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# BOTSWANA

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## Republic of Botswana

**Population:** 1.8 million (0.8 million under 18)

**Government armed forces:** 9,000

**Compulsory recruitment age:** no conscription

**Voluntary recruitment age:** 18

**Voting age:** 18

**Optional Protocol:** signed 24 September 2003

**Other treaties ratified** (see glossary):

CRC, GC AP I and II, ICC, ILO 138, ILO 182; ACRWC

***There was no evidence of under-18s in the armed forces. However, the lack of formal age qualification for volunteers indicates that under-18s could be enlisted.***

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## Context

Botswana has one of the highest levels of HIV/AIDS infection in the world. According to UNICEF, an estimated 39 per cent of people between the ages of 15 and 49 were infected, and most of the parents of the country's 78,000 orphans died of HIV/AIDS.<sup>1</sup>

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## Government

### National recruitment legislation and practice

Recruitment into the armed forces is on a voluntary basis.<sup>2</sup> Enlistment is regulated by the Botswana Defence Force Act of 1977. A volunteer must have the apparent age of 18, and providing false information to a recruiting officer is punishable by up to three months' imprisonment and/or a fine. There was no evidence of child recruitment in the armed forces. However, it was unclear how volunteers' exact ages were determined.

The National Service program (Tirelo Setshaba) established in 1980 consists primarily of community service, obligatory for all school students between the ages of 16 and 20. It is not linked to the military.<sup>3</sup>

Women did not have access to military or national service training.<sup>4</sup>

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## Developments

In July 2001 Botswana ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.<sup>5</sup>

- 2 Civil and political rights, including the question of conscientious objection to military service, Report of the UN Secretary-General to UN Commission on Human Rights, UN Doc. E/CN.4/2000/55, 17 December 1999, <http://www.ohchr.org>.
- 3 Gletsang Maakwe, Director of Tirelo Setshaba, *National service programs and proposals, Botswana*, paper submitted for the conference on National youth service: a global perspective, Wisconsin, 1992, revised 1997, <http://www.utas.edu.au/docs/ahugo/NCYS/first/1-Botswana.html>.
- 4 US Department of State, op. cit.
- 5 African Union, <http://www.africa-union.org>.

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1 US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2003*, February 2004, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/hr/c1470.htm>.