

# Children and Youth

*Includes articles on:*

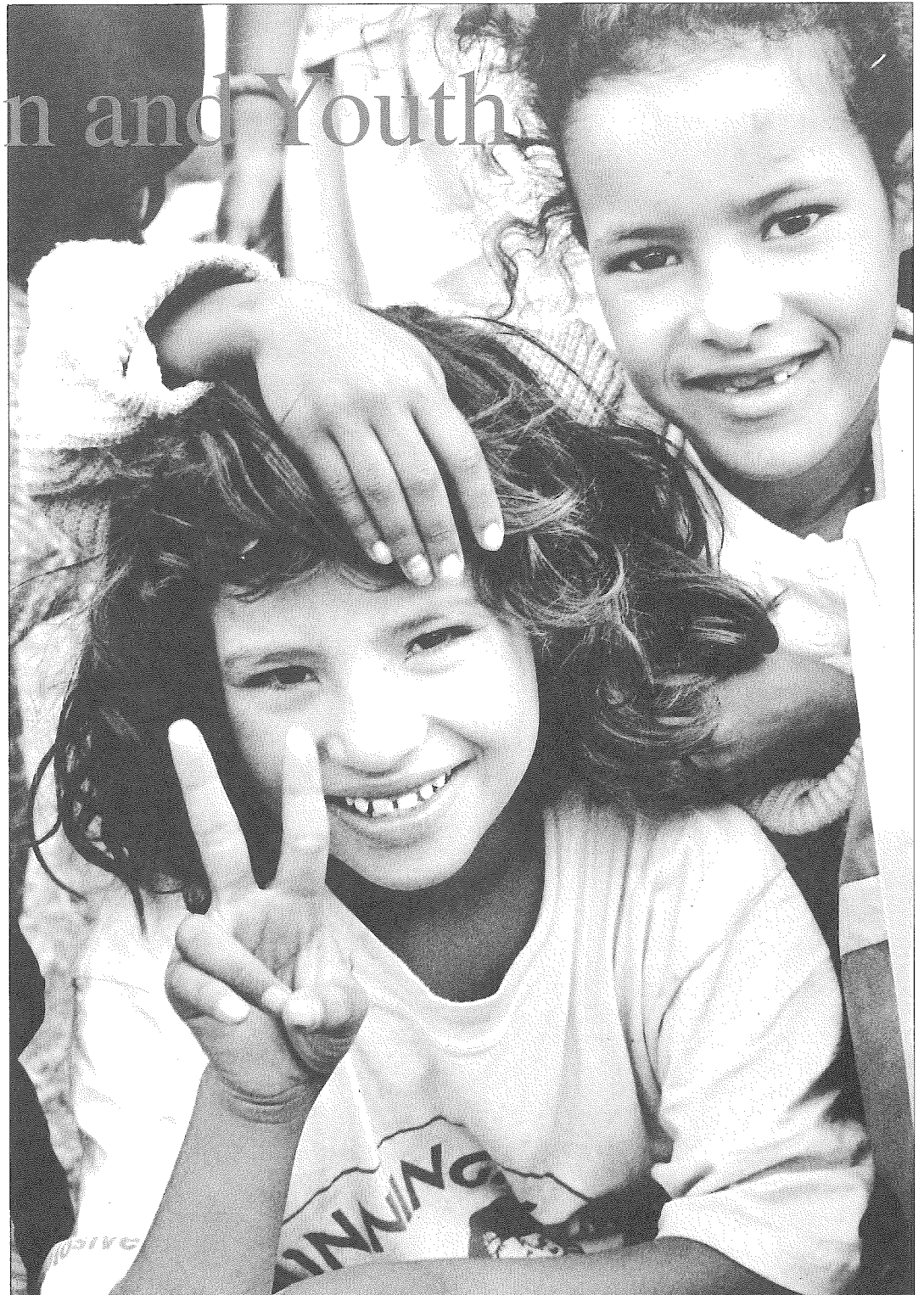
- putting children first
- protection in zones of conflict
- Angola & Sierra Leone
- the Machel Study
- unaccompanied children in Zaire & Rwanda
- El Salvador & Yugoslavia
- psychosocial well-being
- CEE/CIS emergencies
- Safe Places for Youth
- Western Sahara

*plus:*

- seminar reports:
  - impact of refugee camps
  - refugee children in UK
- conference reports
- publication updates
- RSP courses & news

**10 years of the  
RPN**

see page 3 for new  
developments



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## Editors

Marion Couldrey & Sharon Ford

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## RPN

RSP, Queen Elizabeth House,  
21 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LA, UK  
Tel: +44 (0)1865 270722  
Fax: +44 (0)1865 270721  
E-mail: rpn@qeh.ox.ac.uk

## Membership

The RPN aims to provide a forum for the regular exchange of practical experience, information and ideas between researchers, refugees and people who work with refugees.

The RPN - in English and Spanish - is currently mailed to some 3,600 members worldwide. From 1998 it will also be published in Arabic. If you would like to become a member, please complete and return the application form on page 43. Subscriptions are currently voluntary but a formal subscription system will be introduced in January 1998 - see opposite. We encourage the submission of materials from members; themes are advertised in advance on page 3.

Material and information contained in this publication are the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or the Refugee Studies Programme. RSP reserves the right to edit all submissions.

## On the Internet

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## Cover photo:

Western Saharawi refugee girls on a visit to the UK, 1995, arranged by the Woodcraft Folk.  
Photo: Howard J Davies.

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# From the Editors

**The RPN is 10 years old in November this year.** In the first issue of the RPN, Maknun Gamaledin-Ashami, the Network Manager, wrote:

*The overall objective of the RPN is to establish a link through which practitioners, researchers and policy makers can communicate and benefit from each other's practical experience and research results. Those working for host governments, voluntary agencies and international humanitarian agencies acquire invaluable experience but are often too busy to record it; those doing research publish in places and in a style which often make their findings inaccessible or irrelevant to practitioners. The RPN intends to bridge this gap... Hopefully, researchers and practitioners can together build up the much needed institutional memory, improving management of refugee programmes and the delivery of services.*

Since the first issue in November 1987, the RPN has developed into an international network, currently with some 3,600 individuals and organisations worldwide receiving the newsletter in English, Spanish and Arabic.

We have assisted countless members with services such as address lists of members by country/subject for networking purposes and supplies of back issues on specific themes. Many members reproduce and circulate specific articles within their organisation and networks; in addition, all articles can now be accessed and downloaded via the Internet. The RPN has attracted funding and sponsorship from a wide range of funding bodies: the EC, UN agencies, foundations and NGOs. And, significantly, it has continued to receive financial support from some 5% of its own members - on an entirely voluntary basis.

## **The RPN continues to grow and develop. And to bring changes with it...**

**1** We are delighted to announce that Sharon Ford has recently been appointed as a second part-time editor to work with Marion Couldrey on the ever-expanding responsibilities of the RPN.

**2** We have decided to change the RPN format slightly. We have always had 'themed' issues to date and know that this is popular with most members. It is useful to be able to develop different aspects of a theme but it does mean that we often have to turn down good articles because they do not fit in with the themes proposed. From January 1998 we will move from having a 'theme' (encompassing all or most articles) to a 'focus'. We envisage that each RPN will have three or four articles relating to the focus; the rest - perhaps 50-60% of all article/report material - may be on any topic relating to forced migration. The focus for RPN 25 (January 1998) will be internally displaced persons - IDPs; the focus for RPN 26 (May 1998) will be refugee camps.

**3** We are planning to introduce a formal subscription system in January 1998 in order to underpin the future of the RPN. **Please note that subscriptions will remain FREE for individuals and institutions in developing countries - and for others at our discretion.** We are not planning high subscription charges but do need an assured source of income in order to service this extensive network and improve the quality of the RPN publication. **Full details will be included with the next issue of the RPN.** In the meantime, if you work for an institution and know that several members of staff receive the RPN, this may be the time to start discussing how many copies you really need. Bulk subscriptions at discount rates will be available.

**4** We plan to redesign the cover of the RPN before the next issue so look out for our new image - and possibly a new name!



Thank you to all members, readers and funders for your involvement and support over the past 10 years.

*We are proud of the RPN and look forward to the next 10 years.*



With our best wishes.

*Marion Couldrey & Sharon Ford  
- The RPN Editors -*



*Photo: Tamsin Salehian*

# Putting children first

by Murray Last

Save the Children Fund in 1923 and UNICEF in 1990 both declared that children **must come first** in receiving relief. In contrast, the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child omitted all reference to giving such priority to children. The reason for transforming the original *credo* is that the principle of 'children first', if it includes every child and is to be applied literally in the field, is not only impracticable but unacceptable in many cultures. The social value of a particular child's life - or of human life generally - is simply not an absolute, in all circumstances, in all cultures.

## The 'principle of first call'

'The child must be the first to receive relief in times of distress.' So ran the third of the five articles making up the Declaration of Geneva which was adopted first by the Save the Children International Union in May 1923, and then in September 1924 by the League of Nations at its Fifth Assembly<sup>1</sup>. The Declaration was more controversial than it might seem: in giving children priority over adults, and doing so to all children as children, it was setting children (and childhood) apart as both a special and a separate moral category distinct from adults.

Eglantyne Jebb, who drafted the Declaration in Geneva some four years after she and her colleagues had founded the Save the Children Fund, is rarely mentioned now in the spate of literature on the Great War and its aftermath. Yet, at the time, she was put alongside Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Fry and other pioneer women humanitarians. As a relief worker in Macedonia during the Balkan wars of 1912-13, she had witnessed the awful reality of famine and its impact on small children. It was children's hunger, then, that was her first priority, and the child's first right to relief is in essence probably about just that: give **them** food before the adults. She was ready to speak out for all children everywhere. After the war, while the Great Powers' blockade of Germany was still in force, a leaflet she was distributing demonstrated, with a picture of a starving child, how the Allies were by their policies actually making children die.



*Kurdish refugees, March 1990. Photo: Howard J Davies.*

She later described how: 'Mothers killed the babies whom they could not feed. Old people committed suicide so that the younger members of the family might have more to eat'.<sup>2</sup>

A revolution in seeing and hearing, as this was, was always in danger of being taken over by a sentimental romanticism about children, or else by paternalism towards desperate mothers who needed help. It provoked opposition - and still does. There are, for example, the arguments that the family as a whole should have priority, and that the rights and wishes of parents have to be respected (as against the rights of others, including the state, to intervene); or the argument that such Declarations are unnecessary, since children's rights are, or should be, covered by their rights as humans, and not on the grounds that they are some special **kind** of human.

As a result of these objections, the original five-point Declaration came in for amendment. In the 1948 Declaration, the old article III dropped down the list to become article V and a new article II made it clear that 'the child must be cared for with due respect for the family as an entity'. By 1959, in the last of the Declarations, the old article III had become Principle 8: 'the child shall in all circumstances be **among the first** to receive protection and relief'.

The drafting of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was launched

in 1989 and signed by some states in 1990, often proved problematic. Though the preamble acknowledges the earlier Declarations, the Convention is of course a very different document. Such simple statements as the 'first to receive relief' drop out. Even the 'best interests of the child' creates difficulties: should they be 'primary' or 'paramount'? (The final text offers 'the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration'; 'the primary consideration' was dropped.) Above all, there are clauses that offer signatories flexibility: 'in accordance with their national law', 'to the maximum extent of their available resources'.

Unlike earlier Declarations, the Convention had to specify, if only for legal reasons, at least when a child ceases to be a child: a child, it was decided, is 'every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier'. With a child defined as anyone under 18, to insist upon Jebb's priority for children was impracticable.

The Convention's dropping of the 'first to receive' clause did not, however, deter UNICEF. In the year of the Convention's acceptance and signing, UNICEF used its 1990 issue of *The State of the World's Children* to launch a vigorous re-statement of what was now called the 'Principle of the first call': '...that the lives and the normal development of children should

have **first call** on society's concerns and capacities and that children should be able to depend upon that commitment in good times and bad, in normal times and in times of emergency, in times of peace and in times of war, in times of prosperity and in times of recession.'

### Role of UNICEF

Of course, if the United Nations Children's Fund did not claim priority for children, who would? But this renewed emphasis on a principle of first call also reflects UNICEF's institutional dilemma within the UN system. It has to survive, as essentially a ministry for social welfare, in a field where education 'belongs' to UNESCO, health to WHO, and agriculture to FAO. In this technocratic arena UNICEF tends to stay within a biomedical model of health, and to assess its successes by reference to what is measurable by statistics; hence its league tables showing nations with better or worse scores on child mortality rates. UNICEF long ago recognised this, and in the 1960s (the 'Development Decade') sought to get away from its traditional child welfare role and into development. To retain its credibility, then, UNICEF's primary focus has to be on the child, and on its programmes of primary health care, implying that it, more than any other agency, can best promote the interests of young children as a distinct community; it then has to argue further that, for the future welfare of the world as a whole, the interests of children should be paramount.

### Opposition to UNICEF

Nancy Scheper-Hughes<sup>3</sup> dismissed the rhetoric of [the] UNICEF 1990 campaign for 'child survival'. The 'principle of first call', she is saying, is a donors' charter which does not resonate with local life as it is lived - real life runs on different principles. Any relief that is to be more than a palliative stop-gap must be able to mesh with local principles; saved lives must be sustainable lives.

A community's apparent failure to give priority or a special place to children has led some to suggest that the culture in question has no concept of childhood, with the implication perhaps that once the community had been taught such a concept, people would 'naturally' put children first.

Evidence suggests, however, that most communities do have a concept of childhood, and that the problem is not the absence of a concept of childhood but rather that the local conceptions of childhood with which each culture fleshes out the concept differ so much that we fail to recognise it as 'childhood'. Childhood is not only the concept that is open to question as being culture- or period-bound. Nancy Scheper-Hughes implies that 'mother love' may also be a bourgeois myth. It is local conditions that have shaped a mother's behaviour, not just genes or hormones. Mothering is more individually 'made', and is responsive to the particularities of time and health; it cannot be presumed simply to be in-born in every woman.

### Conclusion

Is it too easy to treat the declaration that 'the child must be the first to receive relief in times of distress' as simply an inspiring maxim that has proved good at motivating and uniting people across social barriers? Might it not now be, for example, an obstacle to understanding? I think it might well be, and will briefly suggest why.

Firstly, it simplifies complex issues. There is rarely a ready consensus within a community over **what** priority should **which** adults give to **which** children in **what** context. We may therefore want to know what are the cultural norms regarding children in a community, and we may indeed produce careful analyses of practice, but crises tend to suspend rules that apply in the ordinary round of daily life, making even prediction unpredictable.

Secondly, the declaration obscures the process of becoming and the critical role that time plays in constituting the 'child' as a social being. Although childhood may be legally constituted as a status, it is above all a process of becoming: from baby into child, from child into adolescence. The way social value accrues to an individual life varies across cultures and involves many factors apart from age - gender, kinship or class, religion. But time is more individual. Parents watch to see how their children differ, watch the transformations over time, and encourage and care accordingly: it is a process of waiting too, and judging; of getting very attached to one and losing touch with

another. To have favourites is recognised as inevitable, and unpredictable.

Thirdly, then, the declaration denies the variation between children, and hence the autonomy children have in shaping their own lives. It is perhaps an axiom of western culture that all lives are equally valuable - but the very need to assert that as an axiom suggests that it is not actually true in practice. In very large households, the very diversity of children, the competition and the inequalities, become particularly apparent. Attempts to treat each child equally would be absurd. Different children are loved in different ways for different qualities.

Lastly, the declaration distracts us from the fact that perhaps the direst form of poverty is not hunger but to be totally alone. Given how important groups are, well-being is thus not measured only in food or housing but in having a group (the larger the better usually) to be linked into. Staying together as a social unit, despite the shortages and difficulties, is thus of over-riding importance: there is no substitute. In this context, **whom** to save when it is not possible to save **all**, would require making judgements for which even Solomon, I suspect, would hesitate laying down a general rule.



Murray Last is Professor of Anthropology at the Centre for Medical Anthropology, University College London.

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<sup>1</sup> Fuller E *The right of the child*, 1951, Gollancz, London.

<sup>2</sup> Freeman K *If any man build*, 1965, Hodder & Stoughton, London.

<sup>3</sup> Scheper-Hughes N *Death without weeping: the violence of everyday life in Brazil*, 1992, University of California Press, Berkeley.

# The protection of children in zones of conflict

by Iain Levine

Recent events in eastern Zaire (now Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo) have yet again demonstrated the appalling gap between the theory and practice of international standards for the protection of human rights. Although the last fifty years have seen the growth of the international human rights movement and the signing of a plethora of international conventions and treaties to promote human rights and international humanitarian law, current and recent conflicts - Bosnia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia and others - demonstrate a disturbing level of barbarity. The 1996 UNICEF *State of the World's Children* estimated that, in the previous decade, child victims of conflict had included:

- 2 million killed
- 5 million disabled
- 12 million left homeless
- more than one million orphaned or separated from their parents
- some 10 million psychologically traumatised

In addition, millions of children have been denied access to humanitarian assistance as a deliberate tactic of war.

Children living in countries in armed conflict are among the most vulnerable in the world. Many suffer from flagrant violations of their rights: to life, to health, to education, to an adequate standard of living and to protection from abuse, exploitation, neglect, oppression, discrimination and recruitment into the military. Vulnerable children often live in areas characterised by a breakdown of the political, social and economic infrastructure, the delivery of essential services and the maintenance of legal and judicial systems. Civil society and its institutions are frequently so oppressed and disempowered by the

deliberate use of terror and violence that the state's capacity to defend the rights of its children is seriously weakened. Perhaps

*Remember to kill the little rats as well as the big rats...*

(Broadcast on Radio Mil Collines, Rwanda, April 1994, to the forces of the Interahamwe engaged in genocide against the Tutsis.)

most critically, the breakdown of communities and households through death, displacement, disease and loss of economic capacity weakens or destroys children's immediate

sources of care and protection.

The involvement of children in conflict - whether as actors or victims - is unacceptable. The international humanitarian and human rights communities must act to ensure the protection of children in and from conflict. They need to agree on the ethical and legal standards which should apply to children and work out practical strategies for the application of these standards.

## Protection: towards a definition

The protection of children in conflict and emergencies should have two principal objectives:

1. to protect them from harm inflicted by others (such as exploitation, abuse, neglect, cruel and degrading treatment and recruitment into the military)
2. to protect the humanitarian imperative: that is, the right of civilians in need, including children, to humanitarian assistance (and the prevention of the denial or abuse of that assistance)

The legal standards and ethical values which should underpin protection work in conflict are:

- the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other relevant human rights legislation including international standards for the protection of refugees
- international humanitarian law
- internationally recognised humanitarian principles, such as the primacy of the

humanitarian imperative, the right to assistance and the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian efforts

The protection of children should seek to deal not only with violations as a direct result of armed conflict but also with other forms of exploitation and abuse: sexual abuse, economic exploitation, slavery and discrimination. Although these may exist long before conflict begins, they may continue or even worsen during the conflict as a result of the breakdown of families, communities and social, political and legal structures.

## The protection of children in conflict: action at the international level

The protection of children in conflict demands coordinated, coherent and consistent advocacy at the international level as well as action at field level. The principal advocacy activities required are:

- continued support for the recommendations of the Machel Report on the Impact of Conflict on Children including the appointment of a Special Representative for Children in Conflict
- the promotion of the universal theme of **no more war against children** (advocating a universal humanitarian imperative to protect children from the brutal effects of war and ensuring children's access to humanitarian assistance through the mobilisation of the international community - governments, regional organisations, NGOs, religious groups and other bodies)
- advocacy in support of raising the minimum age of recruitment of children to the military to 18 years through the Optional Protocol to the CRC
- continued support for the international campaign to ban the use of anti-personnel landmines
- political pressure to ensure that those whose activities violate children's rights are, and are seen to be, brought to justice

International humanitarian agencies must also seek to develop collaborative global strategies, including joint action on dissemination and on the role of humanitarian workers and agencies in ensuring the protection of children in armed conflict.

### **The protection of children in armed conflict: country level action**

At country level, protecting children in conflict involves advocacy, education and dissemination, capacity building, coalition building, the creation of safe environments for humanitarian action, monitoring and reporting. Humanitarian assistance must go beyond service delivery and technical interventions. Where possible, the international community should support and strengthen the capacity of the government - or the non-state entities in control - to honour their international legal and moral responsibilities to children.

The following actions are essential:

#### **A. The promotion of laws and values that embody respect for children and their rights, including the dissemination of appropriate conventions and principles**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly Articles 19-23 and 32-40, together with the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977, provide internationally accepted standards for the protection of children in conflict. In addition, the right to receive and to offer humanitarian assistance is embodied in widely accepted principles governing humanitarian action. These principles postulate also that humanitarian assistance must be delivered in a neutral, impartial, accountable and transparent way and that relief supplies and humanitarian workers are to be protected. Such principles are critical to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches its intended beneficiaries and that children receive the minimum support essential for their survival, protection and development. These standards must be promoted through the following activities:

##### *i. Advocacy for written commitments*

The principles enshrined in the CRC, international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles must provide a

basis for humanitarian work in a zone of conflict. The CRC, in particular, provides an essential commitment against which countries will now be judged and upon which they must periodically report with respect to the treatment of their own children.

