Small Arms: An Applied Approach to Children in Armed Conflict Prevention Initiatives in Africa

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Small Arms: *An Applied Approach to Children in Armed Conflict Prevention Initiatives in Africa*

Tristan L. Burger

MASTER OF ARTS
in
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

April 6, 2018
Small Arms: An Applied Approach to Children in Armed Conflict
Prevention Initiatives in Africa

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS
in
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

by Tristan L. Burger
April 6, 2018

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approved by all the members, this applied project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

APPROVED:

Adviser: Date:

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Academic Director: Date:

__________________________________________
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I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my adviser, Professor Dana Zartner, for her unyielding support during this process. Her guidance, motivation, and dedication to my success allowed me to take this project far beyond the scope of requirement. Thank you for believing in me, Dana. I would like to thank Kensey Lacy for donating her time and artistic energy in creating the beautiful and impactful AuCourant visual ad campaign. I also extend love and gratitude to my network of friends and family who helped me achieve this milestone: to my best friend Ella, my mother Donna, and my fiancé Ben—thank you for continuing to support my ambitious (and often wild) dreams. And last but certainly not least, I thank the MAIS faculty, Christie, Amanda, and Jenny in the office, and my fellow classmates for sharing your endless encouragement over late-night pints.

This project is dedicated to the brave survivors of childhood trauma.
ABSTRACT

For centuries, children have been used in times of war—serving as porters, cooks, spies, sex slaves, and soldiers. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is still pervasive today with an estimated 300,000 children involved in armed conflict as of 2015. This applied project examines a possible method for preventing the illegal practice of using children in combat by employing a new technology centered on community-based early warning theories. I seek to understand if implementing a text-based, mobile crowdsourcing platform in remote communities in Sub-Saharan Africa will be successful in predicting Lord’s Resistance Army raids, thereby reducing the number of children abducted and/or forcibly recruited. By harnessing the power of mobile phone technology in conflict prevention, communities and individuals become empowered to protect themselves against an attack rather than relying solely on external interventions. If this program is successful, it could be scaled and replicated to prevent other human rights abuses from occurring across the world.
**LIST OF ACCRONYMS**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ABA ROLI</td>
<td>American Bar Association – Rule of Law Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-LRA EWS</td>
<td>Counter-Lord's Resistance Army Early Warning System</td>
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<td>CAR</td>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
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<td>EWER</td>
<td>Early Warning Early Response</td>
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<tr>
<td>EWN</td>
<td>Early Warning Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>EWS</td>
<td>Early Warning System</td>
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<tr>
<td>HF</td>
<td>High-Frequency</td>
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<td>IC</td>
<td>Invisible Children</td>
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<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee for the Red Cross</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information Communication Technology</td>
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<td>ICT4D</td>
<td>Information Communication Technology for Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>iSMS</td>
<td>Interactive Short Message Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LRA</td>
<td>Lord's Resistance Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPAC</td>
<td>Option Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPCRC</td>
<td>Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child On The Involvement Of Children In Armed Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>Short Message Service; “text message”</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION & STUDY SETTING

“My squad is my family, my gun is my provider, and protector, and my rule is to kill or be killed.”

– Ishmael Beah, Former child soldier and author of “A Long Way Gone: Memories of a Boy Soldier”

“It may seem unimaginable to you that child soldiers exist and yet the reality for many rebel and gang leaders, and even state governments, is that there is no more complete end-to-end weapon system in the inventory of war machines than the child soldier. Man has created the ultimate cheap, expendable, yet sophisticated human weapon at the expense of humanity’s own future: its children.”

– Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire
Founder of Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative and former Force Commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda

In 2011, I was fortunate enough to spend a few weeks in a refugee camp in northwestern Uganda. Even with all of the amenities my gracious hosts had to offer me, life in the camp was difficult. While I was offered lodging in a shelter built out of concrete, most of the homes occupied by the camp’s some 38,000 residents were constructed out of mud and metal sheets collected from food drop containers. The villagers I lived with walked two hours a day to harvest rice from their plots of land. The process of harvesting the rice by hand is a grueling endeavor—one I can personally testify to. And there were many days that we went thirsty due to a lack of rainfall.

Most of the refugees in this particular settlement fled from neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo in 1997 to escape the violence that erupted during the
second civil war; and even though life in the camp was not easy, every person I spoke with was grateful for the chance at a life free from the bloodshed they experienced back home. The people with whom I stayed were eager to share their tales of horror and describe what they had witnessed as they ran for their lives across the border more than a decade earlier. Night after night, I lived vicariously through my new friends’ stories as they described in great detail the unspeakable violence they endured as children—an experience so impactful, it lingers with me today as though I had lived it myself.

As these narratives unfolded throughout the weeks, I noticed that most of the anecdotes I heard had one common and very disturbing theme: children being used as weapons of war. Although I had heard of the term ‘child soldier’ before, I had not realized the extent of the brutality involved in all aspects of children in armed conflict. I heard stories of brothers and sisters being forced to mutilate, maim, or even kill their own family members before being inducted into a guerilla armed group. I was told that abductions were commonplace during this time and many people claimed they were ‘lucky’ to have narrowly escaped the clutches of militia members as they raided village after village in search of children to capture.

The compassion I felt for my kind and generous hosts transformed into a deep desire to do anything I could do to prevent children from enduring the trauma of being involved in armed conflict in the future. The following applied project stands as the culminating result of years-long research and the tangible product of my promise to do what I could do to prevent the horrors that my friends in Uganda lived through from ever happening again. It is my hope that this project will inspire other child advocates to
search for innovative and ambitious approaches to protect future generations from enduring this inconceivable trauma.

1. a. **Scope of Issue - Children in Armed Conflict**

   The use of children in armed conflict is not a new phenomenon; children have been involved in military campaigns and armed militia groups for centuries, “as rats-catchers on warships, or as drummer boys on the battlefields of Europe.”\(^1\) Even the word ‘infantry,’ for foot-soldiers, can also mean a group of young people.\(^2\) However, since the 1970s, the use of children in conflict has grown tremendously with the proliferation of light weapons. These ‘small arms’ are “revolvers and self-loading pistols; rifles and carbines; submachine guns; assault rifles; and light machine guns” which make even very small children as efficient a combatant as their adult counterparts.\(^3\) Such lightweight assault rifles, most notably the AK-47, allow armed groups the ability to exploit children in ways that were previously impossible. These children are now able to wield weapons of their own, making them very effective war machines for guerilla groups and militias.

   The growing prevalence of these type of weapons, known as ‘small arms,’ in conflict areas around the world increased the number of children forcibly recruited to take part in direct hostilities. According to a 2006 statistic, children were present in 40 percent of the world’s “armed forces, rebel groups, and terrorist organizations” and

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2. Ibid.
fought in “almost 75 percent of the world’s conflicts.” As of 2015, an estimated 300,000 children were thought to have taken part in armed combat—but not necessarily as soldiers. Although though the proliferation of small arms enabled the use of children as soldiers, children were and continue to be exploited in combat in a myriad of other ways. In parts of East and Central Africa, for instance, an armed opposition group called the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) has made worldwide headlines for their systematic abduction of children from homes, schools, and communities where they are “tortured, threatened, and sexually abused.” These child victims are forced to commit unspeakable atrocities such as killing their own parents or maiming family members as a way to initiate them into the group. And the latest reports suggest that the LRA has “now turned to selling abducted children into slavery in exchange for arms.” Since not all children forcefully recruited will be made into soldiers or even hold a gun during their time in captivity, contrary to what may be commonly believed, it is important to understand how children in combat are legally defined in the global landscape.

7. Ibid.
1. b. Defining ‘Children in Armed Conflict’

There is a legal, international consensus that a ‘child’ is defined as “a person under the age of 18, unless national laws mandate an earlier age of majority.”\(^8\) Although this international law clearly describes the parameters of a ‘child,’ one major area of contention among scholars and lawmakers alike concerns the definition of what constitutes a ‘soldier.’ The term ‘child soldier’ can refer to many aspects of children’s involvement in armed conflict. These youths do not have to be explicitly engaged in armed hostility to be considered a ‘child soldier.’ They can work as porters, messengers, cooks, or sex slaves (aka ‘bush wives’) to other soldiers.\(^9\) For the purposes of my research, I will use the broader term of ‘children in armed conflict’ or CAC, which is consistent with the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Convention on the Rights of the Child 2007 Principles Relating To The Status Of National Institutions, otherwise known as the ‘Paris Principles’. The Paris Principle guidelines on children associated with armed forces or groups considers the term to be equivalent to the following description:


‘A child associated with an armed force or armed group’ refers to any person below 18 years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities.\(^\text{10}\)

These guidelines are very helpful in elucidating which persons are compulsorily entitled to protections under international law and those who are eligible for convictions, sentencing, and criminal charges for engaging in armed warfare against civilians or non-military combatants. But most importantly, this definition expands the concept of a ‘child soldier’ to include the numerous other roles children fall prey to during a conflict, which is extremely useful in understanding the nature of child exploitation in times of conflict. This definition has also been useful for lawmakers in the creation of legislation attempting to prohibit this practice.

Over the past 40 years, significant headway has been made in the codification of laws protecting children from conflict exploitation. Despite the advances made to criminalize the practice however, there have been difficulties in the enforcement of these laws at the domestic level for several reasons. Primarily, children are abducted by militia groups through pre-planned raids.\(^\text{11}\) It has been well-documented that children are taken from their homes or school by armed groups seeking to benefit from adolescent manipulability.\(^\text{12}\) These groups operate outside the law and are often difficult or near


\(^{12}\) Ibid.
impossible to stop by local law enforcement due to varying factors such as poor governance, a lack of infrastructure, and limited security resources.\textsuperscript{13} Amnesty International campaigner, Andrew Philip, remarks also that commanders of militia groups that use children “…know it's a war crime, but they seem to believe they'll never be brought to justice. There is a sense of rampant impunity.”\textsuperscript{14} Alongside a sense of impunity, the social dislocations of war involving the separation of families and economic hardships can also leave children vulnerable to abduction.

