, depending on the result of the study conducted by the social worker
9. provide the child and his family the needed social services which will help in the rehabilitation of the child together with his family
10. provide after care services to ensure the smooth adjustment of the child in the community after undergoing rehabilitation at the center.

From the information presented, the social worker's role covers assessment, coordination and provision of the needed services that will facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of the child in the society. Department Order 44 stressed the importance of including the family in the rehabilitation of the child. Likewise, the one-to-one helping relationship established by the social worker with the child soldiers serves as a point of entry towards working with other client systems such as the child's family and his/her community. This implies that social work with child soldiers calls for an integrated practice where social worker adopts a comprehensive or generalist role rather than a highly specialized role of being a caseworker.

In the interview with the respondents, they have seen their role in regard to child soldier cases as one of a "generalist" rather than a "specialist"

such as a caseworker. They express that they have worked not only with the individual but also with their families. In some instances, two of the respondents have initiated community work in the area of former CIAC, but this practice was often left to the LGU social worker. Respondents claimed that they have utilized many of the social work tools and methodologies in their social work practice with child soldiers.

“I would describe my role in the child soldier cases as more of a generalist rather than a caseworker. I have said this because my work was not limited to helping the child but also include work to help the child’s family.” (R8)

“Frankly speaking casework and groupwork are useful and all the other methods and strategies in social work such as networking and counseling” (R11).

With regards to the conduct of case study, social workers handling cases of child soldiers conduct careful data gathering and assessment. The result of assessment serves as the basis for formulating the treatment plan “in agreement with the child and his/her families/relatives” (AO 84). When the assessment of the various factors in the family turns favorable to the child, the child is discharge to the family but if not, the child remains in government custody while other alternatives such as foster/kinship care or legal guardianship are being explored. The two issuances (AO 84 and DO 44) from DSWD serve as a blueprint that guides the social worker’s actions. DSWD Administrative Order (AO) 84, series of 2002, directs that the social worker should cover in her/his assessment the child and his/her family as well as the peace and order situation of the community. As stated in DSWD AO 84, the following areas are expected to be included in the assessment of the child:

1. Physical, social and psychological condition as well as the child’s strengths and capabilities
2. Perception of the child of his/her present situation, and his/her preferred custodian
3. What has been or could be done about the situation
4. Support systems and how these can be mobilized

With regards to the family, assessment should include:

1. roles and functions of family members
2. behavior control/problem solving patterns for handling conflict situation/ social interaction
3. communication patterns among family members
4. responsiveness and involvement of the members to provide and sustain emotional support to one another especially to the child victim

Analyzing the two issuances, I would say that both have underscored the rights of the child for protection from exploitation and abuse, provision of bio-psycho-social, legal and medical services and the participation of the child in decision-making. Moreover, AO 84 had stressed the assessment of the various factors internal and external to the child that could have contributed to their present predicament such as the physical, social and psychological condition of the child, the child's perception, strengths and weaknesses, support systems, relationships in the family, communication pattern and roles. This showed that the existing procedures and guidelines in the practitioner's work setting which directs or guides his/her practice is supportive of the child's rights principles and espouses an ecological systems perspective which is holistic.

However, I have noticed that in terms of practice, the focus of assessment of internal and external factors was limited only on the child, his/her family or the micro and the meso level only. The factors in the macro environment that has a connection to the plight of the child soldiers and their family such as the state policies and priorities concerning poverty, militarization, budget for welfare, economic priorities, to name a few, were not given attention in the assessment as well as in the long term plans. Clearly, the social worker can contribute to the bigger effort of influencing the factors at the macro environment because they have the first hand information and experience on what works or not in the field, but this role seems to be given less attention in practice. The social work practice of the respondents seems to be tied down to the provision of remedial services, while preventive services geared towards the improvement of current system in the society seems to be

wanting. Likewise, the transformative nature of social work practice remains to be maximized particularly in lobbying and advocacy work for example in regards to budget, programs and services and facilities for child soldiers. I have considered this as one of the gaps in the holistic approach to social work practice.

