

CHILD SOLDIER • TEACHING GUIDE

Written by Jessica Dee Humphreys & Michel Chikwanine

Illustrated by Claudia Dávila

About the Book

Michel is like many other five-year-olds: he has a loving family and spends his days going to school and playing soccer. But in 1993, the Democratic Republic of Congo, where Michel and his family live, is a country in tumult. One afternoon, Michel and his friends are kidnapped by rebel militants and forced to become child soldiers. *Child Soldier* is the sometimes heartbreaking but ultimately inspiring true story of the triumph of the human spirit.

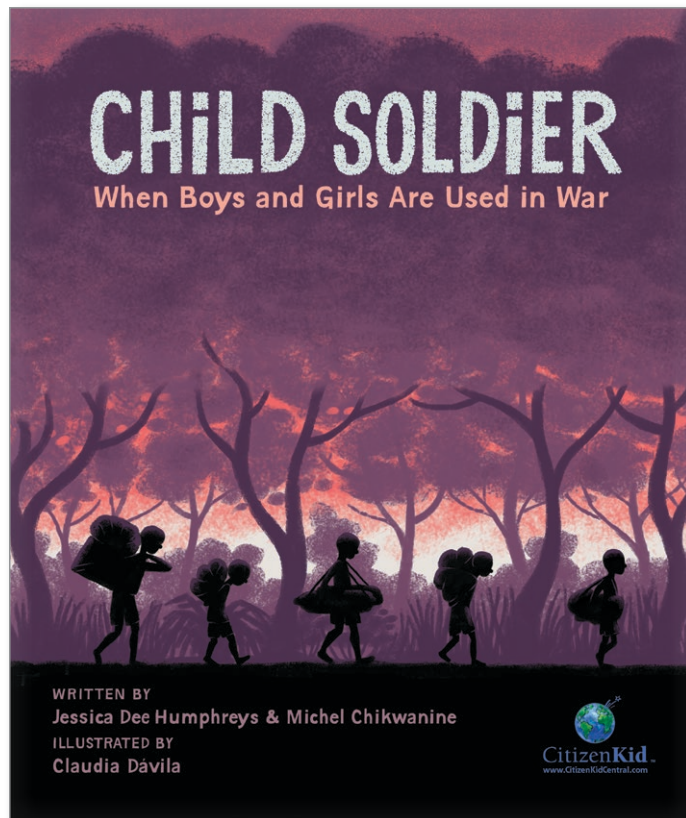
About the Authors

JESSICA DEE HUMPHREYS writes about international humanitarian, military and children's issues. This is her second book about child soldiers. She hopes that the leaders of tomorrow who read it will ensure there is no need for another.

MICHEL CHIKWANINE was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and now lives in Toronto, Ontario. A graduate of the University of Toronto's Africa Studies program and an accomplished public speaker, Michel travels the world inspiring people to believe in their ability to make a difference.

About the Illustrator

CLAUDIA DÁVILA writes and illustrates children's books, and is the author-illustrator of the eco-conscious graphic novels *Luz Sees the Light* and *Luz Makes a Splash*. She was born in Chile and now lives in Toronto, Ontario, with her daughter and husband.



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CHILD SOLDIER • TEACHING GUIDE

Overview

A child is any person under the age of 18, and all children have special rights under international law. Yet, every day, those rights are violated all around the world, never more cruelly than when children are used as soldiers. The activities in this guide provide information and insight about rights in general and about the issue of child soldiers in particular.

SECTION ONE: Rights and Rights Violations		
Activity 1: Child Rights	Critical Thinking	Students are introduced to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
Activity 2: A Safe Place	Creative Application	Students apply their understanding to create a safe place for children to recover from the effects of conflict.
SECTION TWO: Child Soldiers		
Activity 3: Cause and Consequence	Research and Critical Thinking	Students research countries and political realities.
Activity 4: Taking Action	Interrelationship	Students explore actions that can be taken to end the use of child soldiers.

Note: Each of these activities can be adapted for use in grades 5 through 10.

Examples of Curriculum Correlations (Canada)

Social Studies — Grade 6 — Canada's Interactions with the Global Community

- Explain the importance of international cooperation in addressing global issues.
- Investigate some global issues of political, social and economic importance, their impact on the global community and responses to the issues.
- Analyze responses of Canadian governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individual citizens to an economic, environmental, political and/or social issue of international significance.