Not all children in combat, however, are physically abducted and forced to join. Often times children are coerced into joining state military groups or armed militias for a variety of reasons including financial compensation from governments—seeing it as the only way to survive in times of conflict—or as a means of obtaining honor as soldiers are often revered in local communities.\textsuperscript{15} Also, a significant lack of birth registration or age verification documents in certain areas of the world can make legal enlistment difficult or even impossible. The unique challenges that arise from child engagement in armed conflict are highlighted by author T. W. Bennett:

Whether children enlisted of their own free will or were forcibly conscripted, their involvement in armed conflict presents quite obvious dangers. Not only are young people ill-equipped to cope with the physical dangers they encounter, but their immaturity poses an additional threat to the safety of other combatants. Although less obvious, the long-term social consequences are possibly even more harmful.\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} Bennett, "Using Children In Armed Conflict,” 22.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 1-2.
\end{itemize}
The consequences of child involvement in hostilities present a growing global concern for all parties involved. Several scholarly works have focused on the societal consequences that CAC have on local communities as well as the radiating negative impacts of this practice to the economic status countries in which CAC are present. A University of Sussex study, for example, found that Ugandan ex-CAC had hindered long-term economic performance due to a loss in years in education and schooling. This had tremendous negative impacts on their employability and contributed to Uganda’s low employment rates. The obvious and not-so-obvious implications of involving children in armed conflict have gained the attention of people around the world who wish to see this practice abolished once and for all.

Despite the numerous legal mechanisms at the international, regional, and domestic levels directly prohibiting it, the practice of abusing children by making them take part in violent conflict is just as pervasive today as it was centuries ago. It is with this understanding that I seek to explore practical and effective methodologies of ending the exploitation of children in times of conflict and proffer a potential solution.

1. c. Research Question

My research explores past and current methods of ending the forcible recruitment of children into armed conflict in Africa. I chose to focus my research on initiatives in

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Africa because 40 percent of all children involved in armed combat live in African countries and the continent is known as the “epicenter” for children in conflict.\textsuperscript{19} (While the focus of my work is centered on Africa, it is my hope that the results will be transferrable to other areas as well.)

With this in mind, I seek to understand which prevention measures have been most successful in reducing the number of children recruited into armed conflict. Even though there has been notable success in rehabilitation programs for former children in armed conflict, these methods only seek to heal the wounds previously inflicted.\textsuperscript{20} I am more concerned with practical solutions that could lead to more systemic changes versus relying on current methods that focus primarily on rehabilitation and reintegration after children have been released from their captors. By preventing the child from ever enduring the atrocities committed during captivity, it would bypass the child’s suffering from ever occurring and thereby end the need for trauma healing programs.

With this in mind, I have created an applied project that takes into consideration the scholarly research on the phenomenon of CAC, burgeoning theories that technology is an amplifier of conflict prevention, and real-world case studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of these technological approaches. This research builds on recently developed technological applications for conflict prevention and I believe it has the potential to bring about positive outcomes if it were to be deployed. The following

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Vera Achvarina and Simon Reich, "No Place To Hide: Refugees, Displaced Persons, And Child Soldier Recruits", in \textit{Child Soldiers In The Age Of Fractured States}, 1st ed. (repr., Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 56.
\end{itemize}
section outlines the proposed application and summarizes the guiding principles that should allow it to achieve the goal of eradicating the use of children in armed conflict.

1. d. Project Overview

The organization Invisible Children created an Early Warning System that utilizes satellite phones and radios to communicate and track the whereabouts of the armed militia group, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). The LRA is a violent armed group that is often responsible for mass killings, torture, and is well-known for mass abductions of children to serve in their infantry.\(^{21}\) This warning system was developed in 2011 and has been successful in disseminating life-saving information about when village raids may occur. This project has been hailed as “by far the most accurate, up-to-date, and comprehensive source of information on LRA atrocities, which the partners hope will improve efforts to protect vulnerable communities in the region.”\(^{22}\) According to Invisible Children’s 2016 Midyear Security Brief, the team’s regular crisis reports have generated years of solid historical and real-time data, which has been helpful in predicting LRA raids and protecting communities.\(^{23}\) The brief, however, also underscored an urgent need to “strengthen and expand the Early Warning Network include remote communities that are not currently able to access or share information on LRA activity but who remain affected by LRA violence” in order to successfully end


\(^{23}\) Ibid.
LRA violence.\textsuperscript{24} For that reason, I have chosen to focus on increasing the efficiency of this program through the use of SMS text messaging.

In the past few years there have been remarkable strides made toward combatting violence, corruption, and threats of natural disasters in developing countries via the collection of data through text messaging.\textsuperscript{25} In 2014, the United Nations Development Programme partnered with Australian telecom MobiMedia to develop a SMS-based reporting system that allows citizens in Papua New Guinea to anonymously monitor corruption in their Department of Finance. This system, dubbed Phones Against Corruption, utilizes the power of crowdsourcing in rural areas to expose and combat political corruption.\textsuperscript{26} The interactive SMS system is free of charge for users, anonymous, simple to use on any basic mobile phone device, and does not require the internet. This innovative approach has helped the Papua New Guinean government reduce the corruption that was once rampant.

It is based on this technological method that I have created a mobile phone crowdsourcing platform with the purpose of preventing forced recruitment and abduction of children captured in LRA raids. It is called the AuCourant Early Warning Network. I chose this name for two reasons. First, the term ‘au courant’ is a French expression meaning ‘well informed.’ It is important that the name is in French since it will be

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
operating in countries where French is one of the national languages. Second, the name also connotes a current or flow of information, which will hopefully indicate to the user that they are contributing to a network of communities.

This interactive SMS platform will allow users in remote areas affected by the LRA (such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic) to subscribe to AuCourant and submit anonymous information concerning the whereabouts of LRA militiamen. These users will be able to select their language, identify where the sighting occurred, and provide any other pertinent information that would help organizations such as Invisible Children to prevent potential attacks. Once deployed, this service will be able to send emergency notifications to all subscribed users when raids might occur in their area.

The reason Invisible Children did not initially integrate mobile phone technology into their early warning system is due to the fact that when it was established in 2011, there were only 18 million cell lines in the country of DRC.\(^{27}\) Essentially, there were not enough cell users in the country for this kind of integration to be effective and the infrastructure did not exist to support this kind of crowdsourced data. In 2014, however, mobile phone company Vodacom installed over 150 ultra-low cost cell towers through the DRC and over 40 in LRA-affected provinces.\(^ {28}\) In 3 years, they more than doubled


the number of cell lines to 37.75 million and that number is expected to rise exponentially in the next five years.  

There are now enough mobile phone users to be able to provide consistent information to Invisible Children and, potentially, to other humanitarian organizations seeking to prevent child abductions. The platform is designed so that it is replicable, scalable, and translatable to other fields. It is my hope that this platform will be integrated with the Invisible Children early warning system to increase the efficiency and scope of the network so that more lives will be saved and more children will be spared from the horrors of forced recruitment. The subsequent chapters will outline the theories upon which this project has been built, how it will be implemented in the field, how it seeks to end the continued use of children in conflict.

2. SYNOPSIS OF THE FIELD

The research on the topic of children in armed conflict is extensive and spans many disciplines. For decades, scholars have attempted to understand the phenomenon of CAC through peer-reviewed publications such as journal articles and books. The proliferation of this literature is made possible with the accessibility of statistics published by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations, and reports distributed by state governments. Additionally, the news media has chronicled this practice in-depth and is an excellent source of information in the field where NGOs might be unable to reach.

The main areas of research I will be focusing on for my applied project are international law and human rights, child recruitment and conscription in Africa, and

CAC prevention and intervention, and information communication technology for conflict preparedness and prevention. Within these fields, much research has been conducted on the reasons behind the use of children in armed conflict despite the legal mechanisms in place to protect them, the impetus for children to voluntarily join in violent hostilities, and recommendations for the rehabilitation and reintegration of former CACs and the prevention of this practice in whole.³⁰

The first step in approaching this research is understanding what it means to be a child involved in armed conflict, how they are classified and identified, and what roles these children often play in their forced or voluntary obligations. I will examine the role of international humanitarian law in defining and codifying laws concerning children since the human rights movement of the 1970s. I will then outline the research on CAC voluntary enlistment, the methods being recommended to remedy the inadequacies of laws concerning them, and the initiatives currently being studied in intervention and prevention methods.

2. a. International Law on the Rights of the Child

Significant headway has been made in the codification of laws protecting children from exploitation since the 1924 League of Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child, which sparked the dialogue on the issue of the rights of children. Below is a snapshot of the some of the most monumental laws, conventions, and treaties that

followed after that landmark Declaration. This timeline illustrates how instrumental the Declaration was in terms of bringing about more attention to the rights of the child:

- 1924 – League of Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child,
- 1948 – United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- 1949 – Geneva Conventions,
- 1950 – European Convention on Human Rights,
- 1951 – Convention and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees,
- 1966 – United Nations Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights,
- 1969 – American Convention on Human Rights,
- 1977 – Additional Protocols to the 1949 Geneva Conventions,
- 1981 – African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights,
- 1984 – Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,

The next most important contribution to children’s rights was the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Adopted in 1990, the CRC is a foundational treaty that outlines provisions defending all children’s right to life, survival, and development. This Convention, which was ratified by all self-governing states apart from the United States, defines a child as “a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger.”31 The member states who ratified this Convention have an obligation to incorporate these guiding principles into their national legal structures and uphold the standards enumerated in the treaty by all

feasible measures. This landmark Convention paved the way for additional international treaties addressing more specific issues of child human rights abuses, such as CAC.