The abovementioned gaps could have been related to the following issues and concerns expressed by the respondents, which relates to the inadequacy of manpower, training and the frequent reassignment of workers:

"I'm handling 40 children in our center, including the two CIAC cases. I felt guilty because I was not able to give more time to their case. I believe, cases like these should be handled by a social worker who can give more time and focus on the children since it will take time for them to trust others, particularly somebody from the government side, like us" (R1)

"I'm acting multiple roles which both requires technical and administrative work. I act as Center Head, clerk and canvasser too because our center is understaffed" (R3)

"It's been a long time since I got the training on case management. I believe we need to be given more training or refresher course particularly on legal standards for the protection of child soldiers as well as new techniques or strategies in social work practice with them. The CIAC cases are unique and they have unique needs. Besides most of them came from tribal group hence we need to consider their culture" (R7)

"The impact to the client of the frequent changes in social workers handling their cases should be looked into. The reassignment of workers should be done with consideration to the cases they handle. The frequent turn-over of social workers disrupts the establishment of a secured working relationship with the children"(R6)

Interventions and social services. The respondents as part of the formal welfare system facilitated the provision of the tangible services to clientele but in the process of helping were also able to extend intangible services, like emotional support. Services were provided to rehabilitate and reintegrate the child soldier to the mainstream of society. This required provision of services covering the multidimensional needs of the child and, in many instances, that of their family.

The following sharing of the respondents showed the interventions and the social services extended to child soldiers:

“As the child’s social worker, I made sure that he is given the services like, homelife, medical, educational support and other basic needs while at our institutions. We coordinate with different people who can help him like the school principal, the teachers, village officials and other representatives of government and non-government organizations for any help they can give to the child particularly in supporting his education” (R7t)

“We provide transportation and other assistance to enable the minor’s parents to visit her at the center. Two nurses were hired to provide physical therapy because the child has limping problem due to gunshot wound. She was also given regular supply of vitamins. She attends regular sessions with her social worker and psychologist” (R9)

“I coordinated with the LGU the provision of security for the child. We also gave financial assistance for the child’s schooling. Counseling with the child and the family members was conducted once a month by me or by the LGU social worker” (R14)

“The children were well provided for in the center. We let them know and feel that this is a residential center and not a jail by providing them activities and services that would give them family life atmosphere and community life” (R1)

“I believed I was able to give the child the emotional support when he needed it most. I remember when he was interviewed by government agency, he would always glance at me during the interview as if seeking my support. I would just smile or nod at him, just to give him an assurance that he will be taken cared of, if not by his family, at least by the government through me” (R11)

The above sharing confirmed that the services given to the children were not only limited to their biological need, but also include services for their social, emotional and psychological needs. The services provided were not only limited to those available at DSWD but also included services that could be accessed from other organizations or groups such as the provision of security for the child, medical attention and educational opportunities. Usually, social workers exert effort not only in linking individual to outside help but also in strengthening support systems in the child’s physical and social environment. The usual constraints are the limited human and material resources. The social workers also has problem with the limited budget for

welfare, where material resources for helping oftentimes cannot sustain long-term assistance. Services were meant only as safety net, not a permanent crutch, to those who fall out of the acceptable level of social functioning. It appears that the safety nets were made to help the child cope with or adjust to the existing situation and when the condition returns to what the worker considers as normal range, he/she is then released from the safety nets of the country's formal welfare system.

Following the structural framework, this approach in service delivery exemplifies a perspective that regards the source of problem as emanating from the individual hence the target of change centers on the child, his/her family and the immediate community. The interventions adopted are often geared towards the microsystem -the child, his/her family, community - and the mesosystem -that is the relationship between or among these small units. Examples of the services are counseling, educational opportunities, livelihood assistance, to name a few effort, were all focused on the micro system. As presented in chapters II and V, the child soldiering phenomenon is multi-dimensional, hence, responses addressing all its dimensions are necessary to really achieve total solution of the problem. If the intervention would only cover the aspect that is focus on changing the individual together with his/her family and excludes interventions that addresses the wider or the macro milieu of the child, such as state policies, the possibility of sustaining the gains achieved in the individual or familial level are likely to fail.

Summary

In this chapter I have explored the issues and challenges in social work practice posed by the child soldier phenomenon. The history of social work and social welfare work in the country placed the discussion of current social work practice in context. History has shown that even before social work became a profession, the acts or practice of helping others already exists in Filipino culture in various forms and meaning. Early Filipino settlers regarded it as a communal responsibility, which later took another form and meaning under the colonizers. From the charity work done by

religious and private organizations during the Spanish colonization period, the social practice of helping others has become structured and more of an individual responsibility under the reign of the Americans. Government then takes an active role in public welfare until the present. Today, social welfare services such as those for child soldiers are delivered by social workers who played more of a generalist rather than a specialist role. Their practice is guided, directed and controlled by standards, rules and procedures stipulated under departmental and presidential issuances, orders or mandates.