All children everywhere and in all circumstances have the same rights. Though rebel or liberation movements are not signatories to international treaties or conventions, humanitarian and human rights organisations must make it clear to these authorities that they expect them to uphold the same standards as governments on adherence to the CRC, international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles. Commitments to respect children's rights should be obtained through written agreement and should be adequately monitored.

##### *ii. Dissemination*

The observance of child rights requires a level of knowledge and awareness which is often lacking in zones of conflict. Dissemination is therefore critical. A programme of dissemination should seek to reach children themselves, international relief staff, officials of governments and non-state parties (particularly the

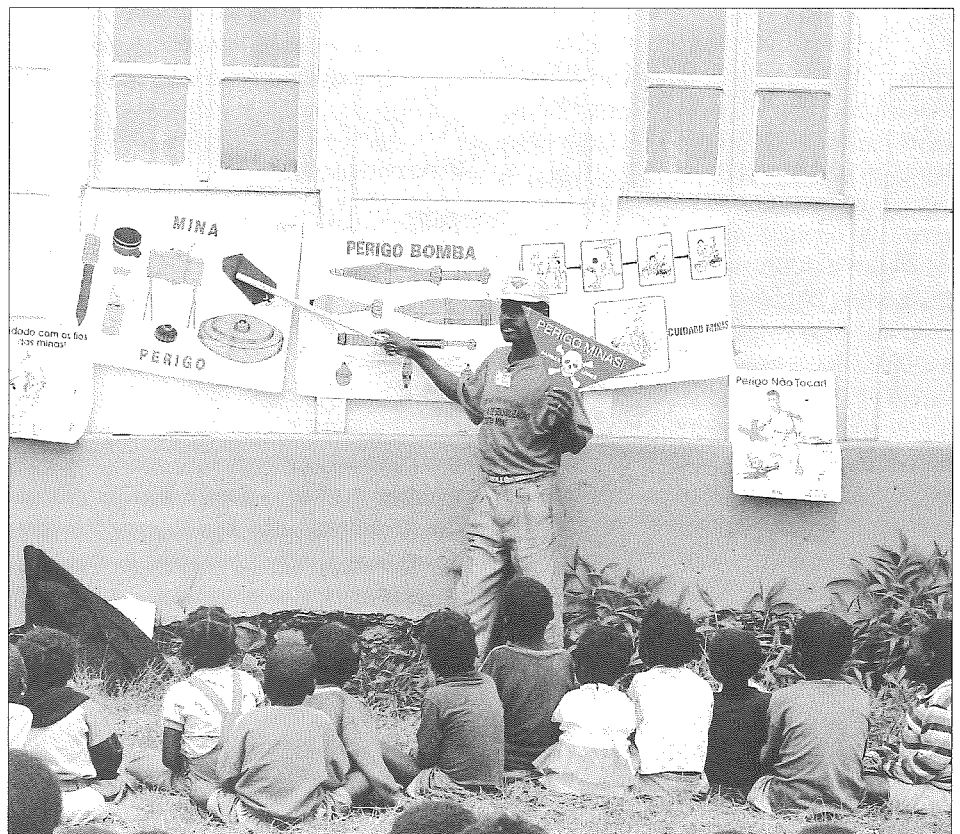
military), local NGO officials, religious leaders and activists, traditional chiefs, women's leaders, journalists, police and others influential in society.

Where possible, dissemination should be undertaken by nationals of the country and linked to local traditional values of care and protection for the child. Most societies have strong traditional values that govern behaviour towards children or the vulnerable. Although such protective values may break down in war - as a result of violence, fear, community disintegration, economic stress, the brutalisation of society and the disintegration of legal systems - they still provide a critically important reference point for the principles of the CRC and Geneva Conventions.

The protection of girls and women from sexual violence must be supported by ensuring that such dissemination covers the responsibilities of all military personnel - including peacekeepers - towards women and girls.

##### *iii. Monitoring violations*

Although international human rights organisations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and, in some conflicts, the UN Centre for



*A UNICEF-trained instructor gives a landmine awareness class at a primary school, Kuito, Angola, 1996. Photo: UNICEF/HQ96-0093/Giacomo Pirozzi.*



Returning home to Rwanda from Zaire, 1996. Photo: UNICEF/HQ96-0765/  
Roger Lemoyne.

Human Rights report on general human rights abuses in zones of conflict, humanitarian agencies in the field must be prepared to ensure that there is systematic documentation of violations of children's rights, preferably by local institutions such as indigenous NGOs or religious groups. They will also need to ensure that information gathered on abuses of children, their families and their communities is channelled - openly or otherwise - to human rights groups and the media. In the most extreme cases, agencies may need publicly to condemn those guilty of such violations.

At all times, however, agencies will need to maintain a balance between their moral obligation to the children and the possible consequences of these actions for the safety of staff, their relationship with the political authorities and the implementation of other programmes.

Related to these issues is the use of sanctions against those who commit systematic violations of children's rights. At field level, there is little that can be done. The withdrawal of humanitarian assistance to children and their families in need - the one obvious step that can be taken in protest against human rights abuses and the denial of access to humanitarian assistance - could only be taken in exceptional circumstances, given the moral, political and

human consequences of such a step. On the other hand, the international community could do more to demonstrate the unacceptability of crimes against children. The refusal of Western governments to arrest the Bosnian Serb leadership implicated in war crimes and the brokering of a peace agreement in Liberia which allowed the war lords to run as presidential candidates, despite their brutal histories, demonstrate a *realpolitik* devoid of morality.

### **B. The creation of protective environments**

The international community must create conditions for the improved physical protection of children in conflict. In principle, this involves creating protective environments - such as periods of tranquility and safe corridors in conflict zones - where children's rights and their access to humanitarian access are respected. For this, an international presence is critical in order to discourage violations of human rights, to remind warring parties that there is international concern and, at the very least, to bear witness to what is done so that crimes against children are neither ignored nor forgotten.

Children who remain with their families suffer less than those separated from their primary care-givers. The family and other community level institutions capable of

protecting children must be strengthened and supported. Programmes of family reunification are therefore critical to the promotion of protection for children and must be a priority for humanitarian agencies, especially those dedicated to children. Children serving in the military - one of the most physically and psychologically harmful environments possible - must be demobilised and supported in their reintegration into their communities.

Humanitarian assistance and an international presence can provide at least some protection to victims of conflict but it is clear that, in the absence of a political resolution of a conflict, the suffering of children, their families and communities will continue. Therefore, although humanitarian agencies cannot normally take sides in a conflict, they can play a role in urging the international community and parties to the conflict to seek long-term political solutions.

### **Conclusions**

Responsibility for ensuring the protection of children in conflict belongs to all those with control and influence over children - their families and communities, governments, *de facto* authorities and other institutions and organisations. Such protection must aim to prevent all forms of violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect of children through the practical implementation of human rights and humanitarian law on behalf of children. This involves adopting and enforcing the appropriate legal norms, securing respect for the fundamental ethical principles reflected by those norms and developing practical strategies to facilitate their application.



*Iain Levine works for the Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF, New York.*

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# Children uprooted by war: Angola and Sierra Leone

by Mary Diaz

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children recently sponsored assessment missions to two countries which together have produced close to 4 million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). In both Angola and Sierra Leone, civil wars have had brutal consequences, with families ripped apart, and children raped, maimed and killed. Both countries have recently signed peace agreements and are now in the reconstruction phase. However, the future for the young people of Angola and Sierra Leone remains uncertain and will only be assured if their countries and the international community invest in education, health care and human rights.

## Angola

A fact-finding mission from the Women's Commission travelled to Angola in December 1996. The mission focused on conditions facing women and children and the prospects for rebuilding communities in the wake of the Lusaka Peace Accord, signed in 1994. Between 5 and 6 million children (half of Angola's population) have been shot at, lost their homes or seen neighbours and members of their families killed during the 30-year conflict. The majority of Angola's 1.5 million displaced people are under 18 years of age. It is estimated that between 5 and 10 million landmines have been laid. Five thousand young people have become street children in the capital city of Luanda.

The international humanitarian community has responded by immunising children, rehabilitating hospitals and clinics, rebuilding schools, setting up emergency feeding centres and providing safe water and sanitation.

One widely-acclaimed programme is the Christian Children Fund's (CCF) effort to provide psychosocial assistance to war-affected children. CCF's goal is to promote appropriate understanding of children's needs by training teachers, care staff at institutions, parents, local village leaders and others directly involved in the

children's lives. The organisation aims to train 4,000 adults in five provinces over a 3-year period, and expects to reach 320,000 children. The programme also includes an extensive research component and monitoring to measure its effectiveness.

One important finding of CCF is that training women to do more for their children may not be the best solution. As women are terribly overburdened and as most men do not see child care as their role, the CCF is starting to focus more on working with adolescents and older siblings who are proud to have additional responsibility and can act as teachers for younger children.

CCF is also one of the international NGOs responsible for the demobilisation of child soldiers. At the end of 1996, an estimated half of the approximately 5,000 child soldiers targeted for the first stage of the process under the peace agreement had been demobilised. However, there were multiple political and logistical difficulties: some child soldiers refuse to go home, others run away, either back to the army or to Luanda, and in some cases local villages were reluctant or afraid to receive the young ex-combatants.

Nevertheless, CCF has made a concerted effort to engage communities in the demobilisation process. After discussions with Angolans and local NGOs, it has enlisted the help of the Catholic Church and their countrywide network of catechism teachers (*catecistas*). The *catecistas* are working with families and communities to prepare them for the return of young men and boys who have been away fighting, in some cases for years. When the demobilised youth return to the villages, the *catecistas* assist them in starting small businesses, regaining land or locating family members, and with other help as needed.

The programmes run by CCF, Save the Children/UK and Norwegian People's Aid are, however, only scratching the surface of the problems facing young people in

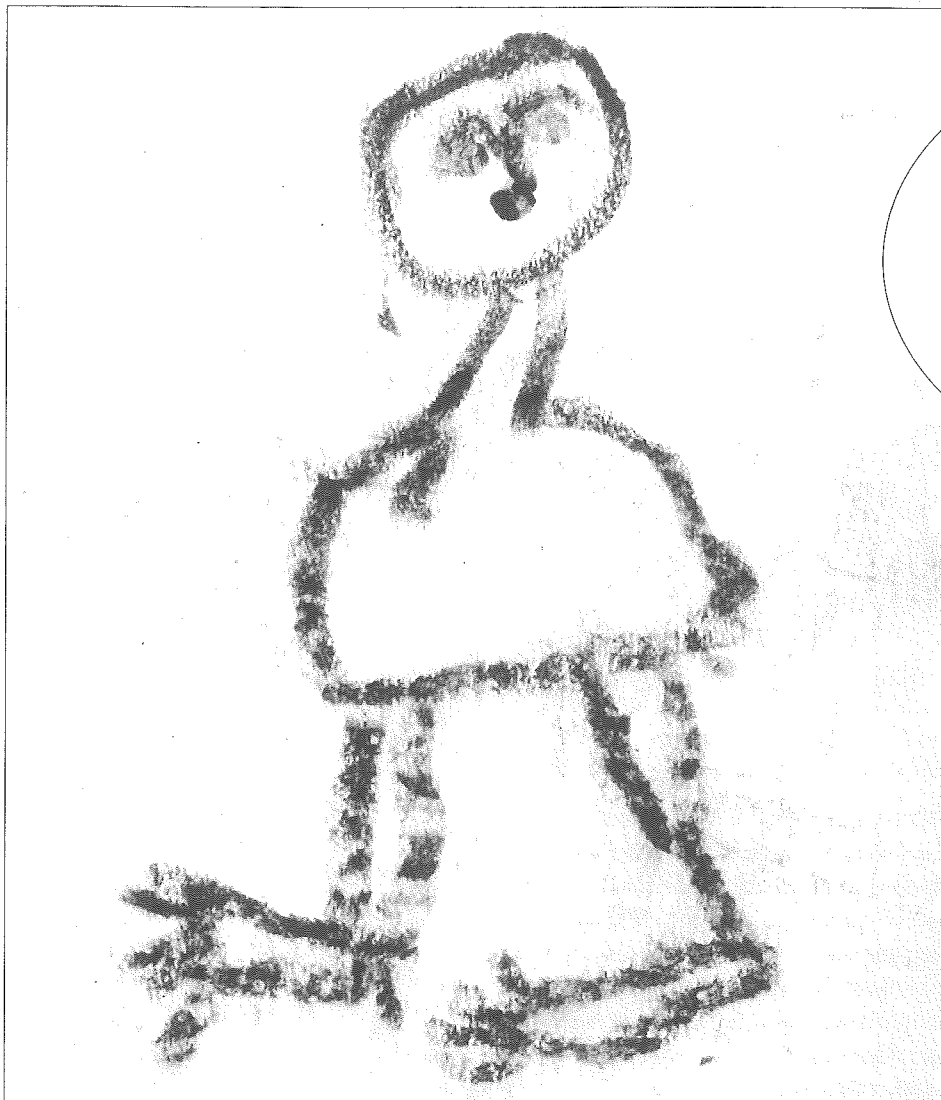
Angola today. Approximately 30,000 refugees will be returning to the country and 1.5 million internally displaced are hoping to go home. Yet there are few schools, health clinics and employment opportunities. There is a scarcity of skilled teachers and vocational programmes or apprenticeship opportunities to attract young men and women and give them a sense of future possibility.

Adolescents are among the most at risk in the country, yet many of their most pressing problems remain invisible to the international humanitarian community. This is particularly true of girls. Sexual violence and exploitation were rife during the war and have continued since the peace agreement but little attention is paid to this problem. Many Angolans speak of the phenomenon of 'little 14-year-old girls' (*catorzinhas*) who are traded by their families to men who can provide money or goods in exchange for sexual services.

## Sierra Leone

The government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) signed a peace accord in November 1996 and, since that time, thousands of uprooted Sierra Leoneans have begun to return to their homes. The Women's Commission conducted an assessment mission in Sierra Leone in March-April 1997 which concluded that the needs of children are not well understood or addressed.

Marc Sommers, the consultant who conducted the study for the Women's Commission, found that those who made it to towns, fleeing rural areas where fighting was raging, became the primary recipients of humanitarian assistance and services. However, the serious problems facing people who hid in the bush and who are still in rural communities have not yet been tackled. Almost nothing is known about those Sierra Leoneans who took to the bush for refuge, rather than going into the cities or crossing the borders into refugee camps. They may number more than 300,000 and many of them are beginning



During a drawing exercise, children who hid in the bush were barely able to draw on their own. When they did, they drew pictures of themselves without arms or mouths.

*Drawing by boy held in rebel bush camp.  
Photo: Marc Sommers, for Women's  
Commission for Refugee Women and  
Children, April 1997.*

to return to their villages, where it is clear to their neighbours and assistance workers that they are suffering serious trauma. During a drawing exercise, children who hid in the bush were barely able to draw on their own. When they did, they drew pictures of themselves without arms or mouths.

Sierra Leone's conflict, like that of Angola, has meant extreme trauma for many girls and women, who suffered sexual violence at the hands of rebel troops and government soldiers. It appears that these abuses have not ended with the signing of the peace accord. In April 1997, there were reports that the RUF troops still maintain bush camps in the forests of central Sierra Leone and ex-combatants said the majority of camp members are young captive girls. Young women were used as commodities throughout the war in Sierra Leone. Sommers found that girls separated from their families often ended up in other households, working as domestics or

servicing as second and third wives. Most of the young women interviewed said that they did not choose these situations but were forced into them in order to survive.

The recruitment and kidnapping of children for use in armies has also been a serious problem in Sierra Leone. The 3-year reign of the military government of Captain Valentine Strasser trebled the size of the military forces to more than 10,000 soldiers. Many of the new recruits are youths, some as young as 9 years of age. The RUF was also known for its use of children in combat. Some estimates suggest that as many as 80 per cent of all RUF forces were between 7 and 14 years of age.<sup>1</sup> Camps housing the young troops as well as the large number of young war captives were established in forest hideaways and drugging youths before raiding a village or entering combat was commonplace.

Sommers found that adolescent boys are still disappearing into diamond mining

areas: 'With schools barely operating and few available opportunities in the rural areas for young men, working in the mines gives the boys a chance to strike big riches (but against considerable odds) while being sheltered and fed in the mines.'

The miners are widely believed to include combatants, soldiers, RUF rebels and probably some *Kamojohs* (local civil defence units empowered with bullet-deflecting charms to protect them) who have elected not to enter demobilisation programmes. Despite the significant numbers of young boys and ex-combatants in mining 'communities', they do not seem to have been considered as candidates for reconstruction or development programmes, probably due to their reputation of being tense, highly competitive areas, with potentially explosive social environments.



*Mary Diaz is Director of the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, an advocacy organisation and expert resource devoted to improving conditions for uprooted women and children around the world. She is acting chair of the UNICEF NGO working group on children in armed conflict in New York.*

1. Mac-Johnson R 'The healing begins' in *African comebacks: strategies for survival*, 2.97, p10, and *Africa Research Bulletin*, December 1996, p12514.

## International documents relating to the protection of children and youth

***Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*** (also known as the **Machel Study** or Report after its author, Graça Machel, Expert of the Secretary-General on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children). This was presented in its final version to the UN General Assembly in November 1996. The General Assembly adopted a resolution incorporating a large number of recommendations for action. Among these, the most significant was the appointment of a permanent Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict to help ensure that the issues raised in the Report continue to figure prominently on the international community's agenda. A Year 2000 Conference is being planned to monitor the progress made on the adopted recommendations. The report deals specifically with: the vulnerability of children in flight, unaccompanied children, evacuation, children in camps, asylum and the right to identity and nationality, the situation of internally displaced children, and returning home and durable solutions. [see p12]

***UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection and Care of Refugee Children***, revised and published by UNHCR in 1994. These guidelines recognise that children uprooted from their homes need special care and attention and they highlight important issues to keep in mind in emergencies. They describe how the refugee experience affects children, including the emotional, physical, cultural and societal effects. Each chapter discusses a particular subject (psychosocial wellbeing, health and nutrition, disabilities, personal liberty and security, legal status, education, unaccompanied children, durable solutions) from the point of view of children's needs and rights.

***UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)***, adopted by the General Assembly in November 1989. This is the human rights treaty which outlines the international standards of behaviour towards children. Ratified by 190 countries as of April 15, 1997. The only states which have not ratified it are the United States, Somalia and the Cook Islands. The convention affirms that every child has the inherent right to life, and calls on countries to ensure children's survival and development. It requires the protection of children from all forms of violence, injury, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, and requires states to take all feasible measures to ensure the protection and care of children affected by armed conflict. This is the treaty that introduces the principle of the 'best interest of the child'.

***Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)***, published by UNHCR in 1979. These guidelines on the prevention of sexual violence in refugee settings point to the special problems girls and women face when they leave their homes and communities during times of conflict. Violations of the rights of girls and women in armed conflicts, including murder, rape, sexual exploitation and forced pregnancy, must be prosecuted and appropriate legal and rehabilitative remedies made available. Rape must be punished as a war crime.

Contact details to obtain copies of these documents:

• ***Machel Study***: see p12 • ***UNHCR Guidelines***: Senior Coordinator for Refugee Children's Unit, UNHCR, Case postale 2500, CH-1211, Geneva 2 Depot, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 739 8155. Fax: 739 7374. E-mail: leysseno@unhcr.ch • ***CRC & CEDAW***: Centre for Human Rights, Palais des Nations, 8-14 Avenue de la Paix, CH-1211, Geneva 10, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 917 3456. Fax: +41 22 917 0214.

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- 23 The role of the military in humanitarian work
- 22 Who protects refugees?
- 21 Education and training
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- 18 Burning issues [environment]
- 17 Partnership: issues of coordination and participation
- 16 The cost of conflict
- 15 Policy, practice, practitioners
- 14 Refugees in Europe
- 13 Who's in charge? Management issues in refugee assistance
- 12 Refugee children
- 11 Welcome home! [repatriation]
- 10 Avoiding camps
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# UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (the Machel Study)

The United Nations Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, also known as the Machel Study after Graça Machel, its author and the former first lady of Mozambique, has brought renewed attention to the plight of children displaced by armed conflict. The Report, the result of two years work, documents that at least half of all refugees and displaced persons are children and that, in the course of displacement, millions of children have been separated from their families, physically abused, exploited and abducted into military groups, or have perished from hunger and disease.

Following the launch of the Report in November 1996, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution incorporating a large number of recommendations for action. Among these, the most significant was the appointment of a permanent Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict to help ensure that the issues raised in the Report continue to figure prominently on the international community's agenda. A Year 2000 Conference is being planned to monitor the progress made on the adopted recommendations.