Although the 2007 Paris Principles created a definition for children in armed conflict, the preceding Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (OPAC), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000, specifically outlawed child involvement in armed conflict. With 130 signatories and 10 ratifications, this Convention proved to be instrumental in the protection of children from state military recruitment. This treaty reaffirms children’s rights to special protections and condemns the “targeting of children in situations of armed conflict.” The treaty recognizes the uniquely harmful effects and long-term consequences of the recruitment and forceful conscription of CAC. The Convention emphasizes the vulnerable nature of children and the responsibility the global community has in safeguarding them from exploitation, particularly in times of conflict. Article 1 of the Optional Protocol obliges state parties to “take all feasible measures to ensure that members of their armed forces who have not attained the age of 18 years do not take a direct part in hostilities.” Other Articles go on to prohibit the compulsory recruitment of persons under the age of 18, ban the use of children by non-

32. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
state actors and guerrilla forces, and compels ratifying governments to do everything in
their power to uphold these provisions.

The scope of these Conventions, however, is limited. The Conventions only have
‘legal teeth’ in the states that have signed or ratified them. Also, the protections laid out
in the Optional Protocol, for example, do not require a complete ban on the use of
children since the wording “take all feasible measures” is not a total prohibition.36
Additionally, the Protocol received other criticism from the International Committee of
the Red Cross for the phrase “take part in direct hostilities,” which opens up the
possibility that children could be involved indirectly in conflict as spies, porters, or
helpers in other ways.37 These and other loopholes—coupled with exiguous
ratifications—have allowed for the use of children in conflict, either by governmental
armed forces or opposition militias, around the world. The shortcomings of these legal
protections that are meant to prevent children from engaging in armed conflict are widely
discussed in academic and governmental institutions alike with the goal of addressing the
loopholes that facilitate abuse.38

36. "Treaties, States Parties, And Commentaries: Protocol Additional To The
Geneva Conventions Of 12 August 1949, And Relating To The Protection Of Victims Of
International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977", Ihl-Databases.icrc.Org,
37. Ibid. (emphasis added).
38. Ilene Cohn and Guy Goodwin-Gill, Child Soldiers: The Role Of Children In
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University of California Press, 2009); Michael Wessells, "Child Soldiers, Peace
Education, And Postconflict Reconstruction For Peace", Theory Into Practice44, no. 4
As of 2017, there are an estimated 230 million children currently living in areas affected by armed conflict, which puts them at great risk for being recruited or conscripted into these conflicts.\textsuperscript{39} And the Council on Foreign Relations estimated that 300,000 children around the world are used as combatants today while nearly half a million additional children serve in armies not currently at war.\textsuperscript{40} However, the debate continues to rage on concerning how states are meant to implement domestic laws that adhere to international standards considering the government’s discretion in interpretation.\textsuperscript{41} This discretion allows the state to interpret and internalize international law provisions in a variety of cultural contexts, within a myriad of different legal traditions, and through the lens of various societal and historical conditions.\textsuperscript{42} How, and if, the state chooses to implement the provisions at the domestic level speaks to not only the legal systems but also the religious and cultural norms which shape perceptions of that society.


\textsuperscript{40} “Child Soldiers Around The World”.


This shifts the conversation from the topic of international law to one of understanding the factors, be they cultural or otherwise, which influence a child’s decision to enlist, an adult’s desire to exploit children, and the government’s role in either prosecutions or impunity of perpetrators. Since the promulgation of the international treaties and the widespread recognition of the human rights movement during the 1970s, scholars have attempted to explain and understand the factors allowing for the perpetuation of this practice. Now that the legal foundations and theoretical explanations concerning CAC have been elucidated, I will turn my examination to the causes perpetuating the continuation of this occurrence.

2. b. Factors Perpetuating the Use of Children in Armed Conflict

Scholars have sought to understand the reasons behind the perpetuation of the recruitment of CAC and why children might want to join of their own volition. These ‘push and pull factors’ are responsible for influencing the decision of either adults to use children or of children to want to enlist themselves. As previously mentioned, the occurrence of children who voluntarily choose to take part in hostilities has remarkably been widely documented. This might seem unthinkable when one considers the danger and trauma associated combat. The children who are voluntarily opt in to leave their

homes and join are often drawn to engage due to the power, excitement, and glamour associated with armed guerilla groups and the military.\textsuperscript{45}

Additionally, children are often times compensated by state militaries for their voluntarily enlistment. Particularly in impoverished countries where opportunities for employment may be scarce, children may look to voluntary enlistment as a money-generating (and potentially life-saving) opportunity. Author Peter Singer, explores the “socio-economic changes, technological developments, and the changing contexts of war” that present the channels for children to become engaged in armed conflict.\textsuperscript{46} In these ‘changing contexts of war,’ there is more economic instability and families must strive harder to make ends meet.\textsuperscript{47} It is in these situations that adults will either encourage their children to enlist for money or even hand them over to the state military. It has even been documented that rebel groups will recruit by flaunting the amount of money they are able to make once they join—thereby attracting adolescents who are eager to earn money and who may be lacking the necessary education or skills to obtain lawful employment.\textsuperscript{48}

Authors Vera Achvarina, Scott Gates, and Simon Reich also discuss the linkages between war and criminality in the context of civil wars and what can be done to remedy the lack of systematic analysis of this human security issue.\textsuperscript{49} They argue that the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{45} Karen Emmons, \textit{Adult Wars, Child Soldiers: Voices Of Children Involved In Armed Conflict In The East Asia And Pacific Region.}, 1st ed. (repr., Bangkok, Thailand: UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, 2002).
\item \textsuperscript{46} Singer, \textit{Children At War}.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Francesca Capone, \textit{Child Soldiers: The Expanding Practice Of Minors Recruited To Become Foreign Fighters}, 1st ed. (repr., The Hague, The Netherlands: Asser Press, 2016); “The Use Of Children As Soldiers In Africa”.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Achvarina and Reich, “No Place To Hide”, 56.
\end{itemize}
problem of CAC is unlikely to resolve itself without the prescription of policy measures to mitigate civil conflicts and address the special needs of child in war zones.\textsuperscript{50} These studies reveal that the mechanisms for child recruitment are often linked to low a gross-domestic product of a country and when coupled with advances in light weaponry, this leads to a higher proportion of child involvement.\textsuperscript{51} In these countries, children are seen as easy and cheap methods for armed forces to mobilize, which contributes to the worldwide proliferation of this practice—as of 2006, approximately 75 percent of conflicts in the world involve children.\textsuperscript{52} With statistics like that, it is clear to see that the issue of CAC spans multiple continents and is not—as it has been claimed—tied to a “cultural or historical thread…or a set of historical experiences.” The widespread prevalence of this occurrence has gained the worldwide attention of children’s rights advocates in a multitude of disciplines.

2. c. Prevention & Intervention Methods

NGOs and international civil society members have also contributed significantly to the global discussion on the best methods to eradicate the use of children and what policies could be implemented to stem the flow of violence in countries with a history of protracted armed conflict. Prominent organizations such as Invisible Children, Child Soldiers International, Watchlist, the International Committee for the Red Cross, UNICEF, and the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative seek to eliminate the use of children in armed conflict through various programs such as training women in the security sector, providing recommendations to governments to criminalize any type of

\begin{flushright}
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Singer, \textit{The Enablers Of War}.
\end{flushright}
recruitment or use of children in hostilities, campaigning for CAC awareness, and advocating for legislative legal reform.

Research conducted by NGOs in recent years has drawn attention to the prevention of the use of children in armed conflict.\textsuperscript{53} This is the primary area of focus as it redirects the issue to the core of the problem: \textit{an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure}. Many peer-reviewed articles, NGO reports, and child rights legislation offer suggestions for what they consider to be the best method for preventing the use of children in armed conflict. One of these methods include involving the security sector to train and prepare governmental militaries on what to do when and if they encounter underage fighters during battle.\textsuperscript{54} The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative focuses on prevention by preparing the “military, police and peacekeepers to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers” in countries such as Sierra Leone, Uganda, and even Canada, by providing specialized training, tools, and resources.\textsuperscript{55} From the website, the Child


\textsuperscript{54} Dallaire, \textit{They Fight Like Soldiers, They Die Like Children}.

Soldiers Initiative has made an impact by leading the way on research by “addressing critical gaps in knowledge on child soldiers, pioneering work on child soldiers as an early warning indicator of mass atrocities, and creating the world’s first training handbook focused on child soldiers.”

Unlike the training approach employed by the Child Soldiers Initiative, other organizations recommend cutting to the core of the problem by increasing regional and national security, increasing opportunities for education, and reducing poverty in countries most afflicted by these practices. Organizations such as World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, and United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) advocate for broader attempts to prevent conflict in areas with protracted violence with the intent of reducing the need for child recruitment and abduction. While these organizations may have specific programs that address the child victims of this violence, those programs are typically geared toward disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former child soldiers rather than pursuing a goal of prevention. Since I am most interested in prevention, I will now explore the most effective systems that have been introduced to prevent children from becoming involved in armed conflict and how these methodologies could be improved with technology.

57. Barstad, “Preventing The Recruitment Of Child Soldiers”, 142-149.
2. c. i. Community-Based Prevention Initiatives

Although organizations dedicated to reducing the number of CAC are becoming increasingly innovative in their methods, these programs often fail to recognize the agency of the community members where these crimes are taking place. These programs are reliant on involvement from lawmakers, security sector actors, government officials, combatants, and civil society members for the most part; rarely is there a focus or even mention of the role of the citizens living in high-risk areas and what they can do to prevent their children from engaging in armed conflict. Be they the relatives of the abducted children, witnesses of the raids, or community members living in areas where these acts take place, I believe these individuals possess the missing key to addressing this issue: first-hand information.

