

**CHILD  
SOLDIERS IN  
SOUTHERN  
AFRICA**

Miguel A Máusse

and

Daniel Nina

Edited by  
Elizabeth Bennett

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# **CHILD SOLDIERS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

## **PART I: The Social Reintegration of the Child Involved in Armed Conflict in Mozambique**

Miguel A Máusse

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## **PART II: Children Involved in South Africa's Wars: After Soweto 1976**

Daniel Nina

**ACT Initiates Actions  
Against Abuse of Children in  
Armed Conflict in Africa**

Final edit: Susan Unsworth

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ABC</b>	Atendimento Baseado na Comunidade (Community Based Support)
<b>ACNUR</b>	Alto Comissário das Nações Unidas para os Refugiados (United Nations High Commission for Refugees)
<b>ADPP</b>	Associação de Desenvolvimento do Povo para Povo (Association for Development of People by the People)
<b>AGP</b>	Acordo Geral de Paz (General Peace Accord)
<b>AMETRAMO</b>	Associação de Médicos Tradicionais de Moçambique (Association of Mozambican Traditional Healers)
<b>AMOSAPU</b>	Associação Moçambicana de Saúde Pública (Mozambican Association for Public Health)
<b>CVM</b>	Cruz Vermelha de Moçambique (Mozambican Red Cross)
<b>COPA-CSD</b>	Comissão Multidisciplinar de Apoio e Protecção à Criança em Situação Difícil (Commission for Support and Protection of the Child in a Difficult Situation)
<b>DEA</b>	Direcção de Estudos e Avaliação do MICAS (Directorate for Studies and Evaluations of MICAS)
<b>DPCCN</b>	Departamento de Prevenção e Combate às Calamidades Naturais (Department for the Prevention and Combat of Natural Calamities)
<b>FADM</b>	Forças Armadas de Defesa de Moçambique (Mozambican Defence Force)
<b>FRELIMO</b>	Frente da Libertação de Moçambique (Liberation Front of Mozambique)
<b>IPM</b>	Instituto de Psicotraumatologia (Institute for Psychotrauma)
<b>MICAS</b>	Ministério da Coordenação da Acção Social (Ministry for the Co-ordination of Social Welfare)
<b>MINED</b>	Ministério da Educação (Ministry of Education)
<b>MISAU</b>	Ministério da Saúde (Ministry of Health)
<b>PLRF</b>	Programa de Localização e Reunificação Familiar (Programme for Family Localisation and Reunification)
<b>PRES</b>	Programa de Reestruturação Económica e Social (Programme for Economic and Social Restructuring)
<b>RECRINA</b>	Reabilitação de Crianças em Nampula (Rehabilitation of Children in Nampula)
<b>RENAMO</b>	Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Mozambican National Resistance)
<b>SEAS</b>	Secretaria de Estado de Acção Social (State Secretary for Social Welfare)
<b>SMO</b>	Serviço Militar Obrigatório (Compulsory Military Service)
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children and Emergency Fund
<b>UNOMOZ</b>	United Nations Operation in Mozambique





## PREFACE

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*“I come from a culture where, traditionally, children are seen as both our present and our future, so I have always believed it is our responsibility as adults to give children a future worth having”*

*Graça Machel*

### **ABOUT THIS MONOGRAPH:**

*WE SELECTED* under-researched topics for our current series of monographs, trusting that they will help in defining mechanisms for stopping the practice of using children in and for war. We are grateful to Miguel A Maússe and Daniel Nina for their contribution to a finer understanding of the plight of child soldiers in South Africa. There is a crying need to provide a deterrent to war crimes against children and to see international justice in action. To this end ACT is calling for the establishment of a specialised international tribunal on War Crimes Against Children as a matter of the gravest urgency.

ACT the Action Plan Project for Children in Armed Conflict forms part of the activities of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in South Africa. The mandate of the ISS is to enhance human security in Africa and ACT supports the quest to stop the use of children in armed conflict situations by undertaking applied research and making recommendations on this issue. The present practices and abuses pose a direct threat to the dignity of humankind, they contradict all principles and rights associated with international norms and make a mockery of the notion of basic human security. Unless the present situation is immediately redressed, generations of children will continue to be exposed to a culture of violence which

neither offers alternatives for intellectual growth nor contributes to peace and nation-building processes. This ultimately robs children of their future and their humanity.

I wish to thank my colleagues at ISS, Virginia Gamba, Mark Malan and Richard Cornwell for their professional support and Janice Bergh for her care in the preparation of the manuscript.

Elizabeth Bennett  
Head, ACTION for Children in Armed Conflict

## OVERVIEW

*By Irae Baptista Lundin*

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*IT IS* difficult to reintegrate into the community someone who has been away for a long time; to forgive and forget evil deeds; and to spend time together again after being so long apart. This is because these are matters concerning the very psyche of the individual. When the emotional and physical distance between loved ones is an armed conflict, with the physical and psychical violence that implies, the task of reintegration is enormous. In the case of Mozambique this situation involved children being removed from their communities forcibly by acts of war, being beaten, mistreated, raped, starved and commanded to kill even close relatives.

This contribution provides a positive account of attempts now being made in Mozambique to reintegrate children involved in the armed conflict that ended in October 1992.

The activities in question are being carried out by government, non-governmental organisations, and by local communities where the children are being resettled to reacquire social rules and family values, largely disregarded during the hard times of displacement, captivity, compulsory participation in combat and other circumstances accompanying armed conflict.

The end of the war in Mozambique in 1992 has made evident the need for overall reconstruction and for the reintegration of refugees, displaced people and other groups rendered vulnerable by conflict. It has also drawn attention to the urgency of reconciling the various parties to the conflict – individuals, social groups and communities – and the need to develop new ideas and perceptions about the structuring of the nation's political life and the process of development for the country.

At present, a process of reconciliation is being consolidated in Mozambique, and is becoming a reality across the country, in the broadest sense. Individuals and social groups are

to bring local individuals back to local social life.

With the help of various social forces from inside and outside the country, society in Mozambique is returning to normality, itself a contribution to the consolidation of reconciliation. The new parliament is slowly promulgating laws, decrees and political resolutions to structure the country's political life and guide the development of the new democratic state. It is as part of this package of "back to normal life" that a new Conscription Act has been approved by the Assembly of the Republic.

The implications of this specific law are that the Mozambican state will have to consider living under laws that stipulate exceptions for at least a generation. This is a matter of ethical and moral principle, because those who have suffered most have to be protected and cared for in a special way, and given preference by the state in the execution of its responsibilities, even if the Republic's constitution stipulates that all citizens have equal rights and duties. This is a situation that also has to be taken into account in the monitoring of the situation by civil society.

In spite of the attempt to normalise as far as possible the lives of a group of children ex-soldiers by reintegrating them into society, this should be regarded as the exception, because children have the right to a normal childhood. To allow a group of ex-child soldiers to serve in the new non-partisan army and resume contact with military life, should be regarded as immoral.

The monograph shows that the national campaign launched by civil society against the conscription of ex-child soldiers has already met with a good response from many social forces in the country. It is now in the hands of the state, however, to ensure that such conscription does not occur.

**Irae Baptista Lundin**

Head: Dept of Cultural, Political and Social Studies

Centre for Strategic and International Studies

Maputo, Mozambique

participating in an exercise of forgiveness, helped by ceremonies and rituals taking place in urban and rural areas all around the country.

It is important to understand that after more than a decade of armed conflict, in which the state has been dangerously weakened by destruction wrought from within and outside the country, communities are reinforcing their traditional role of structuring the rules for the cyclical productive process and for the long term process of social reproduction. In fact, Mozambique, being a community state by nature, community life is the traditional avenue for individuals to seek support. In the aftermath of war, the community offers the individual a sense of belonging to a collective that cares for its members, which is so important for those morally and physically dislocated by the exigencies of conflict.

Communities have participated actively in the process of reintegrating demobilised soldiers, despite conditions of general scarcity. At present these communities are taking responsibility for the care of children affected by the conflict, whether or not these children have proper family ties. This is particularly important in a situation in which aid fatigue is denying the state and the NGOs badly needed financial means to back up projects or programmes for this purpose.

In the case of child ex-soldiers, the community is taking responsibility for reintegrating them in social life. And because African culture is replete with rituals of reconciliations, in which dances, songs and other collective actions help to heal abused and afflicted souls, these are playing a role in the process of healing and reintegrating those very young men and women, trying again to make them functional human beings. Furthermore, the communities are performing rituals of cohesion to make sure the wounds of war are healed properly, making an essential contribution to the implementation of a real and lasting peace.

Because healing has to do with the inner self, and we are all cultural beings, culture plays a major role in the process of reintegration in collective social life. This being so, the actions of reintegration based on the traditional community way of life are showing better results than other approaches, because they follow rules known and valued by the local population, using the very cultural language as a mechanism

***Individuals and social groups are participating in an exercise of forgiveness***



# THE SOCIAL REINTEGRATION OF THE CHILD INVOLVED IN ARMED CONFLICT IN MOZAMBIQUE

*Sharing the  
Mozambican  
experience*

*By Miguel A Maússe\**  
*Maputo, October 5, 1998*

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## I INTRODUCTION

*THIS MONOGRAPH* constitutes an analysis and systematic presentation of information and activities, carried out by both the governmental entities as well as the private sectors of society (non-governmental organisations, associations and the communities), aimed at the social (re) integration of children who were involved in the armed conflict which recently ended in Mozambique.

It is not our intention, in this presentation, to evaluate the relevancy or efficacy of these initiatives, nor to even attempt to criticise what was done or what is currently being done with regards to the reintegration of the children involved in the armed conflict, but rather to present a description of some of those initiatives as a way of sharing the Mozambican experience with other countries which were involved or are still involved in armed conflicts.

We know that the initiatives carried out during and after the war in Mozambique, with regards to the reintegration of these children, were varied, multifaceted and integrated and represent the efforts of all those involved in giving back to the children the social space that is owed to them.

With regards to our theme in focus, during this descriptive analysis we opted to use the designation "**children involved in the armed conflict**", as we believe this term is more generic and incorporates all children involved in the conflict, both directly and indirectly, either as soldiers, participating in spying missions or carrying war equipment; or having been kidnapped, tortured or a witness to barbaric acts. This term is

became involved in another armed conflict during the struggle for the liberation of Zimbabwe (1975-1980) against the colonial Rhodesian government. More recently, the country confronted another war of destabilisation initiated by RENAMO (National Mozambican Resistance), supported by the Rhodesian and South African governments. Altogether these wars were equivalent to military operations which affected communities and individuals, mainly women and children, for more than one generation.

The effects of the last war are the object of this analysis, without however trying to minimise the effects of the other two wars. As this last armed conflict came to an end only recently, its physical and psychological effects are still felt very strongly, despite the fact that a process of reconciliation is underway and is being conducted successfully.

This last war, which lasted 16 years, emerges during its first phase as a war of retaliation by the Rhodesian regime due to the support that the Mozambican Government was providing to the struggle for the liberation of the Zimbabwean people<sup>2</sup>. Later, with independence and the ultimate creation of Zimbabwe, the aid and support to Renamo were transferred to South Africa.

The first armed incursions against the Mozambican territory were initiated in 1976 in Manica and Sofala as well as to the north of Gaza, in provinces which border the present Zimbabwe<sup>3</sup>. From 1980, when the control of the movement is transferred to South Africa due to Zimbabwe having become independent, the war expanded to the north through Malawi and to the south through South Africa.

This expansion was in a way facilitated from inside the country, due to internal reasons, mainly those related to a social unhappiness which worsened throughout the rural areas, especially with the implementation of a policy for the creation of communal villages<sup>4</sup>. Roesch states that "*after 1980 Frelimo started using increasingly coercive measures to force the rural communities to live in communal villages*"<sup>5</sup>.

The policy of communal villages promoted by the government often came into open conflict with the interests of the rural populations<sup>6</sup>. The compulsory village structures place the outsiders to the new area of settlement in a very vulnerable position, and many even lost their food reserves during the resettlement, being forced to abandon the fields which had already been prepared for crops.

Furthermore the government also came into direct conflict with the Régulos, an authority acknowledged by many of the rural people within the local government structure<sup>7</sup>. All this created a general dissatisfaction among the rural communities and the traditional authorities, which resulted in some of them adhering to the Renamo movement. The deterioration of living conditions during the period between 1982 and 1984, as well as the drought which affected the country and brought about general hunger in many areas, contributed to a worsening of the situation<sup>8</sup>.

6 Added to these aspects, there were others which would favour adhesion to Renamo and thus



more encompassing and renders justice to what was in fact the reality of the child during this recent period of Mozambican history.

Some authors prefer to use the term "**children affected by the war**" to designate:

*"all the children who suffered directly from the effects of the war, through attacks, injury, kidnapping, death of family members, separation, involvement in military activities, psychological trauma etc, caused by the war, or indirectly by having been displaced, denied access to education, forced to hunger and malnutrition, or because they were denied access to basic health care, living under extreme situations, inadequate to their development"<sup>1</sup>.*

It is this group that we shall focus on during our address, although with the designation "children involved in the armed conflict," the meaning of which differs slightly, indicating a wider group, our analysis will try to identify different forms of social reintegration of this group of children.

For a better understanding of the problems faced by these children and in fact, in order to show their need for special care and intervention, we present a description highlighting the origins and the characteristics of the war in Mozambique, which was a war of destabilisation.

The socio-economic impact of the war on the country and the psycho-social impact of the war on the children, justify the reasons for the involvement of all the active structures of society, with the objective of reinstating hope in the lives of those children who suffered with the war; they further justify the need for the involvement of the government, civilian structures, the family and the community, working towards guaranteeing a better integration of these children.

## **2 A SHORT HISTORY OF THE WAR IN MOZAMBIQUE**

Mozambique was involved in armed conflict for 30 years. This started in 1964 with the struggle for national liberation against Portuguese colonialism led by FRELIMO and which lasted 10 years (1964 to 1974). After this war, the country

***These wars  
affected mainly  
women and child  
for more than one  
generation***

## 2.1 Social-Economic Consequences of the War in Mozambique

The Mozambican war, which ended in 1992, had a destabilising character, illustrated by the massacres and kidnapping of civilians and by the destruction of the social and economic infrastructures, namely factories, plantations, social structures, bridges, means of transport, energy conductors and others<sup>14</sup>. As a result of this war, more than a million people were killed and 4,5 million were dislocated internally or sought refuge in neighbouring countries such as Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Swaziland and South Africa. Approximately 400 000 of these were children<sup>15</sup>.

The intensification of the war in the rural areas forced the populations to seek refuge in the cities. Here, these populations were confronted with problems of unemployment and lack of land to cultivate, thus becoming more dependent on food aid from overseas or then precariously subsisting on informal sector activities.

A study carried out in 1994 in the city of Maputo by Little and Baptista Lundin, indicates that the majority of the family aggregates which had arrived in Maputo city during the previous 10 years, had become involved in small informal businesses on the street corners, locally known as "*dumba nengue*", and in other small types of business such as the sale of fresh produce in the markets of Maputo city<sup>16</sup>. And for the first time in our time, commercial activities substituted agricultural activities.

This situation worsened with the implementation of the Programme for Economic Rehabilitation in 1987, at a time when the war was spreading throughout the whole country<sup>17</sup>. United Nations data indicate that during the period between 1985 and 1990, between 50% and 60% of the Mozambican population lived in extreme poverty, between 35% and 45% of these in the urban and peri-urban areas and 70% in the rural areas<sup>18</sup>.

The armed conflict, together with the worst drought in years, affected the vast majority of the population, especially in the rural areas. As a result, families were separated by the dislocations from their areas of origin, through emigration to foreign countries or by death.

*"At the end of 1988, according to calculations done by the Joint Verification Commission, constituted by representatives of the Mozambican Government, of the United Nations and of the various donors, there were approximately 5,6 million Mozambicans affected, dislocated or living as refugees, which is equivalent to about one million families, the majority of which in the rural areas. This means that practically 1/3 of the Mozambican population has been affected by the war, in one way or another"*<sup>19</sup>.

The war was of such a nature that the rural communities paid a very high price, having to support the vast majority of the two armies<sup>20</sup> with their crop productions. With regards to the children, the constant dislocations and deaths resulted in orphaned children, traumatised and

allow the expansion of the war throughout the country. Within this context, Taju speaks about "*illegalities, abuse of power, unbalanced social economic development between the north and the south*"<sup>9</sup>.

At the end of 1982, "*Renamo infiltrates hundreds of elements of its movement from South Africa, through Maputo, to create destruction in the south and to advance to the north with the aim of isolating the capital from the rest of the country*"<sup>10</sup>. As a result of that strategy, Renamo activities seriously started affecting the province of Gaza between 1983 and 1987. During this period, Renamo established bases in this province, with the aim of carrying out armed incursions against the communal villages<sup>11</sup>.

After the crisis of 1986 which culminated with the death of the first president of Mozambique, Samora Machel, preceded by an atmosphere of tension and accusations between the governments of Maputo and Pretoria, the war intensified and gained another characteristic. Renamo infiltrated more men through Malawi and/or South Africa and started concentrating its attacks on small towns and suburban areas. In 1987, for example, an army of about 12 000 men, invaded the province of Zambézia from Malawi, with the support of South Africa. This group had as its objective "*to capture the majority of the main towns in the various districts of Zambézia, in the north-eastern part of Tete, and northern Manica and Sofala*"<sup>12</sup>.

From 1992 Renamo intensifies its attacks on the towns and cities all over the country. It is during this spate of attacks that the massacres of Homoíne, Manjacaze, Maluana and Tanninga (all in the south of the country) are registered. These were renowned for the ferocity with which they were perpetrated and for the high number of deaths of the defenceless, among them many women and children<sup>13</sup>.

The war tired both sides, with the people as the major loser. For this and other reasons, at the end of the 1980s, a series of contacts and talks was initiated between the belligerent parties, with the support of religious groups, African countries and finally the Community of Saint Egidio in Italy, and in October 1992, the General Peace Accord was signed in Rome, between the government and Renamo. The first multiparty elections in Mozambique take place in 1994, and a new era begins in the history of the country and of our people - the Second Republic.

***Families were separated through emigration or by death***

### 3 THE CHILD AND THE WAR

The armed conflict in Mozambique was characterised by its devastating effect on children. The number of children who died as a direct result of armed actions is and shall remain unknown. In the meantime, available data indicates that around 45% of the victims of the war (approximately 1 million deaths) were children under 15 years of age.<sup>27</sup>

The majority of the civilians who lived in areas affected by the war were exposed to violence, suffered brutality and other traumatic experiences, and a vast number of children witnessed the death of people. Among the surviving children, UNICEF estimates that about 250 000 were orphaned or separated from their families, as a consequence of the war. In a situation of total vulnerability, many Mozambican children became victims and instruments of acts of war. Young children were forced to fight, and became targets and preferred victims of kidnapping, torture, abuse, rape and forced labour, in war zones as well as in areas of dislocated populations, and even in refugee camps.