The report deals specifically with the vulnerability of children in flight, unaccompanied children, evacuation, children in camps, asylum and the right to identity and nationality, the situation of internally displaced children, and returning home and durable solutions. *It makes the following key recommendations in relation to refugee and internally displaced children:*

- a. As a priority in all emergencies, procedures should be adopted to ensure the survival and protection of unaccompanied children. Family tracing programmes should be established from the outset of assistance programmes.
- b. Unaccompanied children should, wherever possible, be cared for by their extended family and community rather than in institutions. It is essential that donors support this principle. The vast majority of unaccompanied children have some family somewhere. Therefore, no adoptions should be permitted until exhaustive family tracing, including into the post-conflict phase, has been attempted.
- c. Practical protection measures to prevent sexual violence, discrimination in delivery of relief materials, and the recruitment of children into armed forces must be a priority in all assistance programmes in refugee and displaced camps. Such measures should involve women and youth fully in their design, delivery and monitoring and include advocacy and social services to address abuses and violations of children's rights.
- d. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee and its Task Force on Internally Displaced Persons should evaluate the extent to which assistance and protection are being provided to internally displaced children and develop appropriate institutional frameworks to address their needs. In cooperation with the new Office of the Emergency Coordinator in its role under the authority of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and in consultation with other major humanitarian agencies, in each emergency, a lead agency should be assigned overall responsibility for the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons. In collaboration with the lead agency, UNICEF should provide leadership for the protection and assistance of internally displaced children.
- e. The General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights, as well as regional organisations, should support the work of the Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons to develop an appropriate legal framework to increase protection for internally displaced persons and to give particular emphasis to the specific concerns of children.
- f. Intergovernmental bodies, UNHCR, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and other organisations should support governments in strengthening national legislative frameworks challenging any aspect of discrimination against women, girls and child-headed households with particular respect to custody, inheritance and property rights.
- g. The expert urges that UNICEF, UNHCR, FAO and ILO give urgent attention to the situation of child-headed households, and develop policy and programme guidelines to ensure their protection and care.

Copies of the Study may be obtained from the UNICEF website at:

[gopher://gopher.un.org:70/00/ga/docs/51/plenary/A51-306.EN](http://gopher://gopher.un.org:70/00/ga/docs/51/plenary/A51-306.EN)

or from:

Jennifer Klot, UNICEF, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA.

The Resolution can be found at: <http://193.135.156.15/HTML/menu4/gares/res77>

*This overview draws on information from Diana Quick of the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children and from an article by Jennifer F Klot in issue 8 of the RRN Newsletter published by ODI, Portland House, Stag Place, London SW1E 5DP, UK.*

# The UNICEF response to the Machel Study

by Nigel Fisher

UNICEF welcomes the Machel Study for its simple, fundamental thesis: children have no part in warfare. It is an outstanding contribution - comprehensive and to-the-point - and highlights the devastating impact of today's armed conflicts on children. It presents the irrefutable case that armed conflict violates every right of the child and calls unequivocally for a halt to war against children.

Likewise, UNICEF welcomes both the scope and specificity of the Study's recommendations, which strongly reinforce the key provisions of UNICEF's own *Anti-War Agenda*. UNICEF proposes to build upon the concept of 'children as a zone of peace' as a focus for all activities promoting the ethical and legal standards that protect children from and in armed conflict.

UNICEF's *Anti-War Agenda* campaign encompasses:

- advocacy of a universal humanitarian imperative to protect children from the brutal effects of war

- advocacy of the ethical and legal obligations of the international community, sovereign states and groups within states to apply, and comply with, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), other human rights law and international humanitarian law

- where prevention has failed, advocacy of a universal standard of commitment to end the targeting and exploitation of children in armed conflict; to ensure humanitarian access to children in war, regardless of their location; and to protect children in war from abuse and exploitation

Within this overall framework, UNICEF is prioritising the specific recommendations made in the Report in respect of five particularly vulnerable groups:

- unaccompanied children
- internally displaced women and children
- women and girls under threat of gender-based violence
- child soldiers
- children exposed to landmines and unexploded ordnance

The findings of the Study highlight the necessity for a multifaceted approach to child care, child protection and post-conflict recovery and also underscore the importance of consistency and continuity of care. Concerted action will require a renewed alliance between UN agencies, NGOs, concerned governments, donors and other partners in the field, and the new call for children envisages a reinvigorated partnership between NGOs and multilateral agencies to enhance capacity at local levels. UNICEF also sees a key role being played by civil society in both monitoring and implementing the recommendations of the new UN resolution.



*Nigel Fisher is Director of the Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF, New York.*

*Graça Machel talks to a former child soldier during a visit to a camp for demobilised child soldiers near Freetown, Sierra Leone. Photo: UNICEF/HQ95-0948/Robert Grossman.*



# The UNHCR response to the Machel Study

by Neil Boothby, Maya Ameratunga and Bruce Abramson

As the Machel Study notes, UNHCR is 'often the first to respond to emergencies' and is therefore in a unique position to exercise leadership regarding humanitarian assistance to refugee children and adolescents<sup>1</sup> - the majority of 'persons of concern' to the organisation. In response to the Machel Study's recommendation that it enhance its response capacity for refugee children and adolescents, UNHCR is introducing the following three new activities in 1997:

**1** UNHCR has formulated a strategy to implement recommendations of the Study, not just for the benefit of war-affected refugees but for all refugee children and adolescents under the age of 18 years. UNHCR's Executive Committee has strongly endorsed the following child- and adolescent-specific performance objectives for all phases of UNHCR operations:

## I. Emergency stage

### (a) Initial phase of emergency response

- Critical health, nutrition and sanitation problems are identified and addressed.
- Child-family separations are prevented (for example, by ensuring that food distribution promotes family unity and care centres for separated minors do not encourage abandonments).
- Care is arranged for separated minors - they are searched for, identified, documented and provided with alternative care.
- In-camp family reunifications are begun.
- Violations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (in particular military recruitment and sexual exploitation) are identified and addressed.
- Education and other Convention on the Right of the Child concerns are integrated into programme budgets and donor appeals.

### (b) Second phase of emergency response

- 'Rapid education' and recreation programmes are available in all communities.
- Separated minors are placed with foster families or in group care and care is monitored.
- Tracing and reunification are extended into country-wide and cross-border programmes.

## II. Post-emergency stage (care and maintenance)

- Tracing programmes are operating fully and producing reunifications.
- Basic education is available for both children and adolescents.
- The majority of adolescents and older children are involved in meaningful activities (for example, school, vocational training, leadership development, environmental and other community service projects).
- Girls and boys receive reproductive health education and services.
- 'Child-watch networks' promote the wellbeing of minors by identifying and correcting problems.
- In the aftermath of violent displacement, the wellbeing of minors (developmental needs/emotional health) is promoted through community-managed programmes.
- Conflict-resolution and peace-building are incorporated into schools and community-based activities.
- Girls and boys will benefit equally from the above programmes. Reasons for limited participation will be reported, assessed and acted upon.

## III. Repatriation-reintegration stage

### (a) Planning and preparation phase

- Assessments are made of children, adolescents and their families, including their needs, capacities and rights, and their concerns are integrated into the planning.
- Landmine awareness campaigns are conducted when necessary before repatriation begins and include child-focused communication strategies.

### (b) Return phase

- Arrangements are made for the return of separated minors, including legal and personal documentation.

### (c) Reintegration and self-reliance phase

- Reintegration programmes are tailored to meet needs and rights of separated minors, including sibling-headed households.
- The right to education is assured.
- Adolescents, including former under-aged soldiers, are provided with opportunities to reintegrate into society (for example, through education, vocational training, apprenticeships, income-generation and environment programmes).
- In countries where landmine accidents are widespread, arrangements are made with the government and NGOs for the rehabilitation of victims who are minors.
- The design of income-generation and other capacity-building programmes for the general community includes the promotion of the health, nutrition and education of minors.
- Refugee children and adolescents are involved in peace-building activities in their schools and communities.
- Boys and girls will benefit equally from these activities, and discrepancies will be monitored and addressed.

*UNHCR estimates that there are 23 million refugees worldwide and an equivalent figure of internally displaced persons. 50 per cent of these are children, of whom 2-3 per cent are unaccompanied children/young people.*

Fundamental to this strategy are UNHCR's guiding principles with regard to younger refugees:

- In all actions concerning refugee children, the human rights and best interests of the child must be given primary consideration.
- Preserving and restoring family unity are of fundamental concern. Actions to benefit refugee children should therefore be designed to enable their primary care-givers to fulfil their responsibility to meet their children's needs. When the special needs of younger refugees can only be met effectively through child-focused activities, these should be carried out with the full participation of their families and communities.
- Unaccompanied minors should be a particular focus of care. Community-based approaches to their care and protection are preferable to institutional care, which does not provide adequately for young people's psychosocial needs.

**2** UNHCR and the International Save the Children Alliance will undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of UNHCR's guidelines on refugee children in order to provide a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of programming for children and adolescents and pave the way for further improvements. UNHCR is developing, also in partnership with the International Save the Children Alliance, a comprehensive child rights and psychosocial training programme for UNHCR staff and implementing partners, in order to ensure that the Convention on the Rights of the Child becomes a normative frame of reference for refugee relief and reintegration operations. Improvements in staffing will enhance operational support to children and adolescents: these include deploying community services officers in every emergency team, together with specialists in education and child and adolescent welfare where necessary, and creating new positions of regional senior advisors for children.

**3** A newly established Refugee Children and Adolescent Initiative Fund will help respond to urgent needs and promote innovative programming. This trust fund - additional to regular programming for children, adolescents and families - will be used to jump-start child rights and youth programmes in various operations. Activities which prove to be especially useful will be integrated into regular UNHCR programming and budgets the following year.

An essential element of UNHCR's protection of refugee children and adolescents will continue to be the promotion of international standards and monitoring - in particular: international advocacy in the areas of conscription limitations for young people under the age of 18 years and bans on landmines; supporting the call for a Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict; and promoting the Convention on the Rights of the Child as UNHCR's normative frame of reference, in order to translate universal ratification of this instrument into universal reality for refugee children and adolescents.



*Neil Boothby is Senior Coordinator for Refugee Children, UNHCR, Geneva, Switzerland; Maya Ameratunga and Bruce Abramson are Consultants at the Senior Coordinator for Refugee Children's Unit, UNHCR, Geneva, Switzerland.*

*The Senior Coordinator for Refugee Children's Unit can be contacted at: UNHCR, Case postale 2500, CH-1211, Geneva 2 Depot, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 739 8155. Fax: 739 7374. E-mail: leysseno@unhcr.ch*

<sup>1</sup> The terms 'refugee children' and 'refugee adolescent' in this article should be understood to include refugees, returnees, asylum seekers, as well as certain internally displaced and war-affected persons in specific situations for whom UNHCR is mandated to provide protection and assistance.

## **New refugee act in Brazil**

On 22 July 1997, Brazil's first Refugee Act was passed. Rather than reproducing the definition enshrined in the 1951 Convention, the new Act states that an individual shall be recognised as a refugee if 'due to severe and generalised violation of human rights, he or she is compelled to leave his or her country of nationality to seek refuge in an different country'.

The National Committee for Refugees, CONARE, has been established to be responsible for deciding the eligibility of applications for asylum, a task previously carried out by UNHCR. CONARE comprises the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs, Labour, Health, Education and Sport; the Federal Police Department; and an NGO. UNHCR will have observer status at its meetings.

## **Refugee Welfare Club at Moi University**

The Moi University Refugee Welfare Club is an expression of solidarity, by students and lecturers, in response to the growing number of refugees in Kenya during the 1990s. The club was established in 1993 under the patronage of Prof John Okumu, director of the Centre for Refugee Studies at Moi. Their motto is 'service to humanity' and their activities include raising public awareness on refugee issues, fundraising, and co-ordinating assistance to refugees. Their fundraising activities began with a walk from Nairobi to Ruiru refugee camp; the club was then able to sponsor a Sudanese refugee throughout his postgraduate studies at the university. As part of its awareness raising activities, the club holds public lectures and workshops and publishes a newsletter - the *Forum*. The first issue of the *Forum* was published in March 1997. *Contact: Refugee Welfare Club, c/o Centre for Refugee Studies, PO Box 3900, Eldoret, Kenya.*

# The protection of unaccompanied children in large-scale refugee and repatriation emergencies: *Tanzania and Rwanda*

by Ulla Blomqvist

In December 1996, when massive repatriation of the Rwandese started from Zaire, and later from Tanzania, two Rädä Barnen social workers were deployed to work for UNHCR as community services officers in Kibungu, Gisenye and Ruhengeri prefectures in Rwanda. They were responsible for assistance to the most vulnerable returnees during their journey, in transit centres and in their communes of origin (*collines*). An essential part of this work was the coordination (in cooperation with UNICEF), of the NGO programmes for unaccompanied children (UAC). This article aims to highlight some of the achievements, and to examine the constraints and issues of concern facing programmes in the reintegration phase following repatriation.<sup>1</sup>

## A. The Tanzanian refugee camp experience

### 1. Background

Both the massive influx of an estimated 1.7 million refugees into Tanzania and Zaire in 1994 and the repatriation waves back to Rwanda in November and December 1996 (totalling around 1.2 million people) were refugee movements on an unprecedented scale which imposed major challenges to the governments involved and to the international community. A rapid response was necessary without adequate pre-planning and in highly politicised environments with decimated local administrations and no infrastructure.

It is difficult to obtain figures as to how many children are experiencing the ongoing effects of this crisis but it is feared that up to as many as 10 million children in the whole Great Lakes region may be directly affected. As a result of the 1994 massacres of Tutsi and moderate Hutu, and the refugee exodus in their aftermath, it is estimated that between 95,000 and 150,000 Rwandan children have become separated from their families or orphaned.

The genocide, war and life in exile have altered the demographic composition of the Rwandese, so that women now represent almost 70 per cent of the population, of which 40-50 per cent are believed to be widows. Female-headed households are carrying an overwhelming burden of socio-economic responsibility and every household is caring for an average of two orphaned children. According to a UNICEF study,<sup>2</sup> nine out of ten children have experienced killings within their immediate family. Given the magnitude of the psychosocial trauma inflicted on the survivors of the genocide, very little attention has been given to the problems of psychosocial healing. In this context, however, unaccompanied children have been a focus for assistance, whereas the hardship on women and adolescents has been given less attention.

### 2. Assistance to unaccompanied children in refugee camps

The most urgent priority for the community services was to give protection and immediate care to the large numbers of unaccompanied children who arrived in the Ngara and Karagwe camps. UNHCR, in collaboration with the NGOs present, initiated an early registration procedure and organised mass tracing campaigns by directly involving the refugee community.

A firm policy to avoid the creation of child centres was developed and sustained from the outset. In Tanzania, the majority of separated children were arriving together with other families from their original *collines*, which facilitated the integration of separated children into other households. This approach was in accordance with Rwandan cultural tradition, although Rwanda also has a long history of institutional care of orphans and children from destitute families.

The early registration done at camp level was the first step in a systematic

programme of identification, tracing and family reunification, which later became region-wide. This was implemented by ICRC (operating a regional database) and the community services NGOs, including SCF/UK, the Tanzanian Red Cross, Christian Outreach and Norwegian People's Aid.

As the UAC programme evolved in the camps, coordination of activities and common guidelines (based on the principle of the best interest of the child) established in close cooperation with the refugee community became key factors in its sustainability.

### 3. Critical issues and lessons learned in the camps

*i. Administration.* Overall coordination by one lead agency and clear division of the roles and responsibilities of all involved parties are crucial. Regular liaison in the form of agency meetings (daily in the first phase of the emergency) and cross-border coordination from the beginning are also essential. Guidelines need to be shared by all agencies, local authorities and refugee representatives, and should include a definition of UAC, clear principles and objectives and a minimum set of standards and procedures to be followed. The programme objectives should cover prevention of separation, immediate needs for survival, protection and care, tracing and family reunification, interim and transit care arrangements until tracing and reunification can be made, and long-term care if tracing and reunification are unsuccessful.

*ii. Prevention of child abandonment.* Identification of children and families at risk prior to refugee movements or expected emergencies (those in child institutions, foster families, hospitals, boarding schools, children in prison, street children, child soldiers) is a priority. It is also important to raise awareness and



disseminate information to parents, local leaders, authorities and institutions to discourage and prevent family separations. Family and community based support to the most vulnerable groups should be promoted.

*iii. Immediate needs of children.* As far as possible, disruption of children's daily life routines should be minimised and existing support structures maintained. Adult guardians and care-givers from the area of origin of the separated children should be identified. Local NGOs and other non-refugee groups should be prevented from hosting unaccompanied children in, for example, compounds, hospitals and local institutions. Close cooperation with health clinics and feeding centres is advisable in order to monitor admittance of unaccompanied children and put referral procedures in place as soon as possible.

Unaccompanied children should not be placed in a privileged position vis-à-vis other refugee children. Material assistance directly targeting these children should also be avoided. However, to prevent them becoming an additional economic burden on a household, and to lessen the risk of further abandonment, family food rations must take account of any unaccompanied children being cared for in a household.

*iv. Tracing and family reunification.* This work must commence without delay. Posts

or collection points where children and parents can look for each other should be established. Tracing can then progress from these points into the community. Diversified methods of tracing (mass tracing, photo tracing, community-based tracing) may be incorporated. Clear role divisions and shared areas of responsibilities for NGOs and ICRC should be identified with regard to local area tracing, regional and cross-border tracing. Refugee volunteers should be recruited to be trained on the job to work at reception points, tracing and reuniting at camp level, identifying guardian families and other related tasks. When recruiting volunteers and community workers, the potential impartiality and especially any possibility of ethnic conflicts should be considered.

*v. Interim and long-term care arrangements.* Foster care should be seen as the first option; for older children, alternatives such as group living with adult supervision may more adequately meet their needs. Institutional placements should only be considered as a last option. However, a temporary transit care arrangement has to be put in place to meet the most basic needs of shelter, food and emotional support while awaiting a family placement. The duration of a child's stay should be kept to a minimum and material standards should not be developed to avoid attracting other children. It is essential to involve the

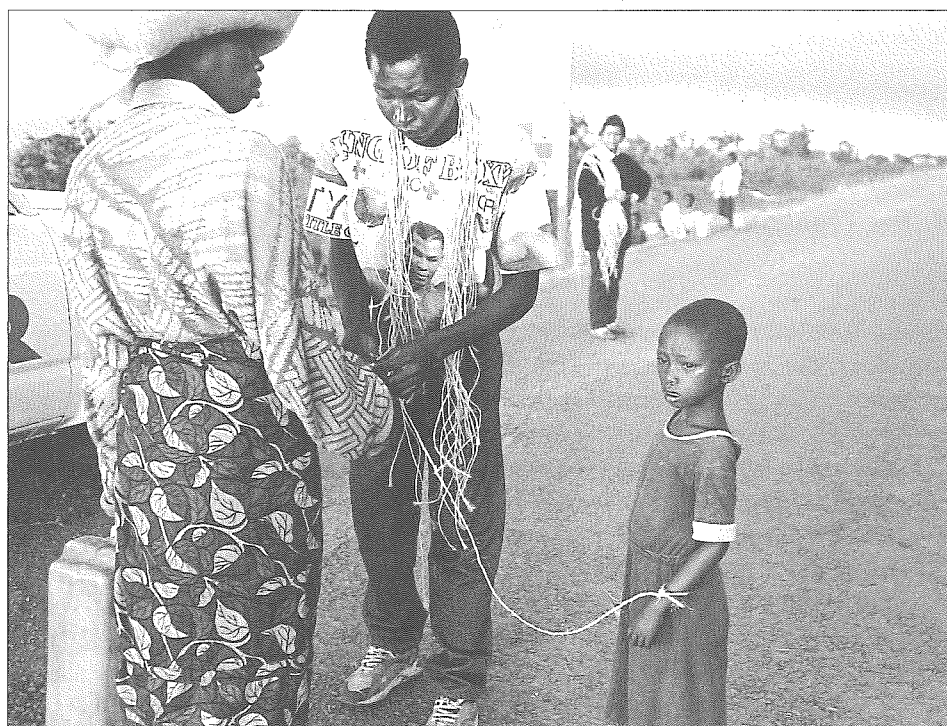
refugee community leaders and a cross-section of representatives from among women's groups, religious leaders, teachers and other key groups in setting up task forces or committees to discuss community responsibility for unaccompanied children, to set the criteria for foster parents and to develop neighbourhood-based support and monitoring mechanisms for the children in foster families.

As foster-care arrangements have some protection implications, attention has to be given to special risk groups, such as children from ethnic minorities, young girls over 10 years (risk of sexual abuse), children under 5 years (risk of neglect and malnutrition), children living alone, or children in particularly vulnerable families (risk of labour exploitation, school truancy, lack of food, exposure to domestic violence). A community-based follow-up system must be developed based on the mediation, advice and support of refugee community workers rather than a monitoring system perceived as a form of control.

*vi. Psychosocial rehabilitation and education.* The psychosocial needs of children should be addressed as early as possible in an emergency. This should preferably be done by starting recreational and educational activities on a non-formal temporary basis, engaging refugee teachers on a voluntary basis, and using an emergency curriculum and the mother tongue as language of instruction.

The involvement of parents in the planning and implementation of the activities should be encouraged and the creation of 'experts' to deal with the psychosocial problems should be avoided. Instead, support should be given to teachers, parents and other key figures in developing culturally appropriate knowledge and teaching materials to meet the needs of all children.

Access to education should be ensured for all children, with special attention given to the inclusion of unaccompanied children, girls and children with disabilities. As far as possible, education programmes, curriculum development, certificate and graduation systems should be planned and coordinated in cooperation with the authorities in the country of origin, with a view to facilitating repatriation.