Although the previously mentioned prevention programs may see some success with their methods, there have been recent studies that show the effectiveness of more community-based methodology that focus on acquiring information from citizens versus relying on data acquired through trained ‘outsiders’ (i.e. NGO workers and government officials).59 The empowered effect that the individuals feel when they are able to contribute to the safety of their community has been linked to “ensuring the sustainability of the systems” and “reduce[ing] their vulnerability” in the face of violence.60

Recommendations from Ruth Kahurananga, Child Rights Adviser for World Vision International, also point to the growing need for community involvement in CAC

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60. Ibid.
prevention. In an address to the 4th World Congress on Family Law and Child Rights in 2005, Kahurananga argues for the following changes to be made in order to achieve higher success rates in prevention programs:

- the empowerment of national citizens;
- participation in decision making and drafting of resolutions by national citizens;
- collaboration in the design, implementation, monitoring and reporting mechanisms for strategies dealing with CAC; and
- mobilisation of resources and capacity building in understanding international humanitarian and human rights law relating to children.\(^61\)

An evaluation and needs assessment conducted by USAID concerning the prevention of LRA child abductions also mirrors Kahurananga’s theory by recommending “strengthening community-based protection systems” by “bridging the gaps in communication between LRA-affected communities, local authorities, humanitarian agencies and the military.”\(^62\) Unfortunately, the growing need for more community-based participation in the effort to quell the CAC epidemic is not without its share of logistical barriers. Since it has been argued that in order for prevention to be more effective, locals should contribute their knowledge about how to solve the issue—but how?

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2. c. ii. Crowdsourcing Information

Given this context, it is easier to understand why gathering local knowledge is extremely helpful, but it is also difficult to acquire; not only are these areas dangerous to enter, but they are also remarkably ‘cut-off’ from the organizations trying to help them due to the terrain and lack of infrastructure.\textsuperscript{63} It is often problematic to communicate with villages that do not have paved roads for travelling to and from, as well as areas that are too entrenched in conflict that prevent NGO workers from visiting. These barriers, physical and bureaucratic, present challenges for those advocates and researchers who are trying to enter these spaces to collect data that could help understand the conflict and prevent abductions.

As outlined previously (see Section 2.c.), the methods employed by NGOs to address child abductions by the LRA have seen moderate success. However, there have been promising results from the use of technology to increase communication between the citizens and the agencies seeking to protect them from harm.\textsuperscript{64} The introduction of mobile phones to “crowdsource” information has been theorized to reduce protracted violence in remote areas of the world.\textsuperscript{65} ‘Crowdsourcing’ is “a method of data collection that draws on voluntary contributions from an unbounded crowd to determine answers to questions” and is generally done “through mobile phones using text-based polls and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{63} "The World Factbook", Democratic Republic of Congo.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Martin-Shields, "Inter-Ethnic Cooperation Revisited", 1.
\end{itemize}
surveys (but can really be done in any way that allows a public audience to provide feedback to a question.)”66 Conflict analysis scholar, Charles Martin-Shields, studies the effects that mobile crowdsourcing has on conflict prevention and management in developing countries. Since mobile phone use is becoming increasingly common in developing countries, Martin-Shields theorizes that mobile phones are able to play a key role in violence prevention because data and information can be gathered efficiently and quickly in ways that it never has been in the past.67

Crowdsourced information can assist in the goal of CAC prevention for a variety of reasons. Foremost, the organizations trying to bring aid and assistance to the conflict areas will be able to communicate with them and gather valuable information such as details about LRA hideouts, reports of attacks and/or killings, and LRA sightings. These communities, which were once closed off from contact with areas outside their immediate surroundings, would be able to transmit their local knowledge of the activities of the LRA militia group and pass along information that might prove to be helpful for predicting where the next attack might take place. Another benefit to collecting crowdsourced data in these goes back to the theories concerning the benefits of community-based prevention methods. The citizens in LRA-affected areas could actively contribute to their own community and family safety through information sharing. They might also feel a sense of empowerment that would, as authors Macherera and Chimbaria argue, reduce their vulnerability to attack.68

66. Ibid., 10.
67. Ibid., 7.
Through mobile phone crowdsourcing, third-party actors such as NGOs and governments, can send and receive information to and from remotely located citizens in an effort to gather data, prevent violence, and foster peacebuilding. Information reported from crowdsourced methods flow from the ‘bottom-up,’ allowing the mobile phone user to send reports in real time to organizations located hundreds or thousands of miles away. Not only does the user act as a collector of data, but she also serves as an extension of the organization she is relaying the information to. She can be the proverbial ‘eyes and ears’ of people who cannot physically collect data in those areas. But crowdsourcing data is only one piece, albeit an important one, in the effort to prevent violence using technology. The flow of information must also be able to inject data back into the communities it seeks to serve. For example, in the case of CAC prevention, people could receive information about the next LRA attack and be able to evacuate before the attack occurs. This is where early warning systems come into play. These platforms allow a two-way communication flow that is necessary for predicting and avoiding clandestine militia attacks, a valuable tactic for communities plagued by LRA raids.

2. c. iii. Early Warning Systems (EWS)

In recent years, humanitarian organizations and governments have been partnering to address some of the world’s worst disasters through early warning systems. Many definitions of early warning systems exist, but according to the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, early warning systems are “set[s] of capacities needed to generate and disseminate timely and meaningful warning information to enable individuals, communities and organizations threatened by a hazard
to prepare and act appropriately and in sufficient time to reduce the possibility of harm or loss."69

Although early warning systems can adapt and change to fit the need of the hazard presented, the most common systems tend to warn communities about natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes, and landslides while platforms that address communicable diseases and human conflict are very few.70 Of these platforms, the systems tend to employ a ‘community-based’ or ‘people-centered’ methodology whereby the affected communities participate in the development of the system by offering their local knowledge.71 Authors Macherera and Chimbari define community-based early warning systems as “one in which the communities participate in hazard identification and the formulation of the warning system, and not merely reacting to a warning at local level” thereby creating more opportunities to prevent violence by allowing locals to create evacuation protocols and security plans to avoid violence.72 This phenomenon suggests that two-way flows of communication are helpful in eradicating instances of human violence and brokering peace in remote regions. Drawing on this newly published research, I will begin to explore how early warning systems and community-based crowdsourcing can be used in tandem to potentially prevent child abductions in conflict areas.

71. Ibid., 1.
72. Ibid., 3.
The Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015 emphasized a more “people-centered prevention approach to disaster risk” and encouraged engagement with relevant stakeholders, including citizens, in order to successfully prepare for encroaching hazards.73 Here we see a shift in the narrative surrounding the role of locals. The decades-long rhetoric of villager victimhood is being replaced by language that suggests that they should engage as critical stakeholders in the fight against violence in their communities—within the confines of the law they “are agents of change and should be given the space and modalities to contribute to disaster risk reduction.”74 Community-based early warning systems are perfect modalities to engage oppressed or victimized actors because anyone with a phone, regardless of position, can contribute their knowledge and receive information about potential dangers. This empowers previously disenfranchised individuals to create change from within rather than waiting for outside forces to intervene.

The community-based early warning systems are also helpful because they cultivate awareness, strengthen local capacities, and allow individuals to actively participate in reducing their vulnerability to hazards.75 Essentially, the platforms afforded by new technologies give agency to people and empower communities that were once powerless to stop the reign of terror. These systems are also gaining international attention as more monitoring and performance evaluations publish statistics marking the

74. Ibid., 22.
75. Ibid., 22.
increase in effectiveness of community-centered protection programs and early warning. Furthermore, advances in technology contribute to the success of these programs as they provide the tools necessary for this kind of two-way communication and collaboration. The following chapters will help to explain the context of violence within the affected communities to better understand the complexities associated with initiating community-based protection programs, how to best analyze the information collected from those individuals, and how to harness technology to hopefully bring about positive change.

3. BACKGROUND & CONFLICT HISTORY

3. a. Understanding the LRA Conflict

Understanding the context in which the LRA conflict came about is extremely important in the analysis of humanitarian intervention and the prevention methods employed by stakeholders. As with many events in history, this conflict is multifaceted and complex. Over the LRA’s long regime of violence, they have been accused of a litany of human rights abuses such as: the mutilation and summary execution on non-combatants, sexual slavery of women, the conscription of child soldiers, and other war crimes and crimes against humanity. The LRA became infamous for their violent forced recruitment of children after failing to fill their ranks with adults from the public. In some

77. Ibid., 4.
cases children were forced to kill their family members, hack off the limbs of captives, or for the girls, become the ‘bush wives’ of the commanders and engage in sex acts or domestic labor. Using “psychological warfare” tactics on children, including addicting them to a drug called brown-brown (a mix of cocaine and smokeless gunpowder), LRA soldiers were able to conscript 66,000 children in Uganda over the course of the war. It has been estimated that by the end of 2003, 1,200,000 civilians were abducted from their homes and forcibly extricated to live in LRA camps. As tensions grew in the region and LRA incidents made their way into the headlines of newspapers around the world, global outraged spawned reaction from governments near and far. Tales of the tragedy being inflicted in northern Uganda caught the attention of world leaders including the U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan who coordinated U.N. efforts in an attempt to quell the violence. Pressure mounted on the militants as the U.S. State Department classified the LRA as a terrorist organization and passed the Northern Uganda Crisis Response Act to end the crisis. In 2006, feeling the rising pressure from the U.N. and the U.S. ground troops, the LRA retreated from Uganda into the safety of west Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) border region and Central African Republic (CAR) where they remain in hiding today. In these heavily forested areas, the LRA can

80. Ibid.
remain hidden by the vegetation which allows them to continue their operations while maintaining a low-profile. Even though their forces have reduced in numbers with the various efforts by the DRC and CAR militaries, the LRA continues to wreak havoc “against local communities on a regular basis” throughout these two regions. These areas are susceptible to LRA attacks due to weak or ineffectual governments, limited humanitarian presence, and rugged landscapes which easily conceal militia hideouts and camps.

The ethnic tensions spurred by years of oppression, brutality, torture, and murder of civilians under previously dictatorships, as well as economic instability, paved the way for this radical militia groups to form and flourish. The unique factors that allow this violence to persist in this area of Sub-Saharan Africa explain why some of the interventions have not been successful while others have, and how some current methods can be improved to build capacity with the aim of ending the violence. The following section provides a ‘real-world’ example of how one organization has brought these theories into practice in an effort to thwart LRA abductions in these regions.