Several issues and concerns came out as social workers perform their roles in regard to child soldier cases. There were gaps identified in terms of the enforcement of standards set forth in existing national and international laws covering the rights of children more particularly those in armed conflict situation. Although social workers were found knowledgeable in local laws protecting children, there appears to be a need for the enhancement of knowledge in regards to international laws or standards protecting children. There were issues raised with regards to the lack of budget and facilities specifically devoted for child soldiers in many levels of the national and local government structure. This poses difficulty in the provision of services that goes beyond the short-term remedial relief. Other related concerns of the respondents were on the limited human and material resources for child soldiers as some social workers acted as the sole implementer of programs and services for all type of clientele in their area of assignment. Others were constrained to provide the full service needed by the clients due to budget limitation or due to political interference. While the respondents found institutional collaboration as beneficial in the helping process, there were instances when concerned agencies fail to deliver their commitment despite of the existence of an agreement such as a MOA. The social workers ability to balance conflicting interest and undue pressures given by some parties interested in the case of the child soldiers was one of the challenges they often hurdle in practice.

In regard to child soldier cases, social workers have seen their role as one of a “generalist” rather than a “specialist” such as being a caseworker. This was because, social workers have to work not only with the individual child but also with their families. Social worker’s practice was governed by the existing procedures and guidelines in his/her work setting. In the case of the respondents, AO 84 and DO 44 are two vital issuances that direct or guide their practice. The two issuances were found to be supportive of the child’s rights principles. The issuances also espoused an ecological systems perspective, however gaps were identified in terms of practice, wherein the focus of assessment was limited only on the micro and the meso level. The factors in the macro environment that has a connection to the plight of the child soldiers and their family were not given much attention. The social work practice of the respondents lean more on the provision of remedial than preventive services. Likewise, the transformative nature of social work practice is yet to be maximized, as respondents were less likely to get involved in lobbying and advocacy work. I have considered this as a vital gap in the holistic approach to social work practice.

Social services provided to the child soldiers include the bio-psycho-social needs of the child. Services were oftentimes extended to the members of the family. However, since there was no specific budget for child soldiers, the material resources for helping were drawn from limited budget for children sectors, which oftentimes cannot sustain long- term assistance. Services were mere safety net to help the child cope with or adjust to the existing situation. This approach in service delivery has regarded the source of problem as emanating from the individual hence the focus was on changing the individual together with his/her family and excludes interventions addressing the existing oppressive structure in the society. Social work practice as a holistic approach needs to address not only the “fruits” but also the “roots” of the child soldier phenomenon.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Using personal interviews and instrumental case study methods, this study aims to achieve four specific objectives. First, to come up with a picture of the child soldier phenomenon in the country using the perspectives of the social workers and the sample cases of child soldiers under DSWD; second, to analyze the various factors or conditions contributing to the participation of children in armed conflict; third, to explore and analyze the issues and challenges surrounding the roles and responsibilities of the social workers, the interventions and services, the collaboration or multidisciplinary cooperation, in regards to social work practice with child soldiers; and fourth, to draw lessons or insights that can contribute to the improvement of current social work practice.

Analyzing the data gathered using an ecological and structural framework, this research has shown that the child soldier phenomenon in the country is multidimensional and is connected with various factors internal and external to the child. The findings elaborated the micro and the macro dimensions of the phenomenon. At the micro level, the findings showed the following:

1. The child soldiers are mostly teenage boys and girls, although some as young as 12 years old are not spared from exposure and participation in the activities of the armed group. They usually have primary education but a very high percentage, particularly for the boys, dropped out of school even before finishing their elementary or secondary education. Child soldiers from tribal communities have no formal schooling at all. The sample cases showed that 22 out of 31 child soldiers were out-of school at the time of their capture or rescue.

