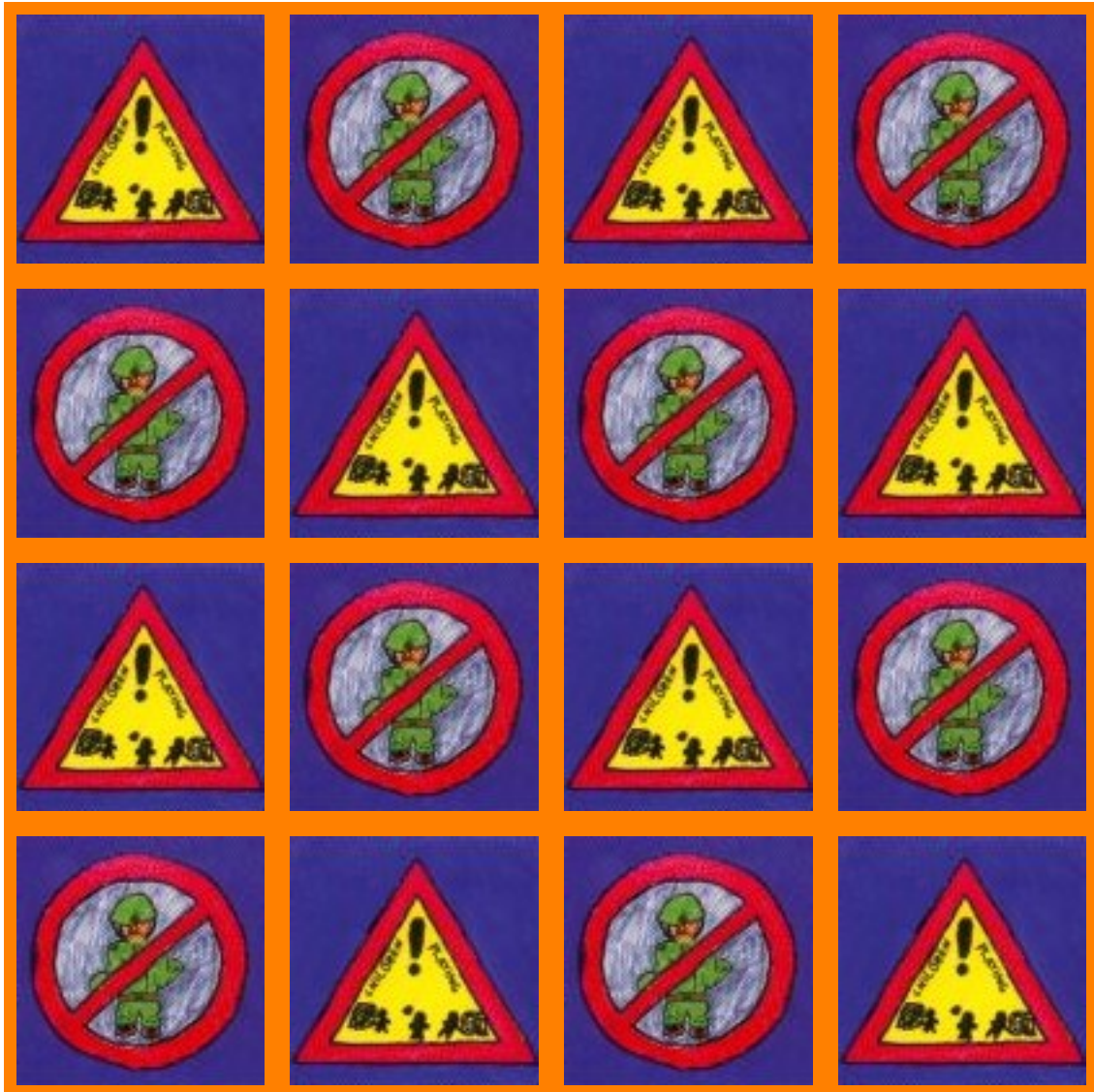


# Protection on Children and Adolescents

## in Complex Emergencies

Oslo/Hadeland 09. - 11- November 1998, Conference Report



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## **The Organisers:**

## United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UNHCR, the United Nations refugee organisation, is mandated by the United Nations to lead and co-ordinate international action for the world-wide protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees, internally displaced, and people who are stateless or whose nationality is disputed. UNHCR strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state, and to return home voluntarily.

In order to improve and enhance the protection and care of refugee children, UNHCR has adopted a Policy on Refugee Children, and has appointed one Senior Co-ordinator for Refugee Children, and five Regional Policy Officers for Children.

## Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

The Norwegian Refugee Council is a non-governmental organisation working for refugees, internally displaced people and other groups affected by war and human rights violations. The organization's headquarter is in Oslo.

Country programme offices have been established in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Croatia, in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Angola, and in Colombia. The complimentary preparedness activities are shouldered by a Standby Force of 600 persons, who on short notice can be deployed anywhere in the world. They represent some 30 categories of skills, including educators and community services personnel.

MOUs have been signed with UNHCR, UNICEF, WEP, WHO, UNHCHR and OCHA, and a UNESCO MOU is ready for signing.

## Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway)

Redd Barna was established in 1946 as a voluntary, humanitarian, membership organisation which observes neutrality in matters of politics and religion. The organisation is committed to creating a better life and a better future for vulnerable children, both in Norway and other parts of the world.

The work of the organisation will be conducted in conformity with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Redd Barna has country programmes in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe.

As a member of The International Save the Children Alliance the organisation is involved in emergency relief operations outside its own programme countries.

In 1996, Redd Barna established an Emergency Standby Team consisting of highly qualified people experienced and trained to work with children in difficult circumstances. The members will, on short notice, be available for assignments to take care of children's psycho-social needs in complex emergencies or other crises. In co-operation with Rädde Barnen (Save the Children Sweden) the organisation has an agreement with UNHCR.

The Conference was funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Funded by: Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (NORAD)

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## Introduction

In November 1998, the Norwegian Refugee Council and Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway) hosted a conference on protection of children<sup>1</sup> and adolescents in complex emergencies, in co-operation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The conference was supported financially by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The aim of the event was :

- to increase the common understanding of the meaning of international protection of children and adolescents
- to address the main problems and principles and give some recommendations to concrete action

The Oslo/Hadeland conference was a follow-up of the United Nations Study on Impact of armed conflict on Children of August 26. 1996, chaired by Graça Machel. ( The Machel study)<sup>2</sup>. The study presents recommendations on how to improve the protection of children in armed conflicts. These recommendations where the starting point for the work that was done during the Oslo/Hadeland conference.

The conference consisted of a one-day seminar in Oslo, and a two-days' workshop in Hadeland, north of Oslo. The United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative for Children and Armed conflict, Olara A. Otunnu, and the Norwegian Minister for Development and Human Rights, Hilde Frafjord Johnson, where among the key speakers on the first day.

### **What has been done in order to follow up the recommendations in the UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children?**

Following the submittal of the Graca Machel study, several conferences have been held in different parts of the world to make the report known and to ensure follow-up. One of these was a conference hosted by Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway) in Oslo in March 1997, "The United Nations study on the Impact of armed conflict on Children". This conference served as a point of departure for the Oslo/Hadeland conference in November 1998.

#### **The action for the Rights of Children (ARC)**

- ARC's primary goal is to increase the capacity of UNHCR, government and NGO field staff to protect and care for children and adolescents during all stages of refugee situations
- ARC is a compendium of training materials that uses an innovative, participatory approach to cover a range of critical issues affecting refugee children and adolescents
- ARC links training to field operations by reviewing the content of modules and identify training methods in accordance with the political, economic, social, and cultural context of a particular region
- ARC reinforces the child and adolescent components of existing UNHCR and NGO emergency training programs.
- ARC was initiated in 1996, and the first training-modules will be completed during the spring of 1999. From 1999 onwards, ARC will be adapted to existing regional training programs. In addition an Internet Resource site will be created

### **The Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict**

The UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children recommended the appointment of a Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. The General Assembly endorsed this recommendation (resolution 48/157, the 20. of December 1993), and Mr. Olara A. Otunnu was assigned to the post by the UN Secretary-General in September 1997.

Several member states, among them Norway, are actively supporting the work of the Special Representative. As a consequence of this, the Special Representative initiated the formation of an informal support group called Friends of the Special Representative. The members of this group are expected to give advise to and collaborate with the Special Representative.

The Special Representative is seeking to spearhead an effort on behalf of all concerned parties to address the violations being committed against children in the context of armed conflict. He seeks to combine normative, political and humanitarian strategies to promote prevention, protection and rehabilitation for the benefit of children. The Special Representative will work closely with UNHCR to promote the protection of refugee and internally displaced children. He will also work in collaboration with the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons on the protection of children displaced within their own borders. Based on the recommendations in the UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, the Special Representative has identified eight key issues of concern to which he is giving priority attention at this stage. The themes were selected because they represent areas where a strong advocacy role by the Special Representative will have a particular added value. The themes are as follows:



The United Nations Secretary General's Special representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara A. Otunnu.  
Foto: Knut Fjeldstad/NTB

- participation of children in armed conflict
- taking norms (international instruments) and values seriously
- rape and sexual abuse in the context of armed conflict
- mine awareness and rehabilitation of child victims
- displaced children
- impact of small arms on children
- impact of sanctions on children
- incorporating standards into United Nations operations

### **The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers**

- a coalition of Human Rights Organisations launched a global campaign to stop the use of child soldiers on the 30th of June 1998
- the campaign is a response to the failure of the UN negotiations to add an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) to raise the legal age limit for soldiers from 15 to 18. The negotiations were blocked by the United States and a handful of other countries
- the Coalition consists of Save the Children, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, International Federation Terre Des Hommes, the Quaker UN Office, Geneva, and the Jesuit Refugee Service. These organisations work in close co-operation with the international Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and key UN agencies
- the strategy of the Coalition is to build the necessary political will at all levels in support of the adoption of an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), prohibiting the military recruitment and participation in hostilities of any person younger than 18 years of age, and the recognition and enforcement of this standard by all armed forces and groups, both governmental and non-government

In his report to the UN General Assembly, submitted in October 1998, the Special Representative gave the following recommendations:

- *Existing standards and commitments must be translated into action.*
- *The Special Representative urges the Security Council to ensure that the protection and welfare of children will constitute a central part in considerations of specific crisis situations, in mandating peacemaking and peacekeeping missions, in the imposition of sanctions regimes, in reviewing standards for the conduct of international personnel, and in the design of peace-building programs.*
- *Non-governmental organisations need to develop their advocacy, operational- and information capacities to respond better to the particular needs of children*
- *More determined efforts must be employed by the international community to prevent or mitigate the suffering of children in armed conflict.*
- *Political support from concerned governments is crucial.*
- *Children must be of central concern in the planning and implementation of post-conflict peace- building programs.*
- *The Special Representative underscores the importance of building local capacities for advocacy on behalf of children affected by armed conflict.*
- *There is an urgent need to organise an effective campaign to encourage the adherence to existing legal standards in conflict areas*
- *Efforts must be made to relieve the suffering of children under sanction regimes.*
- *It is essential to promote local value systems.*
- *Humanitarian response must never be a substitute for political action.*
- *Conflict must be prevented at the source.*

### **Follow-up projects**

In addition to the appointment of the UN Special Representative, four concrete actions have been initiated in order to follow up the UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children:

- The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, created 30th of June 1998, has launched a campaign to lift the age limit for participation in armed conflict to 18 years. This is to be done through the establishment of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (CRC).
- UNICEF has established a working group to review the training that is given to peace-keeping forces regarding protection of children.
- The International Save the Children Alliance and UNHCR has initiated The Action for the Rights of Children (ARC). The aim of ARC is to contribute to the improvement of the protection of children and adolescents.
- In addition to an already existing Regional Coordinator for Refugee Children based in the Great Lakes, UNHCR established four Regional Child Policy Officer posts in 1998, and planned for a fifth regional position for children covering Europe. The role of the Regional Child Policy Officers is to promote the strategic reorientation of UNHCR protection and programming on behalf of refugee children and adolescents.