3. b. Invisible Children & the Kony Campaign

Founded in 2004, Uganda-based NGO Invisible Children operates with the mission of eradicating the Kony-led LRA forces that continue to target communities in DRC and south CAR. With a focus on child protection in particular, Invisible Children


85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.
launched a global campaign dubbed ‘Kony 2012’ to inform the world about the horrific acts the LRA was inflicting upon children. The documentary went viral and people across the world stood united with Invisible Children’s mission to save children from the horrors of conscripted soldiering. According to their website, Invisible Children “mobilized unprecedented international awareness and action to help end the LRA crisis, contributed to a 93% reduction in killings by the LRA, and…have helped thousands of central African families become safer through innovative community-based protection initiatives.”

Although these numbers cannot be corroborated with sources other than what is presented by the NGO themselves, the Kony campaign has been cited by the media as having, for example, a “profound impact on U.S. policy toward the LRA crisis, most notably the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act and the decision to send U.S. military advisers to the region to assist Ugandan military forces hunting for Kony.” It was also reported that Invisible Children’s mission coincided with “public policy priorities of the Obama administration (such as the prevention of mass atrocities and conflict prevention and regional security cooperation in Africa)” that lead to a closer collaboration between the U.S. government and the NGO. Whether or not the success of the Kony campaign can be verified in the field, it is evident that the national attention sparked by this viral movement directed more U.S. attention to the ongoing crisis and

90. Ibid.
provided opportunities for the development of more innovative ways to combat the relentless attacks by the LRA.

3. b. i. Invisible Children’s Community-based Protection Initiatives

With cooperation with the U.S. government, Invisible Children launched several community-based protection initiatives after their Kony campaign to expand their reach into remote, LRA-affected communities. These included a ‘Come Home’ LRA Defection Messaging System, an LRA Crisis Tracker, and an Early Warning Radio Network. The ‘Come Home’ program sends an FM broadcasted message to LRA soldiers encouraging them to leave the group and return home. The hope is that soldiers will understand that there are more options than continuing the life they have been leading.

Invisible Children also partnered with another NGO to establish the LRA Crisis Tracker, a crisis-mapping social web platform that broadcasts the attacks and other activities perpetrated by the LRA in near real time. This dynamic and publicly available mapping tool allows users to better understand the urgency of the LRA crisis and to what extent the group is affecting the local communities. The LRA Crisis Tracker uses information gathered from the UN, partner organizations, local NGOs, and first-hand reports captured by the Early Warning Radio Network.

This Radio Network was Invisible Children’s response to the problem of inaccessibility and lack of communication with remote and isolated villages. The Network was designed to disrupt the patterns of violence by collecting first-hand information from trained Community Observers, vetting the information for accuracy,

91. Invisible Children.
92. Ibid.
and disseminating warnings concerning the location of the LRA using high-frequency (HF), long-range, two-way radios. Presently, there are 74 HF radios in 78 communities in the DRC and CAR that allow Community Observers to receive twice-daily security briefings about LRA activity, including potential life-saving information about the likelihood of a village raid. The information that the Community Observers are responsible for gathering and reporting are incidents such as “civilian death and injury, abduction, looting, displacement, and the release or escape of formerly abducted persons.” The hope with this community-based program is that the citizens in LRA-affected areas will feel empowered to protect their families against potential raids or attacks. This idea is commensurate with the burgeoning theories on Information Communication Technology suggesting that tech-based humanitarian initiatives are more likely to prevent conflict if the citizens function as agents of change rather than merely the bystanders of atrocities committed around them.

Below I have highlighted some of the main issues with the current methods and proffered some potential solutions.

**CURRENT ISSUES:**

- The current method relies on High-Frequency radios, which is not efficient. The radios break often, need to be replaced, are expensive, and do not offer consistently clear transmissions so communication is difficult.

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93. Ibid.
• The Community Observers are the only ones who can report on incidents and they have to be identified and trained which takes times and money.
• The current network can only operate in certain *(pre-selected)* villages, leaving members of other communities to feel disempowered or forgotten.
• Once the information is received from the Community Observer, he must relay the warning of encroaching danger to hundreds or even thousands of people, which can be difficult for just one person to achieve.

**POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS:**

• Increase the accessibility to the network by opening communication through mobile phones, which many people own.
• All people with a mobile phone can send and receive information so no community feels disempowered or forgotten.
• The service is free to the user and anonymous, so they can feel safe reporting information.
• Communities can create disaster response evacuation plans to prevent or reduce fatalities and child abductions. This gives the people themselves the ability to protect themselves versus relying on external assistance.

The following section will further rationalize why I chose these solutions and explain how these changes might help to expand the scope of safety to villages afflicted by militia raids.
4. PROJECT METHODOLOGY & RATIONALE

“Technology is nothing. What’s important is that you have a faith in people, that they’re basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they’ll do wonderful things with them.”

– Steve Jobs,
Former Chairman, Chief Executive Officer,
and Co-founder of Apple Inc.

“We believe that if marginalized people are able to easily communicate to those who aim to serve them, then those organizations and governments can more effectively respond to their communities’ immediate needs while simultaneously bringing global attention to their problems through the aggregation of their voices.”

– Ushahidi mission statement,
Open-source humanitarian software used for crisis response, human rights reporting, and election monitoring

4. a. The AuCourant Early Warning Network

Founded in theories suggesting that community-based early warning systems are useful methods for preparing citizens to protect against violence, I developed a platform that increases the efficiency of Invisible Children’s Radio Early Warning Network by integrating SMS text messaging as a tool for data capture. My platform is named ‘Au Courant,’ which means ‘well informed’ in French, the national language of the DRC and CAR. This phrase can also mean ‘current,’ which connotes the flow of information that this platform hopes to achieve. I created this mobile phone crowdsourcing platform with the intent of improving some of problems posed by IC’s network which relies solely on communication from HF radios.
The way the platform works is simple: it allows any mobile phone user in DRC or CAR to text a short code\textsuperscript{96} number if they spot LRA militia members or any militia-related activity. As the platform is built using interactive SMS (iSMS) technology, the user will be able to have a text ‘conversation’ and pre-programmed messages will be automatically sent depending on the user’s responses. As soon as the first text is sent, the user will receive an automated response welcoming them to the network and asking for certain information to be included in the message such as where the sighting occurred, the time and date, and location of the incident. This information is similar to what the Invisible Children Community Observers are trained to capture and report. However, this method, unlike IC, is available to thousands more witnesses in these LRA-affected communities.

The AuCourant iSMS system is free of charge for users, anonymous, simple to use on any basic mobile phone device, and does not require the internet. Also, the user does not have to be located within a cell service area to send a text. They would simply hit ‘send’ and then as soon as the mobile phone enters a service area, the text is automatically pushed through. This technology enables users in the most remote areas of the DRC and CAR to effectively communicate vital information about the LRA and other militia groups whereabouts. The scope of communication is widened with the introduction of this platform because anyone would be able to contribute to their knowledge in the effort to stop attacks.

\textsuperscript{96} "Short Code", En.Wikipedia.Org, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short_code. \textit{Short codes}, or short numbers, are short digit sequences, significantly shorter than telephone numbers, that are used to address messages in the Multimedia Messaging System (MMS) and short message service (SMS) systems of mobile network operators.
Information gathering (crowdsourcing), however, is only half of the strategy. The other part relies on two-way communication, meaning that anyone who sends information can also opt-in to receive alerts. The platform is built so that users will be asked if they want to subscribe to receive information from Invisible Children about potential LRA attacks and raids. If they opt-in, their phone numbers will be sorted into a database that Invisible Children can then use to send a mass text message with information that they deem credible and pertinent.

As with their current system, IC will have the task of vetting the information they receive from this network for accuracy. The threshold of receiving inaccurate, false, or misleading data will be much higher once the network allows for any person to submit information—not just the highly-trained and trusted Community Observers. Although this particular project does not go into explicit detail about how to efficiently analyze the data, there are many software programs available to NGOs to assist in quick data analysis using algorithms and mathematics to distinguish between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ information. I will discuss more about the potential risks of verifying crowdsourced data in the subsequent sections. Another potential roadblock I will examine is how to communicate the existence of this platform in an easy-to-understand way, across multiple languages, and through a variety of cultural lenses to all mobile-phone holding citizens in LRA-affected communities in the DRC and CAR. But first, I would like to explain why—if this method has such potential for positive change—it has not been implemented by Invisible Children already.

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There are now enough mobile phone users to be able to provide consistent information to Invisible Children and potentially other humanitarian organizations seeking to prevent child abductions. The platform is designed so that it is replicable, scalable, translatable to other fields. It is my hope that this platform will be integrated with the Invisible Children early warning system to increase the efficiency and scope of the network with the goal of preparing these communities to better handle the threat of violence imposed by the LRA militia raids.

4. b. Case Study Comparison & Rationale

To better understand some of the strengths my platform, the potential ease of replication, and to identify potential weaknesses, I conducted a case study comparison between similar community initiatives that have been deployed in other developing countries that utilize SMS-based early warning systems. In an effort to create an effective product for ending child abductions in this region of Africa, I analyzed monitoring and evaluation (M&E) reports for six of the largest and most applicable community-based, mobile phone platforms for conflict prevention and peace building: I Paid A Bribe; ABA ROLI Early Warning and Response System; Counter - Lord's Resistance Army Early Warning System (C-LRA EWS); IPDU/P4P SMS Early Warning Early Response (EWER); and Belun Early Warning Early Response (EWER) (see Appendix 2). These M&E reports provided useful information on what aspects of these programs are working well and what improvements need to be made in order to achieve the desired impact. Although these systems are diverse and range from anti-corruption and ending sexual abuse impunity, they are all relatively similar in their methodologies—most notably through the use of citizens to engage where they previously could not. Below, I will
examine some of these platforms’ strengths and weaknesses to provide rationale for why I chose the methodologies used in the AuCourant system.