2. More than half (61%) of the children come from big family with more than 7 members. The family of the child soldier or some members of their family, like father, mother, brothers or other relatives, are involved or part of the armed group. More than half (54%) of the sample cases, have one or more than one family member/s in the armed group. Some of them are actively engaged in the activities of the armed group while others are involved in the provision of material support. Child soldiers were exposed to the armed group by significant people in their lives such as their family, their friends, peer group, neighbors and other people in their community. Generally, the families are living in dire poverty. Family heads are mostly landless farmers or workers in odd jobs without security of tenure and where earnings could hardly suffice the basic needs of the family for food, let alone the education of the children.

3. The samples cases of child soldiers come from rural areas, mostly remote and difficult to reach. The communities are apparently bereft of basic facilities like school, health centers, water and electrical supplies. Likewise, the areas are either rebel infested or highly vulnerable to the influence of the armed groups as areas are adjacent or accessible to the camp or training ground of the armed groups. There are children who have witnessed or have personally experienced fierce encounters of opposing armed groups in their area or had been exposed to harsh displacement.

4. Child soldiers performed varied roles in the armed group. They are usually involved in simple supporting roles, such as acting as courier or messenger, cook, sentries, member of medical team and helper. However, for some children this seemingly simple duties and responsibilities progress to complex and risky roles in a short period of time. Others are immediately involved in combat operation, mass education and other risky missions like acting as platoon/squad leader or spy. While there are child soldiers who have been born and raised in the rebel's camp, there are also children who go to the camp only when needed or asked.

5. The developmental toll of the child's exposure and participation in armed conflict encompassed all aspects of their development. The most observable toll are physical, such as body injuries, and emotional. Other impact includes the psychological, social and moral development. The impact of the early exposure to armed group varies from each child. While some children manifest socially acceptable behaviour, others displays intense fear, deep hatred and distrust. There are children who regarded guns or other deadly weapons as vital to ensuring their safety, security and the attainment of justice.

6. Children participated in the armed group for various reasons such as the monetary compensation from the armed movement, the protection they get for their family and their livelihood, the fulfillment of their desire to be in "power" through the guns, and the acceptance and belongingness they get from the group. Some regarded their participation in the armed group as a way to escape tradition, while others regarded it as a natural way of life of children from a rebel family.

The findings showed that the child soldier's microenvironment had been filled with critical factors threatening their rights and their full development. The micro units, such as the family and the community where the child belongs, are impoverished or inadequate to provide the child with the opportunities he/she needs to grow and develop to the fullest. As the child interacts with other units in the micro level, she/he is also influenced by them. This interaction is evident in the formation of the child's thoughts, views and values, resembling the views and values of the family and the group where they belong. Indeed, life condition is too harsh for the child soldiers who are forced to defy the natural course of their development by the forces or conditions existing in their immediate environment.

The plight of the child soldiers is also linked to the factors found at the child's macro environment. These factors at the wider environment include among others the following: social and cultural pressures, economic

pressures as well as the pressures resulting from the policies and priorities made by the state.

1. Social and cultural pressures appear to be one of the probable reasons behind the strong influence exerted on the child by the parents, family members, relatives, peer groups, neighbors and other immediate micro units. The existing power relationship between adults and the child has connection with the social and cultural beliefs as well as the norms and traditions with regards to the nature and nurture of the child. Some of these Filipino social culture include the following: deep sense of loyalty to immediate and fictive kin, high regard for authority figures who oftentimes become the young ones role model, the subservience of individual desires and priorities to family and communal goals, and a strong belief that one's children are essentially one's own. The regard of the children as "successor" of their parents or the adults in the armed group is just one concrete example of how social and cultural factors work for or against the best interest of the child.

2. Pressure in the economy is related to poverty situation in the country. Apparently, poverty situation is one of the highest in areas where there is fierce battle between state and non-state armies. Poverty is claimed to be more severe in the rural than in urban areas. Economists has stressed that "high inflation during a period of low growth increases poverty" and the most vulnerable to the inflationary surge of basic commodities like food are the numerous small-scale farmers, producers and landless workers. The families of the child soldier belong to this group.

3. Poverty is closely related to the policies and priorities made by the government with regards to its budget and spending. Critics have argued that although the government had adopted the "Children First" policy in its budget priorities and fund allocation, a different course of action was followed. This is apparently seen in government decisions prioritizing debt service and military spending in the national budget over delivery of social services. Likewise, the imposition of additional tax like the VAT is believed to impact most on the low income earners such as the farm workers.