Geography — Grade 8 — Global Inequalities: Economic Development and Quality of Life

- Analyze some interrelationships among factors that contribute to global inequalities, with a focus on inequalities in quality of life, and assess various responses to these inequalities.
- Use the geographic inquiry process to investigate issues related to global development and quality of life from a geographic perspective.
- Assess the effectiveness of various programs and policies aimed at improving the quality of life in various countries.

Examples of Common Core State Standards (United States)

Reading Standards for Literature — Grade 5 — Craft and Structure

- Recognize and describe how an author's background and culture affect his or her perspective.

Reading Standards for Literature — Grade 5 — Responding to Literature

- Develop personal, cultural, textual and thematic connections within and across genres as students respond to texts through written, digital and oral presentations, employing a variety of media and genres.

Reading Standards for Literature — Grade 6 — Craft and Structure

- Explain how an author's geographic location or culture affects his or her perspective.

Reading Standards for Literature — Grades 6, 7 and 8 — Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Use their experience and their knowledge of language and logic, as well as culture, to think analytically, address problems creatively and advocate persuasively.

CHILD SOLDIER • TEACHING GUIDE

Reading Standards for Literature — Grades 7, 11 and 12 — Responding to Literature

- Recognize, interpret and make connections in narratives, ethically and artistically, to other ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events and situations.

Reading Standards for Literature — Grades 8, 9 and 10 — Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Analyze works by authors or artists who represent diverse world cultures.

Reading Standards for Literature — Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12

- Develop factual, interpretive and evaluative questions for further exploration of the topic.

Activity 1: Child Rights

MATERIALS

- Paper
- Markers or pens
- Tape or sticky tack
- Scissors
- Printouts (see Appendix A)
- *Child Soldier*

OVERVIEW

In small group and large group discussions and activities, students will explore their current interpretation of rights, needs and wants.

Students will be introduced to the rights found within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and asked to reconsider their views.

Using the CRC as a guide, students will review Michel's story and how many of his rights were taken away from him by his experience as a child soldier.

GOALS

Through this activity, students will learn about rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the rights violations facing child soldiers.

ACTIVITY¹

1. Write the following words on three pieces of paper (one word on each paper) and tape them on a wall several feet apart from each other.

Rights

Needs

Wants

2. Cut out the words in Appendix A, #1.
3. Divide the class into three groups and provide each group with an equal number of cutout words (six each).
4. Direct each group to consider the words they have been given and to place each one under the heading they feel is most accurate (Rights, Needs or Wants).
5. Explain: At this stage, there may not be a right or wrong answer and there may be more than one correct answer.
6. Ask students to share their insights and the rationale behind the placement of their papers. Invite students from other groups to comment and indicate whether they agree or disagree.
7. Inform students that the wall will be revisited a little later on.
8. Share the following information with the students:

On November 20, 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child — also known as the CRC.

[Conventions are legal agreements made by governments to protect girls, boys, women, men and also our planet. They highlight the promises governments have made on an issue (for example, to protect children's and women's rights) and they are part of international law.]

¹ This activity has been adapted from: *Youth to Youth: A Program Guide* (Save the Children), and A. Kapell and D. Keating, *Monitoring Children's Rights*. Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children, 2003.

CHILD SOLDIER • TEACHING GUIDE

The CRC sets out the human rights that all children, every boy and girl, everywhere in the world, have.

The CRC is the most accepted human rights convention in history. It has been accepted by every country except for two (Somalia and the United States of America).

It has 54 articles (or sections) and addresses things like health care and education, as well as legal, civil and social services.

Conventions are very useful tools because when governments “ratified” (formally stated that they agree/approve) the CRC, they also made the promise to take action at the local/country level to ensure the promises found in the CRC are also a part of local laws and processes.²

Note: If your class needs more information about the United Nations, conventions and other related details, please see the appendix for a list of resources and child-friendly materials.