The stories gathered by the author in Homóine, in the province of Inhambane, which we quote herewith, are a better illustration of this situation. However, they already show a situation of some stability, with the children living with substitute families.<sup>28</sup>

*"**Maria Alberto** is a 13 year old girl living in the house of Sama Cossa (substitute family) in the suburb 7 de Setembro. Before, she lived in the Renamo base to where she was taken after having been kidnapped with her mother in Chirwala, her place of birth (...). She was separated from her parents during the kidnapping and never heard from them again. Maria escaped death, when the Renamo base where she was living was attacked by the Frelimo soldiers. The Frelimo soldiers took her to their army camp of Benhame. From here she was taken to Soma's house by Soma's husband who was a commander at that army base. (...) She does not go to school because she is too old to attend grade 1. Maria dreams of one day living with her parents again."*

*"**Laura Alfeu** is a 10 year old girl, who, for the last five years, has been living with Suzete Nhelete (substitute family) in the suburb Dzucuaana, in Manhica, district of Homóine, and attends grade 2. Laura does not remember her first childhood days, she only remembers that she used to live with Renamo soldiers in a base, where she was taken together with her family, parents and brothers and sisters. Laura knows that her father was killed during the walk to the camp and she does not know of the whereabouts of her brothers and sisters. (...) Like the other children, Laura would like to live again with her family one day".*

*"**Tereza Sopa** is 11 years old and currently lives with Elisa Samsson, a substitute family in Búfalo. She does not study because there are no schools where she lives. She does not know where she used to live before she was kidnapped. She was separated from her parents after she was kidnapped together with her family. On the way, her parents were told to go back and she was taken to the base at Vilanculos. From Vilanculos she was taken to Mahocuane and*

abandoned in the zones of war, and children separated from their families. Family dislocations "have as an immediate consequence the loss of family links as well as the loss of relationships and of coherence within the community, which in times of crises are fundamental in the process of inter-help"<sup>21</sup>.

Therefore, the effects of the war, which are various and shall continue to be felt for a long time, have wide implications in the economy of the country, of the region and of society in general. The destruction of the infrastructures capable of dinamising the national economy, and the sabotage of transport and communication links, of energy conductors, of the social infrastructures, namely schools, hospitals, shopping centres, towns and cities, negatively impacted on the development of an economy capable of meeting the needs of the country and of the region<sup>22</sup>. The destruction of the economic and social infrastructures placed millions of people in a state of total dependency. The destruction of the health assistance structures will prevent the provision of basic medical and health assistance<sup>23</sup>. This will result in high rates of child mortality calculated between 325-375 for every 1 000 children per year<sup>24</sup>. The destruction of the schools will aggravate the illiteracy problem in the country. With the war, a total of 2 655 primary schools, 22 high schools and 36 boarding schools situated in the rural areas, were destroyed or forced to close down, thus preventing around 600 000 children in those areas from having access to education<sup>25</sup>.

Therefore, even though there are no official or realistic numbers with regards to the children involved in the armed conflict, given the nature of the war everything indicates that there was a wide involvement of children in military acts.

The war of destabilisation in the country meant that the major part of the state budget was channelled towards costing the expenses of the war, which should have been channelled instead towards areas of economic and social development. Thus, it also contributed to the reduction of the total value of exports. As an example, the total value of Mozambican exports in 1986 was only 28% of the total value in 1981. Furthermore, the percentage of exports in relation to imports decreased from 35 in 1981 to 14 in 1986<sup>26</sup>.

***45% of the victims  
of the war  
(approximately  
1 million deaths)  
were children  
under 15 years***

*After contacting her children and the substitute family she asked the family to keep her children as she did not have adequate conditions to bring them up, besides the fact that there were no schools where she lived. Francisco and his wife accepted and from that time the two families have kept contact, thus having established family links.*

*Today, Sarita and Beto live well, and do not think of going back to live with their mother: 'because we are scared of the bandits and we want to study'. Sarita and Beto do the same things that other children of similar age do in the area – they sweep the house and the yard, go and fetch water and sometimes Sarita washes the dishes. She dreams of becoming a teacher one day and Beto would like to have a bicycle to get to school every day, as the school is very far from the house (approximately eight kms)<sup>29</sup>.*

These examples illustrate the situation to which the majority of the children were submitted during the war, which as we have seen was characterised by separations, loss of parents and/or family members through death, dislocation from their areas of origin etc. Many do not even remember everything that happened during the kidnapping and the period which they spent with the soldiers, they do not know the whereabouts of their family members and do not even know how old they are exactly. It must be pointed out that a stay in a military base meant to participate in combat, to carry the flag of war and for the girls, to foresee to the domestic tasks (washing, cooking), inclusively having to act as “wives” to the soldiers and commanders, often to more than one at the same time.

Today the dreams of these children, who are out of this nightmare, vary, but one can notice in almost all of them a common feeling: firstly the existence of hope, and secondly the search for a better life and dream of one day being reunited with their families.

In Mozambique the number of children involved in the armed conflict is not know. However, data supplied by the technical unit of UNOMOZ indicates that 27% (about 25 498) of the demobilised soldiers were at the time younger than 18 years<sup>30</sup>. It is noticeable that of these numbers, about 16 553 belonged to the governmental army, while 8 945 belonged to Renamo.<sup>31</sup>

It must be mentioned that, shortly after the General Peace Accord in October 1992, once the control at the old bases was relaxed, many of the children ran way from there. They either returned on their own to their areas of origin or were reunited by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), by the organisation Save the Children, or through the various initiatives of the community in collaboration with the Programme for Family Localisation and Reunification, about which we will talk more in detail later on.

When finally Renamo authorised full access to its old bases in June 1994, more than 2 000 children were registered, 850 of whom were later reunited in co-ordinated operations carried out by UNOMOZ.

12 The lack of official recognition of these youngsters as soldiers was a mistake made at the time, the implications of which were felt immediately and with long term repercussions. Due

from there to Inharime from where she was taken to the base at Zavala, before being returned to the base of Mahocuane. She managed to escape one day when she was sent to fetch coconut at the village (...).

### ***Marcos dreams of one day returning to his parents***

"**Marcos Matsinhe** is a 10 year old boy. He attends grade 1 and lives with Angelina Sabão in the communal village of Benhane. Before that he used to live in a Renamo base where he was taken after having been kidnapped in Jangamo. He managed to escape and reach the "party" (Frelimo). It was here that Angelina found him and asked if he could go and live with her. ... He says that he does nothing at home, except help in the vegetable garden and fetch water from the well. Marcos dreams of one day returning to his parents".

"**Dhindassani é** is a 12 year old girl who for the last four years has been living with Beti Munguambe in the communal village of Benhane. She does not study because she does not have the money to enrol and to buy books. Before she used to live with her parents in Matsinhe, from whom she was separated when she was kidnapped by Renamo soldiers one day when her parents were not at home. After being freed, she was later taken to the army base of Benhane, where Beti fetched her. She feels good and likes living with Beti, and has not had any problems. **Dhindassani** knows that her parents are alive and thinks she could recognise her house if someone would take her there one day. At Beti's house she usually sweeps the house and helps with the vegetable garden, carrying water and cooking. Her dream is to grow up and have her own home."

"**Beto and Sarita Artur** are brother and sister, respectively 11 and nine years of age, and live with Francisco António in the suburb Malonguela. Beto attends grade 1 and Sarita grade 2. They were kidnapped by Renamo soldiers in Pembe, and were later "recovered" by Frelimo soldiers who took them to the mission. The story of how they came to live with their substitute family is different from the others: Francisco went to the social work services of the area and asked to take Sarita to live with his family, for which he got permission. A few days later, the social worker of the district contacted him and asked him also to take Sarita's brother, because he cried for his sister all the time. Francisco accepted and also took Beto to live with him. Sometime later, the mother of the children turned up.

belonged to Renamo are protected because they hold a demobilisation card. However, he admitted that if there are child-soldiers who were not demobilised, it can only be those who fought on the side of the government, as those in Renamo were all demobilised.

These declarations raise some doubts, because according to the demobilisation process, all soldiers younger than 18 years were not demobilised, due the fact that they were not within the age legally established for military service. This means that officially no children were demobilised<sup>35</sup>. Therefore, at least in legal terms, neither the children who belonged to Renamo, nor those on the side of the government, are exempt from compulsory military service.

These child ex-soldiers usually developed social and psychological problems, directly associated to the experiences to which they were submitted. Problems included nightmares, sadness, depression, aggressiveness, isolation, lack of trust in adults etc. And it would not be recommended for them to participate in activities which might make them remember situations which should not be relived, reviving a difficult past in their lives and due to which they are still traumatised. But the law for compulsory military service demands equal treatment for all, and only the future will show which route should be taken.

### **3.1 The Psycho-Social Impact of the War on Children**

In any human society, children are the most vulnerable members in times of social crises and natural disasters, given their natural incapacity for self-defence. This vulnerability is aggravated in situations of armed conflict characterised by external violence to the communities in which they live or are used to living.

During wars, children are subject to witnessing or participating in acts of violence, thus becoming victims of direct and indirect consequences which the war brings about in a society. The following report illustrates the reality of kidnapped youngsters and men.

*"Kidnapped boys and men were "trained" through a brutal process of deprivation, spanking, threats and subject to breaking all taboos, such as to eat human flesh, to kill a family member. This process presumably takes place to alienate the soldier from his past, making him totally dependent on Renamo."*(Richman;1991:4).

The involvement of children in armed actions, kidnappings, constant escapes, disappearance of family members, deaths and torture, creates problems in the children which are recorded in their minds and which have serious effects for a very long period of time. The actions herein described bring about psychological, social and physical trauma in the children.

In a situation of war, the children live directly and indirectly in situations of tension, which can become traumatic for the children themselves. The fact that they witness the violent death of a family member or of a friend, will be traumatic, and the same is valid for situations where the children themselves are targets or are being personally threatened.



to the non-existence of a structured programme to meet the needs, the handling of these youngsters was not done in a uniform way and depended on the circumstances and the opportunities created by the international organisations which had surfaced in the meantime due to the now possible access to the war zones, which had previously been denied.

Some of these children managed to have access to the demobilisation centres and were formally demobilised, others benefited from the services for family reunification, and others still, simply returned to their areas of origin through their own means and without any type of assistance.<sup>32</sup>

It must be mentioned that the law regarding the compulsory military service recently approved by the Assembly of the Republic, does not mention how to handle these child ex-soldiers who during the war fought alongside the government or Renamo<sup>33</sup>. No mention is made whether they should be receive a special treatment or whether they should be treated as the rest of the youngsters who never did military service. During the debate on this law, no party (neither Frelimo nor Renamo, which were those responsible for recruiting minors for their armies during the war), defended a special statute for these youngsters who initiated and completed a military activity while still children.

There is currently a campaign against the future incorporation of these children in the military service, which already had its first intake in 1998 and which should effectively be in place as from 1999. With regards to this issue, one of the newspapers of Maputo city, quoting the national director for human resources of the Ministry of National Defence, states that in legal terms the "child soldiers" must be recruited to complete the compulsory military services, because their exclusion, for having participated in the last war, is not foreseen in the law. However, the possibility exists for these cases to be analysed during the execution of the recruiting programme.<sup>34</sup>

In reply and as a comment to those statements, the deputy commander-in-chief of the Mozambican Armed Forces, Mateus Ngonhamo, stated that there is no risk of the child ex-soldiers who during the war fought on the side of Renamo, being called up again into the army. Ngonhamo, who during the last war belonged to the Renamo ranks, said that the children who

***Frelimo and  
Renamo were those  
responsible for  
recruiting minors***

A study carried out in Mozambique during the war, involving young boys and girls, indicated that:

*"77% of the children witnessed assassinations, usually in large numbers; 88% witnessed physical abuse and/or torture; 51% were physically abused or tortured; 63% witnessed kidnappings and sexual abuse; 64% were kidnapped from their families; 75% of the kidnapped children were forced to serve as carriers and 28% of the kidnapped children (all boys) were trained for combat".<sup>37</sup>*

These numbers, often overlapping, indicate the difficult situations experienced by these children during that period.

Another study initiated by UNICEF in 1994, relates situations lived by a group of 40 children, who were later involved in a programme of assistance to children traumatised by the war, called the "*Lhanguene Initiative*". The study indicated that of the 40 children, seven saw their families being kidnapped, raped and killed; at least 20 witnessed deaths; 22 were trained by the Renamo soldiers, and many participated in acts of violence. This study also concluded that the majority of these children showed at the time signs of psychological behaviour disturbance, were introverts, had problems of concentration, suffered patterns of confused thinking, and some of them displayed highly aggressive behaviours.<sup>38</sup>

The experiences lived by the children during military acts, characterised by their direct or indirect involvement in fighting, separations and constant dislocations; the violent deaths of parents, family members or friends; the terror, attacks, life threats, bombardments etc, can provoke lack of self-esteem and lack of future perspectives. They constitute a tremendous source for aggression and violence a posteriori, if these children do not undergo a physical and psychological rehabilitation process combined with social reintegration, as is declared in the International Convention for the Rights of the Child approved by the United Nations on November 21, 1989.<sup>39</sup>

For example, during the war, the children became familiar, in various ways, with violent behaviour, either by observing direct family members, or people close to the family, preparing for combat and for sabotage. They might have heard everyday, insults against the enemy and against the problems and difficulties existent at the time and attributed to the mere existence of the enemy which therefore must be eradicated by any means possible, including the assassination of women and children.

During the war, the children, initially in a situation of direct or indirect conviviality with the military forces, breathe everyday a climate of hatred and violence, and learn techniques which later can be used in fighting and in combat, even in times of peace. Some of these children participated in acts of violence against the enemy, in many different ways, until they themselves killed as if they were trained soldiers.

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The involvement of children in armed acts has been a characteristic of the last wars. During armed conflicts the children are trained to participate in military type activities, either

Children separated from their families during the war are subject to additional psychological risks, which can be aggravated by the occurrence of other adversities such as being exposed to violence, death, abuse and hunger and the lack of better social integration.

According to Richman, in a report about the war:

*"we find many (children) still living in fear, sleeping in the bush by fear of attack, anxious about their security and that of their families and friends. Of the first 50 children with whom we talked, several had suffered attacks in the last 12 months ... and it seems that at least one year would be necessary to put back some sense of security, only for them to once again become victims of another attack. Half the victims had witnessed atrocities and assassinations and almost all had experienced separation and isolation. Eleven had witnessed the death of a family member. In this group, a quarter had been markedly affected by its symptoms, and those who had been kidnapped or witnessed the death of family members were the most disturbed"* (Richman;1991:7)

In Mozambique the cycle of violence was experienced by thousands of children, and separation and loss of family members are and were the biggest trauma and obstacle to the psycho-social recovery, even in the case of children who later benefited from the best types of assistance<sup>36</sup>.

Besides the effects of the war which directly affected the children, the war also destroys social services infrastructures and thus worsened an already difficult situation. In Mozambique, during the 16 years of this last war, the right to basic health care and education was denied to the vast majority of children living in war zones. As a consequence of the war, about half of the health and education facilities were destroyed or paralysed; nurses and teachers were killed, kidnapped or forced to seek refuge in neighbouring countries or to move to more secure areas. This group of children who were denied the right to health and education, constitutes nowadays a large segment of the young population of the country, involving children in the age groups of between 10 and 18 years and youngsters of between 25 and 26 years of age, who were born or were of school age during the war.

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recovery***

In this context, state and government institutions, society in general, through the NGOs and associations of a humanitarian character, the families and the communities have taken various initiatives with a view to supporting the populations in an effort to reintegrate the children involved in the armed conflict in Mozambique.

One principle which we would like to clarify, is that during the present conditions in Mozambique when one is searching for solutions for the integration of the children involved in the armed conflict, it is not a matter of choosing between tradition and modernisation, as they coexist in the same space and at the same time; the most important is to try and find functional ways, in order to guarantee a better and more efficient integration of the children who were caught between having to serve the wills of those who held the power and the force of the arms in the military armies. Within these lines, we are of the opinion that one must use:

- the traditional mechanisms for reintegration which the communities in general, and the families in particular, provide;
- also the policies, strategies and programmes elaborated by the government with the participation of various structures of society.

All these must be understood as being a tool towards guaranteeing a better integration of the children involved in armed conflict; as being a means of reintegrating them and "bringing them back to the world of normal people".

#### **4.1 The Reaction of the State: Policies, Strategies and Programmes**

The official reaction of the state, through the Mozambican government, for the integration of children involved in armed conflict (orphaned, abandoned and traumatised children separated from their families etc) became official in 1985, still during the war, through the adoption of an official policy of support to the "**child in a difficult situation**".

This policy acknowledged that in the defence of the best interests of the children affected by or involved in armed conflicts, they should be assisted firstly in the reunification with their families within the shortest period of time, and if such was not possible they should be placed in substitute families, as a way of guaranteeing a better social integration. Should it be impossible to integrate these children in their families or in substitute families, they should be placed in children's homes and in accommodation centres.<sup>40</sup> But this last option was only as a last resort.<sup>41</sup>

Initially this policy was implemented by the Ministry of Health through the National Directorate for Social Work (SEAS) and later by the State Secretary for Social Work (MICAS). Currently the policy is co-ordinated by the Ministry for Co-ordination of Social Work.

voluntarily or by force, by both sides of the forces involved in the conflict. They might have direct contact with military equipment (cleaning, manufacturing, fixing, transporting or using arms); they might fill auxiliary positions such as radio-operators, spies or military guides; therefore their involvement or utilisation in military acts can occur in many different ways.

More than anyone else they suffer the direct effects of the war, through the attacks, injuries, kidnappings and death of family members; or indirect effects such as separation, being forced to move, being denied access to education, being subjected to hunger and malnutrition, being denied access to basic health care and living in extreme situations totally inadequate to their development.

In the Mozambican case these situations created serious psychological and social problems to the children, and only a treatment with the involvement of the various institutions, the communities, their real or substitute families, such as is currently being implemented, can contribute to erasing the past and try to give them a perspective of a more integrated future in society.

#### **4 THE SOCIAL REINTEGRATION OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN THE ARMED CONFLICT**

In every society there are formal and informal institutions, either social or otherwise, which are called upon to intervene in moments of crises. These institutions have mechanisms for social control, so that in moments of crises they can intervene in the regularisation of their social systems. It is these institutions which use their resources and which identify solutions for the resolution of certain problems which affect the normal functioning of society and of its members.

In the case of Mozambique, these institutions were and are called upon to fulfil their role as regulators of more than one situation which arose in times of crises, created by the war which during many years affected the social texture. One of their roles was to deal with the problem of the reintegration of the children involved in the armed conflict.

*More than anyone else children suffer the direct effects of the war*

neighbouring states, and in some cases provided high school facilities to these children together with special pedagogical assistance.

These policies, programmes and strategies found continuity at provincial and district levels through the creation of various commissions for support and protection to the "child in a difficult situation", involving staff of the Departments of Education, Health, Social Welfare, Department for the Prevention and Combat of Natural Disasters (DPCCN), Department of Planning and Finance and district administrations. Their main mission was to co-ordinate the initiatives and to ensure that these children would have priority in the distribution of the few available resources and emergency services.

In the neighbouring countries, especially in Zimbabwe and Malawi, and Mozambican refugee children benefited from a number of initiatives implemented by international organisations, in some cases operating on both sides of the border, sometimes with the support of the Mozambican state and of the countries granting asylum. The High Commission for Refugees (ACNUR) and other international organisations, ensured that the needs of this group were timeously met, planned and co-ordinated, thus avoiding the catastrophes so characteristic of large refugee movements, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. All in all, the programme for assistance to the refugees always considered the children as priority elements within the group of "vulnerable people", which guaranteed, within the available resources, some protection and special care geared towards a better social integration of this group.<sup>43</sup>

In relation to the programmes, we must point out some which had and continue to have an impact on the reintegration of the child with war experience in Mozambique, namely the "*Lhanguene Initiative*", which we can consider the first formally co-ordinated programme. Also the Programme for the Family Localisation and Reunification (PLRF), and the programme for support to the child/youth with war experience.

