



# CHILD SOLDIERS: CRC COUNTRY BRIEFS

Pre-sessional working group 37th session, June 2004

*Prepared by The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers*

## Angola

Republic of Angola

### SUMMARY

<b>CRC-OP-CAC: Declaration:</b>	Ratified 27 January 2004
<b>Other treaties ratified:</b>	CRC; ILO 138; ILO 182; ICC; GC/AI+I
<b>Legal minimum recruitment age: Conscripts: Volunteers:</b>	20 (not in peacetime) 18

**CRC BRIEFING June 2004**

COALITION TO STOP THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS

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<b>Government Armed Forces:</b>	Army: 120,000 Navy: 3,000 Air Force / Air Defence: 6,000 – 8,000 Forces Abroad: 4,000 Rapid Reaction Police: 10,000 <sup>1</sup>
<b>RECRUITMENT AND USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS:</b> Some child soldiers recruited during the civil war remain within the Angolan armed forces (FAA). Many of these youth will have attained the age of majority; however, it is possible that under-age soldiers not yet demobilized remain within the FAA. <sup>2</sup>	

## GOVERNMENT

### National Recruitment Legislation

Young adults eighteen and older may volunteer to serve in the armed forces. Males who have reached the age of eighteen must register for service and at age twenty can be called up in times of necessity.<sup>3</sup>

According to information sent by the Angolan authorities to the UN Secretary-General on the issue of national military service, all men from 18 to 50 and women with "special qualifications of interest to the Armed Forces" are liable for military service in Angola (Law No. 12/82), but those over 30 serve only in the Reserve Force. The Angolan Government has stated that "there are no problems with conscientious objection to military service in Angola. Those who refuse to bear arms are asked to serve in the administrative sector".<sup>4</sup>

### DDR and Child Protection Programmes

The ceasefire declared in April 2002 between the government of Angola and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) that ended 26 years of civil war continues to hold. The main problem has been trying to retrain and reintegrate an estimated 100,000 former UNITA militants<sup>5</sup> - many of whom were child soldiers – into society.

In March 2003, the Angolan government, UNICEF and civil society partners reaffirmed their policy for former child soldiers.<sup>6</sup> The Ministry of Assistance and Social Reinsertion formalized its commitment to intensifying efforts in birth registration, family tracing and reunification, education and training. The policy specifically addresses the needs of children in former opposition reception areas and newly accessible areas. It is intended to assist former child soldiers through access to identity and citizenship, family reunification, education and vocation opportunities. UNICEF stated that healing psychosocial wounds of former child soldiers and reuniting them with their families was important for Angola's long-term recovery.<sup>7</sup> According to UNICEF, in July 2003, the last of the children demobilized from the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) would have been returned to their families.<sup>8</sup>

However, women and girls who were taken as "wives" by UNITA forces feared exclusion from government aid.<sup>9</sup> The current DDR programme limits assistance to UNITA soldiers, preventing "wives" and abducted women and girls from guaranteed direct assistance. Refugees International voiced concern over the possible negative reception these women

and girls may face on return to their village, since they were often used to cook, clean and carry supplies for soldiers.<sup>10</sup> UNITA has also expressed concern about thousands of UNITA health professionals and teachers who have not yet received confirmation from the government on whether they would be integrated into the country's health and education system.<sup>11</sup>

According to Human Rights Watch, current DDR programmes discriminate against child soldiers, many of whom carried out the same duties as adults during the conflict.<sup>12</sup> While adult combatants have received identification cards, resettlement kits and food assistance from the government, many child soldiers were excluded from the demobilization process, receiving only an identification card and food aid. Specific programmes are needed to address the needs of girls, used as cooks, domestics, porters and sexual slaves.<sup>13</sup>

### **International standards**

Angola has yet to sign the CRC-OP-CAC, having ratified the CRC on 5 December 1990 and ILO Conventions 138 and 182 on 13 June 2001. The Angolan Government signed the Rome Statute of the ICC in 1998 and has adopted the Geneva Conventions and Protocol I, but has yet to ratify Protocol II.

### **QUESTIONS TO STATE REPRESENTATIVES**

- Does the Angolan government intend to sign the CRC-OP-CAC and to abide by a "straight 18" standard for the recruitment of children in government armed forces?
- Can the government clarify the laws, regulations and practice relating to national service and conscription?
- Can the government provide up to date figures on the numbers of under-18s currently serving in government military forces?
- Are girls under the age of 18 currently being recruited into government military forces?

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- DDR programmes should take into account the specific needs of girls, former child soldiers who have attained the age of majority or are currently displaced, and other vulnerable youth who may be marginalized from existing processes.
- UN agencies should ensure that existing plans for community-based rehabilitation include provisions for former child soldiers appropriate to their needs.

<sup>1</sup> *The Military Balance 2003-2004*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, October 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Information received from Human Rights Watch, 24 June 2003

<sup>3</sup> *Angola: Forgotten Fighters – Child Soldiers in Angola*, Human Rights Watch, April 2003, [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)

<sup>4</sup> UN Secretary-General's report on military conscription in response to Resolution 1995/83, UN document, E/CN.4/1995/99, Angola, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> *The Military Balance 2003-2004*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies October 2003, p.200.

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF, "New Phase in Action for Separated Children and Child Soldiers in Angola", 7 March 2003.

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF, "New Phase in Action for Separated Children and Child Soldiers in Angola", 7 March 2003; IRIN, "Rehabilitation of child soldiers critical, UNICEF", 10 March 2003.

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<sup>8</sup> E-mail communication to Human Rights Watch from Akhil Iyer, Senior Program Officer, UNICEF Angola, 27 June 2003.

<sup>9</sup> IRIN, "Angola: UNITA "wives" fear exclusion from government aid", 10 March 2003.

<sup>10</sup> IRIN, "Angola: UNITA "wives" fear exclusion from government aid", 10 March 2003.

<sup>11</sup> IRIN, "UNITA welcomes vocational training for ex-soldiers", 31 March 2003.

<sup>12</sup> HRW, "Forgotten Fighters: Child Soldiers in Angola", April 2003.

<sup>13</sup> HRW, "Forgotten Fighters: Child Soldiers in Angola", April 2003.; IRIN, 29 April 2003.

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