



Vision GRAM International

# Vision GRAM- International

**Groupe d'Actions contre la Marginalisation – International**

**Group of Actions against the marginalisation- International**

(Bureau International - International Office)

## Press Release

February 12, 2009, **Red Hand Day**, a true symbol:

*Whatever the pressure, they are still soldiers*



Today the world celebrates the International Day against the use of child soldiers, in commemoration of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. But nothing changes in the field. Everything seems to prove to recruiters that they are entitled to recruit and use them and do according to their desire. They are still many in the armed groups. They are always close to death, injured physically, morally and psychologically.

however, The world is not silent. Anyone with compassion and love stood up and said as one man: **No** of use child soldiers. Children, former child soldiers and other young people are standing now to denounce what was done during their passage into armed groups. “This is a strong signal that shows what level the children themselves realize that adults have stolen their childhood and youth” *said Victor AMISI, Executive Director of Vision GRAM- International.*

In DR Congo, the phenomenon does not seem to stop especially with the upsurge of violence seen in recent days since the clashes between the CNDP rebels and the Congolese army (FARDC) on one side and militias in Mai Mai and Rwandese Hutu rebels (FDLR) on the other. They continue to abduct children, to kill, rape and sexually violate them. Children continue to live in displaced camps and are deprived of humanitarian assistance. It is a phenomenon that

continues to worry more than one, because the conflicts seem to persist and change facets over time.

“The International Criminal Court (ICC) opened the way for the establishment of individual criminal responsibility for those who recruit and use children to participate in hostilities”, but apparently its presence does not seem to worry the recruiters.



“In eastern of DR Congo, Laurent Nkunda, the CNDP ex-rebel leader said he is not afraid of international justice, while the Congolese government had issued an arrest warrant against him. His former chief of staff, Bosco Ntaganda said the same thing, despite the international arrest warrant against him. The commander Biyoyo very known in the recruitment of child soldiers in the province of South Kivu continues

to run. However, all these people are very well known for their atrocities against children, including the use of child soldiers.

“Just as Thomas Lubanga, former leader of the rebel Congolese Patriotic Union (UPC), who was arrested, detained and accused of enlisting and conscripting children under fifteen years and their active participation hostilities before the International Criminal Court that his trial was opened on 26 January 2009, all recruiters must be judged for their acts, they can’t enjoy freedom after destroying the lives of thousands of children”, *Victor AMISI criticized.*

“The event of 12 February 2009 remain historical and should not go unnoticed to the heads of governments, they have to take this time, all their responsibilities and act effectively to stop this phenomenon which destroys the future of children”, *he continued.*

Faced with this intolerable situation, ***Vision GRAM-International*** remind the authorities of the DR Congo to its commitments and its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which includes the recruitment and the enrolment of children under fifteen years as a war crime.

It wishes to remind him of his cooperation in the arrest and extradition of Thomas Lubanga in the ICC, and asked him to do the same for **Laurent Nkunda, Bosco Ntaganda Biyoyo** and so they are also for their actions. It is not acceptable that the recruiters of children are rewarded by the military ranks. (*Like the case of Bosco Ntaganda formally appointed as military official in the FARDC*)

**Vision GRAM-International** calls on the United Nations, through his mission in DR Congo (MONUC) to get involved with the Congolese Army to take action while ensuring that other children will no longer be recruited.

That the UN strengthen its embargo in DR Congo, on weapons and take strong action against the perpetrators of these violations of children's rights.

**Vision GRAM-International** wishes that representative of all countries mobilizes and acts to implement and ratify the optional protocol.

*“As one man, let us stand up and say **NO to the use of child soldiers in the world”***

**Vision GRAM-International**

*February 12nd, 2009*

**Vision GRAM - International** (Group of Actions against the marginalization) is a Human Rights organization affiliated with Projet GRAM-Kivu, which promotes human rights by defending the rights of children and women.

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