*Return to Rwanda: Red Cross workers provide string to prevent children being separated from their family. Photo: UNHCR/26109/12.1996/R Chalasani.*



Tracing the families of unaccompanied children returning to Rwanda, Birenga Transit Camp. Photo: UNHCR/26118/12.1996/R Chalasani.

vii. *The age group 15-18 years.* This is a neglected group, normally excluded from UAC assistance. They too require early attention in an emergency and, given their vulnerability (caught between family disruption, unemployment and lack of access to education), they should be part of community services emergency programmes. Groups at particularly high risk include those young people living without adult support, street children, girls who have been subjected to sexual abuse, pregnancy as a result of rape, prostitution and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and boys who have been exposed to criminal behaviour and military recruitment. During the post-emergency phase in the refugee camps, a number of NGO youth projects were developed, which should be continued after repatriation. They were all based on self-help and active participation by the youth, adopted an integrated approach and included community participation, micro

projects supporting particularly vulnerable groups, skills training, adult education, reproductive health, STD/AIDS prevention advice, and crisis intervention and protection to support victims of sexual violence.

## B. The repatriation experience

### 1. Background

Great efforts were made by UNHCR to prepare for the voluntary repatriation of the refugees. Cross-border meetings were arranged between refugee representatives and the new municipal leaders (*bourgmestres*) in their *collines* of origin, women's groups and other key groups. Peace education was introduced in the schools on both sides of the border. However, political tensions in the region were growing and UNHCR and the whole international community were repeatedly accused of feeding in exile those responsible for the genocide. Borders were closed

and refugee movements restricted. The community services programmes in Tanzania, based on refugee empowerment, were facing cuts and began to be seen as a threat by the Rwandan (and Tanzanian) governments. When mass repatriation finally came about, it was not voluntary but forced by political and military concerns.

Given the brutal nature of the Rwandan conflict, insecurity and increased tensions in Rwanda were expected to follow upon repatriation. The receiving capacity in Rwanda is very low. The destruction of the infrastructure and of the social and cultural institutions in the country has been of a devastating nature. Health, education and other social services have collapsed and most of the trained staff have been killed. In 1994, aid to Rwanda from the international community focused on survival needs and assistance to the internally displaced. Rehabilitation and development projects started as late as 1995. The general view held by the Rwandan Government is that it has been abandoned by the international community, and relations are still marked by distrust with an extensive need on the Government's part to control activities and resources at all levels.

### 2. Assistance to unaccompanied children during repatriation

The Rwandan Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MINITRASO) is responsible for children in difficult circumstances. UNICEF has been assigned as the lead agency to support the unaccompanied children in Rwanda and basically the mandate of UNHCR is to protect and assist returnee children during repatriation and reintegration. Save the Children/UK is supporting the Ministry in capacity building of the social services sector and is implementing a countrywide tracing and family reunification campaign. The ICRC is responsible for registration, documentation and tracing from UAC centres, runs the UAC database and is responsible for cross-border transfers and in-country transport of all unaccompanied children. There are also a number of NGOs implementing community services programmes which focus on unaccompanied children. Most NGOs have experience from working with the Rwandan refugees and have upgraded their skills in tracing, family reunification and care of the children.

However, overlapping mandates, centralised decision-making and lack of common understanding with the local authorities pose many problems.

Efficient coordination of assistance was achieved during cross-border movements and in transit centres during the massive repatriation waves from Zaire and Tanzania. A variety of methods were used to prevent family separations en route, assist in rapid and spontaneous reunifications and provide immediate care in temporary centres. Around 80 per cent of the identified children associated with the massive influx from Goma in November 1996 and Tanzania in December 1996 were reunited with their families by the end of January 1997. In total, from November 1996 to January 1997, 10,400 returnee children were registered as new arrivals, out of which 7,800 were reunited.

The official policy of the Rwandan government regarding unaccompanied children is to support family reunification. No further child institutions should be created. In November 1995, 12,000 children were living in centres but, as a result of intensified family tracing and foster care placement, numbers went down to 7,700 in 1996. Following the massive repatriation wave, an estimated 1,500-2,000 children have been placed in transit centres awaiting family tracing.

### 3. Critical issues for reintegrating returnee children

The reintegration of the returnees has barely begun and is facing many constraints. Continued protection and immense material support to these returnees and survivors of the genocide is needed. The most urgent issues are the recovery of occupied land and property and the need for new housing and a fair settlement policy. Many returnees live in transit camps under plastic sheetings. External food assistance will be needed for many months ahead before families are settled and can support themselves with their own harvest. Moreover, the deteriorating security situation, particularly in the north west of Rwanda, means that it has become increasingly difficult to provide the communes with food, shelter and other basic survival assistance or to make community-based needs assessments and monitor the situation of children and the socio-

economic conditions of vulnerable households.

#### Specific critical issues:

i. Transfer of children to their home prefectures and communes, and tracing and family reunification activities in the communes, have been increasingly suspended due to the worsening security situation. As a result, children have to stay longer in child centres and transit camps, sometimes in an environment which undermines their health. Many of the children among the later groups of returnees from Zaire are malnourished and traumatised upon arrival. The local authorities are reluctant to meet the medical and psychosocial needs of children until they are sent to their home communes, where they then have no access to basic health services.

ii. The receiving capacity for unaccompanied children and vulnerable households must be developed at commune level. Some constructive community-based projects have been initiated by NGOs, focusing on rebuilding socio-economic support structures (rural associations) involving micro-projects, agriculture, shelter and other provision for vulnerable women, foster families, youth and child-headed households but the number of beneficiaries is still very low. Basic medical services, including feeding centres, must be improved and must reach the most needy. Given the scattered living patterns in the rural areas this will require significant logistical support. All community-based assistance to children must be founded on assessments of vulnerability and include all groups living in the communes.

iii. The registered unaccompanied children in Rwanda are largely either those who arrived with new guardian families or those who live in centres. However, there are an unknown number of children (estimated at 300,000-400,000) living with foster families in the communes. These children have not been properly documented at commune level and there are reported problems especially among those living with families to whom they are not related. No follow-up mechanism currently exists to monitor children in these families. Another risk group are child-headed households who might not be able to recover their family property or provide for their basic survival needs. There is an

urgent need to organise and train community-based teams of local social workers who can follow up and support vulnerable children and families in their communes. Children in prison, street children, children in centres and child soldiers all require special attention and monitoring.

iv. The large majority of women are single and supporting many children. Poverty alleviation and promotion of basic legal, social and economic rights for this group are critical. Support to, and empowerment of, women's own networks, and literacy and training in income-generating skills, are essential to reduce their vulnerability. In the prevailing conditions of insecurity and distrust within the communes, protection systems need to be family and household based.

v. There is an urgent need to support rehabilitation and improve the capacity of schools in Rwanda. The rapid integration into schools of newly-returned children must be seen as a priority and will require substantial external support. Schools are currently overcrowded and lack trained teachers and teaching materials. The subsidising of school fees, uniforms, books and school meals is necessary in order to promote school attendance. Teacher training and curriculum development are other important issues, and peace education and the active participation of parents in school activities should be promoted.

vi. The needs of adolescents must be adequately addressed by rehabilitating secondary schools, provision of skills training and income-generating opportunities to combat unemployment, poverty and growing social tensions.



*Ulla Blomqvist is a social worker and a member of the Rädde Barnen Emergency Standby Team.*

<sup>1</sup> For full details, see three Rädde Barnen reports: *Social work in refugee emergencies, Protection of children in refugee emergencies and Community participation in a refugee emergency - focusing on community mobilisation, women and youth*. Contact: Rädde Barnen, 19788 Stockholm, Sweden. Tel: +46 8 698 9000. Fax: +46 8 698 9014.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF Rwanda Progress Report, May 1994-95, quoted in *Rebuilding postwar Rwanda*, Chapter 7, Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, part 4.

# Restoring playfulness

by David Tolfree

Recent years have seen a growing concern with the psychological effects of war on both adults and children. Children who witness killings, especially involving people close to them, who see houses being destroyed, who experience the fear of attack or bombardment, who become orphaned or separated from their families and loved ones, or who have to cope with the upheaval of seeking refuge away from their communities are likely to be affected in many different ways. Such experiences have a profound effect on the ways in which children perceive themselves and the world around them, on how they feel, how they behave and how they relate to other people.

Rädda Barnen (Swedish Save the Children) has become increasingly involved in working with children and families affected by war and displacement around the world. This article introduces two such programmes - Acisam in El Salvador and Hi Neighbour in Yugoslavia.



Returnee children to El Salvador from Honduras.  
Photo: UNHCR/18004/03.1988/D Bregnard.

## El Salvador

### *From clinic to community - the work of Acisam*

Acisam (Association for training and research in mental health) was born during the most critical years of political repression in El Salvador. Initially Acisam offered counselling and psychotherapy to individuals, support to people who sought refuge from the authorities, and assistance to people living in 'marginalised communities' (temporary slum housing) in San Salvador.

The primary focus of the organisation gradually shifted from clinical intervention to preventive approaches and, following the peace agreement in 1992, it decided to concentrate its energies on training and supporting volunteer Promoters in village communities whose task was to offer a range of activities broadly described as mental health promotion. The task of training and supporting Promoters is undertaken by a cadre of Facilitators, most of whom are professional psychologists.

Acisam works mainly with rural communities which have been most affected by the civil war. Many of these communities face problems and issues regarding the resettlement of people who sought refuge outside the country or who were internally displaced, as well as many emotional, inter-personal, social and economic problems resulting directly from the war. Since the peace agreement, these communities have had to face the additional issues of the demobilisation of combatants and the widespread sense of disappointment with the limited change resulting from the peace accord.

### **The effects of war**

Acisam has increasingly come to recognise that the main effects of war on people are not so much the classical symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder but the indirect effects: excessive use of drugs and alcohol, increasing marital violence and child abuse, authoritarian, militaristic attitudes, and a widespread feeling of despair and hopelessness.

Another effect of the war was that people were so preoccupied with their involvement with the conflict that there was little time for other things. Children may have

had little time for play and parents may have had little time for their children.

A current trend within Acisam is to focus more directly on children and youth. They have found that young people are not only less affected than adults by the sense of hopelessness and despair but also tend to be less polarised in their views. For these reasons, children and young people can often be more readily mobilised to take action to transform their communities and to work towards reconciliation.

### **The role of the Promoters**

Promoters are unpaid volunteers who work at community level. In some districts, the Acisam Promoters have a specific mental health role while in others their work is part of an integrated health programme. Most are young but are usually people of standing in the local community - popular teachers, village midwives, members of village committees or former combatants. The majority are women, reflecting the particular concern with problems and issues faced by both women and children, and their lesser involvement in income-generating work.

The mental health promotion work covers a spectrum of activities. At one end is the

more 'clinical' work which includes individual counselling (referred to as 'co-listening') and the setting up and supporting of self-help groups. At the other end of the spectrum is a wide range of community organisation activities which include, for example, organising sports and other activities for young people; raising awareness of issues such as domestic violence, grief and loss, and alcoholism; giving talks to schools and other groups; adult education; organising cultural and recreational activities and celebrations; identifying local needs and negotiating for resources. In addition, those Promoters who work within an integrated health framework undertake a wide range of health tasks which include, for example, treating minor ailments, advising on family planning and various health education tasks.

Acisam has developed the concept of 'community self-diagnosis'. Promoters work within the local community to engage people in examining the problems, resources and needs of the community; this leads to an action plan which specifies what needs to be done to solve the problems identified and to improve the overall health and wellbeing of the community.

### **Working with Young Promoters and child and youth leaders**

Acisam also deploys Young Promoters, who are usually older adolescents or young adults. Their role is broadly similar to that of adult Promoters, with two exceptions: they do not undertake the more clinical work such as co-listening, and they have particular responsibility for reaching children and adolescents in their communities. By using sports and other recreational activities to gain the interest of young people, they often then try to progress into other areas which may include, for example, workshops (on topics such as alcoholism, health issues, sexuality, grief and loss) and the development of modest economic activities.

Under their leadership, young people are also involved in community self-diagnosis. The compilation of village maps (which identify resources and resource gaps, community problems and so on) is a practical and enjoyable exercise which contributes to this process.

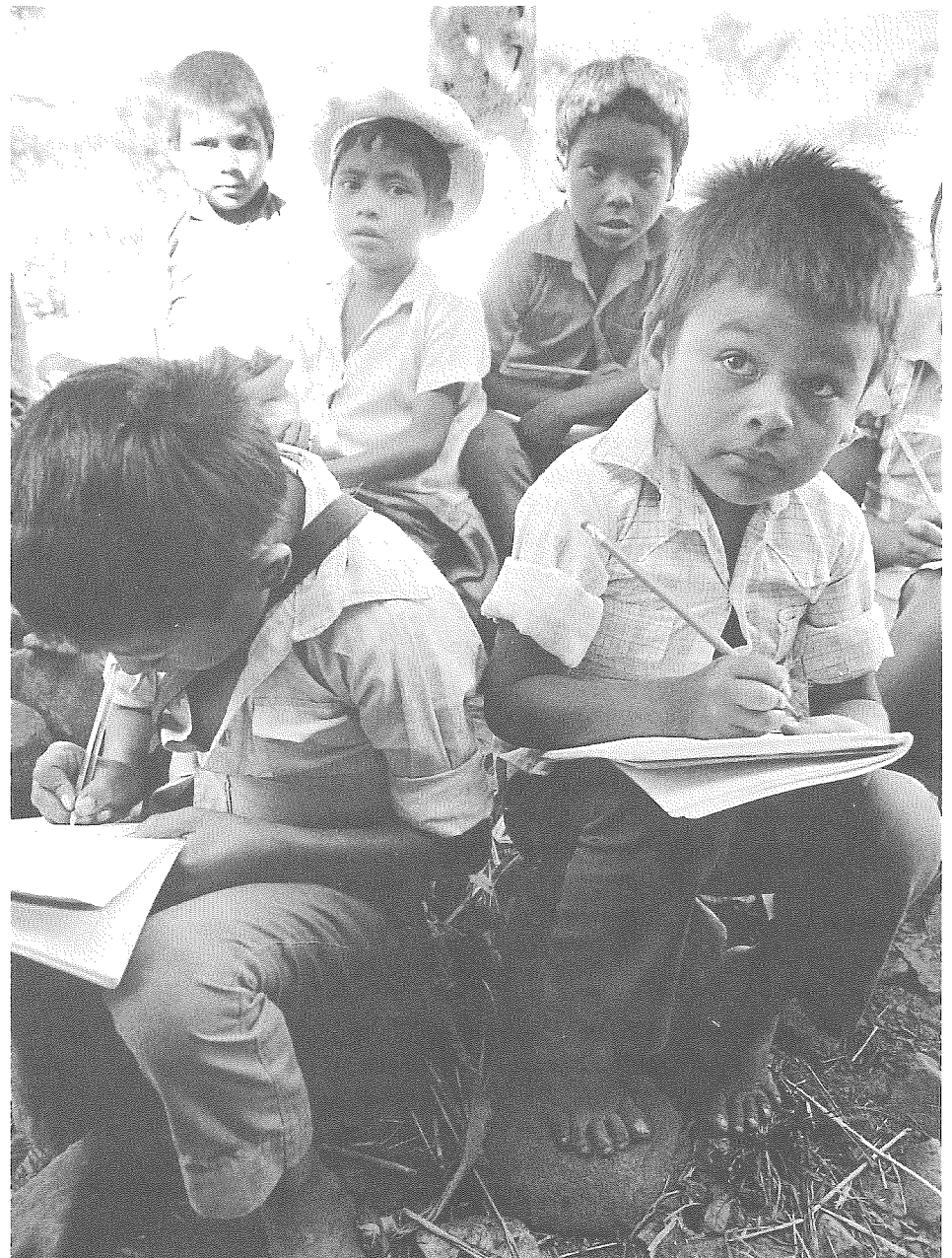
A relatively new departure is the identification of, and training and support to, child

and youth leaders. The idea is to identify young people with leadership potential to undertake a number of functions in respect of children and youth in the community, such as the organisation of sports and recreational activities, workshops on various topics, and the promotion of awareness of mental health issues among the young and the organising of community events. Another facet of their role appears to be that of providing a role model to other young people in communicating attitudes and values conducive to good mental health and community development.

### **Conceptualisations of health**

Acisam's approach is highly significant in moving away from individualised concepts

of mental health and recognising, for example, the importance of identifying the effects of war in community terms. A striking example of this was found in one village which, every year, celebrates the return of its people from exile in Honduras. Previously an individualistic and fragmented community, this village achieved a strong sense of community and a high level of community organisation as a result of traumatic experiences in the war and subsequent experience of exile. An Acisam Promoter suggested ways in which the community might celebrate their return and the village committee decided to re-enact the circumstances leading to flight into exile. This involved large numbers of adults and children and not only preserved



*Returnee community of Segundo Montes, El Salvador. Photo: Network/Jenny Matthews.*

a highly significant part of village history but also served therapeutic purposes in encouraging people to talk about traumatic events within the context of the whole community. Significantly, this village seemed relatively free from problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, and it seems likely that the sense of community solidarity is an important reason for this.

An interesting feature of Acisam's experience is that it has not found it useful to respond to the reactions of individuals and communities to their experiences of war and conflict in isolation from other issues being faced in rural communities. The specific effects of conflict and violence, and the implications of the peace accord, are inextricably intertwined, making it necessary to respond to the totality of people's experiences and not to any one particular aspect of those experiences.

### Conclusions

Perhaps one of the most remarkable features of Acisam has been its ability to adapt as circumstances within El Salvador have changed: from a concern with the immediate psychological effects of war to the problems associated with peace. From a largely clinical perspective, it has moved to prevention and then to promotion of mental health as its major focus, with community reconciliation as an important and challenging task.

## Yugoslavia

### *A special form of social integration - the work of Hi Neighbour*

In 1992, a group of developmental psychologists based in the University of Belgrade in Serbia became concerned about the effects of war on children in the Former Yugoslavia and in particular about the issues facing the growing number of children and families seeking refuge in the Federal Republic (FRY). In order to assess the impact of war on children generally (not specifically refugee children or those with direct experience of the war), they did some work with children attending pre-schools and observed a number of particularly striking factors:

- a preoccupation, sometimes almost an obsession, with war
- a dramatic effect on the colours used by children in their drawings, with flowers and suns coloured black
- in their play, children displayed their reactions to war but their playing tended to be rigid and lacked the vital ingredient of normal play: the elaboration of their experience and not merely reactions to it
- increased aggression in play

- children perceived the end of the war in terms such as 'extermination' rather than reconciliation, peacemaking or conflict-resolution, suggesting that adults have not given children different ways of thinking about the war and the possible ways in which the conflict might be resolved

On closer contact with children in the Collective Centres, they found that many children were simply unable to play, having experienced violence, sudden uprootedness and separation, as well as facing an uncertain future in a very constrained living environment. They also found that many parents displayed a reduced level of parental competence as a result of their experiences; adults were also isolated and experienced difficulties in making social contacts outside the Centres. It was apparent that the refugees felt a loss of individuality, personal identity and 'personal space'.

### Hi Neighbour workshops

The Hi Neighbour approach<sup>1</sup> is based on the belief that all refugees are deeply affected by their experience but, by avoiding labelling people as 'traumatised' or as 'having problems', they are able to work in a way that builds on people's strengths rather than weakness. No attempt is made to 'solve' problems or to suggest action which they can take. Rather the aim is to provide a special form of social interaction and the 'tools' with which people themselves can discover and build on their own and each other's personal resources.

The project consists of weekly workshop groups in selected Collective Centres. Two or more psychologists are deployed in each group and there are usually one group for children, one for adolescents and one for adults operating concurrently, with periodic joint workshops for all ages. The groups are open and refugees are free to join and leave at will.

Each workshop group involves a wide variety of different activities. They usually begin in a large circle, with an activity focusing on the theme of personal names, personal signs and faces which serves to emphasise personal identity and individuality. Workshops also end with participants in a large circle with some sort of experience which, often in a ritual-like manner, draws the workshop to a conclusion.



Collective centre housing IDPs. Photo: UNHCR/25175/12.1995/L Taylor.

Media such as drawing and painting, clay modelling, story telling and performing, movement and human sculpting, creative and expressive games and exercises all facilitate individual and group expression and exploration of the reality in which they find themselves and its emotional significance for them.

Workshops are planned in advance. The project has developed a large range of flexible workshop 'scripts' grouped in 'pools' of topics; some reflect such themes as feelings, faces and self-expression, identity, self-esteem or personal space in a way which provides opportunities for participants to use those experiences as they find appropriate, without necessarily being directed towards particularly poignant issues facing them. Other scripts reflect themes and issues of more immediate pertinence to refugees. New workshops are devised around particular issues which emerge within the Collective Centre or which refugees themselves request; one recent request was for a workshop on the emotive issue of 'revenge'.

The objective of the workshops (referred to as the 'prolonged workshop effect') is to help refugees to change the pattern of interaction among themselves - for example, in encouraging the expression of feelings, in achieving a high level of caring and tolerance, and in developing non-violent means of resolving conflict.