The "*Lhanguene Initiative*", which took place at the end of the 1980s, constituted the first pilot experience in the co-ordinated assistance to the non-accompanied child involved in the armed conflict.<sup>44</sup> This programme was organised by the National Directorate for Social Welfare in co-ordination with the Department for Special Education of the Ministry of Education and received the technical and financial support of the Save the Children Fund (UK) and of the Save the Children Federation (US). The initiative brought together social workers, government officials and NGOs at all levels, in the search for solutions to stimulate the involvement of local volunteer groups, especially in dislodged communities, in the search for local solutions to the problems faced by the dislodged children involved in the armed conflict, as well as non-accompanied children.

During the first stage of the initiative, strategies for assistance to the non-accompanied children were delineated successfully.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, a training module was implemented, especially for members of the future district units for family localisation and reunification to be constituted by social workers, primary school teachers, nurses, members of the Mozambican Women Organisation and of the Mozambican Youth Organisation, members of

This strategy received a major impetus in 1988 with the creation of the Programme for Family Localisation and Reunification (PLRF), which consisted of the co-ordination of efforts through the government (at the time lead by the Secretary of State for Social Work - SEAS), together with various social structures, through NGOs and associations of support to the children in difficult situations.

With regards to health, the Ministry of Health (MISAU) established strategies for special and specific assistance to children involved in the armed conflict, in an effort to facilitate their social integration.

Other national and international institutions created centres for nutritional rehabilitation in camps for the dislodged, hospitals, health centres and in areas affected by the war. Furthermore, special immunisation programmes were introduced, as well as child-mother health to combat epidemics.

Another initiative, which is not less important, was the programme for the supply of prostheses to those injured by the war (including children), while humanitarian organisations were encouraged to rehabilitate and to operate health centres in remote areas affected by the war, and health community brigades tried to reach families and communities isolated due to the war.

At the same time as the initiatives of social welfare and the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education (MINED) delineated policies and specific strategies for assistance to the children involved in the armed conflict.

Through its Department for Special Education, the Ministry of Education elaborated a national programme which had as its objective the training of primary school teachers to conduct screening of students and render special assistance to students psychologically traumatised, and further instituted procedures to prioritise and facilitate transfers of school for children who had returned from areas of war and from refugee camps.<sup>42</sup>

As a means of guaranteeing the right to education to dislodged children, the Ministry of Education established schools in the main centres for war dislodged, in refugee camps in

***The Ministry of  
Health rendered  
special assistance  
to students  
psychologically  
traumatised***

the police, the Mozambican Red Cross and volunteers from other communities.

At the same time, and with the technical support of psychologists, psychiatrists, and psycho-pedagogists, a programme for the evaluation of the physical and mental health of the children lodged at the Lhanguene Centre was initiated, which was followed by treatment and psycho-social rehabilitation.

During the second stage, training was initiated, as well as the constitution of formal units for family localisation and reunification in four provinces. While the processing of children was being done, the search was on for the families and the reunification would then take place. At the end of the "*Lhanguene Initiative*", more than 1 500 non-accompanied children had been registered, half of whom were physically reunited with their families. The centre was thus closed and the number of children sheltered at centres in Maputo, Gaza, Inhambane and Sofala highly reduced.

The other high impact programme was the Programme for Family Localisation and Reunification (PLRF), which constituted one of the forms of co-ordinated and organised assistance which affected more children and families during and after the war.

Co-ordinated centrally by social welfare (DNAS, SEAS, later MICAS), the programme had the technical and financial support of organisations linked to the alliance Save the Children (UK and US), and Redd Barna-Norway, which supplied various types of assistance from institutional capacity, to technical training and all necessary resources for the implementation of the programme. During the first phase, the programme succeeded in organising a group of collaborators right up to a district level. The group comprised collaborators from various organisations and social structures, namely social welfare, education, health, Red Cross, Mozambican Women Organisation, Mozambican Youth Organisation, churches, the COPA-CSD etc.

However the best results of the Programme for Family Localisation and Reunification were achieved once the efforts of the formal network were allied to the spontaneous initiatives of community groups looking for members of their families who had disappeared. The programme then reached the populations in the remote and inaccessible areas (including the Renamo bases) and drastically reduced the funds for family reunification. Once identified, members of these community groups would benefit from training guidance with regards to the basic procedures for the Programme for Family Localisation and Family Reunification, and would have access to its resources in order to facilitate the access to family reunification.<sup>46</sup>

In turn, each group would train other elements in more remote areas, thus creating a network constituted by individual members of the various communities which was spreading throughout very vast areas.

The Programme for the Family Localisation and Reunification also tries to identify



abandoned and/or orphaned children, and to localise their immediate families or other family members for their ultimate reintegration, or then tries to integrate them into other families, followed by a phase of updating and support to both the families and children.

The support that the Ministry of Education offers the families through the Programme for Family Localisation and Reunification, is partly material support, through the supply of goods such as food items, school material etc. Besides the material support, social welfare must also guarantee moral support to the integrated child and to the family which welcomed the child, a fact which has been implemented as far as possible.

In this regard, social workers from social welfare periodically visit the homes with the objective of keeping up to date on the integration process of the child and identifying any related problems. Therefore, in this process, the role of social welfare is mainly to guarantee material and moral support to the abandoned child and to the family into which the child was placed, and to mobilise and raise the awareness of the communities with regards to these problems.<sup>47</sup>

In April 1994, the estimated number of volunteers of the Programme for Family Localisation and Reunification was around 8 000 people, who were responsible for the reunification of 12 000 children, excluding sporadic reuniting events which were never registered and which were done by community members (on average 50% of the reunification procedures were registered). During the period between 1989 and 1998, the Programme for Family Localisation and Reunification reunited approximately 15 588 children of the 22 000 who were identified.<sup>48</sup>

#### ***4.1.1 Other Special Programmes***

In some districts, such as Chibuto in the province of Gaza in the south of the country, a specific and special programme was implemented to assist child ex-soldiers who were reunited with their families. The main objectives of the project were to provide the opportunities for the reintegration and psycho-social reunification of the children, create accommodation facilities for the families, school enrolment and guidance, as well as create alternatives for family income generation.

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done, to find a home for the children who were involved in the armed conflict as well as those children who are unaccompanied.

## **4.2 Participation of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Associations**

In an attempt to guarantee a better integration of the children involved in the armed conflict, the various social sectors did not keep away from the process of supporting the children traumatised by the war, ex-soldiers, orphans and the separated or homeless.

Through the various national and foreign NGOs and associations of humanitarian support, different programmes were devised for different areas of intervention, namely the family reunification, rehabilitation of traumatised children, vocational training, projects for income generation, building of schools and clinics etc, activities which were always co-ordinated centrally by government institutions.

The breakdown of programmes of support for the children involved in the armed conflict, at a national level up to the year 1997, per province and per district, is presented in the following table.

**Table 1**  
**Breakdown of the Programmes of Support to the Children Involved in the Armed Conflict, until 1997**

<b>PROVINCE CHILDREN</b>	<b>PROGRAMMES OF SUPPORT</b>	<b>FOR THE</b>
<b>Maputo</b>	<b>4 programmes</b>	
<b>Gaza</b>	<b>4 programmes</b>	
<b>Inhambane</b>	<b>2 programmes</b>	
<b>Sofala</b>	<b>5 programmes</b>	
<b>Manica</b>	<b>3 programmes</b>	
<b>Zambezia</b>	<b>5 programmes</b>	
<b>Nampula</b>	<b>7 programmes</b>	
<b>Niassa</b>	<b>2 programmes</b>	
<b>Cabo Delgado</b>	<b>2 programmes</b>	

*Source: Abubacar Sultan<sup>51</sup>*

Programmes of the NGOs and associations, where one can include the children involved in

***The children were offered the opportunity of socialising with adult professional teachers and with other children***

The project of support to the child/youngster with war experience (a project which had the financial support of UNICEF and was implemented by social welfare through the various provincial directorates of the Ministry for Social Welfare), is a programme which in its first phase anticipated to accompany and reintegrate 850 children/youngsters through visits to the domiciles and integration in some projects to do with income generation and with vocational training.<sup>49</sup> The project managed to assist only 376 children distributed as follows: 117 in the province of Gaza, 32 in the province of Maputo, 126 in the province of Nampula and 101 in the province of Zambezia.

The component of higher impact of the project was the vocational training, undertaken in private workshops situated near the homes of the children, where besides professional training (such as carpentry, metalwork, tinsmith, mechanics, electricity, fishing, raising of goats etc), the children were offered the opportunity of socialising with adult professional teachers and with other children, which was very useful with regards to the learning process and to the re-organisation of basic rules for social conduct for these youngsters. An evaluation done last year (1998) by the Department for Studies and Evaluations (DEA) of the Ministry for Co-ordination of Social Welfare (MICAS), indicates that within the aims of that project, 19,5% of the children involved are attending in school; 55,6% are engaged in occupational activities, and 72,3% register a good family integration.<sup>50</sup>

It must be noted that this project was also implemented in the provinces of Maputo, Zambezia and Nampula. However, in these provinces no programmes were implemented. The project was limited to the identification of children who were ex-soldiers.

These are examples of some programmes for the reintegration of children who were involved in the armed conflict. There were however others which are just as important and which were implemented by the communities, churches, humanitarian associations and other institutions. As is evident from the above and this must be emphasised, all the institutional programmes had an active participation of the communities, mainly in the joint effort which was done and is still being

Welfare Co-ordination (DPCAS-Gaza) involved some of the children who had been involved in the armed conflict in Bilene-Macia, in activities of vocational training. Children with experience of the war were integrated in grade 1 in primary school (EP1), and also received vocational training.

IBIS, a non-governmental Danish organisation, is financing a project called RECRIVA aimed at the psycho-social rehabilitation of children and youngsters traumatised by the war in the province of Nampula in the north of the country. The project functions in six districts and is implemented in seven centres for psycho-social rehabilitation, where it is thought that the number of traumatised children is higher. The project 'healing through playing' is another initiative of the Mozambican Red Cross (CVM) financed by UNICEF, which has as an objective to assist children with psychological problems due to the war.

The Mozambican Association for Public Health (AMOSAPU), together with the Institute for Psychotrauma of Mozambique (IPM), has initiated investigations on the psychological impact of the war in children and youngsters, and is providing training for non-professional staff in order to enable them to assist those children. They have also elaborated projects of psycho-social assistance directed at the victims of war in the province of Gaza (district of Manjacaze), on the island Josina Machel in the province of Maputo, and in the suburb Zimpeto on the outskirts of Maputo city. The objective of the project is to offer psycho-therapeutic assistance to children and youngsters traumatised by the war, while at the same time trying to improve the conditions for basic schooling, as well as provide possibilities for vocational training and guidance on income generation.

As we previously mentioned, international agencies of the United Nations and others, have rendered technical, material and financial assistance to these initiatives of integration. UNICEF heads the list and continues to be the biggest donor of programmes for children, both through the institutional support to various ministries, namely the ministries of health, education, and social welfare, as well as through the financial support to other government institutions, national NGOs and national associations of a humanitarian nature, in the implementation of projects of support to the children in a difficult situation, including those children who were ex-soldiers and who are psychologically affected by the war.

With regards to financial, technical and material support, the Save The Children Fund (UK and USA) also stand out. Their activities focus on three institutions which are also involved with children, namely, social welfare, health and education. The work of these two agencies extends to provincial and district levels, through the provincial and district offices of these ministries. The organisation Redd Barna-Norway and the Assistance for the Development of People by the People (ADPP) from the Nordic countries, must also be mentioned, as agencies which have been involved in the support of initiatives aimed at guaranteeing the integration of the children.

These are some examples which illustrate programmes initiated by the NGOs and humanitarian associations, aimed at the reintegration of the child victim of the war. There are

the armed conflict, also intervene in various sectors, mainly:

- in the area of rehabilitation of traumatised children - 9 projects;
- centre for street children - 27 projects;
- rehabilitation and building of schools - 6 projects;
- donations of food and clothes - 6 projects;
- vocational training - 3 projects;
- community pre-schools - 2 projects;
- income generation, community development and assistance to handicapped children - 1 project for each programme.

The statistics regarding assistance to children in difficult situations, in Maputo city alone, indicate a total of 2 328, a number which can however be considered lower than the real situation. Of these children:

- 1 738 are assisted in closed centres;
- 500 are assisted directly in the streets; and
- there are 90 who receive no type of assistance.

With regards to the family localisation and reunification, the programme had the technical and financial support of some international organisations of support for the children in a difficult situation, namely the alliance Save The Children (UK and USA) and Redd Barna-Norway, which supply various types of assistance. The activities of this programme were co-ordinated mainly by social welfare, education, health, Red Cross, Mozambican Women Organisation, Mozambican Youth Organisation, and religious denominations.

As mentioned above, in some areas of the country such as in the district of Chibuto in the province of Gaza, projects of assistance to child ex-soldiers reunited with their original or substitute families were implemented.

UNICEF financed some initiatives of integration of child ex-soldiers through the project "Children with Experience of the War", implemented also in the province of Gaza, in the districts of Xai-Xai and Chicualacuala, which also had as an objective to supply self-employment alternatives to the children. Still in Gaza, the Provincial Directorate for Social

***The project  
'healing through  
playing' is another  
initiative of the  
Mozambican Red  
Cross***

in South Africa. The homecoming of these miners, even if it is only temporary, implies the performance of the rituals of purification, as one returns from a world unknown to that community and it is better to ensure that any risk of "contamination" stays outside.

Taking into account that rituals take place to "cleanse" the individual after an absence from home due to work reasons, it is even more valid to perform the ritual after an absence which had to do with "things of the war", mainly because the object of "pollution" is the bloodshed, either directly, or through witnessing bloody or deadly scenes.

Honwana states that *"after the war men and women, children and adults who in one way or the other were victims or were involved in the war, had to go through a 'cleansing' ritual".* And this procedure was important not only for the individual but for the community, which considered it one of the essential conditions to re-establish or maintain harmony in the environment. These practices of reintegration also took place in Mozambique during and after the armed conflict, whenever an individual returned to his specific community.<sup>52</sup>

The ritual for reintegration after the war of 1976-1992 was really a necessity for the reintegration of the individual in the family and community group, as, at least under Renamo, those individuals who were kidnapped would undergo a ritual of "breaking the bonds" with their social group. There are cases where youngster ex-soldiers were interviewed and related how they had to commit crimes within their own families, so that they would "erase" any bonding links from them and would "acquire" a new personality.<sup>53</sup> After these rituals they would inclusively lose all their names, the traditional and the modern, and would receive a new "war name".

Referring specifically to the child ex-soldiers, Honwana quoting Boaventura Macova a "nyanga" who was then the secretary of the Mozambican Association of Traditional Healers (AMETRANO), describes the ritual of reintegration of a child involved in the war:

*"As soon as the child arrived home she was taken to the "ndomba" (house of the spirits) to be introduced to the ancestors. There the elder in the family, (...) addressed the ancestors, informing them that the grandchild had returned home. At the same time the grandfather thanked the ancestors for the fact that the child was alive and had returned to the family."*<sup>54</sup>

This ritual, deals with the reception and the gratitude shown to the ancestors for having protected the child against death. However it is important to have a purification ritual which consists of the following:

*"(...) we took the child to the bush (about two kilometres from our house), where we built a small reed hut where we put the child dressed in the dirty and torn clothes which she had brought from the base of the 'Matsangas'.<sup>55</sup> Afterwards we set fire to the hut and the child already knew that she should get undressed and get out of the hut the minute it started burning (there is always an adult nearby to get the child out of the hut). After the child inhaled the smoke of some roots which were burned, she bathed in water mixed with powdered roots as a medicine. Later at the house of the 'ndomba', the child was 'vaccinated',*

still other programmes being implemented by other NGOs and associations, but our objective was to illustrate only some of the programmes in some of the areas of reintegration.

### **4.3. Participation of the Communities Using Traditional Mechanisms**

The rural communities have their own mechanisms for restructuring the social structure after moments of crisis (where the war is an extreme case), which form part of an ensemble of knowledge accumulated over various centuries and which is transmitted from generation to generation.

When after a war, the soldiers, refugees, dislodged, traumatised, orphaned or helpless children return home, they deserve special attention. There are rituals which facilitate the readjustment of those individuals and their reintegration in the family and the community.

Turner (1967:19) speaks of the existence of rituals or temporary rites which constitute a stage in the various phases of physical and social development of the individual, and of the rituals of application which are generally aimed at repairing a social ill and the resolution of social conflict. It is in this second category that the rituals of purification and reintegration are integrated, and this constitutes one of the means used by the families and the communities to reintegrate individuals who were involved in the armed conflict in Mozambique, including children.

In the rural communities, normally,  
*"(...) when an individual leaves his community for a certain period of time and comes into contact with other people or social groups, he always runs the risk of learning harmful, improper and strange things, which can pollute his community when he returns."* (Turner;1967:19).

Due to this principle, the communities traditionally have their defence mechanisms against the evils which their members might acquire during their contact with other social environments and with other life experiences. And this is the idea underlying the rituals of purification and integration. Mozambique has, for example, in certain regions of the south, a tradition from centuries ago of men migrating to the mines

*There are rituals  
which facilitate  
readjustment*

*regular members through rituals of aggregation*<sup>58</sup>. These rituals or ceremonies which the families and the communities perform, mean different forms of integrating the child in the family and of defending them against ultimate problems which that integration might bring to the family and to the child.

In this way, the performance of these ceremonies as rituals of integration, create a spiritual tranquillity in the people while individuals living in communities see themselves (feel) protected and capable of confronting any situation which the integration of children involved in armed conflict might bring about.

In this way the communities fulfil a very important role in the reintegration of the children involved in the armed conflict, as it is in the community that the child is integrated and it is there that all social issues relating to the individuals and to the social group to which he belongs, happen. It is also there where the mechanisms are established to reorganise social order when this is in disarray.

On the island Josina Machel in the district of Manhiça (Maputo), for example, there is a project organised by AMOSAPU at the level of the community, with ex-soldier children. A clergyman, in an interview with the Mozambican television TVM(9/05/97), stated the importance of the collective ritual which he performed, to make the children forget, as a group, what they had seen during the war: "*I purified them because they had seen many skeletons.*" These rituals are important integrations from a community point of view, collectively to alleviate past feelings and contribute towards the creation and reinforcement of social harmony. The community intervenes here through its specialists in rituals, towards the integration of the group in a more generic context.

Another concrete example of the role of community participation and intervention in the resolution of problems of the "children involved in armed conflict", is the Programme for Family Localisation and Reunification (PLRF) mentioned above, which was co-ordinated by the government through social welfare and other humanitarian organisations or associations, and which had a wide community participation, both in the localisation of families of children lost, separated from their families, as well as in the integration of those children in their families, by awarding them all the possibilities of integration in a community, even when they do not know their parents or direct family members.