1 In the following, the use of the word "children" will refer to children and adolescents up to 18 years of age, in terms with the definition used in the Convention on the Rights of the Children

3 This section is based on "Protection of children affected by armed conflict"; Report (A/53/482), prepared by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and submitted to the 53. session of the UN General assembly in October 1998

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## **Overall recommendations from the Oslo/Hadeland conference on protection of children and adolescents**

Several inter-related themes were discussed in the different working groups. All the groups highlighted education as an important preventive tool, in addition to the general importance of education. The groups also focused on the negative consequences of lacking co-ordination between humanitarian organisations, and suggested measures to solve this problem. The participation of children and adolescents in the development and implementation of protective and preventive measures was a reoccurring theme in all the discussions.

The importance of curtailing the breakdown of traditional norms and social codes of behaviour which often takes place during armed conflict, was highlighted and elaborated upon by several members of the groups. In this context, it is essential to strengthen the various local institutions which serve to protect children, and to integrate them with current international norms.

The overall recommendations below represent proposed solutions to common aspects of the protection and prevention of child rights abuses discussed by the working groups. This has been done by linking the common aspects to recent political- and program developments, like the Lysøen declaration, the Security Council Statement on Children affected by Armed Conflict, ways of utilising the ARC-project, and further development of the co-operation between the Special Representative and humanitarian organisations.

### ***The experts gave the following overall recommendations:***

- The Special Representative should report to the Security Council on a regular basis.
- A position for an adolescent-representative should be established in the office of the Special Representative.
- A position for an NGO representative should be established in the office of the Special Representative. The NGO representative would be responsible for co-ordinating NGO activities and the activities of the Special Representative concerning children affected by armed conflict. The possibility of Canadian and/or Norwegian government financing should be explored, as a measure within the recently initiated co-operation between the two countries, laid down in the Lysøen declaration.
- No support should be given to governments or armed groups who use child soldiers.
- Education should be made the 4th component of emergency assistance (in addition to food, shelter and health care).
- An assessment should be made on how an NGO coalition could contribute to a solution to the problem of abduction and recruitment of child soldiers in Uganda and Sudan.
- An Internet database should be established, covering all activities planned by NGOs, governments and UN agencies concerning the issues of children affected by armed conflict.
- The Sudan situation should be approached in a holistic way, including efforts by UN-agencies, governments, rebel groups, NGOs and local neighborhoods.

### **An important step forward**

The Conference provided an opportunity for UN agencies and NGOs to come together and discuss common challenges. The recommendations are expected to be useful in raising the awareness of donors as relates to the particular needs of children and adolescents, and thereby to contribute to increased financial support for protection and prevention measures directed at children and adolescents. The Conference provided an opportunity for UN agencies and NGOs to come together and discuss common challenges. The recommendations are expected to be useful in raising the awareness of donors as relates to the particular needs of children and adolescents, and thereby to contribute to increased financial support for protection and prevention measures directed at children and adolescents

## Appendix 1

### Summary background of the key speakers at the seminar in Oslo 09.11.98

#### **Mr. Ola H. Metliaas, Secretary General, Norwegian Refugee Council:**

Before taking up his post as Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council, Ola Metliaas was Director General of Ullevål Hospital (1989 - 1996). Mr. Metliaas has also been Director General of the Directorate of Labour, Director General in the State Rehabilitation Institute, and Head of Division, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ola Metliaas has published several books and articles, and held several honorary positions in the Liberal Party. He has served as party chairman during two periods, and is today a member of the Committee. He has also held a substantial number of honorary positions in the World Association of World Federalists, and is today a member of the Council.

#### **Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Norwegian Minister of International Development and Human Rights:**

Before taking up the position as Minister of International Development and Human Rights, Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson worked for four years as representative in the Parliament. She was a member of the Energy and Environment Committee. In 1992 - 93, she worked as consultant to the Resource Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She has also served as personal advisor to Mr. Kåre Gjønnes (parliamentary leader) and for the leader of the Christian Democratic Party, Kjell Magne Bondevik (1990 - 91). She served as Kjell Magne Bondevik's political advisor when he was Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1989 - 90.

#### **Mr. Olara Otunnu, UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflicts:**

As the Secretary General's Special Representative for children in armed conflict, Mr. Otunnu serves as advocate for children in conflict situations, promoting measures for their protection in times of conflict and for their healing and reintegration in the aftermath of conflicts. Mr. Otunnu is widely recognised for his long-standing commitment and contribution to diverse activities related to international peace and security, prevention of conflict, reform of multilateral institutions, development, human rights issues, and the future of Africa. In this connection, he has held many leadership responsibilities, including President of the United Nations Security Council, Chairman of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uganda, and Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations. He has also participated in several commissions, including the commission on Global Governance, the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, and the Club of Rome. In addition to this, Mr. Otunnu has also been active in many civic initiatives and organisations, such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Aspen Institute, Hampshire College, the International Crisis Group (ICG), and many other initiatives and organisations.

#### **Ms. Wairimu Karago, Deputy Director of Division of International Protection, UNHCR:**

Ms. Wairimu Karago has worked in UNHCR since 1979. As Deputy Director of the Division of International Protection, she is assisting the director in advising the High Commissioner on the formulation and implementation of policies for the international protection of refugees as well as providing advice, direction and supervision to protection staff on matters related to the protection of refugees. Ms. Karago led the UNHCR delegation to the 4th World Conference and NGO forum on Women in Beijing, and co-drafted chapters on human rights and displacement in the Beijing Platform for Action. She has participated in numerous panels, round tables and working groups on gender issues and the advancement of women. Before taking up the



2 Margareth McCallin	Consultant, Co-ordinator of ARC (Acton for the Rights of Children
3 Kathy Vandergrift	Member of the Canadian NGO Network for Children and Conflict/Advocacy Team Leader, World Vision Canada
4 Hirut Tefferi	Programme Manager, Rädga Barnen, Ethiopia
5 Angelina Acheng Atyam	Vice Chair, Concerned Parents Association, Uganda
6 Jean Claude Legrand	Protection Officer, UNICEF NY

## **GROUP 2: Preventing gender-based violence and sexual abuse**

<b>NAME:</b>	<b>POSITION/ORGANISATION:</b>
1 Gro Th. Lie	Dr. Psychol, HEMIL Centre (Research for Health Promotion), University of Bergen
2 Gregorio Monasta	Consultant, former Director for the UNICEF Sector of Latin-America and the Caribbean
3 Jean Kagayo	Consultant Burundi
4 Jennifer Ashton	Senior Community Service Officer, UNHCR, Geneva
5 Helene Sachstein	Programme Officer, Defense for Children International
6 Elizabeth Jareg	Special Adviser, Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway)

## **GROUP 3: Protection of separated children**

<b>NAME:</b>	<b>POSITION/ORGANISATION:</b>
1 Senija Taharovic	Psychologist/Manager, MOST Child Centre, Bosnia
2 Stener Vogt	Emergency Standby Team, Norwegian Refugee Council
3 Chris Roys	Programme Manager, Save the Children Alliance, Budapest
4 Signe Skare	Programme Manager, Norwegian People's Aid, Oslo
5 Birgit Arellano	Programme Co-ordinator, Rädga Barnen (Save the Children Sweden)
6 Elizabeth Jareg	Director of Protection of Children's Programme for Africa, World Vision

## **GROUP 4: Protection of adolescents**

<b>NAME:</b>	<b>POSITION/ORGANISATION:</b>
1 Agostinho Mamade	Director of the Department of Children and Families, Mozambique
2 Nydia Quiroz	Programme Co-ordinator, UNICEF, Colombia
3 Kachatur V. Gasparyan	Head of Medical Psychological Studies/ Co-ordinator of the Centre for Psychological Rehabilitation (MSF-France), Armenia

4 Maricella Daniel	Senior Regional Policy Advisor, UNHCR, Central Africa
5 Kristin Eskeland	Project Co-ordinator, Norwegian Peoples Aid, Oslo
6 Mark Avola	Project Co-ordinator, Word Vision, Uganda

## **GROUP 5: Education**

<b>NAME:</b>	<b>POSITION/ORGANISATION:</b>
1 Grete Ravn Omdal	Education Consultant, Norwegian Refugee Council
2 Getsie Shanmugam	Programme Specialist, Redd Barna, Sri Lanka
3 Maria de Fatima	Director of Department for Teacher Training, Mozambique
4 Andre Lokisso	Programme Specialist, Unit for Emergency Educational Assistance, UNESCO
5 Mark Richmond	Programme Specialist UNESCO
6 Helge Brochmann	Project Co-ordinator, Human Rights Education, Norwegian Refugee Council
7 Barry Sesnan	Area Manager, UNDP/UNOPS, Somalia Rehabilitation Programme

## **GROUP 6: Emergency assessment and inter-agency collaboration**

<b>NAME:</b>	<b>POSITION/ORGANISATION:</b>
1 Nigel Fischer	Visiting UN Fellow, Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, Canada
2 Wairimu Karago	Deputy Director of Division for International Protection, UNHCR
3 Rita Reddy	Chief of Activities and Programme Branch, UNHCHR
4 Jo White	Information Officer, SCF-UK
5 Margareth Vikki	Director, Emergency Department, Norwegian Refugee Council

## **Other participants**

<b>NAME:</b>	<b>POSITION/ORGANISATION:</b>
1 Heddy Astrup	Executive Officer, Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2 Marit Sørheim	Information Officer, Norwegian Refugee Council

## **Organisers of the workshop**

<b>NAME:</b>	<b>POSITION/ORGANISATION:</b>
1 Neil Boothby	Senior Co-ordinator for Refugee Children, UNHCR, Geneva

2 Kristin Barstad	Junior Expert, UNHCR, Geneva
3 Eldrid Midttun	Education Adviser, Emergency Department, Norwegian Refugee Council
4 Eva-Torill Jacobsen	Programme Co-ordinator, Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway)
5 Asgerd Vettlejord	Project Co-ordinator, Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway)/ Norwegian Refugee Council

## List of abbreviations

ARC	Action for the Rights of Children
CPA	Concerned Parents Organisation, Uganda
CRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
ICRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
IGADD	Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SPLA	Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

## The plight of children in armed conflict

Half of the total number of refugees and internally displaced persons in the world today are children. Millions of children are victims of war. They are often deliberately made targets and instruments of warfare.