### Social interaction programmes

Although the workshops have a significant impact on the quality of social interaction within the Collective Centres, many refugees still experience problems and anxieties in social interaction with people in the local community. The range of activities designed to improve such interaction has several components:

- meetings with refugees from other Collective Centres
- a range of outings and cultural visits
- encouraging refugees to act as hosts to other people

In such activities, the role of Hi Neighbour has been to encourage the refugees themselves to articulate their own wishes and needs and then respond by providing resources: transport, funds and personnel where needed.

In addition, refugees requested opportunities for taking part in traditional activities such as craftwork. The project responded by deploying an artist to design clothes and other craft items, provide materials, train refugees to train others in traditional skills and to begin to find ways of marketing the goods produced so as to provide a modest income for refugees. This provided not only a range of purposeful activities for adult refugees, mainly women, but also brought them into closer interaction with each other; this social function was considered to be as important as the activity and the modest material gains resulting from it. All three benefits enhance their sense of self-esteem and self-respect.

### Originality and innovation

Hi Neighbour operates on a multiplicity of levels. At a basic level, it provides simple friendship and cultural and recreational activities which are valuable for their own sake. At another level, it offers a conceptually complex approach to child and human development which calls for very precise, purposeful and sophisticated work but which is implemented in a relaxed, friendly and non-confrontational manner. The work is highly professional yet avoids many of the typical characteristics of professional relationships, such as professional distance and inter-personal formality. The willingness of the psychologists to work within the real-life situation of the Centres rather than withdrawing people into a 'special' group situation is also a hallmark of their work.

### Conclusions

Although this programme is built on a particular child development framework rather than specifically pursuing the concept of resilience, the two approaches have much in common. The idea of facilitating social interaction, of enabling young people to develop cognitive, social and emotional competence, and of promoting self-esteem and a sense of mastery over difficult life experiences - all these objectives have much in common with programmes aimed at enhancing resilience. Both have as their starting point the belief that people have a wealth of personal resources to bring to bear on even overwhelming difficulties. The task is to support these capacities rather than to provide 'treatment'.

In particular, the Hi Neighbour approach builds on the great capacity of children for creative and imaginative play, through which difficult issues can be explored, feelings can be expressed and a sense of hope can be found.



The following story was written by a group of children in a workshop called 'my personal sign':

*In the field of flowers a boy was wandering. He was holding tight to his heart a boomerang of kindness, uncertain what would happen to his boomerang if people received it. Would it come back to him as boomerangs always do? The boy took a chance. He threw his boomerang of kindness to people. Kindness went all the way to the sun and was coming back at people together with sunshine. The boy was looking into the blue sky and waiting. His boomerang came back to him as boomerangs always do. Kindness of people was with him, mingling with sunshine around his heart. The boy was certain, now and for ever, that boomerangs do come back to those who send them out to others.*

This story is significant, not just because of the extraordinarily powerful imagery but because it resulted from the creative imagination of children. Here was a group of children surrounded by the horrors of a war which adults had imposed on their lives yet, despite everything, they were still able to perceive their own and other people's capacity for kindness and peace.



*David Tolfree is a social worker and independent consultant.*

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<sup>1</sup> Hi Neighbour is a not entirely satisfactory translation of the Serbian *Zdravo da ste*, a traditional form of greeting which is more accurately translated as 'I wish you good health'.

# Promoting psychosocial well-being among children affected by armed conflict and displacement

*This article is extracted from a working paper written by a group of Save the Children Alliance professionals<sup>1</sup>. It is concerned with approaches to the healing process for war-affected children and the characteristics of intervention programmes. The paper presents a number of proposals concerning the need for community-based solutions to problems, genuine participation of affected groups in decision-making and implementation, understanding of and drawing upon local culture, tradition and resources, and avoiding the inappropriate use of western treatment models in non-western countries.*

## **1 Apply a long-term perspective that incorporates the psychosocial well-being of children.**

Emergency assistance conjures up images of material aid such as water and sanitation facilities, food, shelter and health care. Non-material aspects, however, are central to the psychosocial well-being of children. Will the way the help is provided tend to create passive receivers or help people to help themselves? One of UNHCR's first actions in response to an emergency is to send out a team of professionals to assess the situation and start up programmes; social workers are now usually part of that team. Their tasks include identifying vulnerable groups and assessing and mobilising resources among the refugees themselves as well as those of local authorities and NGOs.

What is done at this early stage has long-term implications. For example, it is essential to involve women in decisions: it is much more difficult to do it later on and without women's participation children become more at risk. Reconstructing a social web and a sense of community helps refugees act together to improve their lives, and the care and protection of children is usually an area where people can work together.

Psychosocial well-being and competence to satisfy material needs are inter-related.

Vocational and skills training for young people helps to augment income-earning ability and economic independence and also increases their sense of identity and self-worth.

## **2 Adopt a community-based approach that encourages self-help and builds on local culture, realities and perceptions of child development.**

If interventions are to be effective and appropriate, those who make them need to have a more than superficial knowledge and experience of local history, culture, traditions, ways of life and local power structures. More than one western aid organisation in the Rwandan emergency employed local staff to assist and protect children without being aware they were Hutu extremists; to the Rwandan children in their care, this was obvious.

Expatriates need to know basic principles of child development and how it is understood locally, as well as about local culture and practices. What are attitudes toward orphaned children and who has the obligation to care for them? What are attitudes to widows, their rights to remarry and inherit, and how do these affect children? Programme staff involved with psychosocial aspects need knowledge that goes deeper, touching on ceremonies and rites around growing up and becoming adult, about death, burial and mourning, as well as ceremonies to give spiritual and psychological cleansing (for example, for a girl who has been raped or a child who has killed). Integrating modern knowledge of child development and child rights with traditional concepts and practices may take time but is likely to result in more effective and sustainable ways to meet children's needs.

## **3 Promote normal family and every day life so as to reinforce a child's natural resilience.**

Some factors that promote the psychosocial well-being of children seem to be universal: safety and security,

sympathetic care-givers (preferable one or both parents), familiar routines and tasks (such as schooling), and interaction with other children.

Monitored foster care is usually preferable to an orphanage as it does not separate the child from family and community life, though sometimes older children prefer to live with siblings or others of the same age and sex. Evacuating children from a war zone carries the risk that obvious short-term benefits may be outweighed by the trauma of separation and the negative effects of temporary or permanent loss of contact with their family. In an emergency, family reunification must take priority.<sup>2</sup>

Familiar routines and tasks create a sense of security and purpose. In addition to family routines, organised activities, especially educational ones, are important for children; even without a school building, lessons and play groups can be held and sports and games organised.

## **4 Focus on primary care and prevention of further harm in the healing of children's psychological wounds.**

Rebuilding the ability to trust is a task for everyone but especially for those closest to children in their daily life. The most effective way to do this is by establishing good relationships with children, through play, listening, supporting, keeping promises, involving children in real tasks and giving them proper feedback. One of the most important contributions is to help adults in a family re-establish their capacity for good parenting. Assistance to improve self-esteem does not require expensive clinical intervention; a caring environment is what matters.

Interventions that automatically provide individualised trauma therapy and recommend the establishment of residential treatment centres are most often inappropriate, unsustainable and a poor use of resources. They may even inflict further psychological harm on children. Exploring a child's experience of violence and displacement



can be important to the process of healing and recovery but should take place in a stable, supportive environment with the participation of care-givers who have a solid and continuing relationship with the child. In-depth clinical interviews may be very harmful, especially if conducted with an unprepared child by a stranger. This kind of interview risks tearing down a vulnerable child's defences; furthermore, talking about intimate feelings and fears with anyone but one's closest family is taboo in many cultures.

## **5 Provide support as well as training for personnel who care for children.**

Field staff do not always seem to be aware that their own behaviour and attitudes affect the psychosocial wellbeing of children in their care. Relief and development programmes in war-affected communities often require staff to work under highly stressful and sometimes dangerous conditions. A heavy workload, risk of injury or death, and frequent ethical dilemmas all contribute to high staff turnover. To counteract work pressures, maintain motivation and prevent 'burnout', it is important to involve front-line staff in developing a work plan that provides them with adequate moral and emotional support and guards them against mental and physical exhaustion. Ways to provide this include the following:

- training sessions that make direct use of experiences of the staff and of issues and problems raised by them
- regular changes of scene for locally-hired staff, including visits to family members
- codes of conduct which apply to personnel at all levels and which remind them of the difference in power between themselves and those whom they try to help
- participation in meetings and exchanges with counterparts in programmes elsewhere in order to upgrade skills and analyse lessons learned

## **6 Ensure clarity on ethical issues in order to protect children.**

Training in recognising and dealing with ethical issues is crucial; for example, how to protect children from intrusion into their private lives (covered by Article 16 of the

Convention on the Rights of the Child). Many ethical dilemmas for field staff concern the protection of individual or small groups of children when, for example, perceiving neglect, abuse or exploitation within the family or community.

Another type of dilemma frequently arises in connection with interviewing children, in particular those in distress. Children who are pressurised into telling, and re-telling, their 'horror stories' to journalists, researchers and sometimes even to aid agency officials and psychologists may suffer secondary distress.

Field staff cannot avoid the need to collaborate with researchers and journalists; it is the terms of such collaboration that require clarification. All staff should be aware of procedures to follow (in particular in relation to who is entitled to give permission for an interview to take place) and should ensure that any government guidelines and regulations are followed. As the interests of journalists and aid workers are bound to clash from time to time, clear guidelines such as the following may help:

- Obtain an understanding in advance concerning what information is confidential and must not be used
- Allow an interview only with a child's informed consent (and, where possible, that of a parent or guardian), ensure privacy for it, prepare the child, and have a familiar adult available during and after it. (Some would argue against allowing any interviewing at all of distressed children.)

Once interviewers have obtained material, they tend to consider that it belongs to them; the legitimate interests of the individuals and communities supplying it are not always taken into account. Usually, the resulting article or study is not even shared with them and sometimes they suffer from the way it is interpreted and used. For these reasons, there is need for clear understanding between those who provide information or pictures (children, parents, communities, aid organisations) and those who obtain it (psychologists, researchers, reporters and photographers). In the case of research, who pays for it and for whom is it being undertaken? How will it directly or indirectly benefit those interviewed?

How will results and analysis of interviews be fed back to communities and field staff who participated in them?

## **7 Advocate children's rights.**

The work of certain NGOs and UN agencies in promoting an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, aimed at raising the age of recruitment to the military from 15 to 18 years, indirectly protects the psychosocial well-being of young people. Another advocacy task is to inform children and adults about the Convention and to try to ensure that its provisions are met; this includes protecting children from being lured or coerced into the military.



Article extracted from: *Promoting psychosocial well-being among children affected by armed conflict and displacement: principles and approaches*, International Save the Children Alliance, Working group on children affected by armed conflict and displacement. 1996. 14pp. Available from: Save the Children, 54 Wilton Road, Westport CT 06880, USA. Tel: +1 203 221 4000. Fax: +1 203 227 5667. or from: International Save the Children Alliance, 59 chemin Moise Duboule, CH 1209 Geneva, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 788153. Fax: +41 22 788154. E-mail: alliance@iprolink.ch

<sup>1</sup> Contributors: Kirk Felsman, Birgitta Gällin-Åberg, Elizabeth Jareg, Naomi Richman, Hirut Tefferi and David Tolfree.

<sup>2</sup> See article by Ulla Blomqvist on p16.

### **Forced Migration discussion group**

The RSP's 'Forced-Migration' discussion group has over 400 members worldwide. If you would like to join, please follow these instructions:

1. Send a message to:  
*mailbase@mailbase* (for JANET users in the UK)  
*mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk* (for overseas users)
2. In the text of the message (not in the subject field), write:  
*Join forced-migration [your first name] [your last name]*  
eg: Join forced-migration Jane Smith

# Emergencies in the CEE/CIS:

## new challenges for UNICEF's child related programmes

by Maarit Hirvonen

The CEE (Central and Eastern European) and CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries with complex emergencies were an unfamiliar field for UNICEF when called to assist their vulnerable child populations in the early 1990s, first in the Balkans and then in the Southern Caucasus and Tajikistan. Further emergency assistance was provided in 1995 to internally displaced people (IDPs) in the neighbouring republic of Chechnya in the Russian Federation.

The complexity of the emergencies, the nature of the assistance needs and the potential for future crisis and population displacement in the region have forced a re-evaluation of assistance and contingency planning. Moving on from the early ad hoc, supply-heavy operations, current programmes reflect a more developmental approach: low-cost, empowering, preventive and focusing on capacity building and community level activities.

### Complex emergencies: current and potential

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, many of the newly independent countries were sucked into a power vacuum with an explosion of old clan and ethnic rivalries. In several cases, local and regional violence degenerated into wider warfare, causing great suffering with deaths, mental and physical traumas and disabilities, breakdown of communities, massive population displacements and the collapse of traditional and moral values.

Despite the Dayton Accord, the problems in the former Yugoslavia<sup>1</sup>, especially Bosnia and Herzegovina, are far from solved; and Kosovo in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), Eastern Slavonia in Croatia and Tajikistan are all still potential crisis areas. The latest example of the complexity of emergencies in the region is Albania where the state has failed to protect its ethnically homogenous population and to create opportunities for growth and progress, leaving the country

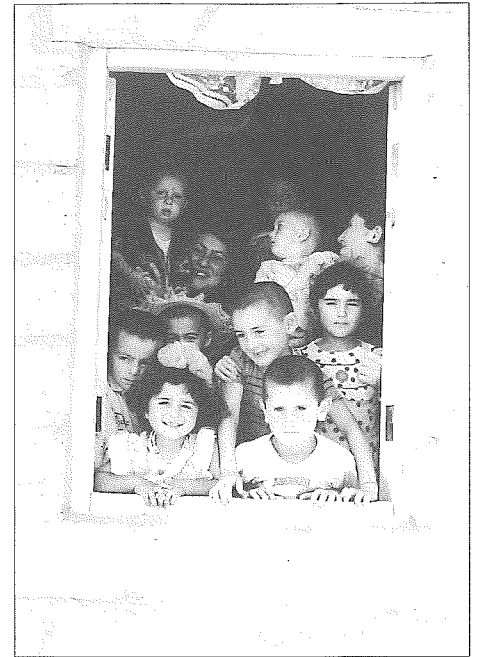
in a state of near anarchy. In the Southern Caucasus, the cease-fire between Armenia and Azerbaijan has lasted since 1994 but the original problems of Nagorno-Karabakh remain unsolved in spite of the efforts of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe to bring concerned parties around the negotiating table. The fighting in South Ossetia, Georgia, has stopped but the area remains isolated and in dire need of assistance to facilitate the return and integration of the displaced and refugee populations. Hundreds of thousands of IDPs in Azerbaijan and Georgia are still lingering in IDP centres or camps with little hope of an immediate return. War in Chechnya is over but its legacy is a devastated country with a deeply traumatised population still partly displaced outside its borders.

In Central Asia, all other ex-Soviet countries except Tajikistan have been able to overcome the problems of power vacuum without larger internal clashes. Tajikistan is unfortunate enough to be viewed by the Russian Federation as a last frontier against Islam, and its southern border is fortified against invasion from Afghanistan. The manipulation by external powers of the internal power struggles in Tajikistan has resulted in a divided country. The peace accord signed between the Tajik President and the United Opposition in June 1997 creates a power-sharing arrangement, though severe threats to peace still exist. The prevailing insecurity and fragmentation of Tajikistan hamper assistance efforts and have forced agencies to develop new strategies in order to address at least the most urgent needs of the people.

Lastly, China's border with Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan could be a future area of instability if Beijing increases pressure to avoid losing control of its northern regions.

### Health issues and approaches

Within the region there is a large cadre of highly educated professionals, among both



*IDP children look through the window of their kindergarten in the newly liberated area of Fizuli in Azerbaijan. Photo: Maarit Hirvonen/UNICEF.*

the local population and the IDP and refugee population. Their skills, however, have remained substantially under-utilised due to the deteriorating infrastructure, failure or lack of equipment, scarcity of medical supplies and meagre salaries. Medical emergency assistance to the local and displaced populations has faced particular problems because of outdated protocols of drug management and of immunisation schedules, heavy bureaucracy relating to rules and regulations for importing medical supplies and a primarily curative-oriented health care system. Lack of iodine is a widespread problem and is prevalent specifically among the displaced population from Chechnya. Different epidemiological emergencies (diphtheria, malaria, polio, tuberculosis, typhoid) are the inevitable result of a degenerating infrastructure, deepening poverty, population movements and crowded, unsanitary living conditions.

The nature of the problems identified in the health sector forced UNICEF and other medical assistance organisations to take a more developmental approach from the outset. This was necessary a) to avoid the abuse and misuse of limited resources, b) to achieve more in cost-benefit terms and c) to introduce unfamiliar methods and

approaches in order to bring the ex-Soviet health systems closer to global mainstream medical practice.

The lack of resources means that low-cost approaches need to be developed to address the emerging epidemiological problems, more along the lines of UNICEF's preventive community/family based programmes in Africa. The former Soviet safety net, which guaranteed at least some basic care at an affordable cost for the most vulnerable, has in some places vanished overnight. In the light of this, UNICEF is advising governments to provide certain services free for young children and to provide special arrangements to cover the health needs of destitute IDP women and children.

The immensity of the needs has led UNICEF to concentrate on the most urgent interventions and to collaborate with partners in the UN community and outside. The use of internal or regional medical expertise combined with updating the skills of UNICEF's local medical officers has proved effective in facilitating the exchange of ideas and the introduction of new notions between colleagues with a similar background of Soviet-era medical training. The problem of obsolete practices can be solved partly through the provision of refresher courses for medical staff. In order not to create parallel systems, the

needs of refugee and displaced populations have been addressed through the enforcement of local structures and, where possible, IDPs with appropriate skills have been mobilised to assist their own displaced communities.

### **Community-based water and sanitation**

The legacy of the old system weighs heavily on water supply facilities in the region. Centralised structures with kilometres of pipes, often uncovered, reaching from major city centres to the smallest of villages have proved to be unsustainable. The infrastructure is collapsing due to lack of maintenance and there are no resources for central purification.

The typhoid epidemic in early 1997, for example, in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, was caused mainly by unsafe, untreated water supplies. Lack of appropriate water and sanitation structures are especially problematic in institutions such as schools, health clinics, and centres for IDPs.

The decentralisation of the water supply system is the only longer term solution to these problems, with the development at community level - such as in Armenia and Tajikistan - of low-cost, locally produced and easily maintainable water pumps, filters and sanitation installations.

### **Double challenge in education: quality and quantity**

Education in the region has suffered enormously from lack of resources. The literacy rate - formerly almost 100 per cent - is falling rapidly as the educational system has less and less to offer and as children are needed elsewhere to support their family.

The IDP child population from Chechnya offered a particular challenge, lagging behind even the most recent Soviet standards due to local resistance to anything Soviet; teaching methods were completely outdated and textbooks dated back some 20 years.

In a combined transitional and complex emergency context, the education sector's needs are even higher than in 'normal' emergencies, yet attract little interest from donors. Funds are needed to supply paper as well as to upgrade dilapidated printing facilities; furthermore, the development of textbooks consistent with the changed environment and social issues is time-consuming and needs basic funding. Due to the lack of funding, only minor 'gap-filling' assistance has been possible: provision of basic school supplies, some production of new materials and a degree of upgrading of teachers' skills through the introduction of interactive methods and new subjects such as life skills and peace education both in local schools and in IDP centres and camps.

'Education for peace and conflict resolution' is part of UNICEF's emergency-related basic educational programmes in countries such as Georgia, Tajikistan and the former Yugoslavia. In the absence of any longer term strategies for this type of programme, the initiatives have been very country specific and often isolated. They have the potential, however, to encourage tolerance and the diffusion of violence in society, and need to be more widely researched, developed and integrated as part of the surrounding cultural environment.

### **Trauma relief programmes: new territory**

UNICEF has been addressing the various war trauma related problems among local and displaced child and women populations in the countries of the former



*Barda refugee camp, southwest Azerbaijan. Photo: UNICEF/95-0033/Maarit Hirvonen.*

Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, since 1992. If these problems are not tackled, children will grow into adulthood with unresolved psychological problems and will be unable to achieve their full potential. Programmes also need to target women, the basic caregivers, to help them regain their emotional balance and in turn be better able to help their children.

In 1995, UNICEF introduced trauma relief activities to IDP communities in the surrounding republics of Chechnya, in Dagestan and, in a more limited scale, in Ingushetia. The programme was enthusiastically received by health professionals, local authorities and the IDP communities themselves after observing concrete positive behavioural changes among IDP children who received initial attention through individual therapy sessions. These trauma relief and treatment activities involved:

- a. trauma relief sessions with severely traumatised IDP women and children
- b. training and capacity building among local and IDP personnel to enable them to take charge of individual or group sessions
- c. research and subsequent incorporation of the knowledge of local cultural characteristics and coping mechanisms into the treatment methodologies

This assistance was linked to empowering women's groups in the IDP centres (with designated tasks such as labour division, arrangement of temporary schooling and identification of most needy members of the community) in the hope that this would provide them with valuable skills to use in strengthening their own communities once back in Chechnya.

In Georgia and Azerbaijan, UNICEF has funded some innovative approaches to improve the psychosocial well-being and cognitive development of young and adolescent IDP children.