The communities also serve as receptacles for the activities of other institutions which work in the integration of the children involved in the armed conflict. Government policies and strategies with regards to supporting the children, rely on the communities as it is they who end up receiving these children and providing the mechanisms for their integration. This is done through individuals and/or families who participate in the integration of these children, welcoming them during the difficult times in their lives and integrating them in their families, such as the following deposition relating to the case of little Sarita illustrates:

30 *"I went to ask social welfare to allow me to take Sarita (a child today integrated within a substitute family) and they allowed me. But it happened that she had an older brother. After*



*(‘kuthlavela’ - small incisions are made on the wrists, tongue and chest, and a medicinal paste is smeared on these incisions)*".

According to the information of Macova quoted by Honwana, a few days after this ritual the child opened up to the family members, chatted and told them what happened during the time she spent with the Renamo soldiers.

Another ceremony which is performed by the communities aimed at the social and community reintegration of people involved in armed conflict is called "*Ku-phalha*", a ritual of propitiation of the spirits as worshipping of the ancestors, which can be carried out within the family circle and is performed by the oldest member of the family, when it deals with a domestic issue; or, if it has a wider dimension, is usually performed by the traditional chief with the participation of the whole community. The ceremonies performed within the family take place to solve problems of a family nature, while those performed by the traditional chiefs are aimed at sorting out community problems. With the end of the war, all over the country, ceremonies of a private family nature were performed, to reintegrate the individual into the family; and also ceremonies of a community nature, so that the community could once again welcome a member who had been absent, or to welcome a new member who had opted for settling within that community.<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, it must be noted that one important aspect of community reintegration which occurs as an important condition for the whole community, is the existence of family cults "*to communicate to the spirits of the ancestors the fact that the child returned home*". Those ceremonies are important to "*communicate (the return) of a member of the family to the spirit of the ancestors, or to do 'ku-phalha' which means to ask for the good and to get rid of the evil*"<sup>57</sup>. Therefore, this means that "*the separation of the old state of things is symbolised through certain rituals*", which Van Gennep calls rituals of separation; "*then starts a period of isolation, during which the individual or group in question is separated from society and submitted to a certain number of taboos and rites; thirdly, at the end of this period the people who were taboos are once again welcomed into the community with their*

***Ceremonies of a private family nature were performed to reintegrate the individual into the family***

which consist on the implementation and co-ordination of programmes and projects of assistance to children in needy circumstances, in the areas of family reunification, psycho-social rehabilitation, integration through the creation of opportunities for vocational training, projects for income generation, facilities for access to schools, integration of children with special needs in formal schools etc.

As an example of these programmes, we have the already mentioned the Programme for the Family Localisation and Reunification (PLRF), as well as:

- Community Based Support Programme (ABC), which assists handicapped people including child victims of the war;
- Projects for Street Children;
- Community Nursery Schools and Institutional Assistance.

Through its various provincial offices, MICAS implements some specific projects in some provinces, such as the project for the creation of micro-enterprises involving groups of youngsters who were involved in the armed conflict in the province of Gaza. It further collaborates in projects of psycho-social rehabilitation of traumatised children implemented by AMOSAPU in Gaza and Maputo; and the project RECRINA (Rehabilitation of the Children of Nampula) of IBIS, among others.

As the needs are many and wide, the programmes of the post-war period also acquire this characteristic. Thus, at the level of education and in accordance with the national policy regarding education and strategies for the implementation of programmes, the concern is to increase the network of primary schools in the more remote areas; to guarantee better teacher training; and to support students in the acquisition of school material through the free distribution of schoolbooks to the more needy, obviously including the child victims of the war.

The Ministry of Education also implemented a policy called "assistance to the children with special needs", a programme not specifically directed at the child victims of war, but at all children with special educational needs, namely children with handicaps or deficiencies, with learning problems, with behavioural problems and with traumas related to the war and to violence.

The pilot programme of this project is currently running in six provinces, previously selected.

## **5.1 Some Problems of the Present Moment**

With the advent of peace, there are problems related to the continuation of the programme for the reintegration of the children involved in the armed conflict in Mozambique. The reconstruction needs are many and varied, and the programmes specifically related to this target group face the following problems:

*having noticed that he cried for her all the time, after she left, they contacted us and proposed that we also take her brother and we accepted".<sup>59</sup>*

## **5. CONTINUATION OF ACTIVITIES DURING TIMES OF PEACE**

A great majority of the activities carried out by the state and other structures in the post-war period, were initiated during the war. But the existence of an environment of peace created new and better conditions for a wider involvement in the issue of integration of children involved in the armed conflict. The activities initiated during the war were extended into the more remote areas which were inaccessible during the war, and also currently meet with a wider participation of society and of the community in general.

However, we can state that at a central level, during the present phase of the end of the war, the needs of this target group are met within the context of sectarian and inter-sectarian policies of support to the child in a difficult situation (including the child victims of war, orphaned, separated, abandoned and ex-soldiers). And in answer to this growing need, the Ministry for Co-ordination of Social Welfare was created after the first multiparty elections in 1994, its main function being to co-ordinate all activities aimed at solving the problems faced by a vulnerable population, including the children in need. The creation of this ministry is seen as a acknowledgement by the part of the state for the need for the existence of a central body to co-ordinate all the activities carried out by the state institutions and by society, while at the same time providing the support, assistance to social integration and progress reporting of these children. The status of "co-ordinator" awarded to this ministry illustrates the acknowledgement on the part of the state that the social problems are multifaceted and are of the responsibility of society as a whole, which implies a wider involvement in their resolution, by both civilians and the state.

The present strategies of the Ministry for Co-ordination of Social Welfare (MICAS) with regards to the assistance to children in needy and difficult circumstances, are a continuation of those which were initiated during the war and

***An environment of peace created new and better conditions for a wider involvement in the issue of integration***

programmes for rehabilitation and social integration. Children were prevented from benefiting from programmes and services offered by UNOMOZ through the programme for reintegration of demobilised soldiers, because the demobilisation process was not anticipating the demobilisation of minors.

## 6 CONCLUSION

One can say that, generally, the policies relating to education, health, social welfare and emergency, aimed at assisting and integrating the children involved in the armed conflict in Mozambique, tried and continue trying to attenuate and oppose the devastating effects of the war on children, and to find alternatives and solutions for a better social integration of children involved in the armed conflict.

The joint work and collaboration efforts among the government entities, NGOs, associations, donors and inter-governmental agencies for humanitarian assistance, have been facilitated by the efforts of families and communities in the search for alternatives for survival, restoration and social reintegration of the children involved in the armed conflict, using for this purpose locally available mechanisms. In the meantime, the financial limitations and the change in support options by the donors have made it difficult for the projects to continue successfully, forcing the scale to tip on the side of work and resources which can be mobilised locally within the communities.

As illustrated, the communities and the families have been deeply involved in the process of normalisation of the lives of their children and assisted in overcoming the social crisis created by the war. The models of integration utilised by the communities fall within their own symbolic and traditional schemes, expressing their vision with regards to the social phenomena and the restoration of social stability.

Within this context, a questioning thought of Richman remains as an illustration as one questions or not, the methods for reintegration used by the communities.

*"An additional matter," says Richman, "is if the Western obsession with the **inner** world (subconscious, conflicting), separated from the social world of involvement, has not imposed a way of thinking on the 'ideal way' of confronting suffering; that, in fact, it is not relevant to all societies or to all situations. That, in fact, symbolic answers to suffering and methods of confronting it which involve denial, distancing, even repression, can be more relevant in some situations. We need to acknowledge and reinforce the mechanisms to confront suffering, identifying those that will help, and we need to determine what types of emotional reactions are needed. For example, an assistance of the type 'confronting the problem by talking, talking exhaustively about it'. The challenge is to develop means of support which might integrate different approaches, and which will be sensitive to the cultural context of the specific society." (1991:18).*

1 Despite the efforts mentioned above, and the commitment and goodwill on the part of the state and of the communities, the role of the international agencies and of the NGOs which assist children affected by the war, lately has been reduced drastically. And this is due to the fact that once the war was over, the support of these agencies was directed more towards the development of programmes of a much wider context, thus leaving a huge gap in the support to the children who were previously involved in the armed conflict.

With the withdrawal or reduction of a number of these agencies, the few NGOs, national associations and even the state institutions which work in support of the social integration of the children, are faced with financial, material and even technical problems, as those agencies that withdrew not only worked on the ground, but were financing these programmes. With their withdrawal, various institutions, NGOs and associations were forced to close their doors or decrease their field of activity by lack of resources to conclude or continue their activities initiated during the war, in a situation of transition from an economy of war to an economy of peace, from a period of political instability to a period of political stability, of democracy and of peace. This seems to be a paradox, but it is reality.

In view of this, the fulfilment of these programmes and the creation of others, is fragile due to the lack of financial and material resources. Within this context, the increasing development towards an integrated market economy, has presented an increasing obstacle to looking after a vulnerable population, including the children involved in the armed conflict, as the vulnerability tends to increase.<sup>60</sup>

2 The omissions of the General Peace Accord (AGP) for not having established any mechanism which made provision for the formal demobilisation of the child soldiers or those involved in armed conflict by lack of acknowledgement of their existence, also constitutes another limitation to the present reality. Due to the fact that the majority of these children return to their families and to their communities, it is not easy to trace them and place them in projects or

***Children were prevented from benefiting from programmes and services offered by UNOMOZ because the demobilisation process was not anticipating the demobilisation of minors***

- the enemy. In this regard, the eighth session of the Central Committee of Frelimo, held in February 1976, concluded that the communal village, while being an organised structure for rural production (...), must constitute the future social structure of the Mozambican rural society (Araújo; 1988:182-183).
- 5 Roesch; 1991:13.
  - 6 The Mozambican rural communities have a model for social organisation which groups them according to genealogy within a specific territory, and this connection with the area is very important to the social and individual structure, that is it has to do with the regulations for the maintenance of law and order, the model for production, the consolidation of the personality of the individual and even the peace within families and social groups. The attempt to group communities in the rural areas according to an arbitrary model, to promote a more integrated development (health, school, water, roads etc), although well intentioned clashed with this traditional model and created problems. Mainly because there was an external factor looking for mistakes internally, to capitalise them for their actions of destabilisation. Geffray; 1991:19, studies and analyses this issue, with regards to the northern area of the province of Nampula.
  - 7 Designation given by the colonial government to the African traditional authority, existing within the political structure of the local communities and based on the dominant genealogy of each area. This authority was used by the colonial government to serve as an intermediary, as a link between the communities and the state, thus trying to attain a legitimacy which the fact that it was "an occupation power" did not allow. For its nature, and present situation, see Baptista Lundin; 1998: 33-44.
  - 8 Ratilal; 1989: 33.
  - 9 Taju; 1998: 33.
  - 10 Taju; 1988: 23-25.
  - 11 Roesch; 1992: 468.
  - 12 Hanlon; 1991: 33.
  - 13 The author did intensive research work in these areas during 1993-1995, from where he extracted part of the material used here.
  - 14 Ratilal; 1989: 46.
  - 15 Ratilal; 1989: 43.
  - 16 Little & Baptista Lundin; 1994: iii-iv.
  - 17 O PRE, was changed into PRES, when the social component was added to the programme.
  - 18 SEAS; 1993: 2.
  - 19 Lopes; 1992: 71.
  - 20 Chachiua raises this issue in "The Impact of Demobilisation in Mozambique - O Impacto da Desmobilização em Moçambique" (Baptista Lundin *et al*, in print). And it is pertinent, as, on the one hand, the governmental army was underpaid (a sergeant earned US\$50 per month, when he was paid), and on the other, the Renamo forces were guerrilla forces, who normally (and almost by definition) drew from the civilian population, in an either voluntary or compulsory way, what they need to survive. The enormous burden placed on the farmers as rural producers of food, can be realised when one knows that there were around 100 000 soldiers involved in the fighting; a burden not adequately accounted for by specialists in the matter.
  - 21 Lopes; 1992: 20.
  - 22 Ratilal; 1989: 42-48.
  - 23 In 1987, 847 health units and centres were destroyed or paralysed and forced to close down. This number represents one third of the primary health care centres of the country (Ratilal; 1989:43; please also refer to table no 21, p 184)
  - 24 Ratilal; 1989: 44
  - 25 Ratilal; 1989: 43; please also refer to the statistical table no 9,

It is therefore not up to us to raise the issue of evaluating or not the efficiency, efficacy or validity of the traditional methods in the institutional level, but to understand those actions as mechanisms which guide the lives and existence of the individual and of the social groups which these constitute within the communities. And in the case of Mozambique, these have proved to function with a positive result.

Finally, a problem related to the present moment of peace and which arises from the "dispersion" of the children previously concentrated in areas of better security, is allied to difficulties of a financial nature. The dispersion, which was an objective to be reached, as it implies having finally placed the children within their original or substitute families and living a community life outside the shelter centres, implies more costs, precisely at a time when the funds start being scarce. This combination of geographical dispersion of the children combined with the lack of funds, makes it difficult for the process of reintegration to advance, and thus prevents the implementation of joint and integrated projects aimed at rehabilitating each child and youngster as an individual, towards total social integration. As a consequence, the work shall be more concentrated within the families and communities where the children are placed, trusting the mechanisms which exist there to monitor these situations.

*The challenge is to develop means of support which must integrate different approaches and which will be sensitive to the cultural context of the specific society*

## ENDNOTES

\* Translated by Elizabeth Soares, Unisa, South Africa.

1 Sultan; 1997:2.

2 It must be noted that Mozambique was the only country which fully adhered to the recommendations of the United Nations with regards to the application of sanctions against the then Rhodesia, inclusively closing its borders with that country.

3 Roesch; 1993:2.

4 Communal villages constitute a new form of territorial organisation of the population which had as an objective to meet the needs of production and of the war. This new form of organisation relies on collective production and on the concentration of population, taking into account that isolation implies insecurity for the populations due to the war launched by

society, through the creation of centres for support to children in difficult situations, by the NGOs and humanitarian associations.

41 Please note the degree of priority in the hierarchy of these initiatives.

42 Richman (1991:14-17) through interviews with teachers, relates some of the difficulties of the special education programme, emphasising the support given by the communities to the work of the teachers.

43 "Vulnerable people" are those affected by the war and other calamities, including the demobilised soldiers. Furthermore, it also includes people who returned from eastern European countries, where they were working or studying.

44 The first children who were assisted in this programme had been ex-soldiers abducted from their homes and families, and had gone through horrible experiences which any healthy human mind would have difficulty accepting as true.

45 In two weeks, close to 200 unaccompanied children sheltered in institutions in Maputo city and in community centres on the outskirts of the city, were processed. They ultimately were reunited with their families. (The Lhanguene Initiative, SCF-US; 1988).

46 This campaign photographed all the non-accompanied children and distributed fliers throughout the country looking for at least one family member, so that the child would then be able to return home. The flier indicated where the child could be found and what steps to take in order to contact him or her.

47 Please note that with the rituals of integration, the children become traditionally part of the substitute families. These are obviously difficult situations, from an economic point of view, and could mean a difficult life ahead for these children, but not more so than for any of the other children in the family.

48 According to the five-yearly report of the Ministry for Social Welfare. Maputo: MICAS; 1998

49 Department for Studies and Evaluations of the Ministry of Social Welfare; 1998:5 and 10, and table on p 20.

50 The project involves 64 children and youngsters with war experience, but only 36 children were located and interviewed. Statistical data from DEA-MICAS; 1998.

51 Sultan; 1994: 4

52 It must be remembered that during the colonial war the same happened with the soldiers who fought alongside the present government.

53 Information provided by Baptista Lundin, during a personal conversation.

54 Honwana (1993), quoting the secretary of AMETRAMO.

55 Term generally identifying the guerrilla fighters of Renamo, which derives from the name of the first leader of the movement, André Matsanguaíssa.

56 Due to the ceremonies of 'disintegration' which took place during the war, as well as military incursions in their home areas, which were very destructive, with the end of war many demobilised Renamo soldiers preferred to settle in areas far from their places of origin (see Baptista Lundin "The impact of demobilisation in Mozambique").

57 Clotilde Murai, a "nyanga" quoted by Ma'sse; 1995: 61.

58 Van Gennep, M A V - "Le Rite de Passage. Paris: Nourry,1909, quoted by Junod;1974:79.

59 Maússe; 1995: 51, quoting the substitute father of Sarita and Beto.

38 60 The present process of privatisation, is bringing about increasing



- p 183.
- 26 Olson; 1990: 44-45
- 27 UNDP; 1990: s/p
- 28 Substitute family is the individual or family who chooses or is forced (according to the circumstances) to assume the responsibility of taking in a child, who either for an indeterminate or a specific period of time was left orphaned or without any other family members or is separated from them due to the war, natural calamities or any other reason. This individual or family does not have any rights on the child, and should the parents or family turn up the child must be given back to them (Maússe & Siteo; 1994: 15, note 21)
- 29 Maússe; 1995: Annexure II, pp 1-5
- 30 It must be pointed that youngsters and children (as well as a large number of adults, men and women) were kidnapped or force to enlist in the frontline, both in the rural as well as in the urban areas. The laws were not really enforced by the governmental forces, and Renamo did not seem to to adhere to any laws.
- 31 Database of the technical unit of UNOMOZ:s/d.
- 32 There is information that in certain areas of the south (Nhamala and Changamine, in Gaza; and in areas of Inhambane) groups of child-soldiers refused to return home without receiving compensation for their participation in the conflict. However, it is believed that these youngsters might have been persuaded to return home after having received a “kit” with some clothing and tools, presumably offered by UNOMOZ (Sultan; 1997: 17).
- 33 Child ex-soldiers are those children, both male and female, who during the war took part in various activities of a military nature, either voluntarily or by force, and they were in both parties involved in the war, namely they had contact with war equipment (cleaning, manufacturing, repairing, transporting or using arms); they were trained; they performed auxiliary activities as, for example, radio operators, spies or military guides (Sultan; 1997:2)
- 34 MediaFax, no 1578, 13/08/1998: 3-4.
- 35 It must be noted, however, that the first Renamo soldier to be officially demobilised by UNOMOZ, declared to be then 16 years of age.
- 36 This is “vacuum” which is filled with a pain which will never disappear; a bad remembrance which can be softened, but which will always be present, according to world experience.
- 37 Djeddah quoting Boothby, N “Displaced Children: psychological theory and practice from the field.” Journal of Refugee Studies, Vol 5, no 2, 1992.
- 38 UNICEF; 1994: 44
- 39 Raundalen; s/d: 36
- 40 Here there is also wider participation of various sectors of

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## CHILDREN INVOLVED IN SOUTH AFRICA'S WARS: AFTER SOWETO 1976

By Daniel Nina

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### INTRODUCTION

MORE THAN 300 000 children are currently directly involved in military conflicts around the world (NGO Coalition, 1998).<sup>1</sup> In fact, according to Graça Machel, the special expert for the United Nations 1996 report on the impact on war in children, more than two million children have died in armed conflicts in the past decade, and more than six million children have been left with some sort of physical disability as a result of such conflicts during the same decade (UNICEF, 1997).