In the course of the past decade;

- 2 million children have been killed as a result of armed conflict
- 1 million have been orphaned or separated
- 6 million have been seriously injured or permanently disabled

In addition to this;

- approximately 10 million children suffer from serious psychological trauma as a consequence of war and displacement
- an estimated 300 000 children below the age of 18 are currently under arms
- an estimated 10 000 children have been abducted in Uganda. Abductions have also been reported from several other conflict zones
- approximately 800 children are killed or seriously injured by land mines every month.

*United Nations Children's Fund, (UNICEF) 1998: Children in Conflict – a child rights emergency*

## The UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children

- In 1993, the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended the appointment of an independent expert to study the impact of armed conflict on children. The recommendation was endorsed by the General Assembly. In late 1993, Ms. Graça Machel, former Minister of Education in Mozambique, was appointed by the UN Secretary General to head a two-year study on the issue.
- The study was supported by all parts of the UN system, with UNICEF, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Geneva-based Centre for Human Rights playing lead roles. Non- governmental organisations (NGOs) from all over the world also participated.
- The report was submitted in August 1996, after two years of extensive research, consultations and field-visits.

The UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children is the first comprehensive report that has been produced on this issue, and represents a groundbreaking contribution regarding the improvement of protection of children in armed conflict. It provides a thorough analysis of the multiple ways in which children are abused during armed conflict. The report also presents recommendations on the following:

- participation of children in armed conflict
- protection and care of refugee- and internally displaced children
- sexual exploitation and gender-based violence
- land mines and unexploded ordnance
- health and nutrition
- promotion of psycho-social well-being
- education
- relevance and adequacy of existing standards
- for the protection of children

## **Complex Emergency**

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees defines a Complex Emergency as a humanitarian crisis in a country, region, or society where there is a total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from international or external conflict and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate of any single agency and/or the ongoing United Nations country programme.

## **Protection of Children and Adolescents:**

International protection of refugee children and adolescents can generally be defined as follows: International protection covers the gamut of activities through which refugees' rights are secured by the international community. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the basic international law framework for the protection of children and adolescents in general. Their rights are in large part set out in this Convention, and are those which the international community is to protect when national protection breaks down. These rights are both of a general nature, and more specialized to meet the specific needs of minors. Meeting this responsibility of international protection for refugee children is equally the responsibility of the international community within this framework and within that of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.»

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## 6. Emergency assessment and inter-agency collaboration

In order to improve the humanitarian and human rights situation for children affected by armed conflict, the co-operation and co-ordination between UN agencies, NGOs, donors and governments must be improved. The UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (1996) underlines that the protection of children, within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), must be central to the humanitarian, peacemaking and peacekeeping policies of the UN, and that protection of children should be given priority within existing human rights and humanitarian procedures.

The Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict sees it as a particularly important task to co-operate with all relevant UN agencies in order to develop a collaborative approach to the protection and welfare of children, and to place this concern within the mainstream of UN policy-making and programme activities. His efforts in this regard are in accordance with the UN Secretary-General's efforts to streamline and increase the efficiency of UN activities in general.

He also proposed the development of neighborhood initiatives. The purpose would be to 1) place child protection concerns at the heart of the peace process, and 2) develop comprehensive protection and assistance responses. The group outlined the possibilities of a similar initiative if applied in a Sudan context.



The working group concentrated its discussions around the following three issues:

1. How to move forward to ensure consensus on «unfinished» protection elements of a framework for assessment and collaboration
2. How to move forward on an approach based on children's rights
3. How to progress in the collaboration with the UN Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict

### *1. How to ensure consensus on unfinished protection elements of a framework for assessment and collaboration:*

The group noted that while the assistance (food, shelter and medicine) aspect of interagency emergency responses appears to be streamlined, responses to a number of child protection concerns are less predictable. These missing dimensions include inter-agency responses to sexual violence, prevention of child recruitment, and swift introduction of educational programs. It was also noted that the needs and rights of adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17 years, are often not taken into account.

The group chose to focus on education and gender-based violence/gender and status as examples in this

regard:

#### Education:

In addition to points made by the other groups regarding this issue - such as the necessity of raising the awareness among donors as relates to the importance of making education a priority in emergency intervention, and the importance of incorporating human rights and education for peace in the curriculum - the working group made the following recommendation:

UNICEF/UNHCR/UNESCOs discussion document on «Rapid Educational Response in Complex Emergencies» should serve as a basis for an inter-agency dialogue on how to ensure that basic education and structured activities are provided to children and adolescents affected by armed conflict. The document should be disseminated to offices in the field as well as to NGOs to solicit constructive feedback. The three above mentioned agencies should then host an inter-agency meeting to reach consensus on guidelines, inter-agency agency co-operation and operational models.

#### Gender-based violence/gender and status:

While UNHCR and several NGOs have informative guidelines in this area, these guidelines need to be circulated to a wider audience. Relevant partners should then meet to develop more predictable emergency responses to gender based violence and sexual exploitation. The establishment of performance indicators for agency responses to gender-based violence and sexual abuse, as well as for female participation in decision-making processes, are required. UNICEF and UNHCR, as a «core alliance», should organise emergency response and assume responsibility for moving this aspect of the emergency response agenda forward.

### *2. Moving forward on an approach based on children's rights*

While there are a number of important child rights initiatives under way, the international community does not appear to share a common understanding of protection and assistance based on children's rights. It was therefore recommended that UNHCR, UNICEF and the International Save the Children Alliance develop an inter-agency task force to start working towards a common understanding of child protection in emergencies. UNICEF program guidelines and case studies and UNHCR/Save the Children Alliance's ARC training and capacity building materials should serve as the basis for this common effort.

### *3. Progressing in the collaboration with the UN Special Representative of Children and Armed Conflict*

**UN Collaboration:** Collaboration between the Office of the Special Representative and relevant UN agencies needs to be improved. More consultation needs to take place in the preparation, field visits, and follow-up of field missions.

**Involvement of NGOs:** The importance of the civil society, and thus NGOs, getting more involved in Mr. Otunnu's work was noted. It was recommended that the International Save the Children Alliance consider seconding a staff member to Mr. Otunnu's office to work full time on these matters. The group inquired if this initiative could be financed by the governments of Norway and Canada, as a part of the previously mentioned Lysøen Declaration.

**Personnel:** A representative should be appointed to the office of the Special Representative to be responsible for the co-ordination between the office and the NGO community.

The Sudan situation should be approached in a holistic manner, and have a clear child component. The creation of a forum for the preparation of a peace plan was suggested. Participants in the forum should include UN agencies, national and neighbouring countries' governments and rebel groups.

Other conditions within a peace process would be:

*Political:*

1. No asylum or refuge for groups who abduct children across borders
2. Prohibition of cross-border arms sales
3. Prohibition of land mines

*Monitoring:*

1. Establish child rights monitoring teams
2. Establish procedures for child repatriation, reception and reintegration
3. Initiate child vaccination campaign to all children in the region

*Humanitarian:*

The importance of securing good co-ordination between Operation Lifeline Sudan and the UN office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) was underlined. The necessity of securing access to the war-affected population and to generate resources for humanitarian work was also highlighted. There is an urgent need to integrate activities related to separated children in Sudan and the asylum countries.

**Specific recommendations**

- UNICEF and the International Save the Children Alliance should develop an inter-agency task force to begin working towards a common understanding of child protection in emergencies.
- Collaboration between the Office of the Special Representative and relevant UN agencies should be improved by means of consultants regarding preparation, field visits and follow-up of field missions.
- A representative should be appointed in the office of the Special Representative to be responsible for the co-ordination between the office and the NGO community.
- The International Save the Children Alliance should consider seconding a staff member to Mr. Otunnus office to co-ordinate involvement between the NGOs, civil society and the Special Representative's office. This post could be financed by the governments of Canada and Norway, as part of the Lysøen Declaration.

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## 5. Action to be taken – focus on education

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), article 28, all children have the right to education, and it is the duty of the state to ensure that primary education is free and compulsory for all. Education provides children with important knowledge and contributes to the development of their personality. In addition to this, schooling can represent a state of normalcy for children caught up in armed conflict, refugee children and internally displaced children. Experience also shows that education has a preventive effect on recruitment, abduction and gender based violence, and thereby serves as an important protection tool. The working group underlined the importance of following up on efforts to introduce international standards for schools as zones of peace.

For these reasons, the education needs of children in armed conflict must be met. The working group on education stated that one of the greatest challenges is to raise the awareness of donors on the importance of initiating education at an early stage of a conflict. A tendency among donors is to view education as a long-term development activity, which means that they are reluctant to use emergency funds for this purpose. The UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children calls for educational activity to be established as a key component of all humanitarian assistance. Along with this, the Norwegian Refugee Council has taken an initiative to make education the fourth component of emergency assistance (in addition to food, shelter and health care).

The importance of co-operating with national and local authorities and different types of community groups and local NGOs was highlighted by the working group on education. The group also underscored the importance of an emergency curriculum including basic learning skills as well as civic education, human rights and education for peace. We also need to keep in mind that education in all phases of a conflict must have a long-term perspective, and that it is important to provide children with the knowledge and skills they need to rebuild their lives after the conflict.



### **Key challenges**

- *Awareness-raising & advocacy at national and international levels*  
National governments and UN bodies should make a strong commitment to providing appropriate forms of education as prevention of recruitment/abduction. International donors should make appropriate forms of education eligible for funding as preventive and protective measures in emergencies. A poster, listing the principles, and various targeted brochures of practices should be produced («The Hadeland Declaration on Education in Emergencies and Difficult Circumstances») to highlight the importance and global challenge for investing in a better future.
- *Capacity-building of organisations to handle these situations*  
There is a great need for training of resource persons to handle emergency education. Concerned parties should identify staff to handle education, and consider setting up an international training body or a pool of trainers for rapid assistance. Existing standby-force personnel could provide resource persons

or be given special training. There should be a link to education packages, and case studies could provide a code of practice.

- *Systematic collection of data*

In order to make best possible use of experiences, there should be an ongoing collection of case studies, relevant data and good/bad practices.

- *Prioritisation when funds are limited*

The following prioritisation of target groups was suggested:

1. lower primary, 2. upper primary, 3. secondary, 4. pre-school

Allocation of funds for other activities were indicated as follows:

1. training of teachers, 2. procurement of class equipment, 3. instruction materials (books etc.), 4. supplies (consumables), 5. recreational items, 6. buildings

In general:

Make use of good quality local material when possible. Initiate and support a teacher training system which is sustainable, through national or local structures.

Curriculum, issues in addition to basic learning (literacy, numeracy etc.):

human rights, health education, life skills, AIDS, environmental education, (not in order of priority)

- *Extended target groups*

There are groups of people in situations that in many ways are similar to those resulting from fleeing conflicts. Refugees and internally displaced persons are main target groups for UNHCR and many other humanitarian organisations, while others also may be working with, for instance, urban populations . Exchange of experiences may be useful.