In Tbilisi, capital of Georgia, IDP children participate in Sunday schools where they learn to express themselves through drawing, music and theatre, and where they are taught history and literature. There are plans to extend this activity to

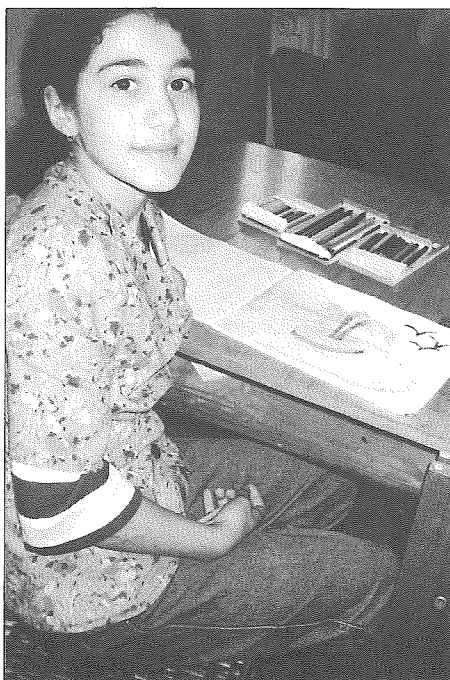
*Sunday schools for IDP children, Georgia.  
Photo: Maarit Hirvonen/UNICEF.*

other cities in Georgia with significant IDP populations.

In Azerbaijan, UNICEF is assisting multi-purpose centres for pre-school children in IDP camps and in some communities in the 'newly liberated areas' where IDPs have moved in the hope of finally being able to return home. The programme aims to include some 7,000 pre-school children by late 1997. In addition, young IDP women have received basic training in early childhood development and psychosocial treatment skills and are now used as monitors and teachers in the centres. Experience gained through these activities may help encourage a wider introduction of early childhood development awareness, plus peace and conflict education, into Azeri society.

### **Institutionalised children: special protection measures**

The examples of Romania and Bulgaria have shown the appalling situation of children - orphans and mentally and physically handicapped children - in institutions. This particular child population is extremely vulnerable and dependent on a state structure unable and/or unwilling to maintain a rapidly deteriorating infrastructure, to contribute to staff salaries or to guarantee basic health, nutritional and educational services. Statistics suggest that this group is growing, due to population displacement and increasing poverty



which leads some families to hand over their children to institutions. The problem is enormous and cannot be addressed by any one agency alone. In Georgia, various agencies are working together to assist some of the most needy institutions. Instead of ad hoc measures, however, a comprehensive policy needs to be developed. This would include the identification of: criteria for selection of facilities to be assisted, priority activities and programmes, and viable partners in the UN and NGO community.

In emergency situations, UNICEF needs to pay special attention to the institutionalised child population and to take additional measures to guarantee their protection. This also includes the children in IDP centres who are growing up without any experience of normal family or community life. In addition to their material needs, these children need programmes to address their psychosocial needs, having often suffered traumatic experiences with memories of violent incidents linked to their forced departure.

### **Contingency planning**

As part of early warning and preparedness activities, contingency plans are being developed for a number of potential emergencies where massive population movements may be expected. A recent application of contingency planning in the CEE/CIS region has been the Kosovo contingency plan involving the offices of the FRY, Albania and the Republic of Macedonia; in view of possible region-wide population displacement, this plan aims to reinforce the social capacity of communities receiving most of the fleeing population. These plans, however, need to be continuously adjusted to keep pace with the changing socio-political environment.



*Maarit Hirvonen is Programme Officer, UNICEF Emergency Programmes, Geneva.*

<sup>1</sup> The former Yugoslavia refers to all previous republics which were part of Yugoslavia before partition: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Slovenia.

# Safe Places for Youth: issues of youth in conflict zones and disordered states

by Angela Raven-Roberts and Bruce Dick

Conflict, crisis and 'complex emergencies' affect youth development in a number of ways. The devastation of educational, vocational and other basic services deprives young people of years of care and training, and creates generations of unskilled and unemployable populations. The economic collapse and slow deterioration of states in crisis and consequent lack of employment opportunities force many young people into a life of crime and a culture of violence. Their unaddressed needs and squandered potential make them politically volatile and a possible threat to stability and state reconstruction.

Years of social, political and economic turmoil and conflict affect the very structures and cultures of households and communities. Children and youth are not only physically displaced but literally dislocated from their normative life cycles, roles, status and responsibilities. The issues of reconstruction, reintegration and post-conflict recovery are thus, in essence, issues of youth and it is this generation which the process of reconstruction should be addressing.

The Safe Places for Youth Scheme, currently in action in a number of countries, provides models for the provision of services to youth and at the same time for galvanizing and harnessing their energy, creativity and potential.<sup>1</sup>

These models can be replicated and expanded in crisis and post-conflict environments. Services have been provided in a variety of ways, through innovative ideas coordinated and implemented by youth themselves and by professional psychologists, social workers and teachers, or a combination of them.

Strong, successful and sustainable programmes require the participation and commitment of youth. In crisis and emergency settings, establishing the trust, respect and participation of youth is the beginning of reconstruction efforts which have a ripple effect throughout the wider community.



*Vietnamese unaccompanied youth at the SCF Children's home in Hampton Court, 1990. Photo: Howard J Davies.*

## Youth resources

Examining ways in which youth have survived, managed and reshaped the cultures of violence around them holds the key for capturing and building on their resilience and creativity. Research on communities affected by armed conflict reveals the myriad ways in which adolescents and youth have helped maintain family cohesion and contributed to community survival.<sup>2</sup>

Girls have assumed a major role as heads of household, responsible for the protection and maintenance of family members. Boys and girls have crossed military zones, engaging in complex networks of exchange, barter and trade. Street children in urban areas have formed intricate social organisations and sharing mechanisms, utilising traditional forms of credit and mutual assistance.

Youth leaders have been trained in refugee camps to educate their peers in health

education, community organisation, public speaking and counselling. In countries such as Ethiopia during the famine of the 1980s, many NGOs were able to galvanize youth and secondary school age children to do basic health and nutritional assessments, and to help in information campaigns on health and other community issues.

## Key components of Safe Places for Youth

UNICEF has identified several key components in the establishment of Safe Places for Youth:

- i. *Core goals:* These can include enhancing practical knowledge, personal strength and coping and decision-making skills. Such goals can stand alone, be incorporated into strategies to achieve specific objectives or complement other developmental goals.
- ii. *Location:* Safe Places for Youth can be established in existing facilities and can

be open according to demand and available resources. Outreach is necessary for promotion and information.

iii. *Youth participation*: This is essential in creating and running Safe Places in order to help create a youth-friendly environment. Professionals supporting Safe Places should be skilled in supporting youth participation and leadership.

iv. *Core activities*: These include the provision of information, non-judgmental listening, discussion and social and recreational activities. Safe Place discussions may lead to the identification of activities which youth want to undertake in order to meet other needs, such as formal education, vocational training, income generation and community service. Safe Places can add such activities to core activities or work in collaboration with other organisations and service providers.

v. *Training*: Safe Places for Youth are strengthened through training young people to support their peers in various roles; training professionals in counselling and working cooperatively with youth; and training both peer and professional leaders in project planning and evaluation.

vi. *Strategies for monitoring and evaluation*: These should generate quantitative information about how Safe Places are used and how specific objectives are met, as well as qualitative information (including personal stories, programme development reports and group statements). Involving youth in monitoring and evaluation can enhance their sense of ownership as well as their ability to contribute to maintaining and improving Safe Places for Youth.

The core activities identified above - provision of useful information, non-judgmental listening and discussion, and referral to other services - all figure more or less prominently in existing Safe Places for Youth. They occur as central activities of the Centres d'Ecoutes in Mali; as informal activities within schooling at the Samaritan Orphanage in Malawi; among the activities in multi-purpose youth centres in Grenada and Mexico; and during recreational, cultural and community service activities of the Youth Development Association in Bhutan. Almost all Safe Places include recreational and social

activities, which attract youth, create an informal atmosphere and help build friendships. As their name suggests, Friendship Clubs in Former Yugoslavia offer primarily social activities to help refugee youth reconnect with society. Some of the main activities undertaken apart from the core activities include formal education, vocational training, income-generating projects and community service.

### Wider application

In crisis and post-crisis affected societies, Safe Places can also be used to address specific issues arising from the demobilisation and reconstruction process. Youth can be mobilised for community mapping and reconstruction projects. They can help in literacy programmes and in the preparation of materials, drama and other cultural activities promoting health education, mine risk awareness, and other public issues. Mentorship and 'buddy' systems can be developed to help younger or orphaned children and former youth combatants.

In societies such as Somalia and Sudan, where much cultural and historical material has been lost or destroyed through war, youth centres can be the focus for the re-documentation and re-telling of legends and traditions as a contribution to reshaping the future.

Young people's own interest and link to global youth culture can be used in imaginative ways to initiate conflict resolution measures and to foster a culture of peace and reconciliation.



*Angela Raven-Roberts is Project Officer in the Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF, New York; Dr Bruce Dick is Senior Advisor for Youth Health in the Health Section, UNICEF, New York.*

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, Brian Hill *Safe places for youth: programming, strategy and examples as identified through interviews with participants of the World Youth Forum of the UN system*, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Chingono M *The state, violence and development: the political economy of war in Mozambique, 1975-1992*, 1996, Avebury; Richards P *Fighting for the rain forest: war, youth and resources in Sierra Leone*, 1996, Pluto Press; Nordstrom C 'Fieldwork under fire', *Contemporary studies of violence and survival*, 1995, University of California Press.

## Countries of asylum:

### Sweden

#### *Returning home - a model for unaccompanied Somali refugee children*

There are currently some 850 unaccompanied Somali refugee children and youth living in Sweden. In 1995, following a study which highlighted homesickness, difficulties at school and high unemployment rates as the main problems faced by these refugee children, Rädde Barnen decided that more assistance was needed, either to prepare the children for a return to their home country or to provide them with greater motivation to work and study in Sweden.

During the study, Rädde Barnen had made contact with Ungbo, a group home for young Somali boys. Recognising the strong desire of the boys to go back home for a visit, Rädde Barnen and Ungbo organised for five of them to travel to Somalia.

The visits were joyful but the boys were shocked at the extent of poverty in Somalia. None of them is yet prepared to return permanently but all five have expressed their intention to live and work in Somalia in the future and, most importantly, have recognised the need to make the most of the educational facilities provided in Sweden.

This journey became the starting point for the construction of a model for integration and voluntary return<sup>1</sup> which focuses on Sweden-Somalia but could be applied anywhere. The model developed by Rädde Barnen is about integration and living - and working - in two countries. The children must make their own choice to stay in Sweden or return to Somalia. To be able to make that choice, they must have an education that is adapted to the employment situation in both Sweden and their home country.

# responses to the needs of refugee youth

## The model

### Step 1:

Education for these refugee children in Sweden should include the following key areas: technology, administration, finance, data, livestock, car mechanics, welding, farming, irrigation, teaching and nursing.

### Step 2:

Youths would visit Somalia to work on a voluntary basis in an aid programme for one year; this would give them a realistic picture of their home country.

### Step 3:

After the visit, they should receive support to document and review what they have learnt during the year. They should also have the choice to continue with further academic studies or more practical training in Sweden.

### Step 4:

After a couple of years, they could decide whether to stay in Sweden or return to Somalia. There should be active networks or support groups to help fulfil the goals of employment and voluntary return.



This model might seem expensive. However, the costs of non-integration of refugees into a host country are extremely high; the cost to Swedish society of one person who is unemployed from the age of 18 to 65 is estimated at SEK 8 million.

Rädda Barnen has presented the model to the Swedish government and awaits their response.

by Sanna Wallin of Rädda Barnen

1. A full account of the journey appears in *Renewing home country links* by Annacarin Leufstedt. Available (price SEK 90) from Rädda Barnen, S-107 88, Stockholm, Sweden. Tel: +46 698 9020. Fax: +46 698 9010.

## USA

### Resources for Refugee Youth

Resources for Refugee Youth, a programme of World Relief, is designed to assist refugee youth make the difficult transition to living in a new country and succeeding in a new educational system.

Over 2,000 refugees from Vietnam, Somalia, Bosnia, Iraq, Ethiopia and Eritrea live in the community of Clarkston in the eastern part of Atlanta, Georgia. World Relief identified three basic needs beyond the physical requirements of food, shelter and clothing:

**1** Youth need to feel accepted and welcomed in their new home; they also need new friends.

**2** They need to have some success in school. This is especially true with older teenagers who were close to finishing high school in their own countries. Some refugee youth, such as those from Somalia, may have been out of school for many years or may have never had any formal education.

**3** Refugee youth need to be a source of pride and stability for their families. Refugee children usually start school before their parents find employment and in most cases they learn English before their parents. The family can come to rely on these young people to be their spokesperson and source of information and this can put undue pressure on a child who already has many changes to deal with.

Resources for Refugee Youth has four major components:

- A tutoring programme is conducted throughout the school year for three hours daily, Monday-Thursday; staff and community volunteers provide individual assistance for each student and a computer lab is available.



Photo: World Relief, Atlanta.

- Support groups meet on Fridays; activities are recreational but with an educational component.
- Cultural diversity workshops in the schools are designed to raise awareness among students and teachers about the diversity of the community and the positive aspects of that diversity.
- A 10-week summer programme integrates recreational activities with education; each week focuses on one aspect of American culture and one other world culture.

Many students come every day, year after year, and thrive on the attention and love they receive. To keep interest and participation high, programme activities are varied, with field trips, workshops, new ideas and new volunteers. The refugee youth themselves help establish the identity of the programme just as they create a new place for themselves in a new and different culture.

For more information or to establish links between these young people and youth in different parts of the world, contact: Michael Burnham, Resources for Refugee Youth, World Relief, 964 North Indian Creek Dr, Suite A-1, Clarkston, GA 30021, USA. Tel: +1 404 294 4352. E-mail: [refugeeyouth@mindspring.com](mailto:refugeeyouth@mindspring.com)

# Seminar and conference reports

## Losing skills: some thoughts on the impact of refugee camps on children *report from a seminar given by Gerry Salole at the RSP, Oxford, UK in June 1997*

In terms of the effects they may have on those living in them, refugee camps need not be distinguished from other types of emergency shelter arrangements. In all such situations, large numbers of people are subjected to an alien context which is not of their own choosing. Children who spend an extended period of time in a refugee camp situation may be affected in four main ways:

*i. Loss of essential skills.* As a result of growing up in an alien environment, children are deprived of or lose skills which their normal lifestyle demands. They may never acquire, for example, horticultural practices and/or animal husbandry methods which are fundamental to the viability of the household. A lengthy period in emergency shelter may thus mean that returning to a previous way of life is no longer possible.

*ii. Secondary trauma occurring while in the camp.* The treatment which they and their parents receive in emergency shelter will have a profound effect upon children. This refers both to the effect of the camp situation itself, and also to the attitudes of camp workers. People in refugee camps are frequently in a depressed, confused, traumatised state and are in a situation where the rules are not theirs. They are therefore likely to behave in a more passive, compliant way than would otherwise be the case. Observing their parents in a situation in which they have little control or say in what happens will affect children; they start to see their parents in a different light. This new perspective does not disappear when the refugee situation ends. The acquiescent behaviour of refugees in a camp setting may also exacerbate the risk of false assumptions and stereotypes by a largely urban national and foreign expatriate staff, resulting in reinforcing patronising treatment.

*iii. Loss of meaning in growing up.* It is of great importance that a child has adults and/or peers who can give meaning to their

experiences: to support and nurture them and explain what is happening. This may be difficult in some situations but care should be taken to respect cultural and linguistic differences when allocating foster families and making other integration arrangements for young children.

*iv. Lack of or inappropriate education in the camp setting.* Advantage should be taken of the refugee camp situation to develop children's skills through educational programmes. This should include engaging children in activities to acquire and maintain practical skills. However, there are practical and ethical difficulties associated with this. For example, the bias of an education programme may be towards a settled 'modern' lifestyle, away from a pastoralist lifestyle, or it may not be feasible to accommodate different cultural groups within the available educational resources. Often, children are subjected to curricula which are chosen by their 'hosts' and this can sometimes mean that the potential benefits of formal education on children is lost upon their return to their own school system.

### **Towards a child-oriented prism**

As far as possible, camp planners and organisers should have a responsibility to minimise each of these negative impacts. At present, this is rendered problematic both by the overly generic concept of the child which is applied, and by the paradigm structure within which the camp is constructed. A great deal of lip service is paid to the situation of children in refugee camps but without taking real account of their diverse needs or even such basic distinctions as age and developmental differences. A perfunctory nod is made in the direction of children, by acknowledging them as a group with particular needs, an aspect of the refugee problem. This, however, does not adequately address the problem.

A paradigm shift is needed, to plan intervention through a child-oriented prism, and

to make the situation of children a cross-cutting issue of camp planning, rather than an afterthought or sidelined aspect of it. This 'soft approach' to camp planning would structure the refugee camp from a child's perspective, and from the point of view of what is in the children's best interests. It would need to capitalise on contexts in which children are likely to reap the greatest benefits, to create a more child-friendly environment.

### **Practical initiatives**

Such a restructuring of the paradigm within which refugee camps are constructed should be seen as an investment, a way of reducing the resources which need to be earmarked at a later stage to cope with the aftermath of long periods spent in a camp. Practical initiatives might include a reorganisation of power structures within the camp, putting decisions in the hands of the people themselves: for example, by placing responsibility for food distribution in the hands of the women, and giving the traditional healers a more prominent position.

While efforts have been made to sensitise development intervention to meet the needs of particular groups, the same is not yet true of the refugee camp setting, and this has particular repercussions on children. There is an urgent need to redress this balance.



*Gerry Salole was born in Addis Ababa and has worked in a number of refugee camps. He has worked for Oxfam, Redd Barna (Norwegian Save the Children) and Save the Children Federation in Ethiopia and for Save the Children Federation in Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe in various emergency settlements. He is currently the director of the Department of Programme Documentation and Communications, Bernard van Leer Foundation, PO Box 82334, 2508 EH The Hague, The Netherlands. E-mail: gerry.salole@bvleerf.nl*



**Planning for children's needs: asylum-seeking children and child care policy in the UK**  
*report by Jessica Pledger of a one-day seminar organised by members of the Refugee Council's Working Group for Refugee Children, London, UK, June 1996*

This seminar was attended by a wide range of policy makers from governmental and non-governmental agencies, practitioners and refugee community organisations. The aims of the seminar were to:

- provide a forum at which delegates could identify the continuum of children's needs and discuss how services and agencies could meet them in an integrated and effective way in the light of national statutory duties and under international law
- identify the extent and interface of responsibilities of the various agencies involved
- consider the Department of Health Practice Guidance on Unaccompanied Children and identify other areas of practice where guidance is necessary
- set a policy framework for a practitioners' conference to be held in March 1997

The seminar was concerned with all asylum seeking and refugee children, not just with those who arrive in the UK unaccompanied. It was recognised that children can become - or cease to become - unaccompanied because their carers leave them in this country or die, or alternatively because family members are found in the UK or are able to join the child later.

Using a case study framework, delegates considered nine stages in the 'continuum of children's needs'. Recommendations and undertakings were recorded where appropriate and are summarised below.

#### **i. Identification of the child**

Advocacy for Red Cross registration is needed to build confidence in the confidentiality of the process. Appropriate legal advice on asylum rights (and detention, if relevant) is of paramount importance. Information leaflets about relevant issues should be available at all ports, and an independent party be available to advise a child during initial interview. Age determination procedures used may not

always be appropriate or accurate and age should be of secondary importance within the process; reasonable benefit of the doubt should be given to the young person's testimony. Early links with schools and an information loop between the different agencies involved need to be established.

#### **ii. Immediate welfare needs**

The most urgent initial needs include provision of food and clothing, accommodation and a caring environment and an initial assessment of physical and mental health and educational needs. Lack of co-ordination between agencies and the lack of awareness of existing services between statutory sector departments and the statutory and voluntary sectors contribute to young people falling through the net. A further problem is the cuts in welfare benefits and housing entitlement for in-country asylum applicants, including unaccompanied 16 and 17 year olds.

It was recommended that reception centres for short-term accommodation should be established and a 'key worker' for each child and young person should be identified at the outset to ensure continuity of care. The Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) should ensure that appropriate facilities are available for children at the port of entry (such as the establishment of a service for children comparable to the Refugee Arrivals Project at Heathrow Airport). Welfare benefits for in-country applicants should be reinstated. Obtaining a young person's trust may best be achieved through the use of non-establishment personnel and appropriate provision for this should be made.

#### **iii. Refugee Status determination process**

This stage is fraught with difficulties, many of which are due to a lack of appropriate knowledge and skills on the part of those working with refugee children within the asylum-seeking process, and the shortcomings of the process itself in dealing with children's cases. The criteria applied

for recognising refugees may be inappropriate in children's cases - the UN Refugee Convention needs to be interpreted in child-specific lights, and asylum procedures should reflect the view that a child is a child first and foremost.

Recommendations included that legal representatives, official interpreters and other involved practitioners need specific appropriate training to ensure proper and sensitive handling of children's claims; advice on good legal representatives should be made available to the young people and their key workers; and children's asylum applications need to be given special priority.

#### **iv. Period pending decision of Refugee Status**

A general insufficiency of provision and monitoring exists at this stage, and issues relating to school and further education are of particular concern. Many of the young people remain unaware of services available to them. A further issue is that they may not be kept informed of the progress of their asylum claim.