4. The adoption of liberalized market or opening up the country's economy to the entry of foreign products and investment have apparently made it more difficult for local industries, particularly the small-scale ones, to compete with foreign corporations. The agriculture sector is claimed to have been affected greatly by this economic policies. Likewise, the privatization, or the transfer of government-run facilities or utilities to private companies, apparently for lower rates and improvement of services, made it more difficult for low-income earners to bear.

5. The continuous use of military force in the rural areas against the insurgent's armed group apparently depletes human and material resources of the country. Under the current administration, the costs of conflict have apparently continued to rise as the government pursues its counter-insurgency and anti-terrorism policy. In an intensive militarization, particularly in rural areas, the need to protect loved ones and the family's livelihood served as a "push" factor for families to join opposing armed groups. Related to the militarization of the rural areas is the proliferation of guns in the country.

6. Acts of injustice or abuse and problems with the administration of justice are considered as another root causes of armed conflict. The inaction or complacency to human rights violation, acts of injustices and abuses could give wrong signals to the moral development of the child as it may be interpreted as sanctioned in the society. Some children may regard the inactions as basis for them to get justice in a violent way.

This study confirmed that the child soldier phenomenon is multidimensional and its existence could not be attributed solely to a single factor but rather to a combination of factors that serve as a cumulative force that pushes the child to participate in the armed group. The interlinking or interconnection of the various forces in the child's immediate and distant environment needed to be fully understood to offer a comprehensive and lasting solution to the problem. A "multifaceted approach" as cited by Webb,

appeared appropriate in the social work practice with children. The findings on the current social work practice of the respondents in regards to child soldier cases revealed the following:

1. CIAC cases under the care of DSWD were referred by the local government units, the military and concerned individuals or groups in the community such as the priest and the human rights group. Other child soldier cases were discovered by the respondents when they conduct coordination or visits in jails and hospitals. The children brought into their care were mostly reported as captured or rescued by the state armed groups during military operation. In fact, at the time of referral to DSWD social workers, six of the sample cases handled by the respondents have had body injuries due to gunshots. Aside from body injuries, other children were facing criminal cases filed against them.

2. The social workers immediately commenced the helping relationship once the child soldier case is brought to their responsibility. As the official representative of the government's welfare department (DSWD), which is legally mandated and officially recognized as provider of welfare programs and services, the social worker respondents facilitated the provision of bio-psycho-social, legal, medical and spiritual services. However, the services are often geared towards the microsystem -the child and his/her family, and the mesosystem -that is the relationship between or among the small units such as the child and the family or the family and the service agency. Usually, the services provided are meant to minimize the negative outcome of the event or the phenomenon to the individual or the family. The individual, considered as not socially functioning, usually becomes the target of change. Services are usually carried out to help the child cope with or adjust to the existing situation. Using the limited resources of the Department (DSWD), the social worker exerted efforts to link the individual to outside help or strengthen support systems in the child's physical and social environment. With the limited material resources for helping, the services available to the child and the family are mostly safety net.

3. Several issues and concerns came out as social workers undertook their roles in regard to the child soldier cases. There are gaps identified in terms of the enforcement of standards set forth in existing national and international laws covering the rights of children more particularly those in armed conflict situation. Although social workers are found knowledgeable in local laws protecting children, there appeared to be a need for the enhancement of knowledge in regards to international laws or standards on the rights of a child. There are issues identified regarding the lack of budget and even facilities specifically devoted for child soldiers in both the national and local government levels. This posed difficulty in the provision of services that should go beyond the short-term remedial relief.

Other related concerns of the respondents are on the limited human and material resources for child soldiers as some social workers acted as the sole implementer of programs and services for all type of clientele in a certain area of assignment. Others are constrained to provide the full services needed by the clients due to budget constraints or due to political interference. While the respondents found institutional collaboration as beneficial in the helping process, there are instances when concerned agencies failed to deliver their commitment despite the existence of the MOA. The social workers ability to balance conflicting interest and undue pressures from some parties is one of the challenges they often hurdle in practice.

4. The existing procedures and guidelines in the work setting of the social worker such as the AO 84 and DO 44, two vital issuances that direct or guide social work interventions, are found to be supportive of the child's rights principles and the ecological systems perspective. However, gaps are identified in terms of practice, as the focus of assessment is limited only on the micro and the meso level. The factors at the macro level are not given much attention. The social work practice of the respondents leaned more on the provision of remedial services. Likewise, the transformative nature of social work practice remain to be harnessed as respondents are less likely to get involved in lobbying and advocacy work. As emphasized in the structural

approach to social work practice, the response to the needs of individuals and their families and the transformation of the oppressive social structures/system in the society are both necessary to achieve social change. Both immediate relief and longer-term institutional and structural change are essential parts of social work practice.