9. Provide each student with a copy of the child-friendly CRC (Appendix A, #2). Give students several minutes to review the information and read through the text.
10. Explore these questions with students:
 - What rights (as found in the CRC) did students already know about?
 - What rights (as found in the CRC) were new to the students?
 - Do they have any questions about the information found in the CRC?
 - In *Child Soldier*, how many of Michel’s rights were taken away from him by his experience as a child soldier?
11. Ask each group to revisit the wall and the original placement of their papers.
 - Do they want to make any changes?
 - Why do they want to make these changes?
 - Invite discussion about their new insights and perspectives.
12. For discussion: Some groups may find that there is still some disagreement regarding the placement of papers and the line between a need and a right. It may be helpful to consider that the applications or definitions of many rights may vary in different countries and cultures.

To settle debates, your class may choose to look for the cutout words within the CRC and focus on the exact language in order to define these words/concepts as rights or needs.

For example: *a safe place to live, play, education and food* are all words/rights that can be found within the CRC. *Books, love, sports equipment and eyeglasses* are not. It could be argued, however, that in some cultures, in order to fulfill the **right** to education, you **need** books; or to fulfill the **right** to health, you **need** medicine.

It is also important to note that the students are using a summarized, child-friendly version of the CRC and that the official version provides substantially more details and descriptions.



IN SUMMARY

This activity has helped us:

- Understand the differences between rights, needs and wants
- Learn about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Consider how the rights of child soldiers are violated and taken away
- Think about how rights may be applied in different cultures and countries

² The information about the CRC has been adapted from: A. Kapell, *What is? The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Save the Children; Plan International; War Child, 2010.

CHILD SOLDIER • TEACHING GUIDE

Activity 2: A Safe Place

MATERIALS

- Paper or flipchart
- Pens or pencils
- Art supplies (multicolored papers, glue/tape, markers, colored pencils, paint, scissors, etc.)
- Building blocks
- *Child Soldier*

GOALS

Students will consider the steps and actions needed to assist children used as child soldiers.

They will learn about some of the actions governments and organizations are taking.

Students will create a “safe place” for children who have lived through difficult experiences, identifying the supports and resources required to help them recover and heal.

ACTIVITY

1. Divide the students into small groups of 4 or 5 children per group.
2. Provide students with the following introductory information:
In *Child Soldier*, Michel shares how he struggled after his experience as a child soldier — “... nothing could erase what had happened. I didn’t know who I was anymore. I didn’t want to play with other children. I didn’t want to play at all.”
3. In their small groups, ask the students to brainstorm and discuss the things a child might need after a difficult experience, such as being a child soldier. Ask the students to consider both the physical and emotional needs and rights of a child.
4. Have students record their discussion on paper or a flipchart.
Optional: If you have introduced the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Activity 1), they might also use the child-friendly version of the CRC as they consider the needs and rights of the child.
5. After their initial brainstorm, ask your students to further consider:
 - Will girls have different needs than boys?
 - Will children with disabilities have unique needs?
 - Will younger children have different needs than older children?Ask them to record their ideas on the paper or flipchart.
6. Provide each group with art supplies (paper, markers, tape, etc.) and ask them to create a community, village or center that addresses all of the needs and rights they identified during their brainstorm. Students can choose to create a three-dimensional model of their village or they can draw the details on paper.
7. Ask each group to prepare a presentation of their community, village or center, explaining the different elements and services, as well as the reasons behind each one.
8. Invite every student to visit each community, village or center, and listen to each presentation.
Optional: Introduce some of the organizations that are helping child soldiers (see pages 45–47 of *Child Soldier*). Ask each group of children to research one or two organizations and the work they do “on the ground” and in communities to support child soldiers.

OVERVIEW

In small groups, students will brainstorm the needs and rights of children who have lived through difficult experiences (such as being used as child soldiers).

Using art supplies and creative expression, students will create a “safe place” for child soldiers.



CHILD SOLDIER • TEACHING GUIDE

Ask students to consider:

- Did we overlook anything in our community, village or center?
- What new information have we learned?
- Would we change anything in our community, village or center?