### **Recommendations**

The working group on Education proposed that the following principles are confirmed, adopted and printed on a poster for information and follow-up by all parties involved in providing emergency assistance:

«*The Hadeland Declaration on Principles of Education in Emergencies and Difficult Circumstances*»

- Education/schooling should start immediately
- Good education is long term and life-long; it keeps focus on the future
- Education is a professional job; it must be handled by educationalists. Standards are important, and quality is the aim
- Providing and receiving education is the responsibility and privilege of the whole of society
- Education must be integrated in a framework relating to needs, authorities, policies, culture and a co-ordinated approach
- Governments are not the only actors. Community leadership and the civil society, as well as parents and youth, should be consulted
- Assessment of needs and response should include formal or non-formal structures

### **Specific Recommendations**

- Education should be established as the 4th component in emergency assistance
- Education is a professional job and must be handled by educationalists.
- Standardisation of emergency education training and pooling of trainers should be established
- An international workshop on training for Emergency Education should be organised, to discuss and develop models and material for training of teachers
- A poster should be produced, listing the principles for Education in Emergencies and

Difficult Circumstances (*«The Hadeland Declaration on Principles of Education in Emergencies and Difficult Circumstances»*).

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## 4. Protection of adolescents

The working group on the protection of adolescents drew attention to the invisibility of this group in the context of emergency and displacement. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to military recruitment and sexual abuse, because of the level of maturity that they actually have attained. Up until recently, there has been a lack of attention to the particular protection needs of this group, which calls for specific measures. This illustrates the necessity of constantly reminding donors as well as the international humanitarian community that the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) is in fact applicable to children and adolescents up to 18 years of age. The importance of prioritising the provision of education to adolescents as well as younger children was underlined by the working group.

The working group on protection of adolescents underscored the importance of providing youth with a role within family and community and give them the opportunity to use their energy in a productive way. In refugee situations the establishment of youth-centres can be important for the development and mental health of adolescents. In addition, this is an important protection tool, because it keeps youth occupied with something useful, and thereby prevents idleness, which often leads to enrollment into armed forces. It was recognised, however, that such centres could have the potential of becoming «drafting points» if in the middle of a conflict.

Awareness-raising on the protection needs of adolescents in the local community is important. A prerequisite to finding the best tools to accomplish this is the comprehension of how «adolescence» is understood in the culture where the emergency is taking place.

### Key Issues

- *Understanding the way «Adolescence» is perceived* in the culture where the emergency is taking place, in order to identify the best ways to raise the community awareness on the protection needs of the group.
- *Exploring ideas on how to provide adolescents in complex emergencies with a 'role'*, through developing their potential and channelling their energy in peaceful and constructive activities. This means to provide positive alternatives to participating in the fighting, and to challenge the youth themselves to take an active part in shaping their own lives. Prevention of «idleness» is an important form of protection.
- *Facilitating meetings with the elders* in order to foster communication between generations. This could prove important in the preservation of values and culture. As adolescents are in a stage of search of identity, it is imperative that the values of their community are preserve. As fathers are often absent (many of them even involved in the fighting) the elders represent a special resource in transmitting such values.
- *Paying special attention to adolescent girls*, related to health and pregnancies, means of survival, and the risk of their being exploited, recruited or abducted.



## **Recommendations**

The protection and visibility of adolescents affected by complex emergencies should be increased at all levels - locally, nationally and internationally, as follows:

### *All levels:*

- Constantly referring, through advocacy and humanitarian assistance, to the applicability of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) to those up to 18 years and not only to the young children
- Awareness-raising on the specific needs and protection requirements of adolescents among donors, NGOs and UN agencies, humanitarian workers and educators. This can be done for instance through the ARC training system
- Using the 10 year anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) to focus on youth needs and strengths

### *Local and national levels*

- Developing «Youth mobilisation» skills among community workers, teachers and journalists as well as among the youth themselves, as an important step to upgrading the attention to this age group
- Supporting the formation of youth groups and networks, allocating funds for pilot projects, and facilitating a practical approach to youth activities. The establishment of «Youth Centres», a place where adolescents can gather, learn and exchange ideas, may contribute positively to re-enforcing messages of constructive alternatives to recruitment and to preparing for the future.
- Organising formal or non-formal educational activities for this group; basic skills and civic education, with special attention to girls' needs. Leadership training, and skills in dealing with the media and with conflict management and peace building are seen as vital investments for the future.
- Compiling ideas and experiences, using existing UN and NGO networks and creating links between them to facilitate exchanges for mutual benefit.

### **Specific Recommendations:**

- Unconditional amnesty should be offered to child soldiers during and after the conflict
- A system for adolescents to obtain documentation on age and identity should be established, and tracing- and documentation procedures for adolescents should be available, recognising that they are eligible and in need of searching for their families



- A position for an adolescent-representative should be established in the office of the Special Representative.
- Refugee children/adolescents should be provided with secondary school, not only «basic» schooling

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### 3. Protection of separated children

«A separated child is a person under the age of 18 years who is not being cared for by his/her parent or usual care giver» (Chris Roys). Children are often separated from their parents in the chaos of armed conflict and displacement. Being without the protection of adults, separated children are especially vulnerable to recruitment, sexual assaults and other abuses.

Children are almost always better protected if they stay together with their family. It is therefore important to prevent separation whenever possible. Separation from the family can have a devastating impact on the child's development and psychological health. On the basis of this, the point of departure for the working group on protection of separated children was that the main emphasis for separated children should be on family-based care.

Prevention of separation should be undertaken by local communities and organisations. Children should be given the opportunity to express their wishes and feelings and take part in decisions which affect their own lives. This is in line with article 20 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which states that in addition to being obliged to provide special protection for a child deprived of the family environment, the state shall pay due regard to the child's cultural background in the efforts to meet this obligation.

The working group on protection of separated children underscored the importance of awareness-raising and capacity building in the communities on how separations can be avoided. In addition, institutions and agencies must be made aware of how outside interventions - whether in the form of children's centres or badly organised relief assistance - can contribute to separations. It is also important to have open discussions about the perceptions held by international organisations concerning dependent populations' abilities to solve their own problems.

The working group on protection of separated children concentrated their discussions and recommendations around three key issues: co-ordination and planning, quality issues and awareness raising.



## **Recommendations**

### *Co-ordination and planning:*

- The UN agency responsible for co-ordinating an operation (for instance UNHCR in country of asylum or UNICEF in country of origin) should establish a regional interagency standing group during the onset of the emergency. This group should consist of participants from agencies and organisations concerned with children separated from their parents. In addition, representatives from the population concerned and local/regional authorities should participate in the meetings. Meetings should be held on regular intervals. Two separate series of meetings should be conducted; one for tracing and family reunion and one for care. Their objective should be to agree on mandates for the implementing organisations and draw up plans for action. This regional interagency standing group will determine terms of reference for..
- .. two facilitators, one concentrating on tracing and family reunion, and one on care. They should have experience and knowledge on the issue, and be deployed to the field to assist the implementing partners in setting up specific programs for separated children. This would be two full time-posts. The facilitators would report to the Regional Group. The facilitators should be administratively connected to the agency co-ordinating the operation. The facilitators' main task should be to assist the main co-ordinator from the UN agency with knowledge and practical help. Using experts from the Emergency Preparedness Forces of Redd Barna (Save the Children, Norway) and the Norwegian Refugee Council as facilitators was suggested.
- .. an assessment of the situation of the separated children. This is to be conducted by experts from agencies and organisations concerned and co-ordinated by the facilitator. The assessment should be conducted by using participatory methods, to ensure identification of the real needs and resources of the target group. Furthermore, this group of experts should be used to conduct training on policy, principles and best practice.

### *Quality issues:*

- Two codes of conduct should be established by the inter-agency standing group on separated children, establishing standards for work with separated children. There should be one code of conduct on tracing and family reunion, and one on care. The two codes of conduct should be linked to the ARC capacity building programme, in order to improve practice and guide authorities and donors in making authorisation and funding decisions. To secure agreement from all organisations concerned, these codes of conduct will need to be distributed for feedback. Furthermore, the codes of conduct will need to be agreed upon at the above mentioned regional meetings. The codes of conduct will serve as a starting point for developing specific Guidelines addressing the specific problems in different areas. The Guidelines will be developed in co-operation with the above mentioned facilitator.
- Advocacy towards agencies conducting field assessments to include issues relating to the separation of children and to ensure that this influences programme planning.
- ARC should establish an information database on the Internet, covering materials relating to separated children. The files in the database should be light (e.g. without unnecessary graphics) to be possible to download on bad phone lines in the field.
- The International Save the Children Alliance should initiate a research project to evaluate models of prevention of separation and effects of separation by a range of agencies.

### *Awareness raising:*

- UNICEF country offices should include prevention of separation - e.g. linked to HIV/AIDS,

trafficking, economic issues etc. - in their country programs.

- The International Save the Children Alliance should disseminate the result of its research from countries of asylum to countries of origin.
- The separated children in the Europe-project «European Network» should be asked to feedback information and issues about the reality of separation in their countries to countries of origin, key agencies and governments.
- As an initial step, ARC should conduct a pilot workshop with donors. Feedback from that workshop should be sent to subregional/regional interagency standing groups to enable them to replicate the training locally. If appropriate, this would include other agencies (i.e. dealing with health, food, water, commodities).

### ***Specific recommendations***

- Agencies concerned with separated children in a particular region should meet during the onset of the emergency and continue meeting on regular intervals. The initiator should be the UN agency responsible for co-ordinating the operation.
- The above mentioned agencies should establish a code of conduct for work with separated children.
- UNICEF country offices should include prevention of separation - linked to HIV/AIDS, trafficking, economic issues etc. - in their country programs.

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## 2. Preventing gender-based violence and sexual abuse

Sexual abuse and other forms of gender-based violence like rape, prostitution, trafficking, sexual humiliation and mutilation and domestic violence pose a constant threat to women and adolescent girls during armed conflict, despite the obligations placed on states parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) in Article 34. The article declares that states shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution.

Mass rapes of women and girls are used as a deliberate war strategy. The assaults committed against women and girls during the wars in Bosnia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone are horrific examples of this.

The breakdown of the social fabric during armed conflict also exposes girls and women to risk during flight and in exile. Assaults are being committed by other refugees/internally displaced, international and local camp-staff, local population and soldiers, including UN peacekeeping forces.

In 1996, the UN adopted a resolution stating that rape in the context of war is a war crime and a violation of International Humanitarian Law. Following the efforts of the UN Special Representative of Children and Armed Conflict, rape and other forms of gender-based violence have been defined as crimes against humanity in the Statute (completed in 1998) of the International Criminal Court.

Gender-based violence is to a great extent invisible because of shame, taboos, threats and traditional practises. This fact also makes work with gender-based violence sensitive. However, mechanisms exist within any society to protect at-risk groups, like women, adolescents and children. During war, this type of protection is often disrupted. The working group on prevention of gender-based violence and sexual abuse stated that an important challenge to the humanitarian community is to find and implement strategies to reinforce these mechanisms and to initiate dialogue between traditional and national legal systems in order to find proper ways to sanction the perpetrators.