4. b. i. Analysis

*I Paid A Bribe*, which operates in India, is the world’s largest online crowd-sourced anti-corruption platform. This system claims to “tackle corruption by harnessing the collective energy of citizens...[by] collect[ing] bribe reports, and build[ing] a repository of corruption-related data across government departments.” The data collected on bribe reports from anonymous users allows advocacy groups to reveal flaws in governance procedures and campaigns for tighter law enforcement and regulation thereby “reducing the scope for corruption.” Although widely praised for its ability to raise awareness of governmental corruption, *I Paid A Bribe* has run into a few issues such as difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of the platform (essentially it is hard to measure changes in the behavior of government officials) and how to generate and sustain interest in the platform since it is being funded mainly by a single entity.

We can learn from this model by developing AuCourant to run sustainably through partnerships with funding agencies and other non-profits. Catholic Relief Services which operates out of Uganda is well-known for funding similar projects that seek to end violence inflicted by the LRA. I would recommend that the AuCourant

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100 Ibid., 5.
implementing organization seek funding from CRS and establish a partnership to ensure future financial sustainability. Although *I Paid A Bribe* is hard to evaluate because corruption is a more abstract threat than the physical violence carried out by the LRA militia, the main takeaway is that an emphasis should be placed on installing proper evaluation methods to measure the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of the AuCourant system once it is in place. M&E reports conducted by third-party field monitors will provide invaluable feedback as to the effect this system will be having on the communities in which it operates. We will be able to assess the positive or negative outcomes as a result of the crowdsourced data and alter the platform and processes as necessary to create a better system.

There are also lessons to be learned from similar platforms that currently operate in DRC which have similar aims of seeking to end the violence caused by the LRA. The American Bar Association’s Rule of Law Initiative created an Early Warning and Response System (ROLI EWRS) as a way to bring justice to remote communities affected by the LRA. This initiative provides innovative mobile courts which allow victims to have their testimonies heard and also provides judicial scholarships to female law students.102 Similar to AuCourant, this platform gathers data on LRA incidents and sends alerts to communities when there is a perceived threat; however, ROLI EWRS has a couple major weaknesses that undermine its mission. This system relies solely on data gathered from trained Community Observers that live in 30 villages throughout the DRC.

Instead of crowdsourcing information from civilians, ROLI EWRS relies on the small amount of information gathered from these Community Observers alone. In addition to the limited number of people submitting information to the network, there is also the issue of limited scope. These are the only 30 people who are responsible for alerting thousands of civilians about a potential raid when they receive an alert. This slows the process of evacuation and puts the community at a disadvantage. And finally, ABA ROLI works closely with the Congolese police force, providing them with all of the information gathered from the Community Observers.\(^{103}\) The Congolese police force and national army in the DRC have been accused of grave violations against children and corruption, making them unreliable partners in the effort to combat the LRA.\(^{104}\) AuCourant will have a much wider scope and range since it will open access to all mobile phone users instead of a small number of Community Observers. AuCourant will also house the crowdsourced data within the confines of the partner organization and will not grant access to potentially corrupt government or police entities.

Another initiative that seeks to end LRA child abductions is the USAID-run platform called Counter-LRA Early Warning System (C-LRA EWS). Although this program offers valuable assistance to LRA-affected communities in DRC and CAR, such as trauma healing workshops for survivors and victims, this platform again falls short of scope as it only uses a limited number of high-frequency radios and volunteer Conflict

\(^{103}\) Ibid.

Monitors to gather information and disseminate warnings.105 And arguably even more discouraging is the fact that U.S. government money is being funneled into this program, and along with it, political consequences. A 2015 congressional report questions whether U.S. fiscal support may have “unintended consequences for U.S. policy and the region” and “may also impede U.S. diplomatic leverage with regard to criticizing Uganda’s record on democracy, governance, and human rights.”106 It is for this reason that AuCourant would only be implemented by a non-governmental agency—to avoid the politics that go hand-in-hand with managing government funded programs.

There are also lessons to be learned from reading M&E reports on the last two early warning and response programs: IPDU/P4P SMS Early Warning Early Response (EWER) and Belun Early Warning Early Response (EWER). Although these programs operate in Nigeria and Timor-Leste, respectively, the evaluations provide some interesting perspective on the pros and cons of conflict prevention using mobile phone technology. Unlike the previously discussed initiatives, these platforms do engage with the community by allowing individuals to submit information via text messaging. There has been proven success with this kind of community engagement and empowerment. For instance, between April to June 2016, over 160 incidents were reported to the IPDU SMS Platform, allowing law enforcement officials to follow up on reports of violence and protect citizens.107 However, here we see the same issue as the C-LRA EWS system

105. "COUNTER - Lord's Resistance Army".
as the IPDU platform also partners with local law enforcement and government forces. In Nigeria, some have suggested that the IPDU system is “weak and inadequate” due to a lack of coordination between policymakers, civil society, government forces, law enforcement, and local actors.\textsuperscript{108} By limiting partnerships to one or two organizations, the AuCourant network will have more control over processes and will hopefully have a more organized directive.

Evaluations of the Belun EWER platform raise concerns about a lack of resources to tackle the threats. Although there have been thousands of reported incidents since its launch in 2009, the Belun team “can barely scratch the surface of conflict resolution” due to a lack of internal resources and weak organization capacity.\textsuperscript{109} This is something that should be taken into consideration for the success of AuCourant. Also, the Belun EWER system faced issues with lack of awareness among senior officials about their program.\textsuperscript{110} An evaluation of the program recommended that the team ensures that there is an “effective role for civil society in security sector monitoring and accountability systems.”\textsuperscript{111} Most importantly, AuCourant must ensure that all team members are fully trained on all aspects of the platform, its technical shortcomings and complexities, and how to engage its users so that the most positive outcome can be realized.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 13.
As shown, technology-driven conflict and corruption prevention initiatives are multi-faceted and complex. As with any humanitarian or advocacy mission, the individuals operating the AuCourant network must put forth extreme diligence and critical consideration in all aspects of this program in order to protect citizens and prevent child abductions. Hopefully these case studies illuminated some of the most important aspects for consideration in the deployment of this cutting-edge conflict prevention system. Now, I turn to the technological elements of the platform that will give individuals living in remote areas of the DRC and CAR the agency they desire and deserve.

5. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

5. a. Technical Interface

After I selected the qualitative methodologies for the platform based on case study comparisons, the next challenge was to choose a technology interface that would allow this methodology to be fully realized. I found that although technologically-driven conflict prevention is a relatively new field, hundreds of previously created systems could simply be modified to meet the needs of this burgeoning industry. The same text messaging platforms that are used by school districts in Minnesota to alerts parents about snow days can be easily adjusted to allow for healthcare professionals in Sierra Leone to alert villagers about possible malaria outbreaks. As the market for these technologies expands to the realm of conflict prevention, the companies behind their creation are suddenly becoming very competitive and accessible to once-untapped clients such as national governments, humanitarian organizations, healthcare agencies, and NGOs.
Therefore, it was relatively simple to research the most widely used text messaging platforms and compare the benefits of each system to determine the one I ultimately selected.

There are two routes to go when thinking about which type of technology to use: a basic, interactive SMS text-messaging platform or a more robust disaster management software. The advantages of disaster management software, such as Ushahidi, InSTEDD, and Sahana, are that more specific data can be collected to address large-scale violence like civil war, election fraud, and natural disasters. These programs use GPS-location technology and can interface with other systems so that information is streamlined from one platform to another. There are also other benefits in the way of data visualization—the software can easily plot records on a map and show the user where incidents are occurring or being reported at a glance. Despite these advantages, I did not select this type of software because I felt that the technology was too complex and unnecessarily robust for my goal of gathering crowdsourced data and disseminating alerts to individuals. Also, the monthly cost for these types of platforms were much higher than the systems offering SMS services alone. Therefore, I chose to build my data collection platform with an SMS service.

My initial research on SMS platforms specifically tailored for international development yielded these three products: Frontline SMS, Open Data Kit, and Magpi. All three products were either open source, meaning it is publicly available and free for all users, or they provided a free version that would meet the needs of AuCourant. I quickly eliminated Frontline SMS because it did not offer text services outside of the US and Canada. Open Data Kit seemed like an excellent choice, however, the product only runs
on Android phones and I wanted the systems to be more accessible to users of all mobile phone types. Magpi was the clear winner as it offers advanced mobile data, messaging, and visualization on any mobile device in the world. The other benefits for selecting this product are as follows:

- The ‘interactive’ SMS (or iSMS) technology allows for two-way communication with a user and a form design allows for different responses depending on user input.
- It can send SMS messages to multiple users from a web-based platform
- A short code allows users to initiate text sessions without being prompted (thus, allowing for crowdsourcing)
- Critical data can be fed into SQL databases, Salesforce accounts, Google spreadsheets, or almost any other web-accessible system
- There is an app-based feature that can run on iOS, Android, and Symbian phones and tablets
- Voice based (IVR) technology allows users to speak into their phones instead of typing—thereby connecting with even illiterate populations
- A text message can be sent outside of service areas and will be pushed through as soon as the mobile user regains service allowing this service to operate well in remote areas of the world that lack abundant telecom infrastructure\(^\text{112}\)

I have also read several case studies which illustrated the multifaceted uses for this software in development work such as responding to disease outbreaks, helping predict natural disasters, and monitoring human rights abuses in developing countries.

And due to the sensitive nature of the data collection for some of these use-cases, Magpi

ensures the security of the information collected through modern full-device encryption methods using a robust security profile. Therefore, I decided to use the Magpi software to carry out the AuCourant messaging system.

Though I have previously described in detail the weaknesses of other systems in both the qualitative and technical senses—and how AuCourant will attempt to avoid making similar mistakes, there are some obvious potential limitations and risks of this system that are unavoidable given the nature of its function. Below I will delve into the most important areas for consideration. Specifically, I will cover how AuCourant will attempt to mitigate issues with data verification, spreading awareness about the program, the platform’s intent, and how it will communicate with users about safety.