IN SUMMARY

This activity has helped us:

- Define the actions, supports and resources needed to help child soldiers recover and heal
- Consider the different needs of girls, children with disabilities and younger children
- Gain more knowledge about some of the actions we want government leaders and decision makers to take, in case we want to write to them
- Understand some of the challenges facing organizations and governments and what they need to create safe places for children

Activity 3: Cause and Consequence

MATERIALS

- Flipchart and markers
- Papers and pens
- Printouts or projector (see Appendix B)
- Access to computer or research sources
- *Child Soldier*

GOALS

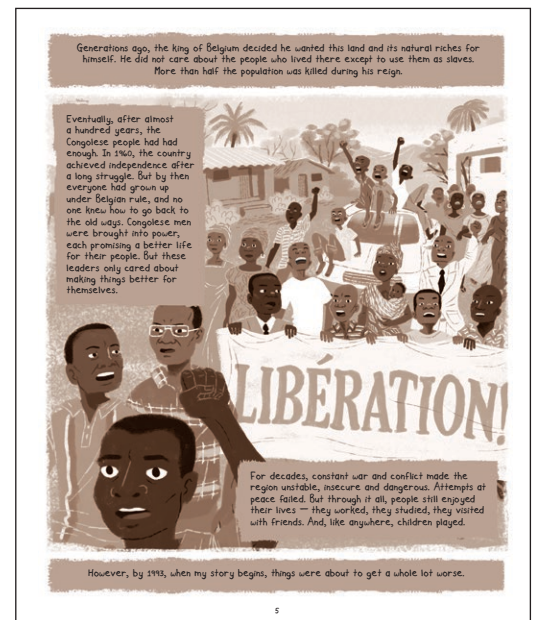
Throughout the story, we learn about some of the political and economic problems in the Democratic Republic of Congo and how they contributed to the use of child soldiers.

In this activity, students will research countries where child soldiers are used.

Students will also have the opportunity to develop their research, presentation and group work skills.

OVERVIEW

In this activity, students will research countries where children have recently been used in active combat and uncover some of the reasons/problems that led to the use of child soldiers in each country.



ACTIVITY

1. Provide students with the map from Appendix B (also helpful would be information from *Child Soldier*, pages 4, 5, 13, 14, 32 and 43.)
2. Divide the students into four groups. Ask each group to choose a country they would like to research (ideally, each group should choose a different country).
3. Give each group the directions below.

Step 1: Draw a large picture of the country they have chosen.

Step 2: Research and add the following details about the country within the drawing:

- Population (number of people in the country)
- Number of children (people under 18 years of age)
- Capital city

CHILD SOLDIER • TEACHING GUIDE

- Language(s) and religion(s)
- What countries are nearby or border their country
- Any other details the students find interesting

Note: While children should be encouraged to seek out a range of resources in their school library, a good source of country information can be found online at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries>

Step 3: Research some of the reasons why children might have been actively used in combat. Questions to explore:

- What are some of the reasons for the conflict?
- What actions (if any) is the government taking?
- Are there any recent news or updates about the situation in this country?

Answers to these questions can be written on smaller pieces of paper and attached on and around their map of the country.

Step 4: Prepare and share a presentation of their research and findings.

IN SUMMARY

This activity has helped us:

- Examine in which countries child soldiers are used and why
- Understand some of the political and economic realities in other countries
- Develop research and group work skills

Activity 4: Taking Action

MATERIALS

- Flipchart and markers
- Papers and pens
- *Child Soldier*

GOALS

Students will become familiar with different stakeholders (e.g., governments, the United Nations, charities, organizations, communities, children and youth) and the roles and responsibilities each group has to help end the use of child soldiers.

Students will explore the opportunities they and other children have to raise awareness, advocate and take action.

ACTIVITY

1. Brainstorm session: In one large group (or in smaller groups), ask students to share their ideas about:

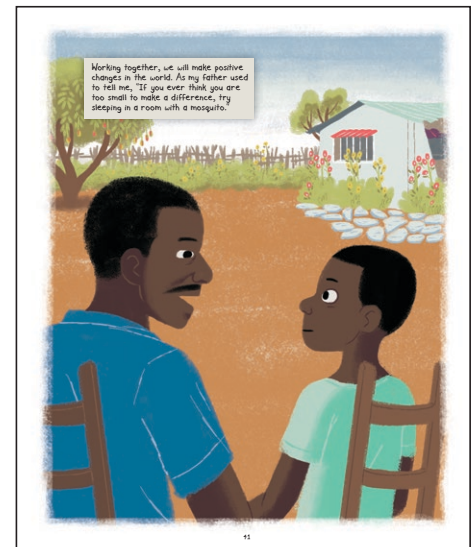
- What actions should GOVERNMENTS take to end the use of child soldiers?
- What should CHARITIES and non-governmental organizations do to help child soldiers?
- What actions should COMMUNITIES take to protect children?

