

Englische Zusammenfassung

Title: Psychological care / support of former child soldiers in West Africa

Worldwide have been more than half a million children under-18 abducted and recruited and are actively fighting as soldiers with government armed forces or armed opposition groups in more than 85 countries worldwide. While most child soldiers are aged between 15 and 18, many are recruited from the age of 10 and sometimes even younger. Others join armed groups out of desperation or join military forces to avenge family members who have been killed. In many countries, both girls and boys are used as soldiers; girls are not only at particular risk of rape, sexual harassment and abuse but also are stigmatized due to rape and sexual abuse. The children often compelled to follow orders under threat of death. They were drugged, beaten, and made to commit horrible acts. They force them to kill, rape and abuse their own families or members of their communities. Because of these acts, they are both victims and perpetrators. They suffer physical disability and are psychologically traumatized. Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) efforts have helped some former child soldiers return to civilian life with their families and communities.

The aim of this thesis is to find ways for a Reintegration of the former child soldiers back to their community and help them recover from their traumatisation during wartime.

The questions now are: Can the children rejoin peaceful the society? Can the community accept the child soldiers back to ihm without avenge? How will the children cope up with their physical and mental injuries occurred during wartime? The content of the investigation in the empirical study is to interview the former child soldiers and the professional helpers. The task of the interview with the children is to clarify their biographic and psychosocial situation of the former child soldiers, who were during wartime victims and also perpetrators too, before and during wartime and to describe their present life situation and their ideas of the future life; and the second interview will analyze the experiences and the work of the professional helpers (e.g. Psychologists, social workers) with the children in projects.

The case study will discuss the use of cultural healing system of the African society (like welfare rituals, cleaning ceremony, protection spirit) in the context of the psychological care of former child soldiers in West Africa. In view of the cultural diversity is meaningful to combine the traditional healing methods of the African society with the western trauma therapy methods in order to increase thereby the effectiveness of the psychological care of

former child soldiers. The results will help national and international Organizations in planning a sustainable rehabilitation of former child soldiers especially how their psychological care can be extended and/or modified and how to increase the effectiveness of their work consideration of the culture and the mentality of the West African society.