5. b. Data Verification

The ubiquity of mobile telephony on the global landscape has paved the way for new modes of peacebuilding, security, and conflict prevention in remote areas of the world. The use of technology is becoming increasingly more common in the field of development as it allows for more data to be efficiently collected and disseminated. However, this data is only as good as it is factual. The information sourced from the communities using AuCourant will need to be thoroughly evaluated in order for the platform to be effective in raid prediction. What if there are false reports of attacks sent in by users in an attempt to undermine the effort? What is LRA members themselves send in false information as a way to redirect attention away from them? What if witnesses submit information accidentally or provide a completely inaccurate account? In crowdsourcing, there are always many possible avenues for erroneous data.
There are several methods to verify the validity of the crowdsourced data including but not limited to: digital algorithms which sort and filter data; comparison with media to cross-reference incidents that were reported on; local Field Monitors who enter communities and corroborate reports with residents and possible witnesses; using GPS stamps to cluster incidents in order to ascertain patterns and sort out unverified reports. Although there are many pros and cons to all of these methods, I recommend implementing as many of them as possible to procure the most accurate and least-biased data as possible. And though this study does not delve into the mechanics of these methods, I would also recommend that the implementing agency places a high emphasis on digital algorithms which use smart machine computing methods to parse out the “actionable knowledge” (true information) from false data.\textsuperscript{113} Several experts in the field of artificial intelligence and machine learning have lauded the ability of these applications to successfully produce indicators from big data sets that assist in development—such as in humanitarian crises and violence conflicts.\textsuperscript{114} As the AuCourant system gathers more data as it expands into other communities, it will become even more important to install data verification systems that accurately vet the information being collected for the safety of the citizens.

It should be noted that the feasibility of using machine learning programs to anticipate the likelihood of raids may be low. In terms of cost, time, and personnel, this may not be within the scope of reality for NGOs operating on tight budgets—as they often are. It is realistic, however, to anticipate that the accessibility of such programs will

\textsuperscript{113} Anwaar Ali et al., "Big Data For Development: Applications And Techniques".
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 2.
become more available in the future as industries continue to pursue this technology as more practical uses emerge. It is also plausible that more money in the future might be earmarked for the installation of technological applications in the non-profit world as these systems become better at problem-solving and more cost-effective than human performance alone.

5. c. Awareness, Intent, & Safety

I foresee the most evident initial hurdle in this implementation being how to properly inform the communities about the conceptual and logistical realities of AuCourant. The first issue is how to effectively communicate the AuCourant short code, the system’s main objective, and what the user should across many cultural, linguistic, and situational barriers. I have worked with a skilled graphic designer to create a few mock-ups of potential advertisements that could be made into physical posters or used in billboards (see Appendix 1.e.). The main objective with these posters is to have a visual impact that will be able to communicate to the user that this is a text-message based initiative used to anonymously report LRA activity in order to stop the forced conscription of children. We included the ‘down the barrel of the gun’ aesthetic and silhouette of a child soldier enshrouded in red to communicate to even an illiterate audience that the nature of AuCourant concentrates on CAC. The ad mockup is currently in English but if and when the system is deployed in CAR and DRC, the copy would be translated into French and some of the main local dialects such as Kiswahili, Sango, and the Bantu language Lingala. The ad clearly states that community members should text 282-687 to report any LRA activity they witness and include the date, time, and any other pertinent information. It also communicates that the user can choose to voluntarily enroll
in a subscription service to receive texts about LRA activity or perceived threats in their area. The target population can also be reached via radio advertisements, community billboards, paper handouts in villages, and TV advertisements, to name a few.

Although it is important to properly convey what AuCourant is, it is arguably more important to communicate to users what is not. It will be crucial to the success of the program, and the safety of the community, to ensure that we communicate to the public that this is not a 911 service. Users should be fully aware that they are simply contributing data that will help the experts predict outbreaks of violence, but that citizens should not rely on receiving an alert notification. As with any conflict, there will be surprise attacks and unplanned raids that AuCourant will not be able to detect. It is also vital that the user understands that no emergency services nor police will be deployed when an alert is sent. The purpose of the alert is to trigger community members to follow through with a predetermined evacuation plan or whatever protocol the village leaders decide. We can learn from past mistakes made with the Ushahidi program where users expected a response when a notification was sent. The following excerpt comes from a TechChange article warning of the perils of mobile phone technology in conflict prevention:

There were cases where people thought that sending a text to Ushahidi was like calling 911. They expected that if their text showed up on a map, then help would come,” said Dr. Levinger. It’s incumbent on outsiders to make it clear what their technology’s purpose is and what its limits are. This is important in the best of circumstances, but in an emergency it can be the difference between life and death.115

With this in mind, proper attention must be given to effectively communicate AuCourant’s conceptual intent and purpose to the public through the ad campaigns. The ads will also inform the user that the program is free and anonymous to use but that does not mean there are no risks. For instance, if the user subscribes to the service, they will receive a text notification which may sound on phones at the same time as other subscribers—an observer may be able to connect the dots that the user was subscribed and that they are receiving alerts. This is one of many potential indicators that a user has subscribed, and that may prove to be dangerous depending on the situation. This is a threat that the user must understand before they engage with the platform.

5. d. Other Limitations & Risks

The overseeing body of AuCourant, be it Invisible Children or another organization, will have challenges to overcome if this system is to work effectively to prevent child abductions. With any newly implemented technology, there are certain unique challenges that must be addressed in order for the system to carry out the specific function for which it was created. However, the precarious nature of the threat that this system seeks to eradicate—an unstable, child-abducting armed militia—should not be understated. The kind of information being disseminated through AuCourant has powerful implications—both for transformative social improvement but also for potentially dangerous effects on the community in which it operates unless special care and diligent thought are put into the management of this system. In the previous sections I have attempted to predict a few of the most critical aspects of this system that are potential areas of weakness, risks, or possible limitations in the implementation of AuCourant—however it is by no means an exhaustive list of the potential risks. I believe
the most prudent process for unrolling this platform would be in a small beta-test in two villages in DRC and CAR, respectively, to monitor the strengths and weakness on small scale before it is deployed country-wide.

5. e. Beta-Testing

It is always a good idea to launch a small-scale version of a project, beta-test, to receive feedback that could be useful in altering the platform before resources are used to implement the full-scale platform. Not only is beta-testing useful for altering the technical aspects of the platform, it is also crucial for receiving feedback from the community in which it will be released. Perhaps there is some aspect that was overlooked in the development stages—this is the opportunity to fix those bugs before the project goes live to thousands of people. And the detailed feedback from the users of the product will be helpful for tweaking aspects of the product that do not make sense for users. It is ultimately a chance to refine the platform before launching in the hopes of maximizing its ultimate success.

Beta-testing the AuCourant platform could be achieved by deploying the program in two villages in DRC and CAR prior to rolling out the system to millions of people. Information on which two communities to choose could best be answered by local actors, therefore I will not presume to know where this system should be piloted. However, it should be assumed that these two areas are LRA-affected and have proven mobile phone users to make it an effective trial. Ad campaigns should be presented in these communities and the data collected should be thoroughly monitored for accuracy. After a period of three to six months, M&E specialists should conduct full reports on the effectiveness of the ads, ability for the system to function, and other limitations or
successes. This information will be paramount to the success of the program when it is launched on a large scale across DRC and CAR.

6. CONCLUSION

If judiciously executed, the AuCourant platform has the ability to provide life-changing outcomes for individuals who had never been able to demonstrate agency in the past. For those parents of children in LRA-affected areas of the DRC and CAR, the power of protection may literally exist in their pocket—by harnessing the far-reaching power of mobile phone SMS technology, the AuCourant network could transform the landscape from one to violence to one of peace. The balance of power which currently resides with the LRA could shift to the residents, emboldening them with the ability to save themselves and their children from a lifetime of trauma and bloodshed.

However, as with any idea that asserts life-changing results, it should be cautioned that this is not a silver bullet. This is simply one suggestion for making a current system more effective in the fight against the use of children in combat. Dr. Raul Zambrano of the United Nations Development Program and Dr. Matthew Levinger from the U.S. Institute of Peace eloquently assert that “the challenges faced by development and peace-making professionals can only be solved by human ingenuity, social awareness and ethics. Mobile technology is only a means to more efficiently achieving this end.”116

If humanitarians, governments, and child rights advocates are serious about changing the tide of abuse and abduction in these countries, they cannot solely rely on technology to make this change; it will require the dedication, hard work, and perseverance of these

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116. Shields, "Power To The People".
impassioned individuals to see that this technology fulfills the transformation they so desire.

I cannot help but think back to my few weeks in that Uganda refugee camp where my initial desire to help originated. Although I am realistic about the barriers facing this kind of innovative method, I am also extremely hopeful and motivated by the potential this project possesses. This platform has far-reaching capabilities to transform communities in areas of the world that have been ‘forgotten’ or are so remote that collaboration with outside assistance is difficult. It also gives the power back to the individuals who were previously regarded as only victims; now they will have the agency to fight back against the violence by being more prepared for when disaster strikes. Knowledge is power—and this power has the potential to improve the lives of millions and most importantly, the lives of the next generation.

I was recently approached by a Congolese citizen studying in the United States about my work on this platform. He confided that his own life was saved when he was alerted about an incoming militia raid on his village before it happened. He was warned about the impending raid through a ‘traditional’ method where a scout would perch on a hilltop and if he spotted danger, he would yell and pound on drums to signal incoming danger to the villagers below. He also disclosed to me that he was excited about the potential impact of my platform and, in his personal opinion, thought that it would work well to save lives in DRC.