Write each question on a flipchart and record the students' answers under each.

Optional: To help deepen discussion and put the issue in a more personal context, you may wish to answer why your own government doesn't just swoop in and put a stop to this terrible practice.

In some cases, they don't want to upset important trade partners or allies of trade partners. In other cases, they have a mandate to protect their own country, not others. However, they might agree to withhold aid money or military assistance to countries that use child soldiers.

Ask students, "What do you think our country should do?" and "What might the ramifications be?"



CHILD SOLDIER • TEACHING GUIDE

2. Review the “What Is Being Done to Help?” section on pages 45–46 of *Child Soldier* and compare the information with the ideas generated during the brainstorm session.

Explain: The ideas we have been exploring are the start of an “advocacy plan.” Often when people identify a problem that needs to be fixed, the first step is to “define the problem” (see Activities 1 and 3), and then the next steps involve finding solutions and deciding who is responsible for taking action.

We have just listed several actions that should be taken to help protect children and end the use of child soldiers, AND we have started to explore who (governments, organizations, communities) should play a role.

This information can be used to raise awareness, send letters to governments, create petitions and more!

3. Share the following:

In *Child Soldier*, Michel’s father says: “Remember, Michel, a great person is not described by their money or success ... but rather by their heart and what they do for others.”

Governments, organizations and adults are not the only ones who can help protect children. Children also have an important role to play!

4. Brainstorm: What actions can children and youth (here and in other countries) take to help child soldiers?

5. Share the following:

In the book, Michel says:

“So I share my story, as painful as it is for me to tell and as sad as it is for you to hear. In doing so, I have discovered that people do care! I am part of a movement of young people who want to help, who are passionate and who will take action so that what happened to me will not happen to the children of the future.

“Working together, we will make positive changes in the world. As my father used to tell me, ‘If you ever think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a room with a mosquito.’”

6. Ask the students if they would like to take action and help child soldiers. Ask them to share any ideas they have. Refer to the “What Can YOU Do?” section on pages 46–47 of *Child Soldier* for more ideas.
7. Develop and execute a plan with students.

IN SUMMARY

This activity has helped us:

- Identify the various stakeholders (e.g., governments, the United Nations, charities, organizations, communities, children and youth) and the roles and responsibilities each group has to help end the use of child soldiers
- Identify some of the actions others should take to end the use of child soldiers
- Identify the opportunities for children and youth to get involved and help child soldiers
- Develop a plan for taking action and making a positive change



For additional activities, videos and more, visit
CitizenKidCentral.com

APPENDIX A, #1: Rights vs. Needs vs. Wants Cutouts

Clean water	Education	Books
Fresh air	Sports equipment	Food
Safe place to live	Family	Television
Music	Cellular phones	Eyeglasses
Designer clothes	Love	Religion
Play	Medicine	Chocolate

APPENDIX A, #2: Child-Friendly Version of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

You can also access this poster at: http://www.unicef.ca/sites/default/files/imce_uploads/UTILITY%20NAV/TEACHERS/DOCS/GC/CRCPosterEN_FA.pdf

Article 1
Everyone under 18 has these rights.



Article 2
All children have these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.



Article 3
All adults should do what is best for you. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

Article 4
The government has a responsibility to make sure your rights are protected. They must help your family protect your rights and create an environment where you can grow and reach your potential.


Article 5
Your family has the responsibility to help you learn to exercise your rights, and to ensure that your rights are protected.



Article 6
You have the right to be alive.

Article 7
You have the right to a name, and this should be officially recognized by the government. You have the right to a nationality (to belong to a country).

Article 8
You have the right to an identity – an official record of who you are. No one should take this away from you.



Article 9
You have the right to live with your parent(s), unless it is bad for you. You have the right to live with a family who cares for you.

Article 10
If you live in a different country than your parent(s), you have the right to be together in the same place.