### **Key Issues:**

- Local traditional values must be reinforced in order to strengthen the protective networks for children and to raise the community awareness on the protection needs of vulnerable groups.
- Continuous advocacy and awareness raising must be conducted in order to create and promote a climate in which measures to prevent gender-based violence and sexual abuse are given priority.
- Focus has to be kept on the necessity of including the prevention of gender-based violence and sexual abuse in the national legal system.



## **Recommendations**

### *Local and regional level:*

- Local power structures, supporting local resources and initiatives to protect children at risk, must be identified
- Local early warning and protective mechanisms must be established
- Comprehensive training programs on child development and children's rights and the factors affecting them should be established
- Creating safe venues for children, for instance by establishing physical security systems in camps and collective centres should be given priority.
- Experiences of good practice and of abuses should be documented and made available at field level
- Dialogue should be initiated between traditional value systems and international instruments of protection.
- Steps should be taken to improve the fostering and tracing of separated children and to reinforce family reunification. Criteria for selection and follow-up action should be developed.
- Education should be seen as an important tool for preventing violence and exploitation. Specific training programs for girls should be established in order to increase the number of girls attending schools.
- Collaborative programs should be initiated to exchange information on perpetrators, tracing mechanisms and to co-operate on sanctions against violators.
- Co-operation on extraterritorial laws and immigration laws regarding trafficking and witness-protection should be established.
- Agencies should appeal for assistance with international bodies like Interpol to investigate cases of sexual abuse

### *International Level:*

- Specific concerns of local and national NGOs should be brought to the attention of international forums and mechanisms, like the Working Committees on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), Conventions against Torture and the Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights (1966).
- Special thematic or country rapporteurs on violation against women and children should be appointed.

### **Specific recommendations:**

- The number of community workers in UNHCR and UNICEF should be increased. Specialised community workers should be appointed to work on child related issues.
- Special thematic or country rapporteurs on violation against women and children should be appointed.
- Field research should be conducted in three sites to see how the traditional help system, including administration, health- and school systems, local police and security systems, actually deal with sexual abuse of children, and how the «users» of the system perceive it.

- Common standards for documentation of gender-based violations and violation of child rights should be established on the onset of an emergency situation.

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## «It's time to act»

### – *recommendations from the six working groups at the Oslo/Hadeland conference on protection of children and adolescents in complex emergencies*

The conclusions in the UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (1996) and the report «Protection of children affected by armed conflict», prepared by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, were the starting points for the discussions that took place in the two-days workshop following the seminar in Oslo. 46 experts from all continents participated. They were divided into six groups, and concentrated on the following issues:

- 1. Preventing recruitment of children to military service**
- 2. Preventing gender-based violence and sexual abuse**
- 3. Protection of separated children**
- 4. Protection of adolescents**
- 5. Actions to be taken - focus on education**
- 6. Emergency assessment and inter-agency collaboration**

The groups' discussions were structured around the following issues:

1. Recognition of the importance of the child-related issues - what measures can we take to contribute to this?
2. Agencies' capacity to protect children - what steps can be taken to improve it?
3. How do we go about increasing donor support for protection and prevention measures directed at children and adolescents?

Ms. Elisabeth Jareg, Special Adviser in Redd Barna (Save the Children, Norway), focused on challenges in the field of child protection in her introductory speech. She highlighted the importance of the issue «children in complex emergencies» as a separate field of activities, and giving priority to competence building in this field. In most conflict-ridden areas, scarcity of community workers is also an impediment to the enhancement of child protection.

In light of the issues above, the groups discussed possible actions to be taken at different geographical levels. The experts started their work by agreeing that an understanding of which children are most at risk is a prerequisite to adequate protection for children and adolescents in complex emergencies. For example, children who are separated from their families are particularly vulnerable to under-age military recruitment. Likewise, unaccompanied girls and girls who are taken care of by someone outside their family are more likely to be subjected to sexual violence than others.





## 1. Preventing recruitment of children to military service

According to the Convention on the Rights of the child (1989), article 38, children below the age of 15 should not be recruited into armed forces. Today, around 300 000 children below the age of 18 are participating in armed conflict. They serve as combatants in government armed forces and armed opposition groups. A substantial number of these children are below 15 years of age, but no estimate exists of how many.

Following the efforts of the UN Special Representative of Children and Armed Conflict, recruitment and participation of children under 15 in hostilities have been defined as a war crime in the Statute (completed in 1998) of the International Criminal Court.

When the UN negotiations to add an optional protocol to the CRC to raise the legal age limit of soldiers to 18 failed, a group of human rights organisations formed the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. The Coalition is currently working to build the necessary political will at all levels in support of the adoption of an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the recognition and enforcement of this standard by all armed forces and groups, both governmental and non-governmental.

It is important to recognise that the factors which give rise to the participation of children in conflict are complex. No single model can either explain all the factors, nor outline a uniform procedure which will prevent child recruitment, nor ultimately enable procedures for demobilisation and social reintegration. This is dependent upon an assessment of the political, social and economic factors which are influencing the process of the conflict, an understanding of the local context, and the resources available to protect children and secure their well-being. The main obstacle to the prevention of recruitment and abduction, however, is the unwillingness among community- and military leaders to abolish this atrocious practise.

### **Key issues:**

- A child-focused analysis should be done at an early stage in every conflict/potential conflict, to identify specific factors that contribute to the problem, assess opportunities to intervene, and develop further strategies. UNICEF should co-ordinate the analysis, share information with all players and enable the relevant actors to analyse the situation.
- On the basis of this, a balanced approach to the prevention of recruitment should be developed. This should incorporate the implementation of international legal standards and instruments, but also the development of practical initiatives which respond to and are informed by the reality confronting the children, their families and communities.
- Community-based, child-focused prevention strategies should be developed at all levels.
- Adolescents must be given priority by all agencies and donors, especially older adolescents. All communities have to focus on groups of children who are more at risk than others.
- Education is seen as a key tool for prevention of recruitment.
- Children must be active participants in advocacy

## **Recommendations**

### Community based prevention

#### Local and regional level:

- Traditional protection mechanisms must be recognised and strengthened. Prevention must be child-focused. NGOs and communities must focus on groups of children who are more at risk than others, for example children who are separated from their families or children who do not live in their home communities.
- Local communities and NGOs should engage in social dialogue with males on the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Specific attention should be paid to factors affecting girls, such as their particular vulnerability and early marriage.
- The local community and NGOs should develop strategies to allow youth who have been recruited to armed groups/forces to return to their communities, to accept them and to integrate them.
- Awareness programs should include rebel movements and government forces. Dialogue between local community, children, militia and the government should be supported.
- Priority should be given to awareness-raising among teachers on the issues of children's rights and the life as child soldiers.
- Investigations in the communities should include charting of risk factors.
- Recreational activities for at-risk boys should be established, for instance football teams.
- Communities that have managed to keep their children from being recruited should be assisted in the development of best-practices.
- Children and adolescents should be seen as promoters of prevention and be encouraged to participate actively in preventive activities.

#### International level

- NGOs should promote awareness on the importance of integrating international protection instruments and local value systems in order to improve the protection of children.
- UN agencies should gather and learn from both successful and less successful community protection strategies.
- Routines for birth registration and provision of ID-cards should be established.

## *Education*

#### Local and national level:

- When formal education is non-existent, community-based non-formal education must be developed, and this for children at all levels. National governments should be encouraged to support and take part in the planning process at all levels. Vulnerable groups should be targeted.
- Safety measures must be taken. A strategy must be developed to deliver education in the safest way possible, including protection of children in school and on their way to school.
- Teaching of survival techniques and the consequences of voluntarily joining the military should be included in the formal or non-formal education.

#### International level

- National governments and UN bodies must make a strong commitment to appropriate form of education as prevention of recruitment and abduction.

- Appropriate forms of education must be made eligible for funding by international donors.

## Monitoring

### All levels:

- Common standards for documentation of violations of children's rights should be established at the outset of an emergency situation. These standards should be common for all agencies working in the area.
- Reports and documentation on violations should be given to national bodies responsible for reporting under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). These bodies should be held publicly responsible for acting on the content of the documentation.
- Positive steps toward compliance with international standards by government forces, armed groups, militia and others should be reported to national governments and relevant international bodies.

### ***Specific recommendations***

- NGOs should promote awareness of the importance of integrating international protection instruments and local value systems in order to improve the protection of children.
- Routines for birth registration and provision of ID-cards should be established.
- When formal education is non-existing, communities should develop non-formal education for everyone.

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## «Words are not enough»

### **Main issues from the seminar held in Oslo**

The 120 participants and six speakers were welcomed by Mr. Ola H. Metliaas, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council to the seminar in Oslo on the 9th of November. In his opening address he focused on the importance of continuing efforts to have all 191 state signatories to the CRC - as well as groups within their jurisdiction - prove that they intend to honour these rights. The UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (1996) is a groundbreaking contribution to this effort.

Before giving the floor to the moderator of the day, Mr. Trond Waage, Norway's Ombudsman for Children, Mr. Metliaas concluded by pledging the strong support of Norwegian NGOs to stepping up the efforts on behalf of children affected by armed conflict.

### **Children in captivity**

Ms. Angelina Acheng Atyam is one of the founders of an organisation called Concerned Parents Association (CPA). CPA was created in October, 1996, following the abduction of 139 girls from the dormitory of a boarding school by the rebel group Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in 1996. 30 of the girls are still in captivity, among them Mrs. Acheng Atyam's daughter. Ms. Acheng Atyam presented a series of real-life stories about children abducted from northern Uganda in order to serve for the LRA.

CPA is fighting for a release of the abducted children. They co-operate with other human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson, the Norwegian Minister of International Development and Human Rights, also focused on the plight of the world's 300 000 child soldiers in her speech. She drew attention to the need to build alliances to combat the atrocities committed against children in armed conflict, and underlined the necessity of doing more to put the issue high on the international agenda. She expressed her expectations for the Oslo/Hadeland conference in this regard, hoping that it would provide the impetus for taking action on different issues concerning children.

### **The importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)**

All the speakers at the conference focused on three aspects of concern that must be addressed in our efforts to protect children against the atrocities of war, namely the normative, the political and the operational aspect.

Regarding the normative aspect, Ms. Johnson underlined the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) as a framework and guiding tool for all efforts to protect and aid children. Both the Minister and Ms. Hirut Tefferi (Rädda Barnen, Kenya and Southern Sudan) drew attention to UNICEF's use of the Convention in the negotiations to incorporate a humanitarian aspect in the ground rules for Operation Lifeline Sudan.

Ms. Wairimu Karago, Deputy Director of the UNHCR Division of International Protection, drew attention to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) as the normative framework of the UNHCR Guidelines for Refugee Children.

Mr. Otunnu pointed to the Statutes of the International Criminal Court, where most demands regarding the rights of children are included. Among other things, the recruitment and participation of children under 15 in hostilities were defined as a war crime in the Statute.