Recommendations included the appointment of independent visitors for children to be vigorously promoted by Social Security Departments (SSD) and it was reinforced that each child must have a social services key worker who liaises with all agencies. The mandate of the Panel of Advisers for Unaccompanied Refugee Children should be extended to include young people up to the age of 18 to ensure continuity of care. The Institute of Education is conducting a two-year project on the needs of refugee children aged 5-16 years in schools, which will be used to promote better educational provision.

#### **v. Voluntary return**

The seminar acknowledged that children must have full information and support to prepare them for options available, and that the child's views must be given full consideration within the context of comprehensive information about the



*Tamil refugee children attending a Saturday school for Tamil language and culture, organised by the local Tamil community in north London. Photo: Howard J Davies.*

situation in their home country. Separate representation for siblings is warranted when disagreements relating to voluntary return arise.

#### **vi. Outcome of refugee claim**

Children must be given clear and comprehensive explanations of all the options, and continued access to good legal advice. Other major issues are the need for a child-appropriate appeals process (including priority listing) and child-sensitive procedures including in-camera hearings and provision of an age-appropriate physical environment. Special adjudicators should be given guidance on handling children's appeals, or a special team created to hear children's cases. Interpretation provision for children during appeal hearing is

currently insufficiently comprehensive to allow children to follow the proceedings. The current situation whereby 16 and 17 year olds living independently lose their rights to benefits during the appeal stage is unacceptable.

#### **vii. Identifying and viii. Implementing durable solutions following Refugee Status determination**

Options vary according to status: a) Children with Refugee Status or Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR) may remain in the UK or be resettled to a third country; b) although children denied Refugee Status or ELR should in theory be returned to their country of origin, in practice many remain in the UK or move to a third country or return to their country of origin.

Lack of confidence in the determination procedure leads to resistance on the part of many agencies to investigate further options, and impedes the implementation of a durable solution. Issues of concern include: a lack of reliable international partners to provide information on countries of origin; identifying where the responsibility lies for determining appropriate care provision in the country of origin or determining the level of provision available for those remaining in the UK; inadequate information and counselling for children on options open to them as a result of continuing gaps in inter-agency collaboration; the level at which the decision to return the young person is taken; and the question of a reasonable legal test for returnability.

The mandates and interests of different agencies give rise to difficulties in determining a durable solution based on the best interests principle. It was recommended that these decisions be taken either by a case conference style meeting or via the establishment of a permanent panel of relevant agencies and professionals which would be better placed to make an appropriate decision.

Full consultation is required on how best interests are to be determined and the child must necessarily be involved and represented to ensure that his or her views are adequately considered. Parents must be kept informed, and prepared for the possible return. An international body should be established to monitor refugee children returning home; general principles of acceptable return criteria need to be established; and the eligibility for British nationality of children under 18 years of age should be checked.

#### **ix. Post-implementation**

Effective support systems must be implemented both in the UK and in the country of origin. It was recommended that international partners and groups or individuals in the country of return should be identified in order to monitor the young people returning.

*Copies of the seminar report are available from the Refugee Council, 3 Bondway, London SW8 1SJ, UK. Tel: +44 171 582 6922. Fax: +44 171 582 9929. E-mail: [refcounciluk@gn.apc.org](mailto:refcounciluk@gn.apc.org)*

**Supporting refugee children: education, welfare and rights in the UK: report by Jessica Pledger of a two-day conference, March 1997 (follow-up to June 1996 seminar - see opposite)**

One of the clear needs expressed by those attending the June 1996 seminar was for practitioners to have multi-disciplinary training in working with refugee children. A conference was organised in March 1997 by the Refugee Council and the Institute of Education to focus on some of the key points that emerged from the seminar. It was attended by 180-200 delegates and endorsed by the British Association of Social Workers, British Red Cross, Immigration Law Practitioners Association, Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, Save the Children, UNICEF (UK) and UNHCR.

The conference aimed:

- to enable practitioners to network both within their field of work and with practitioners in other fields
- to provide examples of good practice and problem solving
- to promote inter-agency working at practice level
- to provide participants with information on contacts and expertise in relevant fields

Not surprisingly, the most powerful messages during the two days came from refugee children and young people themselves. They talked about the services and help they had needed - and not always received - and of the vital importance of a welcoming and supportive school or college environment. They encouraged delegates to challenge racism and enable young people to speak up for themselves.

Recurring themes throughout the conference were:

- **Knowledge of the international situation** and of the conditions which cause children and their families to become refugees is an important element in supporting refugee children and developing appropriate services.
- **Refugee children are individuals.** While they share the common reality of exile and loss, they have diverse cultural backgrounds. Any care given or

interventions made on their behalf should take account of their individual needs, culture and histories.

- **Refugee children, regardless of immigration status, are entitled to full protection under the 1989 Children Act.** In addition, all the rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other relevant international conventions ratified by the UK, apply to children who have sought refuge in the UK.

- **In order to work effectively both with and on behalf of refugee children, active coordination of services is essential.** Comprehensive coordination must be organised at all levels within and between different agencies. Working with Refugee Community Organisations was highlighted as a key element in the provision of services to children and young people and the families supporting them. It was strongly recommended that local authorities should appoint officers with responsibility for coordinating local authority services for refugees. At central government level, delegates considered that the welfare of refugee children would be enhanced by the introduction of a system to provide coherence in policies affecting all children and young people, such as a Ministry for Children or a Children's Commissioner.

- **Unaccompanied children and young people are particularly vulnerable** and need ongoing support and advocacy to help them with a wide range of problems that can arise from arrival in the UK up to the implementation of a 'durable solution'. It was recommended that the remit of the Refugee Council's Panel of Advisers for Unaccompanied Refugee Children (currently limited to a few months and ending once a legal representative has been appointed, accommodation, welfare, education and medical needs met; and asylum claim lodged) should be extended.

- **The cuts in benefit and housing entitlements ensuing from the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act have resulted in a marked deterioration** in the health, education and welfare of both accompanied

and unaccompanied refugee children. A further result of these changes has been to place heavy burdens on local authority and voluntary sector agencies which have inadequate resources to provide the necessary support. Practitioners working with refugee children are under increasing stress to meet the needs of greater numbers of destitute refugees. Under these conditions good practice becomes more of a challenge and coordination even more essential to target resources effectively.

- **Training and support for practitioners is essential** in order to generate awareness of the problems facing refugees and to develop the skills necessary to intervene effectively. It should not be left to refugee children and families to train service providers. Managers and supervisors need the skills to support workers in the current difficult circumstances when many more refugees are dependent on local authority services.

It is apparent that many of the problems faced by asylum-seeking and refugee children are compounded by the lack of coordination between the numerous agencies involved at one or all stages of the asylum process. Inadequate resources and increasing numbers of destitute refugees also mean that ever greater levels of coordination are now needed. Inter-agency training for practitioners, particularly key workers, advocacy workers and interpreters, would all contribute towards developing a more coordinated and informed approach. The greater dissemination of information and the inclusion of all relevant agencies in the debates surrounding the resolution of some of these issues would help to ensure that policy is practitioner, asylum seeker and refugee led.



*Jessica Pledger works at the Refugee Council developing services for asylum-seeking and refugee children, and young people.*

Copies of the conference report will be available shortly.

**Refugee unaccompanied children:  
Bellagio, Italy, March 1997**

The second Bellagio conference on refugee unaccompanied children focused on the issues of their repatriation and reintegration. The conference brought together a variety of organisations and individuals with extensive experience of working with unaccompanied refugee children worldwide. Participants included UNHCR, UNICEF, ICRC, USAID, the Hague Conference on Private International Law, the Save the Children Alliance and government officials from Rwanda. Several NGOs and Human Rights Watch groups also participated. The conference raised issues of coordination, service delivery, protection and rights of children, and how to improve rapid responses in the face of increasing emergencies. These questions were examined from different points of reference: legal protection needs, immediate and long-term care requirements, assessment and evaluation of programmes conducted in the field, and how each organisation can improve the coordination of services to children. Particular attention was paid to assistance efforts in the Great Lakes Region and to the need for increased coordination between International Organisations at the emergency level, as well as long-term follow-up through programmes beyond the emergency phase. Recommendations from the conference emphasise the fact that children's rights exist independently from their immigration status and stress the responsibility of the international community.

*Report by Dr Julie MacDonald, conference organiser, and Jan Williamson, participant. For a copy of the report, contact: Bellagio Report, c/o Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 122 E 42nd St, New York City, New York 10168-1289, USA. Copies are free (limited to initial print run of 2,500), courtesy of SCF/US. The conference was sponsored by International Rescue Committee, International Catholic Child Bureau, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, and SCF/US.*

**The politics of emergency intervention, peacekeeping,  
humanitarianism and development:  
Manchester, UK, May 1997**

This interdisciplinary research workshop, organised by the Department of Government at Manchester University, aimed to promote dialogue between academics in various disciplines and practitioners from NGOs and the military who are involved in complex emergencies. It was attended by some 40 people; disciplines represented extended beyond international politics and included security studies, anthropology and development studies. The focus of the discussion was the critical analysis of practices in the field. One topic of intense discussion centred around proposed typologies and methodologies for the new research projects underway in the field of NGOs and complex emergencies. A broader debate arose around the term 'humanitarian' and the implications, in political terms, of its increasing use to legitimise particular forms of action. It was suggested that, rather than challenging state sovereignty as is often supposed, humanitarianism might reinforce it. At the end of the 1990s, in the face of questions such as who benefits from specific humanitarian episodes and what role NGOs and the military can and should play, participants felt it was crucial to consider the implications for political action (or inaction) of the very notions of humanitarianism and intervention. The question of the value or otherwise of conflict resolution work in this context was also discussed.

*Report by Dr Jenny Edkins. Further workshops, seminars or meetings are planned to extend these discussions; there will be a meeting at the British International Studies Association Conference at Leeds in December 1997 to discuss plans. Contact: Dr Jenny Edkins, Dept of International Politics, University of Wales, Aberystwyth SY23 3DA, UK. E-mail: jae@aber.ac.uk A report of the meeting will be published in the Manchester Papers on Politics; contact Kay Green at the Dept of Govt, Manchester University, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, UK.*

**Radical recommendations  
for child protection in  
Africa**

A continental conference on **Children in situations of armed conflict in Africa** was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 24-26 July 1997.

Organised by the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) and ANPPCAN (African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect), the conference included delegations from various government ministries, NGOs, UN agencies and other international organisations dealing with issues of child welfare and protection. The 28 recommendations of the conference cover issues of law and policy, child soldiers, landmines, displaced children, information and awareness, and capacity-building. Among the recommendations are:

*Recommendation 6:* Sexual abuse or sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict by members of the military or rebel forces should be treated as crimes of war.

*Recommendation 8:* In meeting the needs of refugees, governments, NGOs and humanitarian agencies should seek alternatives to the refugee camps, within national law and international obligation. Considering that the return of refugees to their homeland is ultimately the most durable solution, African governments should endeavour to create a propitious atmosphere for repatriation.

*Recommendations 9 and 10:* The recruitment of children under the age of 18 years into armed forces, militias or rebel forces should be outlawed as stipulated in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and treated as a crime against humanity. African governments should actively work towards the adoption of the proposed Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, establishing 18 years as the minimum age of recruitment into armed forces.

*For more information, contact: ANPPCAN, PO Box 71420, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel: +254 2 722496. Fax: +254 2 721999. E-mail: anppcan@arcc.or.ke*

# Letters to the Editor

*Dear Editor*

The term 'children in especially difficult circumstances' (CEDC) was coined in the mid-1980s by UNICEF and is a popular label bringing together various groups of children who have in common the fact that they are classified as having to cope with challenging circumstances. The creation of an umbrella term permits disparate groups of children who have a common denominator to be brought together as a category. The relative neutrality of the label CEDC helps reduce the tendency to create a particular impression of groups of children. Furthermore, by focusing on the 'especially difficult circumstances', the term CEDC moves towards attributing the cause of behaviours and difficulties to the external environment rather than to internal dispositions. The label CEDC does, however, have quite serious limitations:

1) The categorisation of CEDC does not take account of the fact that the division between childhood and adulthood varies culturally. For the Rwandese, being a child depends, among other things, on whether a person works and whether they are married. The label CEDC also reflects a western notion of childhood as a happy time, with no responsibilities. The fact that children in non-western countries take on responsibilities or marry at young ages challenges western assumptions of 'normal' childhood.

2) Any such categorisation targets and isolates a specific social group and risks exaggerating, or even creating, differences between the labelled group and the rest of the population.

3) The label CEDC is also limited because of its relativity: the words 'especially' and 'difficult' may be perceived differently in different contexts and this may affect who receives assistance. It further implies that the circumstances of children have changed in the past few decades and that 'difficult' circumstances are becoming the norm, while the focus of assistance is shifted to 'especially difficult' circumstances.

4) The label CEDC was coined and applied by adult professionals. Such labels tend to produce a homogenous view of the labelled group, with the risk that differences in the conditions and needs of children are underestimated or not considered.


This discussion does not aim to eliminate the use of the term CEDC but rather to encourage reflection on it:

- The label CEDC reflects a specialist as opposed to a public care approach to individuals who are in need of help.
- There is a clear need for child participation in decision making and in the development of terms such as CEDC.
- Account should be taken of local categories and distinctions as the basis for categorisation.
- Organisations using the term CEDC need to reflect on how the coinage of this new category has helped children. Has it, for example, served more in the effort to assist children or in the effort to provide accountability to funders?

In our Child Studies Unit, we have used the label CEDC in the past but are currently re-considering its use. We are concerned that the category may limit our research and training activities especially where a community-based approach considered an essential component of the work. As researchers and academics, we are also interested in the theoretical and practical implications of the use of such categorisation.

Yours faithfully

**Giorgia Doná**

For more information 

*Dear Editor*

I have long felt the need to disseminate RPN information in the camp.

Currently I am preparing a paper entitled 'Using the RPN to enhance activities for and by Somali refugees in Al-Gahine Camp'. The paper will contain summaries of RPN articles (from issues 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22) bearing relevance to our condition.

I am also thinking about how such information can be made accessible to most people in the camp. A Somali translation of selected RPN articles will be in use in the camp by August, hopefully. Abdinzak, Assistant Camp Manager for Partners for Development (UNHCR's implementing partner), wants to make the camp management office a 'knowledge base'. Selected photocopied RPN and Journal of Refugee Studies articles will be put on the office shelves and made available to the refugees and practitioners.

Haji Mohamed Abdalla, a chief elder in Algahia, has just written a letter entitled 'A powerful plea for RPN use in refugee camps'. I intend to pass on all RPN copies at my disposal to the soon-to-be established library in our camp. Many people have borrowed the RPN from me. It is becoming a popular publication in the camp.

Yours faithfully

**Liban Abdikarim Ahmen**  
UNHCR Camp Administrator,  
Al-Gahine Refugee Camp, Aden

The Child Studies Unit, University College Cork, is currently compiling a directory of individuals and organisations working with children in Africa, plus a bibliography of articles and reports, to be made available on the Internet. Information can be sent to **Child Studies Unit, University College Cork** at: Rwanda Office, PO Box 2040 Kigali, Rwanda. Tel/fax: +250 77673. E-mail: Trocaire@maf.org Ethiopian Office, PO Box 387, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Tel/fax: +251 1 654684. E-mail: csu@paddis.gn.apc.org or to Child Studies Unit, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland. Tel: +353 21 902198. Fax: +353 21 270439. E-mail: csu@ucc.ie

# Publications

Publications are presented in alphabetical order under the headings: *Newsletters, journals and magazines; and General publications.*

## Newsletters, journals and magazines

**Children of War** is a quarterly newsletter published by Rädga Barnen for campaigning against the use of child soldiers. It includes campaign information, media abstracts, news and short articles. Free. 8pp. Also available by e-mail. *Contact: AnnaLena Andrews, Rädga Barnen, S-107 88 Stockholm, Sweden. E-mail: annalena.andrews@rb.se Tel: +46 8 698 9092.*

**Refuge** is published six times a year by the Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, Canada. Vol 15 No 5 (1996) is a special issue on child refugees. 44 pp. ISSN 0229-5113. Annual subscription: Can\$50; US\$60. *Contact: Refuge, Centre for Refugee Studies, Suite 322, York Lanes, York University, 4700 Keele Street, North York, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3. Tel: +1 416 736 5843. Fax: +1 416 736 5837. E-mail: refuge@yorku.ca*

**SARI** - South Asia Refugee Information - is published by the Jesuit Refugee Service South Asia and contains reports and news. Free. 10pp. *Contact: SARI, JRS South Asia, 24 Benson Road, Bangalore 560 046, India. Tel: +91 80 575189. Fax: +91 80 5561700.*

**South and Central Asia's Children** is published by Save the Children Fund, South and Central Asia Regional Office and is intended to facilitate the sharing of experience, ideas and information and to be a vehicle for the promulgation of SCF policies and technical guidelines. The Spring 1997 issue (No 8) focuses on children's right to participation. Free in developing countries. *Contact: Regional Information Assistant, SCF/UK, South and Central Asia Regional Office, Pulchowk, Lalitpur, GPO Box 5850, Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel: +977 1 527152. Fax: +977 1 527266. E-mail: karna@scfscaro.mox.com.np*

## General publications

**A guide to working with young people who are refugees: strategies for providing individual counselling and group work** by the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc. 1996. 232 pages in loose leaf folder. Aus\$105 (incl p&p); Aus\$95 (direct purchase). This guide is divided into four main sections: 1) a framework for understanding trauma and torture; 2) key approaches for individual work with young people; 3) a practical guide to running programmes for young people in groups; and 4) appendices for further resources, plus bibliography. It focuses specifically on young refugees who have experienced trauma and torture. *Contact: Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture Inc, PO Box 96, Parkville, Victoria 3052, Australia. Tel: +03 9388 0022. Fax: +03 9387 0828. E-mail: vfst@peg.apc.org*

**Children: the invisible soldiers** by Rachel Brett and Margaret McCallin, Rädga Barnen. 1996. 257pp. ISBN 91-88726-56-8. SEK200. An estimated 250,000 children under 18 - some as young as 7 - are presently serving in government armed forces or armed opposition groups. Based on case studies from 26 countries, this report documents the practice of recruitment of children into the military and concludes with recommendations aimed at governments, UN bodies, NGOs and concerned individuals. *Contact: Rädga Barnen, SE-107 88 Stockholm, Sweden. Tel: +46 8 698 9000. Fax: +46 8 698 9010. E-mail: info@rb.se*

**Distance education for refugees: the experience of using distance and open learning with refugees in Africa 1980-1995 (with guidelines for action and a directory of information)** by John H Thomas, International Extension College. 1996. ISBN 0903-6325-43. 14. This handbook includes case studies and discussions of teacher training, secondary education, and non-formal/vocational projects, with practical suggestions for emergencies and longer-term refugee situations. It focuses exclusively on the

African experience but makes clear that most of the principles will bear global application. *Contact: International Extension College, 95 Tenison Road, Cambridge CB1 2DL, UK. Tel: +44 1223 353321. Fax: +44 1223 464734. E-mail: iec@dial.pipex.com*

**Doing the right thing: relief agencies, moral dilemmas and moral responsibility in political emergencies and war** by Hugo Slim, Director, Centre for Development and Emergency Planning, Oxford Brookes University. 1997. 18pp. ISBN 91-7106-407-9. SEK80. This publication discusses moral dilemmas and difficult choices, the need to develop an ethos in humanitarian organisations and the need for models; it contains a number of case studies. This is Report No 6 in the series of Studies on Emergencies and Disaster Relief, of the Nordic Africa Institute in cooperation with Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. *Contact: The Nordic Africa Institute, PO Box 1703, S-751 47 Uppsala, Sweden.*

**Double vision: a history of Cambodian refugees in Thailand** by W Courtland Robinson, Asian Research Center for Migration. 1996. 171 pp. ISBN 974-634-817-5. 200 baht. The flight of Indochinese refugees during the 1970s and 80s was a significant mass movement of people. International organisations, NGOs and governments dedicated much effort to bringing peace and safety back to Indochina and assisting asylum seekers. This study analyses the flight and assistance efforts, and demonstrates how situations can be perceived differently by the various parties involved. *Contact: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok 10330, Thailand. Tel: +66 2 251 5199. Fax: +66 2 255 1124.*

**From reporter to refugee** by Victor Lal. 1997. ISBN 1-872142-29-X. 66p. £5. Published by WorldView Publishing in association with the Refugee Studies Programme. Victor Lal, sub-editor on the *Fiji Sun*, left Fiji in 1984 to study at Oxford University; political events in Fiji made his return impossible and forced him into the labyrinthine UK asylum procedure. This book is an account of his 7-year struggle to obtain full refugee status in the UK. *Contact: RSP (see inside front cover).*

**Liberty denied: women asylum seekers imprisoned in the United States** by the *Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children*. 1997. 48pp. Single issues free. This report condemns the imprisonment by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service of women seeking refuge in the US. Detainees - who have fled persecution, human rights violations, female circumcision and forced marriages - face verbal and physical abuse; conditions of detention frequently fail to meet international principles of refugee protection and basic standards of decency and compassion. Contact: WCRWC, c/o International Rescue Committee, 122 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10168-1289, USA. Tel: +1 212 551 3088. Fax: +1 212 551 3180. E-mail: wcrwc@intrescom.org

**NGO projects for children: directory for Central and Eastern Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States 1995**. 180pp. This publication was compiled by the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) for the NGO/UNICEF Coordinating Committee on Activities for Children in these areas. Contact: NGLS, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland.