The use of children in military conflicts is something that despite the 1989 United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the clear indication that children would not be used directly in conflicts, is still increasing worldwide. The governability of the problem has moved beyond the capacity of the states' signatories to the convention. In fact, most of the worldwide conflicts today are ones where children are directly involved by internal warring factions, either through state or non-state forces. This in itself makes difficult the process of enforcing the international legal conventions, which are geared to regulate the interstate wars, particularly in a historical period when states have proved not to be capable of enforcing international conventions.<sup>2</sup>

South Africa's contemporary history, that which starts in 1976 with the Soweto student uprising, is representative of the current situation in the world.<sup>3</sup> In particular between 1976 to 1994, the country participated in many "wars" internal and external, in which the use of children was a common feature.<sup>4</sup> Both state and non-state military forces used children in many capacities, and on some occasions in armed conflicts (TRC

*"The report does not, however, claim to be representative of all children and youth. Given the Commission's focus on gross human rights violations, those who gave evidence at the hearings on children and youth spoke mainly of the suffering of young people. Few chose to speak of, or to report on, the heroic role of young people in the struggle against apartheid. Many saw themselves not as victims, but as soldiers or freedom fighters and, for this reason, chose not to appear before the Commission at all.*

*(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa - Special Report, 1998:Vol 4, 249).*

The above questions are important when one is trying to draw some normative understanding of South Africa's recent past - in particular what affects children and what is understood as healthy and normal development. Important also, because with rare exceptions, much of the analysis of children at war in South Africa has concentrated on one community, the black children (cf. TRC - Special Report, 1998; Goldstone Report, 1994).

This monograph concentrates on those who were struggling to defeat the "old regime". The story of the children who defended the "old regime" is excluded from this monograph, and from most of the literature considered.<sup>7</sup>

The history of the "privileged" children of South Africa's past will need to be explored in the future. This monograph, however, looks at this episode from a critical perspective, in particular when examining the role of the state in engaging in internal conflicts and taking advantage of the particular side of the children in the community, with the aim of satisfying state interests.

The psychological impact of this experience, different to the one suffered in many countries throughout the African continent, was that it made child soldiers fight against each other just because of racial differences (Brett and McCallin, 1996).<sup>8</sup> Where the conflicts created by the apartheid-racially divided society, were represented in every single instance of society, including that of the war-conflicts.

Internationally, children under 18 years old are not allowed to participate directly in armed conflicts (UNCRC, 1989; Woods, 1992). The state/s presupposes that children are entitled to enjoy their childhood and to grow without any emotional or physical distress.<sup>9</sup> However, contemporary history suggests that children are regularly used in armed conflicts, voluntarily or against their will, to defend the interest of people in power, or seeking power (Woods, *Ibid*).

South Africa is an interesting case – the armed conflict, in the traditional sense of a liberation [people's] army fighting an oppressive state army, was not the only route adopted for involving children in military hostilities. In fact, a great deal of the "people's revolution" that took place between 1976 to 1990, was led by or involved children under 18 years, whose participation did not necessarily fall under the command structure of a particular organisation, but who were operating under their own wisdom and intuitions, against an oppressive regime (Marks, 1995).<sup>10</sup> These children were warriors, but also were victims and as such they suffered considerably (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1986).<sup>11</sup>

In this regard, South Africa's experience challenges and questions international common understanding of normative and legal definitions. It would be too simplistic, however, to dismiss South Africa's historical, if not political, responsibility by saying that in the formal army (state) or in the alternative army (the liberation forces) no children under 18 years participated, and then to close the debate.<sup>12</sup>

Special Report, 1998). Moreover, South Africa developed its own special modalities of internal conflict, in which children participated in “wars” where the enemy was not the state, and where the line of command rested with the children themselves (Marks, 1992; 1995).

However, since the uprising of the students in 1976, the course of children developed its own history - sometimes guaranteed and monitored by the “family” society, but on many other occasions guided only by the organisations of the children themselves. Mistakes and successes, as it can be imagined, were made throughout the many years of child leadership in South Africa’s many [but essentially black] communities (Marks, 1995).

South Africa’s history was the tale of two cities, of two people, indeed, of two countries. In fact, South Africa’s treatment and handling of conflicts of the past was fundamentally determined by skin colour. Black children were the direct victims of the apartheid regime due to their involvement in the politics of liberation. As such, they operated freely and without the regulatory role of the state, and in many cases of the family itself.<sup>5</sup> The price paid for this involvement, as can be expected, was a high degree of repression, oppression and alienation.

For the other children, white children in particular, the experience was rather protected and secure. Under the umbrella of the state and institutions of socialisation such as the church, the other children of South Africa grew up driven by the need to defend the nation from an imminent “communist attack”.<sup>6</sup>

Who were these children, these “child soldiers”, who participated in and contributed to the social transformation of South Africa - from an undemocratic and oppressive society into one that is democratic and participative.

Moreover, and focusing on underprivileged [black] children, what were the sacrifices endured by these children in order to achieve the present society? Who requested or induced the children to adopt a protagonist role in advancing a democratic and free society?

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## SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Addressing normative definitions is important in order to provide some common understanding; in particular because the understanding of what constitutes a child, for example, essentially requires combining legal formal definitions with what constitutes the popular understanding of the concept, as well as how it has evolved in the past few decades.<sup>15</sup>

Specifically, it is important to define what constitutes a child in the context of his/her participation in armed conflicts. In this sense, a child is any person under 18 years (UNCRC, 1989).

It is important, nonetheless, to distinguish normative definitions which coincide with international and domestic definitions and to explore them in the light of popular understanding. In this regard the age limitation is based on international and domestic legal definitions (Klothen, 1995). However, some scholars like Seekings (1993), for example, state that there is a popular understanding which combines the concept of children with the concept of youth - which could apply to any person up to mid-30s (Seekings, 1993: introduction).<sup>16</sup> It is important to confine any understanding of the problem to what is internationally accepted, and to distinguish the discussion on this monograph from what is popularly understood in South Africa.<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless, the importance of this lies in the fact that although South Africa is now legally bound by the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child, the period which covers the involvement of children in the country's internal "war" from 1976 to 1990 (and the aftermath of the political transition 1990-1994), is one where children, youth and [political and military] comrades are synonymous: children under 18 years old on certain occasions, and young people under 30 years old, on others (cr ref, Sitas, 1992; Seekings, 1993; Klothen, 1995).<sup>18</sup>

During the period under considerations, the normative categories to describe young [chronological age defined] people, were determined by their involvement and participation in the popular uprising against the regime - notwithstanding that on some occasions we were addressing children (under 18 years old). As the people's uprising started in 1976, it was the "schoolchildren" who took to the streets of South Africa to protest against particular policies of the apartheid government.

However, these schoolchildren, as long as they remained outside the school, developed their own new identity of youth, of comrades, of the young lions, who became full time activists in the struggle for national liberation (Marks, 1995; Sitas, 1992). In this regard, the normative definition of youth became more representative of young people actively involved in the streets of South Africa, rebelling against the regime without being involved in a traditional military structure or institution.<sup>19</sup> This category of children, which confuses itself with young adult people, remained within the country critical theory discourses after 1994 - to such an extent after the transition they were named the "lost generation" (cr ref, Seekings,



As indicated before and as I will discuss below, South Africa's war happened in many battlefields, which included the streets of many urban and rural communities, where the involvement of children, fundamentally students, was crucial to destabilise the regime. This particular angle of the experience of the country, however, opens a different door which is not necessarily comprised within acceptable normative definitions.

In fact, the above argument in terms of the South African experience suggests that in the struggle for the national liberation of the country, children participated as "proxy soldiers" in the formal war. In other words, their direct involvement was limited; however, their intervention as street militants in mostly school and community protests [although driven by welfare needs/benefits] was essential for the politics of social confrontation against apartheid from 1976 onwards.<sup>13</sup>

In this monograph I explore child involvement in South Africa's own version of civil war from 1976 to 1994. In particular, and using the international definitions of children and their participation in armed conflicts, I will try to analyse what is specific to the South African experience which makes it different to other case studies of children and armed conflict.

South Africa, for example, unlike Mozambique or Angola, did not have an open and declared civil war, where people under 18 years participated as part of the belligerent forces (cf ref, Quakers, 1992). Compared to these two countries, South Africa's experience was one of participation by need, choice and also by what seems to be an ideological conviction of what was needed to overturn the regime.

Moreover, South Africa can assist us in exploring the gaps or limitations of existing normative definitions as well as international agreements on the topic; particularly because South Africa's children were involved in an armed/belligerent conflict of a "special kind" and the state did not participate in the international convention due to marginalisation through apartheid.<sup>14</sup>

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For example, the involvement of students in education boycotts has to be seen in a similar way to the direct intervention of a young person under 18 years in a military conflict. South Africa's pragmatic approach allows us to transform and re-adapt international definitions which, within the nature of the conflict of the country, are too limited. The possibility lies for a more encompassing terminology which allows a inclusive rather than exclusive approach.

In this regard, when using the term political violence, war or conflicts of the past in the case of South Africa, one has to appreciate the flexibility in which the terminology is being used to define or categorise the internal uprising that happened in the country since 1976. There was armed conflict, in the traditional sense of the interpretation, which took place fundamentally between the armed forces of the government and those of the liberation armies such as Umkhonto we Sizwe and the Azanian People's Liberation Army (MK and APLA, respectively).

Finally, it is important to consider that in the South African context during the people's revolts in the 1980s and later during the transitional years (1990 to 1994), the political conflict escalated to involve traditional social groups (such as the state army or national liberation armies), but also to include non-traditional social groups such as vigilantes or the so-called "third force". The "war" in South Africa, in which many children participated, did not necessarily involve a defined enemy, but a wide range of repressive forces, and forces and counterforces.<sup>23</sup>

As the struggle escalated, and as the government became unable to tackle all the sources of political/armed conflict, the retaliation against those uprising, was diversified.<sup>24</sup> The children of South Africa were at war with more than one enemy. These were the army, vigilante organisations and what was defined in a different context in the USA as "black on black" violence. In particular, in the mid-1980s to early 1990s, the "black on black" violence was mostly conducted between children/young people affiliated to the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party (cr ref, Dowdall, 1994; Jeffrey, 1997).

The "black on black" violence of the early 1990s is difficult to classify under traditional legal conventions or international literature (Brett and McCallin, 1996). However, it needs to be examined in the sense of unorganised or organised civil society violence, within the domain of a conflict; and where the social impact of this conflict needs to be addressed in the same way as a traditional military war.

## **INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC LEGAL CONVENTIONS AND LEGISLATIONS**

International and domestic legal rules provide a useful guide for understanding the limitations of the role of children in armed conflicts. In particular, there seems to be conflict between age factor limitations in the different international agreements.<sup>25</sup> However, where there is no difference between the conventions and domestic legislation children should receive

1993).<sup>20</sup>

In the period post-1995, when South Africa adheres itself to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the word “child” (and children) emerges or re-emerges, to define a particular category of people which now needs special attention. However, the social group that now needs attention is not consistent with the body of literature generated in the country around the phenomenon of young people’s involvement in the struggle (cf ref, Sitas, 1992; Seekings, 1993; Marks, 1995, 1992).<sup>21</sup>

In terms of the above discussion, when one uses the normative concept of child/children, and when one is analysing the role of this social group in the struggle against apartheid, one needs to understand the flexibility of the concept at the social and political level. However, in the decade of the 1990s, and in particular since 1995, the concept of a “child” has been introduced as part of the legal discourse now adopted by the government and other sectors in the country.

The practical implication of the loose way in which normative considerations have been posed in South Africa, is the possible exclusion of non-age members (over 18 years old), although “comrades” in the struggle. This creates the implication, at least for the analysis conducted in this monograph, that the social categories of analysis moved and reduced the scope of those included as the country re-engaged itself in the international community.

This moves us to a modification of terminology of what constitutes an armed conflict situation, and what has been defined in South Africa as “political violence” (Rock, 1997) or “culture of violence” (Dowdall, 1994).<sup>22</sup> Fundamentally “political violence” as it has been seen in South Africa, represents a more flexible social approach to define or categorise the armed conflicts of the past. This social category allows for the inclusion not only of what was traditionally seen as a belligerent conflict, defined under the 1949 Geneva Convention, but for more atypical examples of limited uprisings, revolts, protests, and any other popular mobilisation guided to question the authority of the [illegitimate] state.

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1995; Klothen, 1995).<sup>27</sup>

In relation to Article 38, Brett and McCallin have found that:

Article 38 was an innovation in explicitly incorporating international humanitarian law into international human rights law. Previously, the links could be made only by drawing on general provisions that required states parties to human rights treaties to abide by their obligations under international law. (Brett and McCallin, 1996:189).

The authors further add:

Article 38(1) applies the dual standard of requiring the states parties both to respect and to ensure respect of these provisions. It therefore establishes positive as well as negative duties with regard to both their own conduct and the conduct of others (whether other governments or armed groups). The limitation to “conflict relevant to the child” is superfluous. (Brett and McCallin, *ibid*).

On the other hand, the African Charter on the Rights of the Child (ACRC) states:

Article 2: Definition of a Child:

For the purpose of this Charter, a child means every human being below the age of 18 years.

In terms of providing a definition for what constitutes an armed conflict, the ACRC states:

Article 22: Armed Conflicts:

1. States Parties to this Charter shall undertake to respect and ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts which affect the child.
2. States Parties to the present Charter shall take all necessary measures to ensure that no child shall take a direct part in hostilities and shall refrain in particular from recruiting any child.
3. States Parties to the present Charter shall, in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law, protect the civilian population in armed conflicts and shall take all feasible measures to ensure the protection and care of children who are affected by armed conflicts. Such rules shall also apply to children in situations of internal armed conflicts, tension and strife.<sup>28</sup>

Another important consideration when dealing with international conventions and agreements dealing with the rights of children, lies with the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Using a more flexible interpretation of the age limitations for entering into work, one can also interpret that children under 18 years are not allowed to be soldiers, because they are not allowed to work.

In addition the ILO Convention No 138 on Minimum Age, 1973, sets 18 years as “the minimum age for admission to employment or work which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to jeopardise the health, safety or morals of young people”.

Although the armed forces are considered to be outside the legal scope of this Convention, the ILO itself has suggested that it “may be applied in corollary to the involvement in armed

adequate and humane treatment in all circumstances.<sup>26</sup>

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), for example, states:

Article 38:

1. States Parties undertake to respect and to ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts which are relevant to the child.
2. States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of 15 years do not take a direct part in hostilities.
3. States Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of 15 years into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of 15 years but who have not attained the age of 18 years, State Parties shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest.
4. In accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts, States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict.

Article 39:

State parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

In the context of children at war, this United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, becomes an important point of reference which defines parameters in terms of how states should guide themselves when dealing with children in armed conflicts and the process of their reintegration. The process of adopting the UN convention requires first that each state sign the convention and ratify it domestically (see UNCRC, 1989, articles 47 and 48). Once ratified by each state, it has to be adopted at the domestic level (Kirmayo,

***States Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of 15 years into their armed forces***

difference with the old regime before 1994, and provides scope for a different enforcement of and claim for respect towards a culture of rights. Moreover, in relation to the post-1994 era, it provides a framework for evaluating the adequate enforcement or not of the international agreements in the local jurisdiction.<sup>32</sup>

Children have now become children - at least since the 1995/6 period.

## **CONTEXT ANALYSIS:**

The history of child involvement in armed conflicts or resistance to the oppressive regime dates back many decades. What is important to highlight is that although the history is in a way an old one, the escalation of conflicts in the post-1976 era created the conditions for more resistance, but also for more oppression.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, for example, summarises the history as follows:

The role of youth in resisting apartheid dates back to the formation of the militant African National Congress (ANC) Youth League in 1943. The militancy of the youth provided the impetus for the Defiance Campaign of 1952 and the drafting of the Freedom Charter in 1955. In the 1960s, students were among those who rose up in their thousands to protest against the pass laws. The state's response to these peaceful protests was mass repression. Many youth saw no option but to leave the country to take up arms and fight for liberation. Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) formed in 1961, drew many of its recruits from the ranks of the youth. (TRC - Report, 1998: 252-253).

The report further adds in relation to the post-1976 era:

In June 1976, the student revolt that began in Soweto transformed the political climate. One hundred and four children under the age of 16 were killed in the uprising and resistance spread to other parts of the country. Dissent by the children and youth of South Africa cast children in the role of agents for social change, as well as making them targets of the regime. Classrooms became meeting grounds for organisations such as the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), which was formed in 1979 and ultimately boasted a membership of more than a million students. The security police clampdown on COSAS resulted in the arrest of more than 500 of its members by the time of the declaration of the state of emergency in July 1985. (TRC - Report, 1998: 253).

It is in the light of the TRC report, as a starting point document for an historical classification of periods of resistance, that one can perhaps suggest the following four periods for understanding the level of involvement of the children of South Africa in the [armed] conflict of the past. The periods are: 1976-1983, from the Soweto uprising until the formation of the United Democratic Front; from 1983 to 1990, from the UDF until the famous February 3, 1990, when democracy was named for the first time in parliament; from 1990 to 1994, the transitional years in the country; and finally, from 1994 to the present, which involves the first democratic government in the country.

conflicts". (Brett and McCallin, 1996:196).

Since the democratic transition of 1994, South Africa has adopted affirmative steps to comply with international legal rules. For example, in 1995 the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child was ratified. Immediate measures were then taken to bring domestic law in line with international commitments through a National Plan of Action.

This can be seen in the difference between the South African interim constitution of 1993 (Act 200) and South Africa's final constitution, Act 108 of 1996 (Jeffrey, 1997b:124).<sup>29</sup> In the former, no mention was made of the involvement of children in armed conflicts.<sup>30</sup> In the latter, however, clear indications were made, which represents South Africa's willingness to comply with its domestic legal obligations in terms of this international convention.<sup>31</sup>

South Africa's 1996 constitution states in its relevant section in the Bill of Rights:

Section 28:

1. Every child has the right:
  - (a) not to be required or permitted to perform work or provide services that -
    - (i) are inappropriate for a person of that child's age; or
    - (ii) place at risk the child's well-being, education, physical or mental health or spiritual, moral or social development;
  - (b) not to be used directly in armed conflict, and to be protected in times of armed conflict;
2. A child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child.
3. In this section "child" means a person under the age of 18 years.

What is important is to recognise, firstly, that South Africa transformed its way of thinking in relation to the 1993 and 1996 constitutions; and secondly, that after ratifying its adherence to the international Convention on the Rights of the Child, it immediately put it into practice its obligations in the domestic legal domain. This in itself constitutes a qualitative

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After almost 15 years of peaceful resistance to apartheid (1961-1976), the children of Soweto mobilised against the language medium of their education - Afrikaans. The uprising that sparked this protest was followed by many throughout the country, leaving scores of children under arrest, displaced from their traditional homes, or even dead.

It also created new expectations of the possibility of fighting the regime, and the need to engage in armed struggle to overthrow it. This led to a new exodus of children across the border to participate in armed struggle against the regime. However, despite the fact that many children left the country, there is no clear evidence that they returned to fight and engage the regime in direct military actions (TRC Special Report, 1998; Brett and McCallin, 1996).

- b. 1983-1990 - The protagonist role continued and it was intensified during this period - when the United Democratic Front (UDF) called to make the townships “ungovernable” (MDM, 1989; Seekings, 1993). It is important to raise that the emergence of the UDF in 1983, signalled the beginning of a new era of popular resistance, where the townships were the focus of the struggle.

In this process, to resist meant to involve all possible sectors of the communities, making it almost impossible for the local authorities to operate. This included the distortion of normal routines at schools.

