

demobilisation and reintegration in the Horn of Africa and Uganda, where massive demobilisation and reintegration took place in the late 1980s and mid 1990s with relative success. In the late 1990s, Eritrea and Ethiopia were back to square one. The two countries rebuilt their standing armies and demobilised soldiers were called to duty. The same applies to landlocked Uganda, where military expenditure is threatening the modest gains of the National Resistance Movement government of Yoweri Museveni.

I hope Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria shall not return to rebuilding big armies.

Post Conflict

In conflict and post conflict situations, governments and rebel forces need to be lobbied into accepting and implementing national, regional and international conventions such as the Geneva Protocols, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1992), the UN Convention on the Right of the Child (1989), the Maputo Resolution on Child Soldiers and the ECOWAS Foreign Ministers Declaration on Child Soldiers. This is imperative, if West Africa is to limit and eradicate child soldiering.

Impunity

Rebel leaders and their field commanders and government supported militia leaders, should and must be held accountable for recruiting and deploying child soldiers or combatants. History is a living institution; if this is done, then the future would become brighter.

Africa needs to break the circle of impunity taking leaders to power. Impunity, as a mechanism to power needs to be resisted. Donors should and must stop providing support to undemocratic leaders and their assets abroad should be confiscated and returned, to facilitate the education of children. If we are not prepared to facilitate the implementation of international laws against impunity then we have no business discussing child soldiers. Civil society's duty is to work to end impunity.

Democratic Space

Fourteen ECOWAS States have no child soldiers. This is a positive sign. So, let us have the political will to create and implement the conditions to prevent these States from following the examples of Sierra Leone and Liberia. Political order that is democratic and popular is needed. Let us create the space and civil society has a critical role to play.

Democratic elections are essential to prevent use of children as soldiers. It was the undemocratic 1984 elections in Liberia that finally led to the civil war of 1989. Helping West African States to have open, transparent elections and inclusive governments with a minimum