Article 11
You have the right to be protected from kidnapping.

Article 12
You have the right to give your opinion, and for adults to listen and take it seriously.



Article 13
You have the right to find out things and share what you think with others, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms or offends other people.

Article 14
You have the right to choose your own religion and beliefs. Your parents should help you decide what is right and wrong, and what is best for you.



Article 15
You have the right to choose your own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it isn't harmful to others.



Article 16
You have the right to privacy.

Article 17
You have the right to get information that is important to your well-being, from radio, newspaper, books, computers and other sources. Adults should make sure that the information you are getting is not harmful, and help you find and understand the information you need.

Article 18
You have the right to be raised by your parent(s) if possible.

Article 20
You have the right to special care and help if you cannot live with your parents.

Article 21
You have the right to care and protection if you are adopted or in foster care.



Article 22
You have the right to special protection and help if you are a refugee (if you have been forced to leave your home and live in another country), as well as all the rights in this Convention.

Article 23
You have the right to special education and care if you have a disability, as well as all the rights in this Convention, so that you can live a full life.



Article 24
You have the right to the best healthcare possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help you stay well.

Article 25
If you live in care or in other situations away from home, you have the right to have these living arrangements looked at regularly to see if they are the most appropriate.

Article 26
You have the right to help from the government if you are poor or in need.

Article 27
You have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have your basic needs met. You should not be disadvantaged so that you can't do many of the things other kids can do.

Article 28
You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can.



Article 29
Your education should help you use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.

Article 30
You have the right to practice your own culture, language and religion. Minority and indigenous groups need special protection of this right.

Article 31
You have the right to play and rest.

Article 33
You have the right to protection from harmful drugs and from the drug trade.

Article 34
You have the right to be free from sexual abuse.

Article 35
No one is allowed to kidnap or sell you.

Article 36
You have the right to protection from any kind of exploitation (being taken advantage of).

Article 37
No one is allowed to punish you in a cruel or harmful way.

Article 38
You have the right to protection and freedom from war. Children under 15 cannot be forced to go into the army or take part in war.

Article 32
You have the right to protection from work that harms you, and is bad for your health and education. If you work, you have the right to be safe and paid fairly.

Article 39
You have the right to help if you've been hurt, neglected or badly treated.

Article 40
You have the right to legal help and fair treatment in the justice system that respects your rights.



Article 41
If the laws of your country provide better protection of your rights than the articles in this Convention, those laws should apply.

Article 42
You have the right to know your rights! Adults should know about these rights and help you learn about them, too.



Article 43-54
These articles explain how governments and international organizations like UNICEF will work to ensure children are protected with their rights.

APPENDIX A, #3: Additional Resources on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

If your class needs information about the United Nations, conventions and treaties, or the General Assembly, please refer to the “What is...” resources for children and adolescents, available at the following links:

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/what-united-nations/>

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/what-convention-and-treaty/>

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/what-un-general-assembly/>

Visit Unicef’s “Right Site” for guidance on teaching about the Convention on the Rights of the Child:

<http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/433.htm>

Child-friendly summaries of the CRC:

http://www.unicef.ca/sites/default/files/imce_uploads/UTILITY%20NAV/TEACHERS/DOCS/GC/CRCPosterEN_FA.pdf

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/what-un-convention-rights-child/>

Official, full-length version of the CRC:

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf>

Child-friendly overview of the Security Council:

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/what-security-council/>

Child-friendly version of the UN Security Council Resolution 1612 (Children and Armed Conflict):

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/children-and-armed-conflict-child-friendly-version-un-security-council-resolution-1612/>

Child-friendly version of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Peace and Security, Women and Girls):

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/peace-and-security-women-and-girls-child-friendly-version-un-security-council-resolution/>

APPENDIX B: Resources on Countries Reportedly Using Child Soldiers

<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/countries/children-and-armed-conflict-interactive-world-map/>

An interactive world map of areas where children are affected by armed conflict can be found on the UN’s Children and Armed Conflict website, which highlights the following countries:

Afghanistan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Iraq, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Myanmar, Nigeria, Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and South Sudan, Thailand, Uganda and Yemen.

Another good source of country information related to the issue of child soldiers can be found online at

http://www.child-soldiers.org/country_reader.php