This process meant that child participation in the struggle increased, and their protagonist role became more prominent. This was the case with schools, for example, where the process of boycotting classes continued, following the tradition established in 1976 (Seekings, 1993). Moreover, it meant the strongest retaliation from the state, which had to call two states of emergency to contain the resistant mode of the children and others in the townships (Seekings, *ibid*).

Indeed, the children, or the “youth” as the people under 18 years who were commanding the revolts throughout the country became known, led most of the historically heroic actions. But as much as they protested and challenged the regime, the repression was also felt. More children were detained in this period (in particular 1986), than ever before, as the state used all its might to control the dissidence (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1986).

- c. 1990-1994 - The era of political transition initiated on February 2, 1990 transformed the political role of children. Moreover, the return of exiles brought on board a sense of reorganisation of the struggle as far as the leadership managed to come to the country and lead the political transition. In this regard, the children lost their protagonist role.

However, the internal conflicts in South Africa, and in particular the emergence of political conflicts between the ANC and the IFP in particular in Johannesburg and KwaZulu/Natal, led to the emergence of the so-called Self Defence Units and the Self



***The Soweto  
uprising marked  
the beginning  
of the open  
resistance era to  
apartheid***

What is important to assess from these chronologically divided periods, is the need to recognise the impact that political violence and social uprising had on the formation of children, their culture and their identity. It is important to recognise that since Soweto in 1976 the children in most regions of the country became heavily involved in a “militarisation” process which distorted their normal growth (Marks, 1995; Schärf, 1997).

Dowdall, for example, describes the 20 odd years from Soweto 1976 to after the political transition of 1994:

... for many children who have grown up in the last 20 years there has been a protracted exposure to police violence and violence on the part of the security force, especially during the states of emergency. This has gone together with social upheavals over this period, as youth moved to the forefront of resistance and longstanding adult authority structures unravelled. Over this period large numbers of young people were not only victims of state violence but perpetrators of violence themselves in the name of resistance. Revolutionary and political violence has been a significant influence in the lives of huge numbers of children, and in many areas this has involved ongoing violence between groups with different affiliations. Connected, of course, to the violence of the police is the experience, direct or indirect, of the criminal justice system. Large numbers of children have been exposed directly to the system as prisoners or indirectly as friends or family members of prisoners. (Dowdall, 1994:77-78).

The context analysis from 1976 to 1994 and beyond has to be examined in the light of the above quotation; in particular, because the experience generated throughout the country all those years, created the foundations for defining the governing parameters of a future society.<sup>33</sup>

a. 1973-1983 - The Soweto uprising marked the beginning of the open resistance era to apartheid. It was accompanied by an important element which was the protagonist role that the children of the country acquired from then onwards.

In addition, the Ministry of Welfare embarked on a consultation process leading substantial reform in the way in which children are handled by the criminal justice system. This process has resulted in several proposals leading to the so-called “juvenile justice” reform (Pinnock, 1997).<sup>35</sup>

Finally, the government launched in 1997 the National Youth Commission, which has almost a constitutional ranking, and is to facilitate the development, welfare and general status of young people. Although it does not embody exclusively children (under 18 years), it embodies a general vision which is consistent with the legacy of the struggle - where children, youth and comrades were virtually the same category of people (Seekings, 1993).

## RECRUITMENT METHODS

The recruitment of children from the school environment was a phenomenon sparked by the Soweto uprising of 1976. This momentum, at least at the national level, created the conditions for the recruitment of child soldiers from the classrooms. The possibility of launching a revolt against apartheid using a sector of the population that was highly disaffected, was an opportunity on which the national liberation forces managed to capitalised.

The way of recruitment during the stages of confrontation and resistance against apartheid, can be described in the following way:

- By spontaneous adherence to a protest/challenge against the apartheid regime. This is the case of the Soweto uprising and its immediate aftermath.
- Alternatively, in the early 1980s, the banned political organisations realised the power that young people’s organisations could have in challenging the authority of the apartheid state. As a result, political organisations began a drive to involve children and young people, to use them in the uprising against the regime.<sup>36</sup>

The recruitment was geared at two levels: for the children to participate in the actions of social unrest that were mostly concentrated on making the townships “ungovernable”; and in recruiting these children to participate in the liberation armies in exile.<sup>37</sup>

- As from the late 1980s, the state response to the national resistance and uprising was to develop other forms of repression against the social forces that were challenging its authority. This included, among others, the development of vigilante forces and state-run initiatives by “private sectors”. In the particular case of vigilante organisations, the children were not only their targets, but also a source for their forced recruitment policies (Jeffrey, 1997a:61-77).<sup>38</sup>

Protection Units, which increased the violence and re-established the protagonistic role of children during the transition.<sup>34</sup>

The violence involving these two political factions went beyond control in the early 1990s. It consolidated an experience that emerged in 1976 with the Soweto uprising, and demonstrated that children's participation in the "wars" of the country was more important than their participation in normal children's activities.

The social impact of this process has to be seen in relation to further disruptions in the children's lives; lack of participation in normal age-related activities; further involvement of children in criminal or pseudo-criminal activities; and a major dislocation of family life, where a "point of no return" took place in the life of many children, who were not able to return to their homes and became urban nomads, or street children.

The following summarises the experience of the 1990s, and is told by a former Self-Defense Unit member.

More [disturbing] is the fact that they are being seen as the persons responsible for the crime wave. "This is not so" says a former unit member... "There are some members who do crime but then their behaviour stems from other factors and not merely because they are members of the SDUs. One of these is the fact that many former members... **find it difficult to return to school.**" (As quoted in Brett and McCallin, 1996:170; emphasis added).

d. 1994 to present - This period is marked by the first democratic governments attempts to develop a comprehensive policy for children.

For example, one of the first measures taken by President Nelson Mandela, was to institute free access to medical services for those under six years. Through decisions of the Constitutional Court and policy implemented by the Ministry of Justice, children were treated again as children, and were not processed by the criminal justice system as adults.

*Children's participation in the "wars" of the country was more important than their participation in normal children's activities*

base and to blame him for the backlash which coercion had evoked. (Jeffrey, 1997a:134). What the above suggests, in the light of the four categories of recruitment that took place during the 20 odd years after Soweto in 1976, is the fact that the mobilisation of children against the regime, led to a state organised resistance against those mobilised, which also involved the use of similar types of people to counteract the resistance. In this regard, resistance against apartheid and repression against those who resist end up being led by children/young people - either as victims or as victimisers.

## **THE IDENTITY OF THE STRUGGLE:**

The struggle created a particular identity for the children of South Africa who participated in the uprising and resistance from 1976. Young black activists became protagonists in a political struggle which forced them into premature “adulthood”. In fact, after Soweto 1976, as it has been suggested by many including the TRC Final Report (1998), lost their humanity and their capacity to be children.

Marks summarises the situation of South African children [black children involved in the resistance against apartheid] as follows:

It is not a new, nor a debatable point that the youth have been at the forefront of struggles since the late 1970s but especially since the mid-1980s. With the call for “people’s war” and the development of “structures of people’s power”, youth have created barricades, destroyed the homes of councillors and the councillors themselves, necklaced, run (with much community controversy) so called “people’s courts” and “manufactured” arms to fight the security forces. They have also suffered the consequences... (Marks, 1992:11).

The historical role that the children of South Africa adopted since Soweto in 1976, created an identity of resistance, activism and moreover of leadership. As Marks and others suggest (1992, 1995; Schärf, 1997) the identity that emerged justified their protagonist role. But essentially, it justified the levels of violence adopted and used against all “legitimate targets” (Marks, 1992).

The strength of the children/young people was so powerful that they succeeded in questioning the apparent unchallengeable authority of state in the late 1970s, and led the process for the “ungovernability” of the townships in the early 1980s. These politico-military achievements cannot be taken in a light way. They not only shaped the identity of children as one of legitimate fighters or warriors, but created the popular culture that justified the role of children in the struggle. To fight against apartheid was the right thing to do, no matter what personal consequences the child needed to endure.

What is important to state is that the identity developed by the children/young people throughout the many years of apartheid, and in particular after 1976, can be categorised as:

- In the early 1990s the political conflicts and tensions between two of the main African political organisations led to a formal recruitment of political cadres to join the Self Defence Units (SDUs) and Self Protection Units (SPUs). Different to a traditional national liberation army, these forces were defending the communities from the attack of vigilante organisations (Cronin, 1991; Marks, 1995). They were armed and mobilised to engage in a low intensity war against their immediate enemy - another black organisation operating in the community. In this regard, the emergence of vigilantism in the late 1980s, created the conditions for the open recruitment of young people either to the vigilante organisations or to the self defence organisations. In both circumstances children were recruited to participate in initiatives of military nature.<sup>39</sup>

The process of recruitment in a way comes to an end after 1994. Once the government of national unity was put in place, and the major opposition parties in the violence of “black against black” were represented in the new political dispensation, the level of violence, at least political violence, was reduced and with it the need to recruit further urban [child] soldiers.

Jeffrey, for example, analyses the role of children, turned into young people, involved in conflict in the KwaZulu-Natal province. In particular, examining the history of the political violence between the Inkatha Freedom Party and the African National Congress in the early 1980s, she states:

In the viewpoint of Inkatha, the schools boycott of 1980 marked the beginning of the active implementation by the ANC alliance of the strategy of ungovernability. Drawing on lessons from the Soweto revolt, the ANC alliance now planned to capitalise on the grievances of the youth, to draw them away from classrooms across the country and use them as the shock troops of the revolution it intended to bring about. Inkatha was fundamentally opposed both to the use of children for this purpose, and to the intimidation and coercion which accompanied the boycott call. It noted also, with concern, the attempts of the alliance to undermine and erode Chief Buthelezi’s support

*In the viewpoint of Inkatha, the schools boycott of 1980 marked the beginning of the active implementation by the ANC alliance of the strategy of ungovernability*

variety of serious problems: inexperienced leadership; the rising of *constotsi*<sup>43</sup> phenomenon; an influx of new and undisciplined youth as well as a generally confusing political terrain where on the ground nothing significant has changed, yet political violence (especially when carried out by the youth) is no longer condoned openly by the leadership of the movement which once encouraged the activities of ungovernability of the “young lions”. Nonetheless these organisations remain the organs in the township that through their perceived legitimacy are able to mobilise the youth and assert some form of moral authority. These organisations have very strong “codes of conduct” which relate to the behaviour of youth both inside and outside the organisations. These codes of conduct are generally adhered to by the majority of members of youth organisations, who are not a part of the *constotsi* phenomenon. Youth organisations need to acknowledge the problems which exist within their own organisations, particularly that of proper training of youth leadership. This will need the support of the “mother body” political organisations in the townships. (Marks, 1992:24-25).

The alternatives for reintegration and resocialisation of children, as developed since 1994, have not necessarily achieved the intention of creating a new identity. In fact, some commentators suggest that much work is still needed to transform the culture of violence that shaped the identity of these children since Soweto 1976 (Seekings, 1993:101).<sup>44</sup> As it has been noted by others (TRC Special Report, 1998), almost 30 years of struggle after Soweto have left more than one generation of children - and young adults - who participated in the struggle, with a “fighting” identity, but without formal tools for succeeding in a normal life.

For this sector of South African society, not much has changed. Indeed, the processes of marginalisation, if they are not addressed rapidly by the governments could lead to an eventual negative backlash - and return to the past.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL DAMAGE

It is difficult to assess the impact of the child soldiers on the process of national liberation. In particular, their involvement has to be assessed in relation to creating a tier of young people (children), whose normal and acceptable growing period has been distorted by politically motivated reasons. What if the past had been different?

Dowdall, for example, argues from a psychological and social point of view, that:

Children have been exposed to violence in many different ways in this country, with a number of problematic effects. Stress, trauma, anxiety and depression are obvious sequelae to many of the acute or chronic situations children face; but a further inevitable effect has been that many children or youths have been drawn into an acceptance of a “culture of violence”, a way of thinking which accepts violence as a natural part of daily living and a natural part of the solution to conflict and differences. (Dowdall, 1994:76).

- 1976-1983 - An identity of spontaneous leadership, challenging the state authority and opening the door for active players in the struggle against the regime.
- 1983-1989 - An identity of “domestic” freedom fighters - historical role and intervention that led the children, now classified as youth, to adopt a highly militant role in challenging the state authority in the communities, and which motivated for making the townships “ungovernable”.
- 1990-1994 - As “defenders of the community”. As the struggle and conflict evolved, and the regime had to diversify its repression, children/young people had to move to the terrain of defence of the communities; particularly because the targets of the state-led repression were no longer activists but ordinary unrelated and defenceless community people.<sup>40</sup>

In all the above stages, children emerged with a distorted identity. They constituted a force, perhaps an independent and dependent force from political organisations (African National Congress and the Pan African Congress), but with a great deal of autonomy.<sup>41</sup> The role of these children was to fight and challenge state authority in the communities. However, the immediate consequence was the emergence of generations of children that recognised no authority but themselves.

In addition, the identity developed throughout the years of the struggle, among other immediate consequences, fostered a ‘male struggling bonding’, lack of recognition of any authority, and also a generation/s of non formally educated children. In this particular aspect, the legacy as it has been noted by others (Seekings, 1993: conclusion), has been that of a so-called “lost generation”, which although highly politico-military active, is not necessarily trainable for the new era of political dispensation since 1994. In this sense, the identity created through almost 20 years of struggle, lost its meaning and social function in a post-apartheid scenario.<sup>42</sup>

Marks summarises the above discussion succinctly when she argues that:

It is clear that youth organisations in the 1990s faced a

***The identity developed throughout the years of the struggle, among other immediate consequences, fostered a ‘male struggling bonding’, lack of recognition of any authority, and also a generation/s of non formally educated children***

perception that the use of force and violence is the only means of resolving conflict is commonplace. This reflects and results in a desensitisation to violence and a loss of respect for human life, even among children. A significant number of children emerge from violent experiences with an inclination to being violent (...). (Emphasis added; Duncan and Rock, 1997b:96-97).<sup>47</sup>

Finally, it is the apparent “unfinished business” or lack of satisfied expectations which bothers many commentators about the children who gave the best of their lives for the transformation of the country. In the eyes of many who sacrificed in the past, the immediate rewards of the new dispensation have to be seen, beyond the possibility of participating in the political process every five years. It is at this level that the TRC Final Report provides important recommendations of how to handle the children’s legacy in the post-apartheid society, and the potential consequences if it is not treated accordingly.

Those who grew up under conditions of violence will carry traces of their experiences into adulthood. Many have suffered the loss of their loved ones. Many carry physical and psychological scars. The life opportunities of many have been compromised through disruptions to their education. Some have transplanted the skills learnt during the times of political violence into criminal violence, as they strive to endure ongoing poverty. However, perhaps the most disturbing and dangerous aspect of this legacy for the future of the nation is the fact that those who sought to transform the country, and in the process gave up so much, see so little change in their immediate circumstances. (TRC Final Report, 1998, Vol 4, 276).

## **ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE STATE**

The role of civil society and the state in their involvement with the children of the country has been defined basically as a situation before or after 1994. In particular before this date, the progressive side of civil society provided support and protection to the “young lions”. On the other hand, before the end of apartheid the state role was one of repressing these revolutionary children.

The history of the South African state, at least clearly defined during the 46 years of the apartheid rule, was one suppressing any dissident voice that challenged the logic of the regime: separated because we are different. From the beginning, the apartheid regime used the law to establish categories of exclusion and inclusion, and to foster a system in which the police was used most of the time as a repressive mechanism - the front line between the state and the rebellious masses (Brodgen and Shearing, 1993:52).

The TRC Final Report illustrates, in the context of violence against children and young people, the following:

**62** The state used various means to suppress dissent. Arrests and detentions removed



Apartheid managed to create a culture of brutalisation and repression over the children of the country. In fact, since Soweto 1976 the state security forces concentrated their energy on repressing children and young people who were seen as one of the main groups responsible for the lack of stability in the country. Repression and the logical resistance to it, and also the levels of militancy, transformed the psychology of these children and affected the normal process of socialisation. Children and young people became a clear target for the apartheid regime and their normal processes of social regulation were distorted.<sup>45</sup> In fact, the level of brutalisation and repression was so alarming that in mid-1980s the New York-based Committee for Human Rights defined the apartheid state as one conducting acts of “terrorism” and engaged in a real “war against children” (as quoted in Duncan and Rock, 1997a:61).<sup>46</sup>

***In mid-1980s the New York-based Committee for Human Rights defined the apartheid state as one conducting acts of “terrorism” and engaged in a real “war against children”***

Duncan and Rock summarise the situation and discuss the impact of the apartheid policy of repression, as well as the children political activism, in terms of the psychological and social impact that it has in their human formation:

In essence, apartheid gave rite to, and fed on, the brutalisation of black children and the communities in which they were located. To a certain extent, the brutalisation of black children can be seen as having been a precondition for the functioning and success of apartheid, because in order to succeed this system had to produce an oppressed group that was so dehumanised that it would accept white dominance, as well as its own domination without too much protest (...). (Duncan and Rock, 1997a:52).

The immediate consequence of the political and social violence in which most of the underprivileged South African children grew up, was that of the “normalisation” of the violence. The socialisation through violence has implications not only for those who actively participated in the struggle since Soweto 1976, but also for the constitution and consolidation of the nation in a post-apartheid society.

Duncan and Rock provide additional support for the above argument when they state that:

One specific outgrowth of the unprecedented levels of violence in this country is that violence has come to be expected and has, to a large degree, been *normalised*. The

particular legislation on children and young people activists in the country. In particular it mentions the over 80 000 people who were arrested in the 1985 to 1989 period, of which between 26% to 45% were children and young people under the age of 25 years (TRC Final Report, 1998: Vol 4, 261). This in itself provides a chilling account of the difficult years of apartheid, and the resistance to it.

The use of the Internal Security Act of 1982 to repress dissidents was then enhanced by three states of emergency (partial or national) that were called from the mid-1980s until the end of the decade. These states of emergency provided wider powers to the state to take over entire communities and to militarise them as required. The increased levels of resistance by community people in general, and by children in particular, created conditions for greater state intervention and brutalisation. The victims of state intervention during the state of emergency, were many and varied, but children were particularly hard hit.

The New York-based Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, reports the following about this period:

At least 201 children have been killed by the police in unrest incidents during 1985, according to the latest government statistics. All those children were black. A survey of 77 of these deaths conducted in November 1985 revealed that 44 of the children were shot dead, 17 were burned to death, three were run over by police vehicles, four were drowned while fleeing from police, two were beaten to death, one was stabbed and six died of “unknown causes”. Nineteen of the victims in this November survey were under 10 years old. (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1986:30).

Children were not ordinary casualties of the undeclared civil war in South Africa during the 1980s. They were systematically targeted by the state and made responsible for the political turmoil that the country was experiencing during this era. As the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights defined the situation: “Much of the state-instituted violence and repression against children has been part of a strategy to break the boycotts and crush student organisations and protest” (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1986:12).

The systematic intervention of the state against children, nonetheless, created the conditions for resistance and further rebellion in the case of the children, and also for a formal response from non-parties to the conflict. This was the case of many non-governmental organisations, academics and members of liberal professions who opted to provide alternative options to the state-generated violence, and also to the violence generated by the children’s rebellion.<sup>49</sup>

What is important about the role of South Africa’s civil society is that, at least, it contributed to:

- Developing a frame of tolerance in a particular period when the state response, versus the people’s response, was deeply immerse on violent solutions.
- Providing necessary support to the victims of the violence, and in particular to children.

opponents from the political arena. Courts were used to criminalise political activity. In the 1980s, in particular, student and youth organisations were banned, as were the possession and distribution of their publications. From 1976 to 1990, outdoor political gatherings were outlawed. From 1986, there was a blanket ban on indoor gatherings aimed at promoting work stoppages, stayaways or educational boycotts. (TRC Final Report, 1994: Vol 4, 254).