Both Mr. Otunnu and Ms. Tefferi underlined the importance of integrating international norms and local value

systems. During armed conflict, we often witness a breakdown of traditional norms and social codes of behaviour. In this context, it is essential to strengthen the various local institutions that serve to protect children. Ms. Tefferi underlined that development of local capacity is particularly important in situations where international agencies might have to withdraw on short notice.

The Special Representative expressed his support to the efforts made by the Coalition to stop the use of Child Soldiers to build the necessary political will in support of the adoption of an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

Mr. Nigel Fisher pointed to the importance of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) in the sense that it has put children's rights on the map. On the other hand, the number of violations of children's rights has increased alarmingly during the last decade, despite the fact that 191 countries have ratified the Convention. This calls for immediate political action; the further development of norms or humanitarian aid can never substitute actions to address the real causes of armed conflict, often to be found in the unequal distribution of resources.

### The Lysøen Declaration

- The Lysøen Declaration is an agreement between the governments of Canada and Norway to establish a framework for consultation and concerted action on important issues of international concern.
- Some important objectives:
  - To enhance foreign policy consultations and co-operation on priority issues of international concern
  - To co-ordinate and concert actions with a view to:
    - enhancing human security
    - promoting human rights
    - strengthening humanitarian law
    - preventing conflict
    - fostering democracy and good governance
  - To develop and enhance partnerships between governments, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and other elements of civil society.
- The framework for consultation will consist of ministerial meetings at least once a year and bilateral teams to develop and implement joint Ministerial initiatives. The two governments will seek the advice and involvement of civil society and relevant international bodies. Where practicable, the intention is to involve other countries as well.
- Issues relating to children in complex emergencies on the partnership agenda:
  - Land mines
  - Women and children in armed conflict
  - International Criminal Court
  - Small arms proliferation
  - International Humanitarian Law
  - Child soldiers

### Addressing the causes of armed conflict

Mr. Fisher pointed to the tendency in the international community to use humanitarian aid as a substitute for political action. To address the causes of armed conflict, concerted political action is necessary. The uneven conditions for international trade and the power that rests in the hands of the giant multinational corporations must be addressed by the countries that thrive at the expense of the world's poorest countries. The leaders of conflict-ridden states must also be challenged to address the issue of internal redistribution of resources.

Mr. Otunnu also drew attention to the international arms trade as a conservator of armed conflicts. The Special Representative is co-operating with the Department for Disarmament Affairs, UN agencies and non-governmental organisations in support of instituting controls for the transfer of arms to conflict zones.

Both Mr. Otunnu and Ms. Johnson underscored the importance of the statement made by the Security Council following the Special Representative's briefing on the theme «Children affected by armed conflict». The Security Council gave full support to the Special Representative's work, and identified areas in which the Security Council should increase their efforts to protect children, like for instance UN peacekeeping operations. Several of the speakers stressed the importance of this statement as a lobby tool in the future work for children's rights, and Mr. Fisher suggested to work for a regularisation of the Special Representative's reporting to the Security Council.

A potentially useful alliance on the political side is the so-called Lysøen Declaration, signed in May 1998. This is an agreement between the Norwegian and Canadian governments to co-operate on issues connected to human rights and democratisation. The promotion of children's rights will constitute an important part of the co-operation.

### **Relevance of international agencies in the field**

Mr. Neil Boothby, Senior Co-ordinator for Refugee Children at UNHCR, focused on the important challenges ahead regarding the implementation of human rights standards at field level. He highlighted the importance of focusing on the specifics of each emergency situation in order to ensure the most feasible implementation. He also noted the importance of combining humanitarian aid and protection activities at field level with advocacy on the national and international level. In this respect, an important challenge is how to mobilise the advocacy networks that are needed. Mr. Fisher also elaborated on this issue, and underlined the termination of competition between NGOs in the field as a prerequisite to obtain better co-ordination of humanitarian aid and protection activities.

Ms. Karago stressed the importance of initiating education activities at an early stage of a conflict. Education does not only provide children with important knowledge, it also represents a state of normalcy for children and serves as an important protection tool. Ms. Karago underlined the importance of viewing education in a long time perspective and, when it comes to refugees, keep focus on the preferred durable solution; voluntary repatriation.

Ms. Tove Romsaas Wang, assistant Secretary General and Head of the International Department of Redd Barna (Save the Children Norway), drew attention to the fact that the special needs of adolescents in complex emergencies are often overlooked. She underlined the devastating effects that wars have on the future of communities and entire countries, when whole generations of adolescents and children are left without educational opportunities.

Ms. Romsaas Wang, looking to the challenges ahead at field level, posed a challenge to the Norwegian government regarding its granting system, which she argued had to become more flexible in order to contribute to the improvement of humanitarian organisations' abilities to protect children. She also expressed hopes that the Hadeland workshop would provide proposals on how to strengthen measures of protection in general.

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**PROTECTION OF CHILDREN...**



## «It's time to act»

### *– recommendations from the six working groups at the Oslo/Hadeland conference on protection of children and adolescents in complex emergencies*

The conclusions in the UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (1996) and the report «Protection of children affected by armed conflict», prepared by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, were the starting points for the discussions that took place in the two-days workshop following the seminar in Oslo. 46 experts from all continents participated. They were divided into six groups, and concentrated on the following issues:

- 1. Preventing recruitment of children to military service**
- 2. Preventing gender-based violence and sexual abuse**
- 3. Protection of separated children**
- 4. Protection of adolescents**
- 5. Actions to be taken - focus on education**
- 6. Emergency assessment and inter-agency collaboration**

The groups' discussions were structured around the following issues:

1. Recognition of the importance of the child-related issues - what measures can we take to contribute to this?
2. Agencies' capacity to protect children - what steps can be taken to improve it?
3. How do we go about increasing donor support for protection and prevention measures directed at children and adolescents?

Ms. Elisabeth Jareg, Special Adviser in Redd Barna (Save the Children, Norway), focused on challenges in the field of child protection in her introductory speech. She highlighted the importance of the issue «children in complex emergencies» as a separate field of activities, and giving priority to competence building in this field. In most conflict-ridden areas, scarcity of community workers is also an impediment to the enhancement of child protection.

In light of the issues above, the groups discussed possible actions to be taken at different geographical levels. The experts started their work by agreeing that an understanding of which children are most at risk is a prerequisite to adequate protection for children and adolescents in complex emergencies. For example, children who are separated from their families are particularly vulnerable to under-age military recruitment. Likewise, unaccompanied girls and girls who are taken care of by someone outside their family are more likely to be subjected to sexual violence than others.

### **1. Preventing recruitment of children to military service**

According to the Convention on the Rights of the child (1989), article 38, children below the age of 15 should not be recruited into armed forces. Today, around 300 000 children below the age of 18 are participating in armed conflict. They serve as combatants in government armed forces and armed opposition groups. A substantial number of these children are below 15 years of age, but no estimate exists of how many.

Following the efforts of the UN Special Representative of Children and Armed Conflict, recruitment and participation of children under 15 in hostilities have been defined as a war crime in the Statute (completed in 1998) of the International Criminal Court.

When the UN negotiations to add an optional protocol to the CRC to raise the legal age limit of soldiers to 18 failed, a group of human rights organisations formed the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers. The

Coalition is currently working to build the necessary political will at all levels in support of the adoption of an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the recognition and enforcement of this standard by all armed forces and groups, both governmental and non-governmental.

It is important to recognise that the factors which give rise to the participation of children in conflict are complex. No single model can either explain all the factors, nor outline a uniform procedure which will prevent child recruitment, nor ultimately enable procedures for demobilisation and social reintegration. This is dependent upon an assessment of the political, social and economic factors which are influencing the process of the conflict, an understanding of the local context, and the resources available to protect children and secure their well-being. The main obstacle to the prevention of recruitment and abduction, however, is the unwillingness among community- and military leaders to abolish this atrocious practise.

### **Key issues:**

- A child-focused analysis should be done at an early stage in every conflict/potential conflict, to identify specific factors that contribute to the problem, assess opportunities to intervene, and develop further strategies. UNICEF should co-ordinate the analysis, share information with all players and enable the relevant actors to analyse the situation.
- On the basis of this, a balanced approach to the prevention of recruitment should be developed. This should incorporate the implementation of international legal standards and instruments, but also the development of practical initiatives which respond to and are informed by the reality confronting the children, their families and communities.
- Community-based, child-focused prevention strategies should be developed at all levels.
- Adolescents must be given priority by all agencies and donors, especially older adolescents. All communities have to focus on groups of children who are more at risk than others.
- Education is seen as a key tool for prevention of recruitment.
- Children must be active participants in advocacy

### **Recommendations**

#### Community based prevention

#### Local and regional level:

- Traditional protection mechanisms must be recognised and strengthened. Prevention must be child-focused. NGOs and communities must focus on groups of children who are more at risk than others, for example children who are separated from their families or children who do not live in their home communities.
- Local communities and NGOs should engage in social dialogue with males on the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Specific attention should be paid to factors affecting girls, such as their particular vulnerability and early marriage.
- The local community and NGOs should develop strategies to allow youth who have been recruited to armed groups/forces to return to their communities, to accept them and to integrate them.
- Awareness programs should include rebel movements and government forces. Dialogue between local community, children, militia and the government should be supported.
- Priority should be given to awareness-raising among teachers on the issues of children's rights and the life as child soldiers.
- Investigations in the communities should include charting of risk factors.
- Recreational activities for at-risk boys should be established, for instance football teams.
- Communities that have managed to keep their children from being recruited should be



assisted in the development of best-practices.

- Children and adolescents should be seen as promoters of prevention and be encouraged to participate actively in preventive activities.

#### International level

- NGOs should promote awareness on the importance of integrating international protection instruments and local value systems in order to improve the protection of children.
- UN agencies should gather and learn from both successful and less successful community protection strategies.
- Routines for birth registration and provision of ID-cards should be established.

#### *Education*

##### Local and national level:

- When formal education is non-existent, community-based non-formal education must be developed, and this for children at all levels. National governments should be encouraged to support and take part in the planning process at all levels. Vulnerable groups should be targeted.
- Safety measures must be taken. A strategy must be developed to deliver education in the safest way possible, including protection of children in school and on their way to school.
- Teaching of survival techniques and the consequences of voluntarily joining the military should be included in the formal or non-formal education.

##### International level

- National governments and UN bodies must make a strong commitment to appropriate form of education as prevention of recruitment and abduction.
- Appropriate forms of education must be made eligible for funding by international donors.

#### Monitoring

##### All levels:

- Common standards for documentation of violations of children's rights should be established at the outset of an emergency situation. These standards should be common for all agencies working in the area.
- Reports and documentation on violations should be given to national bodies responsible for reporting under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). These bodies should be held publicly responsible for acting on the content of the documentation.
- Positive steps toward compliance with international standards by government forces, armed groups, militia and others should be reported to national governments and relevant international bodies.