In view of the strengths and weaknesses identified in current social work practice with child soldiers, I present the following recommendations integrating, too, the recommendations of the respondents:

1. Gaps in terms of knowledge of the implementers in the handling of child soldiers and the corresponding legal basis or standards covering the rights of the child soldiers need to be met through training, fora and other similar form of knowledge and skills enhancement activities. As cited in earlier chapters, social workers should have a “solid foundation of basic knowledge” which according to Webb (2003, p. 26), should include not only knowledge on child development - both the normal and the “deviations” from it, but also knowledge on how family dynamics, developmental phases and events affect the individual child. Knowledge, too, of the local and international laws and standards solidify or strengthen the social worker’s claim for actions or attentions such as the child’s entitlement to education, reunification with their families, removal from conflict zones to safe areas, separate detention cells and their exclusion from the death penalty. According to the respondents:

“Social worker handling cases of CIAC should at least be given a chance to attend conferences or training that will enrich their knowledge and skills in handling child soldier cases” (R7)

“Child soldier cases are unique and their needs are also different. Social workers should be able to give appropriate response, that’s why we need to be given trainings, orientation on laws, protocols, so that we will not be caught off-handed” (R5)

“I need to enhance my knowledge and skills in the handling of child soldier case. Our CIAC cases are mostly from tribal groups. Their culture needs to be considered in case management” (R15)

2. Gaps in the enforcement of standards set forth in existing national and international laws covering the rights of children in armed conflict situation need to be straightened out. The IAC-CIAC is one important body that can facilitate or advocate for the resolution of this gap. The respondents recommends the following:

“The judicial process should expedite the resolution of case filed against the child soldiers. The judicial process really takes time and oftentimes it jeopardizes the right of the child to avail of the provisions of PD 603 because they already passed the age of 17” (R11)

“The Department should make representation to the court to fastrack the judicial process for cases concerning children. The long judicial process is so hurting to the children” (R3)

3. The issues identified regarding the lack of budget and facilities specifically devoted for child soldiers in most levels of the national and local government structure deserve attention. Lobbying for budget specific for child soldiers and the strengthening of resource generation activities for preventive and rehabilitative projects need to be undertaken. Respondents recommends that:

“ There should be a center or a halfway home for child soldier in areas highly vulnerable to having such kind of problem” (R1)

“There is a need for a center where to put the children to avoid further emotional harm. Moving the children from one center to another adds up to their feeling of rejection. I myself felt bad when I learned that the local government could not accept the child because they have no center or facility for children.” (R6)

“The unique culture of people from tribal groups needs to be uphold in programs and services for child soldiers from tribal groups. We need a culture responsive programs for child soldiers” (R11)

4. The Department should also look into the manpower needs in the field or in regional institutions where cases of child soldiers are high. Likewise, the reassignment of workers and the caseload handled by each worker should be considered. The respondents said that:

“If there are many cases of CIAC in a certain regional office,, I hope there will be a social worker who can focus or work solely for them” (R10)

“The frequent changes of social workers disrupts the establishment of good working relationship with a child soldier who oftentimes has deep feeling of hatred and mistrust against workers connected with the government” (R14)

5. The transformative nature of social work practice needs to be harnessed. Social workers should get involved in lobbying, advocacy work and other efforts meant to transform oppressive structure in the society. Likewise, they must engage in reflective practice. Having a good working knowledge is not enough, if the social worker does not have the ability to draw on the vast theories and approaches in practice. However, it is not only the theory that we need to subject to critical reflection, but also the “taken for granted knowledge and popular assumptions” (Stepney, 2000,p. 22), because this has its own weakness and limitations too. Stepney argued that reflection becomes significant and meaningful to social work practice when reflection is turned into positive action. Schon (1983) emphasized that reflection should not be done only after the event had occurred- that is reflection-on-action - but also reflection-in-action where reflection is “part and parcel of day-to-day practice” (as cited in Thompson, 2002, p. 4). Reflective practice enables the practitioner to make decisions or conclusions that deviate from the traditional and routinary practice supportive of the three c’s- conformity, consensus and conventional wisdom.