As the people's revolt developed, since Soweto 1976, the state increased its capacity to intervene and repress the dissidents. The state became more intrusive in civil society, and the level of repression more brutal - at least directly controlled by the state until the late 1980s, and driven by the will to physically eliminate the uprising (Brodgen and Shearing, 1993). Although political reforms were launched, like the tri-cameral constitution of 1983, the level of resistance increased and the level of state counteraction.

For example, as part of this process the state enacted the Internal Security Act of 1982, which was inspired by the need to contain and immediately remove from society all the people who were participating in the social mobilisation against the regime. This legislation gave clear power to the state to keep in unlimited detention those activists who were regarded as participating in any of the banned political organisations.<sup>48</sup>

Brodgen and Shearing have noted the following about the Internal Security Act of 1982:

Most significant from the point of view of the mass killings that have characterised South African policing, the draconian Internal Security Act 1982 (s4) allowed the use of firearms to disperse an unlawful gathering. What is critical about this authority is that it does not require prior warning nor is there a requirement to use minimum force. Most of the killings that took place during the 1980s' state of emergency were legally defensible in terms of these provisions. Furthermore, while these deaths have been regretted by members of the judiciary, they have on occasion been recognised as necessary (...). (Brodgen and Shearing, 1993:28).

***The victims of state intervention during the state of emergency, were many and varied, but children were particularly hard hit***

The TRC Final Report (1998) states the impact of this

against children, with more care and caution (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1986:11).

- It provided necessary financial assistance for the legal actions, solidarity support and infrastructure development that was needed in South Africa to foster a struggle against apartheid in which many children were involved, but also assisted the local initiatives that emerged out of the political violence and which required an active [progressive] civil society.
- It provided an important “donor culture” influence in many of the programmes developed in South Africa during those days, which needed to accommodate internationally accepted practices, at least in relation to children and young people matters.<sup>55</sup>

## **DEMOBILISATION, REINTEGRATION AND RESOCIALISATION MECHANISMS IN A POST-APARTHEID SOCIETY**

Since the transition to democracy was achieved on April 27, 1994, the government has created different institutions, including the National Commission for Youth Affairs, to address the demobilisation, reintegration and resocialisation of the children. This is an important task, when one realises that for more than two decades the youth of the country were at the forefront of the mobilisations to end the apartheid regime, and that in most of the cases education, discipline and the general welfare of the children were not necessarily important factors to take into consideration at least not by the state.

The struggle created many expectations in those who fought against apartheid - and in particular in those involved in the frontline of the internal struggle: children. Their expectations, as has been suggested already by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report (1998) have yet to be fulfilled. The importance of fulfilling their expectations, is based not only on moral grounds, but on the general political and social consideration that the state needs to afford its citizens, and in particular those who are more fragile.

The state response, as well as that of civil society, since 1994 has been to handle the problems that are seen as a legacy of apartheid and which seem to be a priority in order to provide children with a better opportunity in the new dispensation.<sup>56</sup> The areas which seem to be of priority for the state are:

- General welfare for the children.
- Transformation of the criminal justice system
- Special pension fund for those who participated in the conflicts of the past.
- Adherence to international conventions, which then have been adopted by the domestic legal system.<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps the most significant state initiatives since 1994 have been those taken by President

- Creating capacity where it was needed, entering and participating in many communities in difficult times, when state authority was contested and nonexistent.
- Promoting alternative solutions to the then climate of violence that permeated through the country, and fostering the idea for a political resolution of the conflict.
- Taking over the country during the transition from 1990 to 1994 and managing to exercise the role of an acceptable governing body, when the apartheid state could not provide an alternative.<sup>50</sup>
- Providing assistance in the reintegration and resocialisation of children who participated in the conflicts of the past. This has occurred notwithstanding many difficulties.<sup>51</sup>

The above is just a very preliminary list of successes of the sector of civil society which engaged in facilitating the transformation of South Africa.<sup>52</sup> Much more will have to be written, in particular of its contribution to the transformation of South Africa from an oppressive society into a democratic one. However, in the case of children at war, one has to highlight that civil society contributed a great deal in defining the necessary parameters during the difficult years of apartheid for restoring the humanity of children at war.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, it is important also to assess the role that the international civil society (and in a lesser role the states) had in formulating a contention/limitation frame for the state repressive mode against the children of the country. Organisations such as the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, for example, had a great deal to say in monitoring and researching the impact of violence on the children of the country (see for example Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 1986).<sup>54</sup>

In particular it is important to highlight the following about the role of international civil society:

- It moved the internal debate on the question of children at war beyond the national frontiers. The internationalisation of the problem provided for further inputs and international parameters to assess the national question of South Africa.
- It created an important pressure group on the South African government, forcing it to handle the domestic question, in particular violence

*Education, discipline and the general welfare of the children were not necessarily important factors to take into consideration at least not by the state*

The Act establishes in section 1:

1. Right to pension - (1) A person who made sacrifices or served the public interest in establishing a non-racial, democratic constitutional order and who is a citizen, or entitled to be a citizen, of the Republic of South Africa, has the right to a pension in terms of this act if that person -

- (a) was at least 35 years of age on the commencement date; and
- (b) was prevented from providing for a pension because, for a total or combined period of at least five years prior to February 2, 1990, one or more of the following circumstances applied:
  - (i) that person was engaged fulltime in the service of a political organisation.
  - (ii) That person was prevented from leaving a particular place or area within the Republic, or from being at a particular place or in a particular area within the Republic, as a result of an order issued in terms of a law mentioned in Schedule 1 of this Act.
  - (iii) That person was imprisoned or detained in terms of any law for any crime mentioned in Schedule 1 of this Act, or that person was imprisoned for any offence committed with a political objective.

The impact of the above legislation, despite its good intention, will need to be assessed in due course. It is not clear, yet, for example, due to lack of social research, how many children who participated in the struggle during the 1970s or 1980s, have received any benefit from this legislation.

In terms of the impact of the international Convention on the Rights of the Child, a great deal has to be analysed. In particular, it is important to assess, among other things, the social implications of the cutting age factor (18 years and under) and the effects for militant children who were actively involved in the struggle.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the above, I would like to propose the following recommendations. However, it is important to highlight that the impact of South Africa's experience affects not only the internal debate, but international understanding of the children at war phenomenon.

In particular the following must be noted as recommendations:

1. The state has to provide clear guidance to avoid the past being repeated, in particular in terms of the effects of the criminal justice system on children. The current process of reform and transformation of the criminal justice system must be speeded up so that the benefits of a new legal order reach children and young people sooner rather than later.
2. Special education should be provided to any one who lost his or her "history" for having been involved in the politics of the country. Age should not be a factor to take into consideration when analysing the need to provide basic

Nelson Mandela to provide a framework of protection for children in the country, aside from his own acts of generosity by giving R150 000 of his R750 000 annual salary to a children's fund operating under his name. This in itself is not only meritorious, but it has created a climate that suggest the limits of the personal commitment of the President to assist in the process of transformation of the social and economic conditions of the children of South Africa.

This personal action translated into public policy through the almost constitutionally created National Youth Commission established by the government in 1997, which is linked to the National Programme of Action for Children, a requirement after ratification of the UNCRC. However, based on the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, one would have to carefully assess the real impact that these government policies have on the transformation, reintegration and resocialisation of children in the new dispensation.

The criminal justice system is an area where rapid transformation has occurred in certain aspects, and where the vision for a new system that treats children and young people differently to the old regime, is being mooted. For example, some of the first Constitutional Court decisions ruled in South Africa dealt with general children's rights.<sup>58</sup>

Additional work is taking place at the level of providing a transformation to the criminal justice system's way of handling young people. In particular a proposal has been circulating, generated by a working group of civil society, promoting the idea of a reform of the criminal justice procedure, to introduce new legislation to handle juvenile justice (Pinnock, 1997; Juvenile Justice Drafting Consultancy, 1995).

A significant piece of legislation that has been adopted has been the Special Pension Fund of 1996. This legislation is to provide financial assistance, according to the state limited funds, for those who participated in the conflicts of the past. The criteria of selection, however, is important because it establishes age limitations that could have implications for those who participated in the popular uprising of the 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>59</sup>

***Work is taking place at the level of providing a transformation to the criminal justice system's way of handling young people***

to punish those responsible for the involvement of children in armed conflicts.

- c. engage in an international campaign to prohibit the further development of the arms industry geared to child soldiers, by way of manufacturing lighter weaponry.
10. A national policy dealing with children as victims of South Africa's wars, should be developed, focusing on the gender differentiated impact of the conflicts of the past.
11. Policy should be established prohibiting South African based military/mercenary operators from recruiting children to fight in the military conflicts of the African continent.
12. The South African government should seek the international criminalisation of the practice of recruiting children to participate in armed conflicts. Those who are active in recruiting children to participate in military conflicts, should be responsible before the International Criminal Court when it comes into effect.

## CONCLUSION

In South Africa's recent history, child soldiers of under 18 years old were heavily involved in the national liberation. However, a great many people in their early 20s and early 30s also were involved. Notwithstanding the social or legal definition of what is a child, it is important to recognise that thousands of them participated in the struggle for the transformation of the country.

Different to what is internationally perceived as the role of children at war (limited to 15 or 18 years, depending on their involvement), in South Africa evidence suggests that children did not necessarily participate directly in the traditional armed conflicts of the national liberation forces against the state. Instead, they participated in a rather unusual "war" fought in the streets of many communities throughout the country, in particular in the 1980s and early 1990s, with less military hardware and software than a traditional army or national liberation force, but with the same amount of risk, brutality and physical harm.

These children were soldiers as well as schoolchildren. They were also football players, who became torturers. They also danced *kwaito* and other township rhythms and dressed up in the most unconventional "Italian" style clothing. But they were also killers, demolition machines, and most important, victims of a repressive society.

These child soldiers, despite all the inhumanity, were essentially humans. Despite all the atrocities committed, they were outstanding courageous children determined to see and live in a different type of society. And for that, they gave away the best of their childhood, young adulthood and teenage years. The TRC Final Report, for example, captures the contradiction of these children's history.

However, despite the above, these children did not give away their dreams and expectations. In fact, as the TRC Final Report suggests, they are still waiting to see the benefits of the new society and believe that sooner or later, all the ideas and aspirations for which they sacrificed



schooling to all those who fought against the apartheid regime and for the transformation of the country into a democratic and egalitarian society.

3. Greater speed is needed in the process of complying with international obligations in relation to the rights of the child. The international parameters will provide now, in addition to the national legislation, the basic standards that need to be provided by the government.
4. Civil society, not only the so-called progressives must become heavily involved in assisting in the empowerment of those many children who participated in the struggles against apartheid in the mid-1970s and mid-1980s. A social responsibility tax deduction, for example, geared to providing upliftment programmes or initiatives for children and young people, should be adopted in the country.
5. A more comprehensive state policy, is needed to deal with the conflicts of the past and recognise that not only black activist children were traumatised due to the the type of civil war experienced in the country. White children were also victims of the struggle of the past, and those who were conscripted and participated in the South African Defence Force at under 18 years old, must have been seriously affected by what they experienced.
6. Although South Africa must comply *strictu sensu* with the international conventions, it should use them as minimum rather than maximum standards. In this regard, age limitation (18 year and under) should not preclude the government from providing additional incentive to those “young lions” in their late 20s or early 30s, who seriously participated in the transformation of South Africa.
7. The government should prohibit the recruitment of children under 18 years to enter into the national security forces, and in particular the army.<sup>61</sup>
8. The government should strengthen all legislation in relation to the possession and sale of arms.
- 9 South Africa should take a leading role in the international community to encourage other states, and in particular, African states to:
  - a. prohibit and punish the use of children in armed conflicts of any kind.
  - b. encourage other states of the international community

***Those who are active in recruiting children to participate in military conflicts, should be responsible before the International Criminal Court when it comes into effect***

1980s and the subsequent people's revolts (cr ref, Seekings, 1993:30).

- 4 It is important to highlight that South Africa's wars included direct military intervention by the state in the 1970s and 1980s in neighbouring states - such as the military intervention in Angola, and the proxy war in Mozambique. Internally, the wars involved state repression against organised and non-organised expressions of popular resistance. In either experience, children were victims and perpetrators of the conflicts.
- 5 It is impossible to describe what the unequal experience of apartheid symbolised for all in South Africa, but most specially for children. Black children were, in a way, entitled to no benefit or state protection. This led, not without contradictions and conflicts, to the eventual rebellion of the children against the system. In the case of white children, despite allegations of their role and involvement in the defence of the 'nation against the communist invasion', they received wide support and protection from the state - making the life inequality harsher for black children than for white children (Goldstone Report, 1994).

Thipanyane describes the impact that the apartheid regime and unequal policies had for white children and black children in the context of street children:

In 1990 there were an estimated 9 000 street children in South Africa, homelands included. There were no white street children in the same period, but there were about 10 000 white children in 160 state registered and subsidised children's homes. This can be contrasted with 12 private children's homes accommodating just 1 000 African children and 11 places of safety which accommodate 700 African children. With the declining economic conditions and escalating political upheavals, the number of homeless children in South Africa is likely to increase. However, there is very little being done for homeless children. (Thipanyane, 1995:123)

- 6 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa - Report (1998) describes the above situation:

Fear of the 'other' was implanted in [white] children under the guise of an imminent 'communist' plot, articulated through slogans such as 'total onslaught'. All this contributed to a situation in which many white males concluded that it was their obligation to serve in the armed services. (TRC - Report, 1998:Vol 4, 257).
- 7 Most of the literature revised for this monograph does not examine the role of white children in South Africa's internal war. In this regard, the monograph reproduces the existing logic of other researchers and concentrates mostly on the essential parties in conflict in the past (cr ref, Rock, 1997; Marks, 1992, 1995; Seekings, 1993). However, recent government initiated work (both before and after the 1994 transition) tends to provide space to constructing the history of the past involving the experience of white children as well (TRC - Report, 1998; Goldstone Report, 1994).
- 8 The modality of South Africa's use of child soldiers during the height of the internal conflicts (1976 to 1994) is different to that of many other African or international experiences. Age limitation for children to participate in the state army (white males) was 16 years during the apartheid era (Brett and McCallin, 1996:46). The post-apartheid era increased the age limitation to 17 years. However, the irregular armies, of the national liberation forces, used children below 18 years old, during the struggle against apartheid, and also during the 1990-1994 transitional era, when intra-black violence emerged (Brett and McCallin, 1996:47). In this regard, both "armies", the state and the non-state, used children to pursue their aims.

most of their life, will materialise, and that their involvement in the struggle will not have been wasted.

It rests on both the state and civil society to provide the necessary resources for the transformation of the lives of these children. South Africa's government, although taking concrete steps to assist in this process, has to increase the speed and provide clearer resources.

Bearing in mind that South Africa is still a young democracy, one has to have faith that we are still on the right path to satisfy the dreams of those children. Those who died in Soweto in 1976 must not have died for a lost cause.

***To the memory, dreams and unfinished aspirations of the 104 children killed during the Soweto uprising in 1976. The freedom and democracy that we experience today in South Africa is in great deal owed to them.***

## ENDNOTES

- 1 The use of the word child defines any person under 18 years old. Although international legal conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), allows for children under 18 years and over 15 years, to be conscripted, the general discussion in this monograph adopts the emerging dominant trend to prohibit the use of children under the age of 18 in any capacity in war conflicts or military activities. (Coalition, 1998).
- 2 Almost 99 percent of the 190 state-members to the United Nations, are signatories to the UNCRC (NGO Coalition, 1998); exceptions are the United States and Somalia (Coalition, 1998).
- 3 As I will contextualise below, South Africa's history of resistance against the oppressive apartheid regime can be categorised at various chronological stages. Perhaps it is possible to talk about before and after the Rivonia trial in the 1960s; and before and after the 1976 Soweto students' uprising against compulsory education in the Afrikaans language. What is important to state, as analysed later in the text, is that the 1976 students' revolt, led by "child soldiers" created the foundations for a new collective memory of resistance and triumphalism, which led the country into the

- 16 Seekings, for example, examines the problem of normative definitions by stating that:  
South Africa underwent considerable social change in the 1980s; childhood, youth and adulthood became blurred as the 'natural' progression from home to school, and then to work became anything but commonplace. In this context the category of youth came to be increasingly understood in terms of attitudes and behaviour, particularly related to the process of political change. This has given rise to stereotyped understanding of the youth, with each stereotype based in an interpretation of the broader processes of political change. (Seekings, 1993:2).
- 17 As I will discuss below in the text, although the international legal conventions operate, as well as now the South African Constitution of 1996, it is important to distinguish and to differentiate the context of South Africa's history. In particular, because during the heyday of the struggle 1976-1990, and during the transitional period (1990-1994), perceptions of what constituted a child did not necessarily match international understanding.
- 18 The above discussion is relevant when one is developing policy, as it has occurred in South Africa, in relation to children/young people. Those who were children yesterday, in particular during the 1970s, and are now young people (mid-30s) are, perhaps, to benefit from certain state initiatives such as the National Youth Commission, and also from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations (TRC Special Report, 1998).
- 19 Sitas for example describes this difficult normative categorisation as follows: The tyre, the petrol-bomb, the knife, the stone, the hacking: death. The words, "comrade" and "amaqabane" conjure them up... The word [comrade] frames images of unemployed black youth with no future, no home, busy destroying everything in their way: homes, shops, schools, infrastructures and traditions... [T]he media picture is of young men, hungry men, with hardened features and red eyes. (Sitas, 1991:6 - as cited in Seekings, 1993:3).
- 20 There have been many attempts by various scholars to define the generation of children [and young] people who participated in the struggle of the 1970s, but in particular who were highly involved in the 1980s. Among others, it is important to mention Schärf's definition of "militarised youth" - describing those young people who participated from civil society in the social uprisings against apartheid (Schärf, 1997).
- 21 The post-1995 period of redefinition of normative concepts, coincides with South Africa's adoption of the international Convention on the Right of the Child. This process re-creates the discourse, both legal and social, of how to classify those involved in the armed conflict of the 1980s.

For example, Duncan and Rock redefine the experience of the 1980s by stating:

In essence, apartheid gave rise to, and fed on, the brutalisation of black children and the communities in which they were located. To a certain extent, the brutalisation of black children can be seen as having been a pre-condition for the functioning and success of apartheid, because in order to succeed this system had to produce an oppressed group that was so dehumanised that it could accept white dominance, as well as its own domination, without too much protest. (Duncan and Rock, 1997:52).

For an additional reinterpretation of the introduction of the normative concept of "child" (and children) in the 1990s, see Goldstone Report (1994).