Whether or not this platform is implemented in the field, I will continue to ‘sound the drums,’ so-to-speak, and do whatever is in my ability to prevent the needless suffering of children in the future. I am honored by those who bravely shared their stories
with me, humbled by the fierce determination of the survivors, and driven by my promise to bring hope to an area ravaged by decades of brutality. I am very grateful that I have had the opportunity to contribute to the research on this topic and provide my idea to the growing movement of advocates fighting to keep children safe from the dangers of armed conflict around the world.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


"Treaties, States Parties, And Commentaries: Protocol Additional To The Geneva Conventions Of 12 August 1949, And Relating To The Protection Of Victims Of"


APPENDIX

1. AUCOURANT APPLIED PROJECT

a. Magpi iSMS Platform
### AuCourant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LAST SUBMIT</th>
<th>WELCOME</th>
<th>SUBSCRIBE</th>
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<th>GPS STAMP</th>
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</tr>
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<td>2017-11-19 17:22:38</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017-11-19 17:08:40</td>
<td>11 LRA forces from ...</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>2017-11-19 17:09:16</td>
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<td>I saw an attack at a...</td>
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<td>5.343526, 25.87</td>
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25 14 record(s)
c. Exported Data Report

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<td>282-687</td>
<td>10 LRA forces abducted 2 motorcyclists as porters near Napopop, DRC. Sept 24.</td>
<td>4.19654</td>
<td>28.03162</td>
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<td>282-687</td>
<td>11 LRA forces from Achaye Doctor's splinter group looted a field near Ngouyo, CAR, and abducted 6 men to porter the looted goods. Sept 17</td>
<td>5.683384</td>
<td>25.306456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>282-687</td>
<td>I saw a group attack an NGO vehicle traveling from Doba to Mboki, CAR. The assailants looted the 19 victims of their belongings, including several computers. They were armed with AK-47s. Sept 22</td>
<td>5.259437</td>
<td>26.201452</td>
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<tr>
<td>282-687</td>
<td>An LRA group attacked the community of Kpabou, CAR. They looted the community of food and non-food items and abducted 23 community members as porters. Sept 24</td>
<td>5.335847</td>
<td>25.840474</td>
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<td>282-687</td>
<td>A group of suspected LRA forces comprised of men, women, and children looted a peanut field near Sam Ouandja, CAR. Sept 25</td>
<td>8.543605</td>
<td>23.202308</td>
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<tr>
<td>282-687</td>
<td>16 armed men suspected to be LRA looted several households northeast of Ouanda Djalle, CAR. The assailants abducted 3 men as porters after looting peanuts, corn, cassava, and sugar. Sept 26</td>
<td>8.962412</td>
<td>22.821003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>282-687</td>
<td>I saw an LRA group comprised of men, women, and children looted fields 52 km northeast of Mbangana, CAR. The assailants looted peanuts and temporarily forced 6 civilians to porter the looted goods. Oct 5</td>
<td>7.80589</td>
<td>23.613358</td>
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<tr>
<td>282-687</td>
<td>I saw an attack at a Pediu camp west of Mboki, CAR. The assailants were armed with AK-47s and wore a mix of civilian and military clothing. They abducted a woman and a girl. They also looted peanuts and bushmeat. Oct 24.</td>
<td>5.343256</td>
<td>25.870573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>282-687</td>
<td>There was an ambush and temporary abduction of 5 travelers on the Mbangana-Sam Ouandja axis, CAR. They looted the victims of all their belongings. Oct 25.</td>
<td>8.029721</td>
<td>23.22792</td>
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<tr>
<td>282-687</td>
<td>Men with guns looted the mining community of Yangou Waka, CAR. They reportedly fired their weapons upon arriving in the community and looted rice, sugar, soap, and cassava flour. They abducted 8 men and forced them to porter the looted goods. Oct 29</td>
<td>3.794</td>
<td>26.252</td>
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<tr>
<td>282-687</td>
<td>21 men ambushed near Bembangana, DRC. They wore military clothing, had 21 automatic weapons, a satellite phone, a GPS, solar panels, batteries, and an HF radio. Aug 24</td>
<td>4.4657</td>
<td>27.306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>282-687</td>
<td>About 40 men, women, and children looted several households in Zigbi, DRC. Stole peanuts, chickens, cassava flour, palm oil, clothes, and utensils. Aug 22</td>
<td>4.19654</td>
<td>28.30162</td>
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<tr>
<td>282-687</td>
<td>Men men wearing military clothing ambushed 2 men traveling near Gongolo, DRC. They had AK-47s, and spoke Acholi, Arabic, and broken Lingala. Aug 15</td>
<td>4.01226</td>
<td>28.35876</td>
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<tr>
<td>282-687</td>
<td>There were 8 men who ambushed 3 motorcyclists 10 km north of Sambia, DRC. The motorcyclists were reportedly on their way to Faradje, DRC, to sell food. June 13</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>29.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
d. Mapi Map
AU COURANT
EARLY WARNING NETWORK

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES. SAVING CHILDREN

Text JOIN to 282-687 to report LRA activity. Include the activity you witnessed, date & time, and location. Subscribe to receive text alerts about LRA raids in your area.
Text JOIN to 282-687 to report LRA activity. Include the LRA activity you witnessed, date & time, and location in the text. Subscribe to the network to receive text alerts about LRA raids in your area.

9 out of 10 LRA soldiers are younger than 18.

Empower your community to end child abductions & conscription.

Powered by Invisible Children.
### 2. CASE STUDY COMPARISON CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Name</th>
<th>Implementing Agency</th>
<th>Stakeholder(s) /Partners</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Geographic Region</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tr>
<td>I Paid A Bribe</td>
<td>Janaagraha</td>
<td>OECD Development Assistance Committee</td>
<td>Government Corruption</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>• Largest online crowd-sourced anti-corruption platform in the world today &lt;br&gt; • Crowd-sourcing model to collect bribe reports &lt;br&gt; • Repository of corruption-related data across government departments</td>
<td>• Data on corruption builds awareness and shame, raising the cost of corruption. &lt;br&gt; • Leverages technology to decrease corruption in government.</td>
<td>• Difficult to measure effectiveness of platform (behavior changes). &lt;br&gt; • After initial successes in 2011, traffic to the website has slowed. &lt;br&gt; • How to generate and sustain interest in the web platform so that they have real impact on corruption in India.</td>
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<td>ABA ROU Early Warning and Response System</td>
<td>American Bar Association, Rule of Law Initiative (ROU)</td>
<td>Congolese Police and National Army</td>
<td>Rape/Serious Crimes</td>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>• Free legal aid and mobile courts to meet the needs of those in remote areas &lt;br&gt; • Scholarship and externship opportunities for female law students</td>
<td>• Helps to build the justice system's ability to manage, analyze and use data to improve the delivery of justice. &lt;br&gt; • Uses simple yet powerful technology to increase access to justice, connect the various actors within the justice system to prevent violence. &lt;br&gt; • Empowers community leaders to advocate on behalf of communities affected by large-scale mining.</td>
<td>• Information routed directly to Congolese police force and national army which have been accused of grave violations against children and corruption.</td>
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<td>Counter - Lord's Resistance Army Early Warning System (C-LRA EWS)</td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>Catholic Relief Services</td>
<td>LRA Attacks/Raids</td>
<td>Northeast DRC &amp; CAR</td>
<td>• Communities use high frequency radios and other technologies to report LRA activities and exchange critical information enabling them to reduce their exposure to attack &lt;br&gt; • Communities can organize their own protection plans and provide trauma-healing support for survivors of LRA attacks</td>
<td>• Over 281,000 beneficiaries in CAR and DRC &lt;br&gt; • Formed 94 community protection committees (32 in CAR, 62 in DRC) that help local populations mitigate the impacts of attacks. &lt;br&gt; • Operates high-frequency radios in 38 communities in CAR and 62 communities in DRC using solar panels to expand dissemination of information on LRA attacks. &lt;br&gt; • Held more than 123 trauma healing workshops in the DRC and CAR. &lt;br&gt; • Trained 538 volunteer conflict monitors across Northern Uganda.</td>
<td>• Only 30 members have ability to send/receive texts. &lt;br&gt; • Some might question whether ongoing U.S. support to the Ugandan military is having unintended consequences for U.S. policy and the region, for example in relation to Uganda’s military role in the internal conflict in South Sudan. &lt;br&gt; • The U.S. security partnership with the UPDF may also impede U.S. diplomatic leverage with regard to criticizing Uganda’s record on democracy, governance, and human rights.</td>
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<td>IPDU/P4P SMS Early Warning Early Response (EWER)</td>
<td>Partnership Initiative in the Niger Delta (IPDU), Partners4Peace (P4P), The Fund for Peace</td>
<td>Law enforcement agencies</td>
<td>Conflict Management and Peace-building</td>
<td>Niger Delta Region</td>
<td>• SMS-Based Early Warning &amp; Response System and peace messaging online platform collects, collates and analyzes conflict incidents and aids law enforcement agencies</td>
<td>Enables PREVENT Committee Members and other trained field monitors to send in regular reports that are integrated into monthly trackers along with other data sources. &lt;br&gt; • Between April-June, 2016, over 160 incidents were reported to the IPDU SMS platform.</td>
<td>• In Nigeria, peacebuilding stakeholders’ responses to early warning signals are weak and inadequate due to a lack of coordination between major stakeholders, policymakers, civil society and local actors. &lt;br&gt; • There is an urgent need to develop conflict prevention and management mechanisms to enhance political stability, peace and human security in Nigeria.</td>
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<td>Belum Early Warning Early Response (EWER)</td>
<td>Belum</td>
<td>The Secretary of State for Security, Colombia University</td>
<td>“Conflict”</td>
<td>Timor-Leste</td>
<td>• Alerts are released when incidents or trends of serious concern are recorded by the EWER monitoring system &lt;br&gt; • Monthly situation reviews summarize the most notable incidents and trends recorded by the EWER monitoring system and present a graphical review of all incidents recorded each month. &lt;br&gt; • Conflict Potential Analysis Reports review EWER data over a longer period (4 months to 1 year) to better identify long-term trends and changes to the security situation at the sub-district, district and national levels.</td>
<td>• Resources; with thousands of disputes reported since 2009, the Belum team can barely scratch the surface of conflict resolution. &lt;br&gt; • Need to strengthen organizational capacity for Belum and FM. These national NGOs still need support in institutional development and management information systems (MIS).</td>
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