

# REINTEGRATING Former Child Soldiers in Nepal



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Children were forcibly conscripted or became victims of rape, assault, and other forms of violence during Nepal's ten year war. In addition to suffering psychological trauma, continuing political instability and violence makes life for children particularly difficult. Access to education and health care is severely limited and children are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Child labour is a serious problem, with more than 40% of children aged 10-14 working. Many children, especially girls, are forced to become bonded labourers or migrate to Kathmandu or India for work. Between 5,000 and 12,000 girls are estimated to be trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation annually, and as many as 200,000 trafficked Nepalese girls are believed to reside in Indian brothels.

An EU project protects and promotes the rights of former child soldiers and conflict-affected children in the Mid-Western Region of Nepal. It is helping the reintegration of thousands of affected former child combatants and children.

The project is giving six months basic reading, writing and maths lessons to 4,000 children who have never attended school or who have dropped out. They are also given life skills education, including sex education, peer education, human rights, and other relevant issues. Children who complete the literacy training are encouraged to attend formal school afterwards.

Two thousand children affected by conflict, abuse, and exploitation will also receive psychosocial counselling, expected to contribute to a reduction in social crime, depression, drug abuse, and suicide. Training will be given to 100 counsellors on working with child conflict survivors. The project is also expected to increase awareness among 50,000 people at national, district and local level through various information campaigns such as radio programs and distribution of pamphlets, posters and booklets.