**Slipping through the cracks: unaccompanied children detained by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service** by *Human Rights Watch*. 1997. 120pp. ISBN 1-56432-209-2. Based on on-site visits and interviews conducted at INS facilities in Los Angeles County and Arizona, this publication reports that the US INS detains too many children for too long, fails to inform them of their legal rights, interferes with their efforts to obtain legal representation or to consult in private with their lawyers, and fails to facilitate contact with family members. Many abuses are due to the conflicting roles of the INS: prosecutorial on one hand and care-giving on the other. Human Rights Watch urges the US government to end this conflict of interest by assigning the care-giving role to child welfare agencies while the INS assesses their immigration status. Contact: *Human Rights Watch*, 485 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10017-6014, USA. Tel: +1 212 972 8400. Fax: +1 212 972 0905. E-mail: hrwnyc@hrw.org *Human Rights Watch* also have offices in the UK and Belgium.

**Teaching to diversity: teaching and learning in the multi-ethnic classroom** by *Mary Meyers*, Board of Education for the City of North York. 1993. 144pp. ISBN 7725-1958-7. US\$26. This is designed to help both ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers and classroom teachers of mixed ESL and other students to establish the kind of environment where these students can become successful speakers, readers and writers of English. Contact: *Irwin Publishing*, 1800 Steeles Avenue West, Concord, Ontario L4K 2P3, Canada. Tel: +1 416 445 3333. Fax: +1 416 445 5967. Also available by *Mary Meyers*: 'Equity for refugee children' article published in the *Newsletter* of the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario; this article focuses on the different and highly specific needs of refugee children in Canadian schools. Available for Can\$3 from *Mary Meyers*, 20 Roselawn Avenue #2, Toronto, Ontario M4R 1E4, Canada.

**Women refugees in international perspectives, 1980-1990: an annotated bibliography** by the *Research Resource Division for Refugees*. 1996. 348pp. ISBN 0-7709-0420-3. US\$28 plus \$4 postage. Published with assistance from the Centre for Documentation and Research of UNHCR, this is a compendium volume to the original UNHCR bibliographies on refugee women. It provides over 350 fully indexed abstracts of books, articles, analyses and field reports about women refugees in countries of origin, asylum and resettlement. Contact: *RRDR*, Carleton University RM 112 SRB, 1125 Colonel Bay Dr, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6, Canada. Tel: +1 613 526 2888. Fax: +1 613 520 3676. E-mail: cvincent@ccs.carleton.ca

**World Disasters Report 1997** by the *International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies*. 1997. 173pp. ISBN 0-19-829290-2. £15.99. This annual publication has five sections on key issues, methodologies, year in disasters (with latest trends in aid), disasters database and the ICRC (including update on Code of Conduct and other issues of aid standards). Contact: *IFRC*, 17 chemin des Crêts, PO Box 372, 1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 730 4222. Fax: +41 22 733 0395. E-mail: secretariat@ifrc.org

## UNICEF publications

- UNICEF Exploratory Report *Complex political emergencies: with reference to Angola and Bosnia*, Mark Duffield, March 1994.
- UNICEF Innocenti Occasional Papers, Economic Policy Series, Number 55, *The transition in Georgia: from collapse to optimism*, Teimuraz Gogishvili, Joseph Gogodze, Amiran Tsakadze, September 1996; Number 49, *The demographic impact of sudden impoverishment: Eastern Europe during the 1989-94 transition*, Giovanni Andrea Corina and Renato Paniccia, July 1995.
- Pendergast, John *Frontline diplomacy: humanitarian aid and conflict in Africa*, Lynne Rienner, London, 1996.
- UNICEF Economies in Transition Studies, *Children in difficult circumstances: risks and promises in Central and Eastern Europe*, 1996.

Contact: UNICEF, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY, USA 10017. Tel: +1 212 326 7000. Fax: +1 212 888 7465.

*Do you have reports to share or publications to advertise?*

All too often, useful information is kept in a filing cabinet instead of being shared with other people working in the same field. If you would like wider dissemination of, for example, a new piece of research undertaken or your latest project report, let us help...

If you produce or know of any publications which might be of use and interest to other RPN readers, please send details (and preferably a copy) of the publication to the Editors (address on page 2). Please include details of any price/subscription charges plus: address/telephone/fax/e-mail.

**Any publications sent to the Editors will be kept in the RSP Library for reference purposes.**



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- ❖ *European Human Rights Foundation* ❖
- ❖ *International Planned Parenthood Federation* ❖
- ❖ *Lutheran World Federation* ❖
- ❖ *Oxfam UK and Ireland* ❖
- ❖ *Rädda Barnen* ❖
- ❖ *Save the Children Fund (UK)* ❖
- ❖ *UNICEF* ❖

## Development in Practice

**Development in Practice** is a quarterly journal published by Oxfam (UK and Ireland) which acts as a forum for practitioners, policy makers and academics to exchange information and analysis concerning the social dimensions of development and humanitarian relief work. **Development in Practice** reflects a wide range of institutional and cultural backgrounds and a variety of professional experience.

'*Development in Practice* offers a wealth of useful information that is easy to access, easy to pursue further, and easy to put to good use.' John Grierson, SKAT (Switzerland)

Published in February, May, August and November, with an index to the whole volume in the November issue. A reduced rate is available for organisations from developing countries. *For full subscription information or to receive a sample copy, contact: Carfax Publishing Company, PO Box 25, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 3UE. Tel: +44 1235 401550. Fax: +44 1235 521154. E-mail: sales@carfax.co.uk*



## Articles:

Home is where you make it: repatriation and diaspora culture among Iranians in Sweden by *Mark Graham and Shahram Khosravi*

The politicization of UNHCR in Former Yugoslavia by *S Alex Cunliffe and Michael Pugh*

Physician utilization among refugees with psychiatric disorders by *Edvard Hauff and Per Vaglum*

On the detention of aliens without documents: the impact on democratic rights by *Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp*

## Field report:

UNHCR - the cross border operation in Somalia by *John Kirkby, Ted Kliest, Georg Frerks, Wiert Flikkema and Phil O'Keefe*



## Please note:

Abstracts from the *JRS* are now published on the RSP's home pages at <http://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/rsp>

**FREE back issues** of the *JRS* are available to appropriate organisations. Please contact Margaret Okole, Assistant Editor, *JRS*, RSP, QEH, 21 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LA, UK.  
Fax: +44 1865 270721.  
E-mail: [margaret.okole@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:margaret.okole@qeh.ox.ac.uk)

## Journal of Refugee Studies

**Editors:** Roger Zetter, Richard Black  
**Book Reviews Editor:** Nicholas Van Hear

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Tel: +44 1865 267907. Fax: +44 1865 267773

## Special issue: Palestinians in Lebanon

This special issue contains an edited selection of the papers presented at the conference 'Palestinians in Lebanon' held in September 1996 (organised by the Centre for Lebanese Studies and the RSP). The conference was the culmination of a two-year research and documentation project aimed at highlighting key issues in the political and social situation of Palestinians in Lebanon.

The papers cover three central themes: first, the connection between the past experience of both Palestinians and Lebanese and their attitude to current changes and policies; second, the impact of the peace process; and third, data and analyses of the social, economic, and legal vulnerability of Palestinians in Lebanon. Two issues are raised repeatedly: the disturbing deterioration of the Palestinians' socio-economic and legal security in Lebanon since the end of the civil war there, and the opposition among both Lebanese and Palestinians to any proposal involving the permanent settlement of the refugees in Lebanon.

Papers in the special issue include:

Editorial introduction by *Marie-Louise Weighill and Nadim Shehadi*

**Section I** • The United Nations and the Palestinian refugees, with special reference to Lebanon by *Anthony Parsons* • Palestinians and Lebanon: the common story by *Michael C Hudson* • Palestinians in Lebanon and the PLO by *Abbas Shibliak* • Permanent settlement of Palestinians in Lebanon: a recipe for conflict by *Farid El Khazen* • Palestinians in Lebanon: the politics of assistance by *Marie-Louise Weighill*

**Section II** • The Refugee Working Group, the Middle East peace process, and Lebanon by *Andrew Robinson* • The multilateral Arab-Israeli peace talks and the Refugee Working Group by *Joel Peters* • UNRWA and its role in Lebanon by *Yves Besson* • Lebanese perceptions of the Palestinians in Lebanon: case studies by *Fida Nasrallah* • The legal status of Palestinian refugees by *Souheil Al-Natour*

**Section III** • The socio-economic conditions of Palestinians in Lebanon by *Mahmoud Abbas, Bassem Sirhan, Hussein Shaaban and Ali Hassan* • Palestinians in Lebanon and the role of non-governmental organizations by *Jaber Suleiman*

## Spanish RPN

To date, six issues of the RPN have been translated into Spanish: RPNs 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23.

We launched the Spanish RPN in partnership with HEGOA in Bilbao in order to improve access to resources such as the RPN for Spanish speakers working in the field of forced migration. We also hope that it will enable the unique experience of Latin America and other Spanish speaking areas to be shared with other researchers, policy makers and practitioners around the world. The Spanish RPN now has some 600 members.

**If you have field offices or partner organisations in Spanish-speaking countries** who would be interested in receiving a copy, please contact Carlos Puig at HEGOA (details below) or the RPN Editors at RSP.

**We are also keen to encourage the submission of articles, reports and letters** (in Spanish or English) relating to Latin America/Caribbean and other Spanish speaking regions.

Carlos Puig coordinates the Spanish RPN. Contact him at: *HEGOA, Facultad de Ciencias Economicas, Lehendakari Agirre 83, 48015 Bilbao, Spain.* Tel: +34 4 4473512 Fax: +34 4 4762653  
E-mail: [hegoam01@sarenet.es](mailto:hegoam01@sarenet.es)

## Arabic RPN

RPN 21 has been translated into Arabic and is now available. We have recently received confirmation of funding by the EC for translating further back issues and by the Ford Foundation, Cairo, for translating future issues. If you would like to receive a copy of RPN 21 in Arabic (or if you know of an organisation which would like to receive it) or if you would like to be on the mailing list for future RPNs in Arabic, please contact the RPN Editors (see p2 for contact details).

*Many thanks to the Al-Qattan Foundation, the EC and the Ford Foundation, Cairo, for their support.*

# RSP courses and news

## RSP and RPN on the Web

The RSP's home pages at <http://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/rsp/> provide information on RSP research, publications, teaching and courses. Articles from back issues of the RPN (RPNs 17 to 24) can be accessed and downloaded from the RPN pages at the same Web address. The Documentation Centre's catalogue can be accessed on <http://www.rsl.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/rspnew.tcl>

## RSP staff news

**Maryanne Loughry** was appointed as Pedro Arrupe Tutor in March 1997, seconded from the Faculty of Health Sciences, Flinders University of South Australia. She is a Sister of Mercy from Adelaide, Australia, and a psychologist with research interests in the field of health psychology, child psychology, communication and development, particularly with reference to refugee work. Over the past ten years she has been actively involved with the Jesuit Refugee Service in the Philippines and Hong Kong, as a counsellor and trainer in the Vietnamese camps. In recent years she has trained refugee workers in Vietnam and Africa. Maryanne is currently researching the psychosocial well-being of returnee children in Vietnam with particular reference to children who were unaccompanied in the camps. She is a curriculum consultant to the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme and is also on an international teaching team for a Graduate Diploma in Community Mental Health awarded by the Islamic University, Gaza City.

**Chris Dolan** joined the RSP as Research Officer in 1996 to coordinate a study on the reintegration of demobilised soldiers in Mozambique. The final report of the 12-month study, *The reintegration of ex-combatants in Mozambique*, was published in June 1997 (£5: contact RSP). Chris previously worked for four years as research officer at the University of Witwatersrand in one of South Africa's former homeland areas on the border with Mozambique. His publications include: (with Tollman, Nkuna and Gear) 'The links between legal status and environmental health: A case study of Mozambican refugees and their hosts in Mpumalanga (Eastern Transvaal) Lowveld, South Africa', *International Journal of Health and Human Rights*, Vol 2, No 2, 1997 and 'Aliens abroad: Mozambicans in the New South Africa', *Indicator South Africa*, Vol 12, No 3, 1995. From October 1997, Chris will be working for ACORD in their research and policy unit, responsible for designing and conducting fieldwork on complex political emergencies and NGO involvement, in collaboration with Sussex, Leeds and Bradford universities; his work will focus on the Great Lakes region.

## Courses

### The Rights of Refugees Under International Law

Professor James C Hathaway, Osgoode Hall Law School,  
York University, Canada  
9-10 May 1998 (full-time)

This workshop begins with a critical appraisal of those aspects of international human rights law that may be universally invoked by refugees and all other persons. Its conclusion is that while universal human rights law is the undeniable core of the general international law that speaks to the concerns of refugees, its protective ambit is exceedingly modest. Refugee rights in international law are then traced from their origin in the law on aliens, through to codification in the present Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. Against this historical backdrop, the centrepiece of the Workshop is a detailed and case study-based examination of refugee-specific human rights. *Fee: £100 (excluding accommodation)*. *Venue: Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford.*

### 1998 International Summer School

4 weeks (full-time)

The Summer School aims to provide those working with refugees and other forced migrants with a wider understanding of the interlocking institutional framework that dominates their world and the world of those who have been uprooted. The objectives of the Summer School are to provide participants with: a multidisciplinary framework; a comparative perspective on issues; a forum for the analysis of problems in assistance programmes; and the sharing of successful experiences. Participants are expected to include senior and middle level governmental officials, inter-governmental and non-governmental agency personnel engaged in policy-making management and implementation of assistance for forced migrants. *Fee: to be announced (including bed/breakfast accommodation)*. *Venue: Oxford College.*

### Asylum in a frontier-free Europe

Nuala Mole, Director, the Aire Centre, London  
26-27 September 1998 (full-time)

The 1951 Geneva Convention has long ceased to be the only instrument governing asylum in Europe. Safe third countries, the Dublin Convention, Schengen, the Treaty of Maastricht and the European Convention on Human Rights must also be considered. This workshop will also look at important recent developments from the European Commission and Court of Human Rights and the Committee on the UN Torture Convention, and will examine the application of the Schengen and Dublin Conventions across Europe. *Fee: £100 (excluding accommodation)*. *Venue: Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford.*

For further information and application form, please contact:

The Coordinator, Education Unit, RSP, QEH, 21 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LA, UK.  
Tel: +44 1865 270723 Fax: +44 1865 270721 E-mail: [rspedu@ermine.ox.ac.uk](mailto:rspedu@ermine.ox.ac.uk)

# Join the Refugee Participation Network...

The Refugee Participation Network is a network of some 3,600 individuals and organisations worldwide, bringing together researchers, policy-makers, refugees and those working with refugees. Members receive the RPN newsletter which is published three times a year and are encouraged to contribute articles, reports and news. Membership is currently free. A subscription system will be introduced in January 1998 but please note that **subscriptions will remain FREE for individuals and institutions in developing countries.** We are not planning high subscription charges but do need an assured source of income in order to service this extensive network and improve the quality of the RPN publication. **Full details will be included with the next issue of the RPN.**

*If you would like to join, please complete and return the form below.*



**Yes, I would like to join the Refugee Participation Network.**

I would like to receive it in: English  Spanish  Arabic

I enclose a voluntary contribution of: £20  £40  other

Please make cheques payable to Refugee Studies Programme. Tick if you require a receipt:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Job title \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Tel \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

We produce directories of members to facilitate networking. *Please tick any of the following that apply to you:*

## 1 Organisation

Researcher/academic	RE	_____	Inter-government agency	IA	_____
Student	ST	_____	Government	GT	_____
Journalist/media	JO	_____	Trust/foundation	TR	_____
Refugee	RG	_____	Library/documentation	LI	_____
Non-governmental (NGO)	NG	_____	Educational institution	EI	_____

## 2 Work

Education	ED	_____	Mental health	MH	_____
Community development	CD	_____	Protection/asylum	PR	_____
Income generation	IG	_____	Emergency relief	EM	_____
Agriculture	AG	_____	Camp administration	CA	_____
Health and nutrition	HN	_____	Resettlement	RS	_____
Environmental displacement	ET	_____	Development-induced displacement	DD	_____

## 3 Region of work/interest

Africa	AF	_____	Middle East	ME	_____
Asia	AS	_____	North America	NA	_____
Europe	EU	_____	Pacific	PA	_____
Latin America/Caribbean	LA	_____	Worldwide	WL	_____

Return form to: RPN, RSP, QEH, 21 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LA, UK. Fax: +44 (0)1865 270721

# A voice for children in the Western Saharan refugee camps

by Margaret Burr

*Spanish Voices: today's children, tomorrow's world* is a three year project focusing on displaced children in the Western Saharan refugee camps and in Guatemala; its aim is to provide a voice for these young people, giving them the opportunity to share their ideas and experiences through different media.

The 9th June School is a boarding school for 2500 Saharawi refugee children, built near the camps in the middle of the desert, close to Tindouf in Algeria. The children study the usual subjects but with so few resources that it is difficult to differentiate one lesson from the next, apart from the writing on the blackboard. The windows are small and shuttered because of the heat but there is little on which to look out. There is none of the romance of the desert, simply a harsh, gravelly landscape which brings little stimulation or colour into the lives of the young refugees. Their visions, however, are unlimited and they delight in colour. Every piece of paper is returned with imaginative and colourfully decorated borders. They draw pictures of the school and of the Western Saharan landscape of which they have heard so much. The Saharawis speak a dialect of Arabic known as Hassaniya but their second language is Spanish which is used to establish links with their partners in the project.

'Spanish Voices' has taken on a new dimension via the Internet. One World Online recently launched an exhibition of Saharawi children's paintings - 'Sand Colours'. Another Internet site was launched by The Photographers' Gallery, entitled 'Mirage: an imaginary city', which allowed the young people of the four communities to share their visions through pictures and in writing. The Guatemalan children revealed their 'Paradise for women' with houses and trees, transport by horse and elephant, and vines with which to swing from house to house: no cars nor men, and tourists for the day only. In contrast, the vision of the Saharawi children for their 'City of Dreams' was a vibrant, colourful city by the sea with an enormous swimming pool and plenty of cars.

Products of the 3-year project will include: • a language resource introducing development and rights issues into the UK's Modern Foreign Languages National Curriculum with ideas and experiences from all partners • a series of Spanish language teaching programmes for the BBC, based on the project with film from all locations • a Minority Rights Group leaflet on the life of the Western Saharan refugees to be produced in English and Spanish and distributed in schools in the UK

For more information on 'Spanish Voices', contact the Humanities Education Centre, English Street, London E3 4TA, UK. Tel: +44 171 364 6405. Fax: +44 171 364 6422. E-mail: [hec@gn.apc.org](mailto:hec@gn.apc.org) Website: <http://www.oneworld.org/spanish-voices>. Funded by the EU plus a number of development agencies and the Tower Hamlets Local Education Authority in London, UK.

## Direct talks bring new hope

Many of the young Saharawi people have never left the camps established over 20 years ago when their families fled the invading Moroccan army. The Western Sahara continues to be claimed and occupied by Morocco. A UN brokered referendum on self-determination has not been implemented due to a failure to agree on those eligible to take part. The 1991 cease-fire still holds but the situation has reached a critical stage. In March 1997, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan appointed James Baker (former US secretary of state) as his Special Envoy for Western Sahara. Baker visited the refugee camps in April 1997 and has since succeeded in brokering the first direct talks between Morocco and POLISARIO (the Saharawi liberation movement formed in 1973).

There is still considerable concern, however, over continuing human rights abuses by Morocco; hundreds of Saharawi people remain disappeared and agencies report that Morocco has blatantly compromised the fairness of the voter identification process. The Peace Plan provides the UN with a mandate to ensure that 'no-one can resort to intimidation or interference in the referendum process'; Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch recommend that the mandate of MINURSO (the UN Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara) needs to be widened to include the monitoring, investigating and reporting of human rights violations.

Information taken from the July 1997 newsletter of the Western Sahara Campaign UK, Oxford Chambers, Oxford Place, Leeds LS1 3AX, UK. Tel/fax: +44 113 245 4786.

## My refugee children by Ali Salem

*When I was young, I dreamed of an independent Western Sahara, studying medicine, and a happy life. But when Morocco invaded my country in 1975, I was obliged to flee and live in refugee camps in Algeria. Twenty-two years later, I am still living there with my wife and children.*

*The Saharawi children continue to suffer silently in the desert. A recent medical survey indicates that most of the children are anaemic and that their physical development has been affected by the lack of adequate food. They are condemned to exile and to an endless dream about their eventual return to their homeland. Summer visits to European countries, organised by NGOs and councils, have helped the children understand that there is a world which is more tolerant and beautiful than the one in which they are condemned to live. The purpose of the visits is to show them the world beyond the refugee camps: flowers instead of thorns and stones, rivers instead of the thirst of the desert.*



Photo: Western Sahara Campaign.