#### ***Specific recommendations***

- NGOs should promote awareness of the importance of integrating international protection instruments and local value systems in order to improve the protection of children.
- Routines for birth registration and provision of ID-cards should be established.
- When formal education is non-existing, communities should develop non-formal education for everyone.

## 2. Preventing gender-based violence and sexual abuse

Sexual abuse and other forms of gender-based violence like rape, prostitution, trafficking, sexual humiliation and mutilation and domestic violence pose a constant threat to women and adolescent girls during armed conflict, despite the obligations placed on states parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) in Article 34. The article declares that states shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution.

Mass rapes of women and girls are used as a deliberate war strategy. The assaults committed against women and girls during the wars in Bosnia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone are horrific examples of this.

The breakdown of the social fabric during armed conflict also exposes girls and women to risk during flight and in exile. Assaults are being committed by other refugees/internally displaced, international and local camp-staff, local population and soldiers, including UN peacekeeping forces.

In 1996, the UN adopted a resolution stating that rape in the context of war is a war crime and a violation of International Humanitarian Law. Following the efforts of the UN Special Representative of Children and Armed Conflict, rape and other forms of gender-based violence have been defined as crimes against humanity in the Statute (completed in 1998) of the International Criminal Court.

Gender-based violence is to a great extent invisible because of shame, taboos, threats and traditional practises. This fact also makes work with gender-based violence sensitive. However, mechanisms exist within any society to protect at-risk groups, like women, adolescents and children. During war, this type of protection is often disrupted. The working group on prevention of gender-based violence and sexual abuse stated that an important challenge to the humanitarian community is to find and implement strategies to reinforce these mechanisms and to initiate dialogue between traditional and national legal systems in order to find proper ways to sanction the perpetrators.

### **Key Issues:**

- Local traditional values must be reinforced in order to strengthen the protective networks for children and to raise the community awareness on the protection needs of vulnerable groups.
- Continuous advocacy and awareness raising must be conducted in order to create and promote a climate in which measures to prevent gender-based violence and sexual abuse are given priority.
- Focus has to be kept on the necessity of including the prevention of gender-based violence and sexual abuse in the national legal system.

### **Recommendations**

#### *Local and regional level:*

- Local power structures, supporting local resources and initiatives to protect children at risk, must be identified
- Local early warning and protective mechanisms must be established
- Comprehensive training programs on child development and children's rights and the factors affecting them should be established
- Creating safe venues for children, for instance by establishing physical security systems in camps and collective centres should be given priority.
- Experiences of good practice and of abuses should be documented and made available at field level
- Dialogue should be initiated between traditional value systems and international instruments of protection.

- Steps should be taken to improve the fostering and tracing of separated children and to reinforce family reunification. Criteria for selection and follow-up action should be developed.
- Education should be seen as an important tool for preventing violence and exploitation. Specific training programs for girls should be established in order to increase the number of girls attending schools.
- Collaborative programs should be initiated to exchange information on perpetrators, tracing mechanisms and to co-operate on sanctions against violators.
- Co-operation on extraterritorial laws and immigration laws regarding trafficking and witness-protection should be established.
- Agencies should appeal for assistance with international bodies like Interpol to investigate cases of sexual abuse

*International Level:*

- Specific concerns of local and national NGOs should be brought to the attention of international forums and mechanisms, like the Working Committees on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), Conventions against Torture and the Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights (1966).
- Special thematic or country rapporteurs on violation against women and children should be appointed.

***Specific recommendations:***

- The number of community workers in UNHCR and UNICEF should be increased. Specialised community workers should be appointed to work on child related issues.
- Special thematic or country rapporteurs on violation against women and children should be appointed.
- Field research should be conducted in three sites to see how the traditional help system, including administration, health- and school systems, local police and security systems, actually deal with sexual abuse of children, and how the «users» of the system perceive it.
- Common standards for documentation of gender-based violations and violation of child rights should be established on the onset of an emergency situation.

### 3. Protection of separated children

«A separated child is a person under the age of 18 years who is not being cared for by his/her parent or usual care giver» (Chris Roys). Children are often separated from their parents in the chaos of armed conflict and displacement. Being without the protection of adults, separated children are especially vulnerable to recruitment, sexual assaults and other abuses.

Children are almost always better protected if they stay together with their family. It is therefore important to prevent separation whenever possible. Separation from the family can have a devastating impact on the child's development and psychological health. On the basis of this, the point of departure for the working group on protection of separated children was that the main emphasis for separated children should be on family-based care.

Prevention of separation should be undertaken by local communities and organisations. Children should be given the opportunity to express their wishes and feelings and take part in decisions which affect their own lives. This is in line with article 20 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which states that in addition to being obliged to provide special protection for a child deprived of the family environment, the state shall pay due regard to the child's cultural background in the efforts to meet this obligation.

The working group on protection of separated children underscored the importance of awareness-raising and capacity building in the communities on how separations can be avoided. In addition, institutions and agencies must be made aware of how outside interventions - whether in the form of children's centres or badly organised relief assistance - can contribute to separations. It is also important to have open discussions about the perceptions held by international organisations concerning dependent populations' abilities to solve their own problems.

The working group on protection of separated children concentrated their discussions and recommendations around three key issues: co-ordination and planning, quality issues and awareness raising.

## **Recommendations**

### *Co-ordination and planning:*

- The UN agency responsible for co-ordinating an operation (for instance UNHCR in country of asylum or UNICEF in country of origin) should establish a regional interagency standing group during the onset of the emergency. This group should consist of participants from agencies and organisations concerned with children separated from their parents. In addition, representatives from the population concerned and local/regional authorities should participate in the meetings. Meetings should be held on regular intervals. Two separate series of meetings should be conducted; one for tracing and family reunion and one for care. Their objective should be to agree on mandates for the implementing organisations and draw up plans for action. This regional interagency standing group will determine terms of reference for..
- .. two facilitators, one concentrating on tracing and family reunion, and one on care. They should have experience and knowledge on the issue, and be deployed to the field to assist the implementing partners in setting up specific programs for separated children. This would be two full time-posts. The facilitators would report to the Regional Group. The facilitators should be administratively connected to the agency co-ordinating the operation. The facilitators' main task should be to assist the main co-ordinator from the UN agency with knowledge and practical help. Using experts from the Emergency Preparedness Forces of Redd Barna (Save the Children, Norway) and the Norwegian Refugee Council as facilitators was suggested.
- .. an assessment of the situation of the separated children. This is to be conducted by experts from agencies and organisations concerned and co-ordinated by the facilitator. The assessment should be conducted by using participatory methods, to ensure identification of the real needs and resources of the target group. Furthermore, this group of experts should be used to conduct training on policy, principles and best practice.

### *Quality issues:*

- Two codes of conduct should be established by the inter-agency standing group on separated children, establishing standards for work with separated children. There should be one code of conduct on tracing and family reunion, and one on care. The two codes of conduct should be linked to the ARC capacity building programme, in order to improve practice and guide authorities and donors in making authorisation and funding decisions. To secure agreement from all organisations concerned, these codes of conduct will need to be distributed for feedback. Furthermore, the codes of conduct will need to be agreed upon

at the above mentioned regional meetings. The codes of conduct will serve as a starting point for developing specific Guidelines addressing the specific problems in different areas. The Guidelines will be developed in co-operation with the above mentioned facilitator.

- Advocacy towards agencies conducting field assessments to include issues relating to the separation of children and to ensure that this influences programme planning.
- ARC should establish an information database on the Internet, covering materials relating to separated children. The files in the database should be light (e.g. without unnecessary graphics) to be possible to download on bad phone lines in the field.
- The International Save the Children Alliance should initiate a research project to evaluate models of prevention of separation and effects of separation by a range of agencies.

#### *Awareness raising:*

- UNICEF country offices should include prevention of separation - e.g. linked to HIV/AIDS, trafficking, economic issues etc. - in their country programs.
- The International Save the Children Alliance should disseminate the result of its research from countries of asylum to countries of origin.
- The separated children in the Europe-project «European Network» should be asked to feedback information and issues about the reality of separation in their countries to countries of origin, key agencies and governments.
- As an initial step, ARC should conduct a pilot workshop with donors. Feedback from that workshop should be sent to subregional/regional interagency standing groups to enable them to replicate the training locally. If appropriate, this would include other agencies (i.e. dealing with health, food, water, commodities).

#### ***Specific recommendations***

- Agencies concerned with separated children in a particular region should meet during the onset of the emergency and continue meeting on regular intervals. The initiator should be the UN agency responsible for co-ordinating the operation.
- The above mentioned agencies should establish a code of conduct for work with separated children.
- UNICEF country offices should include prevention of separation - linked to HIV/AIDS, trafficking, economic issues etc. - in their country programs.

## **4. Protection of adolescents**

The working group on the protection of adolescents drew attention to the invisibility of this group in the context of emergency and displacement. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to military recruitment and sexual abuse, because of the level of maturity that they actually have attained. Up until recently, there has been a lack of attention to the particular protection needs of this group, which calls for specific measures. This illustrates the necessity of constantly reminding donors as well as the international humanitarian community that the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) is in fact applicable to children and adolescents up to 18 years of age. The importance of prioritising the provision of education to adolescents as well as younger children was underlined by the working group.

The working group on protection of adolescents underscored the importance of providing youth with a role within family and community and give them the opportunity to use their energy in a productive way. In refugee situations the establishment of youth-centres can be important for the development and mental health of

adolescents. In addition, this is an important protection tool, because it keeps youth occupied with something useful, and thereby prevents idleness, which often leads to enrollment into armed forces. It was recognised, however, that such centres could have the potential of becoming «drafting points» if in the middle of a conflict.

Awareness-raising on the protection needs of adolescents in the local community is important. A prerequisite to finding the best tools to accomplish this is the comprehension of how «adolescence» is understood in the culture where the emergency is taking place.

### **Key Issues**

- *Understanding the way «Adolescence» is perceived* in the culture where the emergency is taking place, in order to identify the best ways to raise the community awareness on the protection needs of the group.
- *Exploring ideas on how to provide adolescents in complex emergencies with a 'role'*, through developing their potential and channelling their energy in peaceful and constructive activities. This means to provide positive alternatives to participating in the fighting, and to challenge the youth themselves to take an active part in shaping their own lives. Prevention of «idleness» is an important form of protection.
- *Facilitating meetings with the elders* in order to foster communication between generations. This could prove important in the preservation of values and culture. As adolescents are in a stage of search of identity, it is imperative that the values of their community are preserve. As fathers are often absent (many of them even involved in the fighting) the elders represent a special resource in transmitting such values.
- *Paying special attention to adolescent girls*, related to health and pregnancies, means of survival, and the risk of their being exploited, recruited or abducted.