6. Social workers must strengthen partnership work. Thompson (2002) identified three essential factors in partnership work with children. These are: communication, think-feel-do framework and needs-led assessment. Communication means being able to communicate with the child in accordance

with her/his development level and being clear and explicit about what is happening or what will be likely to happen in the helping relationship or partnership. Communication entails not only getting your message across to the child but also being able to listen actively to the child, both to the spoken and unspoken message. In communicating to the child, it is important to consider his/her language and cultural background.

A good practice should be able to address the three dimensions of a situation. These are thoughts, feelings and actions. The adoption of the think-feel-do framework provides not only clarity and focus but also enhances professional credibility and confidence, an essential ingredient in partnership work. A need-led assessment means an assessment tailored on the clients' need and not on the existing services as the term service-led assessment connotes. The service-led process of assessment often relates to the limited resources at hand and provides a "very narrow picture of the client's circumstances...[The] client may not be offered the most appropriate service...[It] masks unmet need". Needs-led assessment extends the partnership by giving both client and the social worker a clear focus of the problems and the possible solutions particularly when resources are inadequate.

7. Social work response to individual problem should merely serve as a point of entry towards working with the family and the society. As shown in this study, the problem of child soldiering is multi-dimensional and interconnected with various factors or conditions existing in the child's micro and macro environment. This calls for a response or intervention that should go beyond mere adjustment of individual to the existing order but should also include the transformation of existing structural order which maintains the deprivation and marginalization of the people whom the profession is bound to help.

8. There is still a need for further studies on social work practice with child soldiers particularly along the following:

- a. longitudinal case study examining the strengths and weaknesses of case management

- b. research that would determine the status of cases discharged from DSWD's care and the sustainability of after care services given to the child and his/her family
- c. participatory action research that would explore and analyze the child soldier's experiences and views in regards to the demobilization, disarmament, rehabilitation and reintegration efforts made by the government.
- d. research that would surface the "best practices" employed by the social workers in their work with child soldiers in different settings such as in the centers or institutions or in the community.

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Appendix A***The Exploitation of Children as Soldiers in the Philippines:
An Analysis of Issues and Challenges in
Social Work Practice*****Interview Guide for Social Worker**

1. Please tell me about the nature of your involvement in the handling of child soldier case/s (e .g. elaborate what specific direct or indirect involvement there is, the role, length and nature of involvement, the volume and nature of cases)
2. As a social worker, how do you perceive the problem on the use of children as soldiers? (probe explanation for the perception e.g. factors, causes, roots of the problem)
3. What particular problems or difficulties have you encountered in the course of your involvement in the programs or efforts concerning child soldiering? (probe for problems along knowledge, skills, support or policies, etc. hindering social work practice)
4. How does your background of social work operate in your present work/ involvement with child soldiers ? (probe for social work principles, theories, strategies, methods being used which promotes or hinders work with child soldiers)
5. What do you think are the important issues in child soldiering that concerns social work practice? (explore explanations for issues mentioned e.g. injustice, violation of children's rights, response not attacking root cause, etc)
6. Given a chance, how will you approach/ address the problem of child soldiering? (explore for strategies to critically assess the problem and the intervention at the micro, meso, exo and macro level)
7. What can you suggest to enable social workers to overcome the challenges in working with child soldiers? (may cover recommendation for personal, professional, organizational, social change)



Appendix B Invitation to Participate

**The Exploitation of Children as Soldiers in the Philippines:
An Analysis of the Issues and Challenges in
Social Work Practice**

My name is **Ma. Irene de Ocampo**, a postgraduate student taking Master of Social Work at Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand. I will be undertaking a qualitative research which aims to explore the phenomenon of child soldiering in the Philippines and analyze the issues and challenges it poses in social work practice with the goal of deepening understanding of this phenomenon and draw lessons to improve existing practice. I am employed at the Department of Social Welfare and Development, IBP Road Constitution Hills, Quezon City. Although this research is independent from my employer, I was granted access to the databank i.e. case files and reports at the regional and central office concerning former child soldiers under its care. This research is being done as a requirement for the completion of my Masterate Degree under the supervision of the following supervisors from Massey University:

1. Dr. Mike O'Brien
Head of the School
Department of Humanities and Social Science
Massey University, Albany Campus
Auckland, New Zealand
Ph: 64 (9) 4418161
e-mail: m.a.obrien@massey.ac.nz

2. to be confirmed

I am seeking your participation in my research in your capacity as social worker who has direct/indirect involvement in programs or any similar efforts concerning child soldiers. I learned about you through my initial coordination with the regional office. I have chosen social workers for this research specifically those who have handled cases of child soldiers and at least have a year of exposure in any related efforts concerning child soldiers.

