Internet resources on child soldiers & psychosocial issues

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The Internet is an enormously rich source of information, but its very richness is also its main weakness. How can you find what you need? How do know if what you find is from a reliable source and can be trusted? In the contribution below we will summarize some Internet resources on psychosocial aspects of child soldiers that have been proved to be reliable and valuable.

Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers
This is probably the best resource site for anyone interested in child soldiers. This site provides background on the problem, links, publications, country reports, international laws and declarations, as well as ways to help. There is a wealth of information including the *Child Soldiers Newsletter* that is published three times a year. On the website, several sections which give access to key documents can be found. There is also special section on psychosocial issues where important publications can be downloaded in PDF form. This section includes (some) articles from scientific journals that can normally only be accessed through university libraries. Some specific examples are:
– 'Psycho-social support for war affected children in northern Uganda: lessons learned' (Castelli *et al.*, 2005), is a practical article that describes lessons learned in providing psychosocial support to war-affected children, in two districts of northern Uganda.
– 'The psychosocial aspects of children exposed to war: practice and policy initiatives' (Barenbaum *et al.*, 2004), is a thorough overview of existing literature on how trauma impacts child mental health, and the evidence for intervention techniques.
http://www.child-soldiers.org/resources/psychosocial

Children and Armed Conflict Unit
This is a collaborative project of the non-governmental organization Children's Legal Centre, and the University of Essex (UK). This site provides country-specific information on conflict areas, both past and present, and on countries with related issues affecting children. It also contains relevant international and national agreements, and legislation, as well as a specific section on psychosocial issues.
http://www.essex.ac.uk/armedcon/themes/psychosocial/default.htm

Forced Migration Online
One comprehensive website that provides access to a diverse range of relevant information resources on forced migration is *Forced Migration Online*. This site includes key documents from the Psychosocial Working Group on psychosocial issues.
http://www.forcedmigration.org/psychosocial/inventory/

Children and armed conflict
This is a Canadian government website that provides background information, helpful resources, and documents about Canada's policies and projects that are related to

children and conflict. The 'Resources and documents on children affected by armed conflict' has a section on child soldiers that includes documents that can be downloaded. http://www.waraffectedchildren.gc.ca/menu-en.asp

Human Rights Watch
This is the website of a large non-governmental organization for human rights all over the world, with a separate section on children in armed conflict. They provide strong documentation on legal frameworks and government policies.
http://hrw.org/campaigns/crp/index.htm

Warchild
The website of the non-governmental organization War Child offers many useful links to documents and websites of other organizations, as well as full descriptions of their own activities.
http://www.warchild.org/links_resources/childsoldiers/childsoldiers.html

Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (United Nations)
The Special Representative coordinates efforts within the UN in regard to children and war. On the website official documents and speeches can be found.
http://www.un.org/special-rep/children-armed-conflict/English/index.html

Helping Children Outgrow War
This is a guidebook on support to children in post-conflict settings (132 pages) by Vachel Miller and Friedrich Affolter. It offers examples of successful interventions in post-conflict settings. The interventions are presented within a framework that emphasizes the ecology of children's wellbeing and learning. One of the chapters in this guidebook (pp 26-36) is dedicated to child soldiers, and uses case examples from Africa.
http://www.eldis.org/static/DOC15803.htm

Children — not soldiers
This is originally a comprehensive book, including guidelines (348 pages), published under the auspices of Save the Children UK. It provides practical information for those working with children directly involved in armed conflict and other key areas. The book draws on existing and emerging lessons of experience from different countries, and highlights issues of special concern and areas where further research is needed. *Children — not soldiers* can be downloaded in chapters on the website of Save the Children UK.
http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/scuk/jsp/resources/details.jsp?id=505&group=resources&section=publication&subsection=details&pagelang=en

Impact of armed conflict on children
In 1996, Graça Machel wrote a ground breaking report at the request of the Secretary General of the United Nations that is downloadable through the website of UNICEF. The website also contains a section on child soldiers.
http://www.unicef.org/graca/graright.htm

Psychosocial interventions for children of war: the value of a model of resiliency
This is an overview article by Apfel and Simon that focuses on psychosocial interventions that enhance the resiliency of children. It is written from a broad perspective with many literature references and can be downloaded from the Internet.
http://www.ippnw.org/MGS/V3Apfel.html

Child soldiers: understanding the context
Psychiatrist Daya Somasundaram has written a concise and overview article describing the background of the problems of child soldiers, with special references to Sri Lanka. The article is freely accessible from the website of the *British Medical Journal*.

http://bmj.bmjjournals.com/cgi/content/full/324/7348/1268?ck=nck

Lancet
An article in the prestigious medical journal the *Lancet* (2004; 363: 861−63) Derluyn *et al.*, reports on the alarming figures of post traumatic stress disorder in former Ugandan child soldiers. The results, obtained through brief questionnaires, have raised serious criti-cism focusing on methodological and ethical issues (*Lancet* 2004; *363*: 1646-7). In many low-income countries the *Lancet* is freely accessible.
www.thelancet.com