### **Recommendations**

The protection and visibility of adolescents affected by complex emergencies should be increased at all levels - locally, nationally and internationally, as follows:

#### *All levels:*

- Constantly referring, through advocacy and humanitarian assistance, to the applicability of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) to those up to 18 years and not only to the young children
- Awareness-raising on the specific needs and protection requirements of adolescents among donors, NGOs and UN agencies, humanitarian workers and educators. This can be done for instance through the ARC training system
- Using the 10 year anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) to focus on youth needs and strengths

#### *Local and national levels*

- Developing «Youth mobilisation» skills among community workers, teachers and journalists as well as among the youth themselves, as an important step to upgrading the attention to this age group
- Supporting the formation of youth groups and networks, allocating funds for pilot projects, and facilitating a practical approach to youth activities. The establishment of «Youth Centres», a place where adolescents can gather, learn and exchange ideas, may contribute positively to re-enforcing messages of constructive alternatives to recruitment and to preparing for the future.
- Organising formal or non-formal educational activities for this group; basic skills and civic

education, with special attention to girls' needs. Leadership training, and skills in dealing with the media and with conflict management and peace building are seen as vital investments for the future.

- Compiling ideas and experiences, using existing UN and NGO networks and creating links between them to facilitate exchanges for mutual benefit.

#### **Specific Recommendations:**

- Unconditional amnesty should be offered to child soldiers during and after the conflict
- A system for adolescents to obtain documentation on age and identity should be established, and tracing- and documentation procedures for adolescents should be available, recognising that they are eligible and in need of searching for their families
- A position for an adolescent-representative should be established in the office of the Special Representative.
- Refugee children/adolescents should be provided with secondary school, not only «basic» schooling

## **5. Action to be taken – focus on education**

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), article 28, all children have the right to education, and it is the duty of the state to ensure that primary education is free and compulsory for all. Education provides children with important knowledge and contributes to the development of their personality. In addition to this, schooling can represent a state of normalcy for children caught up in armed conflict, refugee children and internally displaced children. Experience also shows that education has a preventive effect on recruitment, abduction and gender based violence, and thereby serves as an important protection tool. The working group underlined the importance of following up on efforts to introduce international standards for schools as zones of peace.

For these reasons, the education needs of children in armed conflict must be met. The working group on education stated that one of the greatest challenges is to raise the awareness of donors on the importance of initiating education at an early stage of a conflict. A tendency among donors is to view education as a long-term development activity, which means that they are reluctant to use emergency funds for this purpose. The UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children calls for educational activity to be established as a key component of all humanitarian assistance. Along with this, the Norwegian Refugee Council has taken an initiative to make education the fourth component of emergency assistance (in addition to food, shelter and health care).

The importance of co-operating with national and local authorities and different types of community groups and local NGOs was highlighted by the working group on education. The group also underscored the importance of an emergency curriculum including basic learning skills as well as civic education, human rights and education for peace. We also need to keep in mind that education in all phases of a conflict must have a long-term perspective, and that it is important to provide children with the knowledge and skills they need to rebuild their lives after the conflict.

### **Key challenges**

- *Awareness-raising & advocacy at national and international levels*  
National governments and UN bodies should make a strong commitment to providing appropriate forms of education as prevention of recruitment/abduction. International donors should make appropriate forms of education eligible for funding as preventive and protective measures in emergencies. A poster, listing the principles, and various targeted brochures of practices should be produced («The Hadeland Declaration on Education in Emergencies and Difficult Circumstances») to highlight the importance and global challenge for investing in a better future.
- *Capacity-building of organisations to handle these situations*

There is a great need for training of resource persons to handle emergency education. Concerned parties should identify staff to handle education, and consider setting up an international training body or a pool of trainers for rapid assistance. Existing standby-force personnel could provide resource persons or be given special training. There should be a link to education packages, and case studies could provide a code of practice.

- *Systematic collection of data*

In order to make best possible use of experiences, there should be an ongoing collection of case studies, relevant data and good/bad practices.

- *Prioritisation when funds are limited*

The following prioritisation of target groups was suggested:

1. lower primary, 2. upper primary, 3. secondary, 4. pre-school

Allocation of funds for other activities were indicated as follows:

1. training of teachers, 2. procurement of class equipment, 3. instruction materials (books etc.), 4. supplies (consumables), 5. recreational items, 6. buildings

In general:

Make use of good quality local material when possible. Initiate and support a teacher training system which is sustainable, through national or local structures.

Curriculum, issues in addition to basic learning (literacy, numeracy etc.):

human rights, health education, life skills, AIDS, environmental education, (not in order of priority)

- *Extended target groups*

There are groups of people in situations that in many ways are similar to those resulting from fleeing conflicts. Refugees and internally displaced persons are main target groups for UNHCR and many other humanitarian organisations, while others also may be working with, for instance, urban populations. Exchange of experiences may be useful.

### **Recommendations**

The working group on Education proposed that the following principles are confirmed, adopted and printed on a poster for information and follow-up by all parties involved in providing emergency assistance:

«*The Hadeland Declaration on Principles of Education in Emergencies and Difficult Circumstances*»

- Education/schooling should start immediately
- Good education is long term and life-long; it keeps focus on the future
- Education is a professional job; it must be handled by educationalists. Standards are important, and quality is the aim
- Providing and receiving education is the responsibility and privilege of the whole of society
- Education must be integrated in a framework relating to needs, authorities, policies, culture and a co-ordinated approach
- Governments are not the only actors. Community leadership and the civil society, as well as parents and youth, should be consulted
- Assessment of needs and response should include formal or non-formal structures

### **Specific Recommendations**

- Education should be established as the 4th component in emergency assistance
- Education is a professional job and must be handled by educationalists.
- Standardisation of emergency education training and pooling of trainers should be established
- An international workshop on training for Emergency Education should be organised, to



discuss and develop models and material for training of teachers

- A poster should be produced, listing the principles for Education in Emergencies and Difficult Circumstances («*The Hadeland Declaration on Principles of Education in Emergencies and Difficult Circumstances*»).

## 6. Emergency assessment and inter-agency collaboration

In order to improve the humanitarian and human rights situation for children affected by armed conflict, the co-operation and co-ordination between UN agencies, NGOs, donors and governments must be improved. The UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (1996) underlines that the protection of children, within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), must be central to the humanitarian, peacemaking and peacekeeping policies of the UN, and that protection of children should be given priority within existing human rights and humanitarian procedures.

The Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict sees it as a particularly important task to co-operate with all relevant UN agencies in order to develop a collaborative approach to the protection and welfare of children, and to place this concern within the mainstream of UN policy-making and programme activities. His efforts in this regard are in accordance with the UN Secretary-General's efforts to streamline and increase the efficiency of UN activities in general.

He also proposed the development of neighborhood initiatives. The purpose would be to 1) place child protection concerns at the heart of the peace process, and 2) develop comprehensive protection and assistance responses. The group outlined the possibilities of a similar initiative if applied in a Sudan context.

The working group concentrated its discussions around the following three issues:

1. How to move forward to ensure consensus on «unfinished» protection elements of a framework for assessment and collaboration
2. How to move forward on an approach based on children's rights
3. How to progress in the collaboration with the UN Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict

### *1. How to ensure consensus on unfinished protection elements of a framework for assessment and collaboration:*

The group noted that while the assistance (food, shelter and medicine) aspect of interagency emergency responses appears to be streamlined, responses to a number of child protection concerns are less predictable. These missing dimensions include inter-agency responses to sexual violence, prevention of child recruitment, and swift introduction of educational programs. It was also noted that the needs and rights of adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17 years, are often not taken into account.

The group chose to focus on education and gender-based violence/gender and status as examples in this regard:

Education:

In addition to points made by the other groups regarding this issue - such as the necessity of raising the awareness among donors as relates to the importance of making education a priority in emergency intervention, and the importance of incorporating human rights and education for peace in the curriculum - the working group made the following recommendation:

UNICEF/UNHCR/UNESCOs discussion document on «Rapid Educational Response in Complex Emergencies» should serve as a basis for an inter-agency dialogue on how to ensure that basic

education and structured activities are provided to children and adolescents affected by armed conflict. The document should be disseminated to offices in the field as well as to NGOs to solicit constructive feedback. The three above mentioned agencies should then host an inter-agency meeting to reach consensus on guidelines, inter-agency agency co-operation and operational models.

**Gender-based violence/gender and status:**

While UNHCR and several NGOs have informative guidelines in this area, these guidelines need to be circulated to a wider audience. Relevant partners should then meet to develop more predictable emergency responses to gender based violence and sexual exploitation. The establishment of performance indicators for agency responses to gender-based violence and sexual abuse, as well as for female participation in decision-making processes, are required. UNICEF and UNHCR, as a «core alliance», should organise emergency response and assume responsibility for moving this aspect of the emergency response agenda forward.

## *2. Moving forward on an approach based on children's rights*

While there are a number of important child rights initiatives under way, the international community does not appear to share a common understanding of protection and assistance based on children's rights. It was therefore recommended that UNHCR, UNICEF and the International Save the Children Alliance develop an inter-agency task force to start working towards a common understanding of child protection in emergencies. UNICEF program guidelines and case studies and UNHCR/Save the Children Alliance's ARC training and capacity building materials should serve as the basis for this common effort.

## *3. Progressing in the collaboration with the UN Special Representative of Children and Armed Conflict*

**UN Collaboration:** Collaboration between the Office of the Special Representative and relevant UN agencies needs to be improved. More consultation needs to take place in the preparation, field visits, and follow-up of field missions.

**Involvement of NGOs:** The importance of the civil society, and thus NGOs, getting more involved in Mr. Otunnu's work was noted. It was recommended that the International Save the Children Alliance consider seconding a staff member to Mr. Otunnu's office to work full time on these matters. The group inquired if this initiative could be financed by the governments of Norway and Canada, as a part of the previously mentioned Lysøen Declaration.

**Personnel:** A representative should be appointed to the office of the Special Representative to be responsible for the co-ordination between the office and the NGO community.

The Sudan situation should be approached in a holistic manner, and have a clear child component. The creation of a forum for the preparation of a peace plan was suggested. Participants in the forum should include UN agencies, national and neighbouring countries' governments and rebel groups.

Other conditions within a peace process would be:

### *Political:*

1. No asylum or refuge for groups who abduct children across borders
2. Prohibition of cross-border arms sales
3. Prohibition of land mines

### *Monitoring:*

1. Establish child rights monitoring teams

2. Establish procedures for child repatriation, reception and reintegration
3. Initiate child vaccination campaign to all children in the region

*Humanitarian:*

The importance of securing good co-ordination between Operation Lifeline Sudan and the UN office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) was underlined. The necessity of securing access to the war-affected population and to generate resources for humanitarian work was also highlighted. There is an urgent need to integrate activities related to separated children in Sudan and the asylum countries.

***Specific recommendations***

- UNICEF and the International Save the Children Alliance should develop an inter-agency task force to begin working towards a common understanding of child protection in emergencies.
- Collaboration between the Office of the Special Representative and relevant UN agencies should be improved by means of consultants regarding preparation, field visits and follow-up of field missions.
- A representative should be appointed in the office of the Special Representative to be responsible for the co-ordination between the office and the NGO community.
- The International Save the Children Alliance should consider seconding a staff member to Mr. Otunnus office to co-ordinate involvement between the NGOs, civil society and the Special Representative's office. This post could be financed by the governments of Canada and Norway, as part of the Lysøen Declaration.

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**PROTECTION OF CHILDREN...**