The information you will share during the interview will cover your views and opinions on the problem and the response to child soldiering and your views on the issues and challenges it poses to your professional practice. The data to be collected from you and the other participants as well as from the case files of the children will be collated and analyzed for the final write up/thesis report. A transcript of interview will be given back to you for review or any changes prior to collation. The information will be used solely for the purpose stated herein and all transcriptions will be destroyed after the completion of the study. To protect your identity and privacy, your name and other identifying information e.g. address, will not appear in the instrument to be used during interview or in the research report. All information will remain confidential to the researcher and her supervisors.

If you agree to participate in the research, the following are your rights as respondents:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to the summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I am likewise providing you the attached consent form which also stipulates your right as respondent and the coverage of the permission you are granting to me. If you decide to participate in this research, please send the consent form back to me at fax # 9512801 at Project Management Bureau (PMB), DSWD Central Office. The date and place of the interview will be finalized with you once I got your letter of consent. The interview will last for about an hour.

For any questions concerning the project, you may contact the researcher at Ph:09204028190 or sent e-mail at mairene13@yahoo.com. Or you may write or send e-mail message to my supervisors at the aforementioned contact address.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, ALB Application 04/086. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor Kerry Chamberlain, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Albany, telephone 64 9 414 0800 x9078, email humanethicsalb@massey.ac.nz.

Ma. Irene O. de Ocampo
(Researcher)



Appendix C Consent Form

***The Exploitation of Children as Soldiers in the Philippines:
An Analysis of the Issues and Challenges in
Social Work Practice***

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

(This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years)

I have read the Information Sheet and have clearly understood the details of the study.

I am aware that if I decide to participate, I have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that my name will not be used unless I give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to the summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I am affixing my signature to attest my consent to participate in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Full Name -
printed _____



2000

D. DSWD Authorization Letter

AUTHORIZATION

In support to the professional growth and scholarship/academic requirement of the herein named employee taking up a Master's Degree in Social Work at Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand, **MA. IRENE DE OCAMPO** is hereby authorized to have access to the following:

- a. Access to the database i.e. case folders and reports on child soldier, at the central and regional offices.
- b. Access to the Department's resources while doing the home located research such as the use of equipment e.g. telephone, fax and computers related to the purpose of the research only and covering the data collection period January to March 2005.

She is given the permission to conduct semi-structured interview with selected regional social workers involved in case management of the child soldiers and selected central office social workers involved in program and policy development and management.

In the conduct of the research, she is expected to observe the standard operating procedures of the Department and to uphold the highest ethical standards in handling information and in dealing with human participants.

This authority expires on March 31st, 2005


HON. CORAZON JULIANO-SOLIMAN
 Secretary

Massey University

AUCKLAND

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OFFICE OF THE
DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR - AUCKLAND
Private Bag 102 904
North Shore MSC
Auckland
New Zealand
T Deputy Vice-Chancellor - Auckland
64 9 414 0800 extn 9517
Regional Registrar - Auckland
64 9 414 0800 extn 9516
F 64 9 414 0814
www.massey.ac.nz

11 January 2005

Ma. Irene O. de Ocampo
C/- Associate-Professor M O'Brien
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Massey University
Albany

Dear Ma. Irene O. de Ocampo

HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL APPLICATION – MUAHEC 04/086

“The Exploitation of Children as Soldiers in the Philippines. An analysis of the Issues and Challenges in the Context of Social work Practice”

Thank you for your application. It has been fully considered and approved by the Massey University, Albany Campus, Human Ethics Committee.

If you make any significant departure from the Application as approved then you should return this project to the Human Ethics Committee, Albany Campus, for further consideration and approval.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, a new application must be submitted at that time.

Yours sincerely



Associate-Professor Kerry Chamberlain
Chairperson,
Human Ethics Committee
Albany Campus

cc Associate-Professor M O'Brien
College of Humanities and Social Sciences