- 9 This state assumption is constituted within the states best interest approach for its citizens. There is no scientific or other evidence that can legitimately justify that 18 years is the right age to enter into conflict. Probably this is based more on a moral attitude to early age participation in armed conflicts, than on a justifiable delivery problem.
- 10 In certain ways, South Africa's history is similar to that of Northern Ireland, where children's involvement was beyond the traditional military structures. In both countries, children got involved as members of paramilitary organisations or national liberation forces, as victims; and as members of their own organisations and initiatives outside the political organisations (ie, as petty criminals, joyriders etc). For an interesting exploration of the Northern Ireland conflict, see Smyth (1998).
- 11 This debate is important on two levels: firstly to disentangle South Africa's experience from normative and legal definition of what constitute a child at war; secondly, to be able to create a multiple identity approach when analysing South Africa's "child soldiers," because in a way they were victims of an oppressive and repressive regime, but they were also agents of transformation and radicalism. More on this in the text.
- 12 In terms of the state army during the apartheid era, the South African Defence Force was the official institution. The national liberation forces were Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) for the African National Congress and the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) for the Pan African Congress.
- 13 In the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report (1998), for example, there is no mention or suggestion that the two national liberation armies (MK and APLA) did recruit young people under the age of 18 years (TRC Report, 1998: Vol Four, Chapter Nine). Even in the case of the political violence in KwaZulu Natal, the involvement of children was more as victims of the violence, or as proxy urban militants, who did not belong to any formal army or liberation army but who were seriously involved in the urban/township protests (cf ref, Jeffrey, 1997a).
- 14 I am playing here with Harold Wolpe's famous political analysis of South Africa as "colonialism of a special kind".
- 15 For the purpose of this monograph, although noticing the popular perceptions - at least in South Africa - the international legal convention definitions are used in the strict sense.

class, ethnic and geographic differences.

Many vigilante attacks were rooted in intergenerational conflicts. Some men saw the dramatic surge of women and youth to political prominence as a threat to the patriarchal hierarchies of age and gender. Young people were perceived to be undermining the supremacy of traditional leaders who saw it as their duty to restrain them. Vigilantes mobilised around slogans such as 'discipline the children', and frequently described themselves as 'fathers'. (TRC - Report, 1998: Vol 4, p 255.).

25 As an example, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (1998), argues that:

Although as discussed below, international human rights and humanitarian law currently set 15 as the minimum age for military recruitment and participation in armed conflict, national laws in the majority of the world's countries set that limit at 18. (Coalition, 1998:7).

26 It is important to note that there is a distinction between international human rights law, which applies only to the states, and international humanitarian law, which regulates the nature of armed conflicts. It has been understood that international humanitarian law applies to all parties, as a result of specific clarity in the conventions or as an adopted international legal practice (Brett and McCallin, 1996:188-189).

27 Kirmayo describes what it entails for a state to sign and domestically ratify the UNCRC: Ratification of the Convention means respecting and ensuring the rights set in it, for all children, without discrimination. It also involves the adoption of measures, be they legislative, administrative, programmatic or other as appropriate to the implementation of the rights.

The implementation of the Convention is a long-term process/goal and this is a responsibility for *all* sectors of society, requiring enormous effort from all.

Incorporation into the programming process includes situation analysis; objective/goals; strategies; planning/National Programme of Action; implementation; and monitoring and evaluation. (emphasis in original; Kirmayo, 1995:25).

28 It is important to add, following Brett and McCallin, that:

The only regional human rights treaty which addresses the age of recruitment is the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Article 2 of which defines a child as every human being below 18 years. Article 22 reaffirms the obligation to respect and ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law, and goes on "(2) States Parties to the present Charter shall take all necessary measures to ensure that no child shall take a direct part in hostilities and shall refrain in particular, from recruiting any child". Thus government may not recruit under 18s, and has an absolute duty to ensure that under-18s do not take a direct part in hostilities. Unfortunately, not enough states have yet become parties to this Charter to bring it into effect. (Brett and McCallin, 1996:1993; emphasis added).

29 The 1993 Interim Constitution stated:  
Section 30:

- (1) Every child shall have the right -
  - (a) to a name and nationality as from birth;
  - (b) to parental care;

- 22 The discussion of what constitutes an armed conflict is governed for international conflicts under the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. What is important is that it has been established that “‘hostilities’ means a battle or similar armed engagement in an armed conflict” (Brett and McCallin, 1996:188). However, it is important to highlight that social scientists have provided a looser definition, based on a definition of levels of violence and number of people killed in any particular conflict (Wallensteen and Axel, as quoted in Lederach, 1998:26). For the purpose of this monograph, although I adopt a more traditional definition according to international law, I also found it important to explore popular or non-legal definitions of armed conflicts. In a way, international legal conventions, as with any domestic legal legislation, are subject to natural limitations.
- 23 South Africa in this regard poses an interesting modification of the international experience of armed conflicts and the involvement of children. The conflicts of the past, in which many children participated, did not involve exclusively an open war against the state; or between the state and guerrilla movement. In fact, a great deal of conflict, in particular in the 1990s, involved armed conflict between two political movements, without the direct participation of the state (Brett and McCallin, 1996:chapter 5). Palestine and Northern Ireland have similar histories.
- 24 Jeffrey provides a good analysis of the role of the KwaZulu Natal “civil war” between the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party. From her account, it was clear that young people were at war with non-state parties, and that they were suffering the consequences of this engagement. Young people as well as children died innocently in this conflict (Jeffrey, 1997a:396).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in its final report, also opens the door for the exploration of the role of vigilante forces in the [state] war against young children/people. The intervention of these forces further increased the brutalisation of the conflict.

Vigilantes were recruited from the ranks of the homeland authorities, black local authorities, black police officers and those who wished to protect existing social hierarchies. The state colluded with vigilante organisations to destabilise resistance organisations. As migrant hostel dwellers were drawn into the conflict with youth, vigilante attacks came to reflect

Units were aligned with the African National Congress.

35 Although no formal policy has been established yet in relation to juvenile justice, a great deal of discussion has been generated nationwide, creating a momentum for a major reform - a reform which will remove children from the traditional criminal justice system when they commit offences.

36 Seekings, for example, describe this period as follows:

It was during the bitter conflict of the mid-1980s that the youth came to be seen as the driving force of township militancy. Their role in transforming the dream of liberation into an apparently imminent event led to their being celebrated as the 'young lions'; the association with the rising use of violent direct action led to their being denigrated as mal-socialised savages. In reality, the so-called youth in the mid-1980s included politically astute strategists as well as violent individualists, and many other young people besides. The category of youth was an amalgam of many different types of young people, with a wide range of goals and motivations. (Seekings, 1993:56).

37 If one takes the Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report (1998) as a guiding document containing strong evidence into what happened in the past, it could be argued that the modus operandi of the recruitment of children/young people was through students organisations mobilised to disrupt social and government order in the communities. However, it cannot be suggested with strong evidence that the recruitment of children/young people was geared towards mobilising this category of people into the national liberation armies, but that instead it is more a phenomenon inferred by the circumstances of the period.

38 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report analysed his phenomenon of recruitment of children/young people into vigilante organisations. In particular it stated:

Some young people were recruited into vigilante activities by, for example, being offered money to attack the homes of activists. Two youth from Thokoza admitted to having been recruited by the police for this purpose. Young people were also manipulated by state projects such as the Eagles, which was founded in the early 1980s, and came into conflict with organisations like the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO). Groups like the Eagles were involved in activities such as assisting the police to identify activists, launching arson attacks and disrupting political meetings. In 1991, the Eagles were exposed as an official state project. (TRC Final Report, 1998: Vol 4, 256).

39 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission final reports, states that:

Large numbers of youth, whether politically active or not, were affected by the violence, especially those who lived near hostels. In many cases, the responsibility for protecting their homes and streets fell on children. Some young people turned their attention to the defence of their communities, redirecting their energies into the formation of self-defence units that were, in their view, justified by vigilante attacks. (TRC Final Report: 1998, Vol 4, 255).

40 Marks summarises this process as:

The consequences of these realities is that youth who do see themselves as "defenders of the community" are forced to play the role of an alternative police service. This in itself is problematic since these youth are not formally trained as police personnel; in some instances, they themselves are the perpetrators of crime and part of gang formations. Their legitimacy, therefore, as defenders



- (c) to security, basic nutrition and basic health and social services;
  - (d) not to be subject to neglect or abuse; and
  - (e) not to be subject to exploitative labour practices nor to be required or permitted to perform work which is hazardous or harmful to his or her education, health or wellbeing.
- (2) Every child who is in detention shall, in addition to the rights which he or she has in terms of Section 25, have the right to be detained under conditions and to be treated in a manner that takes account of his or her age.
- (3) For the purpose of this section a child shall mean a person under the age of 18 years and in all matters concerning such child his or her best interest shall be paramount.
- 30 The impact of South Africa's adoption of the UNCRC and its role in modifying the domestic legal order, has been studied by others. In particular see Thipanyane (1995).
- 31 In conversation with attorney Vincent Saldanha from the Legal Resources Centre (Cape Town), on December 9, 1998, who is coordinating the projects of the office on children rights, it was clear that for the local legal fraternity involved in this area of work, South Africa's ratification of the convention is a positive asset. The ratification of this convention provides additional tools for enhancing the rights of South Africa's children.
- 32 In conversation on November 29, 1998 with Priscilla Jana, MP (member of the national assembly at national parliament), who is a member of the Judiciary Committee of Parliament, and who has been personally involved in the process of the government signing and ratifying the UNCRC, she stated that South Africa's past conflicts, internal revolts and the role of the children/young people, do not fit easily with international legal definitions. From her point of view, South Africa was a different experience, where "armed conflict" and children's participation in it, have to be constructed from the perspective of the internal revolts and the involvement of the children/youth in it.
- 33 In particular this can be seen in the debates about reintegration and resocialisation of children/young people at war in a post-apartheid South Africa. In the case of the reorganisation of the criminal justice system, for example, most of the proposals developed since 1994 argued for a more humane system that breaks away from the experience of the past (Pinnock, 1997; Juvenile Justice Drafting Consultancy, 1994).
- 34 The Self Protection Units were aligned with the Inkatha Freedom Party, whilst the Self Defence

children by hunting down 'troublesome' youth and developing an informer network. This latter had dire consequences for youth organisations. Stories are told about the transfer of detailed children to rehabilitation camps where it is thought that they became informers and participated in counter-mobilisation structures and other state security projects. In the words of Mr Mzimasi Majolo at the Eastern Cape hearing: "Our friends were made to spy on us... be it girlfriends or boyfriends, were forcibly turned to spy on us for the benefit of the monster". (TRC Final Report, 1998: Vol 4, 254).

On the other hand Duncan and Rock (1997a) provide clear statistical information of the amount of children/young people who were caught in the struggle by the security forces and as such, wrongly treated. The age category of those under police arrest, suggests the magnitude of the people's revolt but also extent into which the state was prepared to repress in order to crush the social uprising. They argue,

Extant research reveals that until 1989 children consistently constituted between 25% and 46,5% of all detainees held by these forces (...). Of these, 25% were aged 16 years and younger (...) and an alarming 6,13% were 14 years of age and younger (...), some as young as 7 years of age (...). (Duncan and Rock, 1997a:59).

46 The total number of children who suffered violence, were detained, killed, tortured, or maimed is open for contestation due to the lack of reliable sources. However, the TRC Final Report, can provide some insights to the situation.

- According to the report, just a few children under 12 were killed. However, as a result of political violence, deaths among 13 - 24 year-olds amounted to almost 1 500 children (TRC Final Report, 1998:Vol 4: 259).
- Very few children were tortured, but almost 2 000 13 - 24 year-olds were tortured. (TRC Final Report, 1998:Vol 4: 262).
- In terms of detention for the period of 1985 to 1989, children under the age of 18 years represented between 26% and 45% of those in detention. Of a total amount of 80 000 detentions, 48 000 were detained under the age of 25 years old (TRC Final Report, 1998:Vol 4: 261).

For further information on children under detention, tortured or killed, see Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (1997); Duncan and Rock (1997a, 1997b); Brodgen and Shearing, 1993:30, 33).

47 This process reminds me of the initial analogy used in this monograph. In the film/book the *Lord of the Flies*, what is important to capture is the process of desensitisation that the children experienced and how it became normal to participate in the violence. It is important to recognise that to move beyond this human condition to which many children have been exposed due to the war, will take many years, if not various generations. The problematic aspect lies in the fact that it might not be in the state interest now to take care of this generation which has been highly traumatised by South Africa's own type of civil war, and which now faces an emerging crisis of marginalisation, social oblivion and identity. Private conversation with Monique Marks, December 1, 1998. See also: Marks (1995) and Seekings (1993).

48 I am referring to the political organisations which under the 1950s and 1960s legislation were declared prohibited, such as the Communist Party, the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress, among others.

of the community, differs from one area to the next. Nonetheless, these youth derive a sense of identity and purpose through their engagement in “policing activities”, largely as a result of the fact that they have historically been marginalised from key social activities such as employment and education. (Marks, 1995:25).

- 41 Seekings summarises the argument quite clearly when he states: The ANC encouraged almost any form of militancy as contributing to the intensifying ‘people’s war’ against the state, in which the youth were the heroic combatants. Direct action and confrontation also provided spaces for a range of people to seek social affirmation, and even to enjoy themselves through collective action. The intensification of local struggles drew many people into conflict, including violent conflict who would otherwise have remained passive or peaceful. Young women, by contrast, were largely marginalised. (Seekings, 1993:97).
- 42 This is a delicate implication that emerges out of the political transition. As it has been noted by others (Marks, 1995; Rock, 1997) the new dispensation transformed the identity of the children who were highly involved in the years of the struggle, and is not necessarily providing a clear remedy to assist them in the process of reintegration. The discussion at the beginning of this monograph of the implication of adopting the UNCRC and limiting the age determinant factor to 18 years, is a fundamental element to understand the implications of the new state policies in the children/young people generation. For many in the age range of over 18 years to mid-30s, reality seems to be, to paraphrase Seekings, “lost”.
- 43 Contotsi is a South African word which defines a person who is a comrade and also a small criminal (totsi).
- 44 In personal conversation with Monique Marks on December 1, 1998, she notes the fact that the process of reintegration and resocialisation of children/young people has not been completely successful since 1994; in particular because the rate of unemployment is so high, the lack of expectations unfulfilled is also beyond the control of these activists, and the pace of government delivery has been too slow. In this regard, the so-called “lost generation” continues to be “lost”.
- 45 The following assists in the process of analysing the psychological and social implications of the apartheid regime on the youth.

The TRC Final Report states that:

The security establishment engaged in the informal repression of

monograph, it does not appear that the national liberation forces, in the case of the African National Congress or the Pan African Congress, used children or young people under 18 years old for joining and fighting through their respective liberation armies (ie Umkhonto we Sizwe or Azanian People's Liberation Army). However, in the local domain, at the urban township communities, the same political organisations were encouraging the children and the young people to destroy and destabilise the regime. In this regard, as discussed at the introduction of this monograph, these child soldiers were used as proxy agents of real war soldiers. As the reader can imagine, the moral responsibilities and considerations between one category of soldiers and the other are too thin. It is in this context that the role of civil society has to be understood: it provided criteria and parameters for a vision/future beyond the war mentality that permeated the state but also for the children/young people as well as for those who participated in the struggle.

- 54 The list of organisations in the international civil society is wide (including for example Amnesty International, the Quaker Peace and Service and many more). In addition, one has to argue as well for the role of progressive community/activist-based formations operating internationally, which focused, among other things on the impact that the war had on the children. For example, the Anti-Apartheid Committee in London and the Anti-Apartheid Solidarity Committee in the Netherlands. What is important to highlight is that the pressure against the government, and to a lesser extent the liberation forces, was mounted not only in the national territory but in the international domain.
- 55 This point is strongly based on a personal perspective on the work that I have conducted in South Africa for many years around non-governmental organisations and academic institutions. What is not clear to me yet, is how much influence the progressive international civil society had in the military camps or in the international offices of the national liberation forces. This is a theme that needs to be explored in the future.
- 56 The process that has taken place in South Africa, in relation to the demobilisation aspect of the struggle, has been assessed internationally. In particular, Brett and McCallin have argued that: In South Africa, although there has been no formal demobilisation of young people involved in the self-defence units/protection units, the normalisation of their daily lives should be addressed through a programme of re-education, retraining and vocational programmes. This process should be assisted by the process of disarmament which the government has implemented "by declaring an amnesty wherein all members of former units protecting communities could hand in weapons in their possession". (Brett and McCallin, 1996:149).
- 57 As discussed in the section of the international and domestic legal documents, complications exist for those who fought during the 1980s against the apartheid regime, and who are now in an age bracket which exclude them from any state benefit: they are no longer classified as children (18 years old and under).
- 58 In terms of South Africa's new constitutional order, the 1996 Constitution (Act 108) states in chapter 8, section 166, the composition of the judicial system, which includes the following tiers: Constitutional Court; Supreme Court of Appeal Division; the Magistrates' Courts; and any other court established by an act of parliament.

It is important to state that one of the first rulings of the Constitutional Court was to declare unconstitutional the corporal punishment of children at school, and the keeping of children in detention in prisons together with adults.

49 A critical review of the role of civil society in the transformation of South Africa is yet to be written. In particular the role of different organisations, for example the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA; currently renamed after the transition as the Institute for Democracy in South Africa), who facilitated multiple dialogues with the liberation forces and also with the state to achieve a negotiated settlement.

50 The experience of 1990 to 1994 was perhaps a unique experience for the country and for those enduring what seemed to be a very uncertain political transition at the time. Civil society, at least the one that I have defined as the “good” civil society (that composed of progressive non-governmental organisations), managed to articulate a practical response to the state’s lack of legitimacy, repressive mentality and inefficiency to rule over a political transition (cf ref Nina, 1995). From land development to constitutional legal advice, conflict resolution and human developments, among other areas, civil society in the form of non-governmental organisations and progressive academics, controlled the country.

In the case of “children at war”, for example, organisations such as the Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence in Cape Town, or the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg, provided the necessary knowhow and support for the healing of child victims of the violence in the country.

51 As argued before, the state since 1994 has been “rolling back” civil society and taking over areas controlled in the past by many non-governmental organisations. This is probably a natural process - the state has a role to fulfil. However, what has to be recognised is the fact that a great deal of expertise has been lost, or it could be lost, in the new dispensation and that there is no need to “reinvent the wheel”. For a general discussion around the state role in post-apartheid South Africa see: Nina (1995).

52 Excluded from this process is the role of corporate civil society, religious civil society, labour civil society and generally other private entities in civil society which assisted or obstructed the struggle for the transformation of South Africa. This discussion is beyond the scope of this monograph. For a general analysis, from a theoretical perspective see: Gramsci (1986); for the role of the many faces of South Africa in the years of apartheid, see the Truth And Reconciliation Final Report (1998, Vols 1 to 5).

53 This is an important argument in terms of what was going on in the country at the level of political society - in particular between the state and the national liberation forces. From the research conducted for this

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59 In terms of the 1990s, I am referring here to those involved in Self Defence Units and Self Protection Units.

60 The policy today in South Africa is in the process of changing the recruitment age to 18 years.

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**Miguel A Maússe**, a graduate of Eduardo Mondlane University, is an historian and current director of Studies and Evaluation of the Ministry for Co-ordination of Social Welfare in Maputo, Mozambique.

**Daniel Nina**, originally from Puerto Rico, holds a doctorate in Law and Social Theory from the University of Kent (UK). He is affiliated to the Community Peace programme of the School of Government at the University of the Western Cape and in Puerto Rico to the Hostos Law Faculty.

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