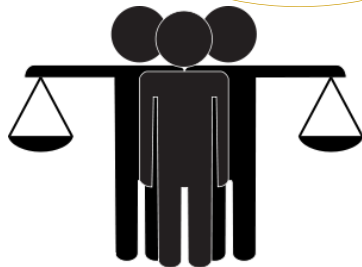


THE AFTERMATH

JUSTICE

In the aftermath of war, justice is important as part of the healing process and helping prevent future violence against children. Children can participate in this through:

- closed sessions
- testifying behind a screen
- pre and post-counselling to protect child witnesses
- truth and reconciliation and restorative justice initiatives
- traditional healing ceremonies



RESTORATION AND HEALING

- **Physical rehabilitation**
- **Educational activities** including non-formal learning such as youth activities, mentoring, and life skills training
- **Psychosocial support** including play, games, drawing, sports, discussion and narration of feelings and experiences of conflict

- **Structural rebuilding** including national legal system, health care systems, faith institutions, and basic resource provision such as shelter, water, and nutrition

There are cultural differences in how trauma and healing are perceived. When planning psychosocial interventions it is vital to involve local communities to ensure long-term, sustainable, and culturally sensitive approaches are used.

ACTIVITIES

- **Writing for Recovery Manual:** available from http://www.childrenandwar.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/CAW_Writing_for_recovery_manual1.pdf
- **Resources for Educators:** <http://www.nctsn.org/trauma-types/refugee-and-war-zone-trauma>
- **Peace Education Stories (with Teacher's Manual):** <http://journeyofpeace.ca/>
- **Mental Health Resources:** http://www.hhri.org/thematic/child_soldiers.html#
- **Psychosocial Care Package Children:** <http://www.healthnettpo.org/en/1311/psychosocial-care-package-children.html>
- **Rehabilitation and Reintegration:** http://www.hhri.org/thematic/child_soldiers.html#
- **Life Story Board tool:** <http://vidaview.ca/#sthash.vzXxXjEx.dpbs>

Canadian Physicians for Research and Education in Peace (C-PREP) is a charitable organization to support research and education in peace from a health perspective. Visit <http://cprep.ca/> for more information in the Peaceful Childhoods Series.

PEACEFUL CHILDHOODS SERIES

CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT



C|PREP

Canadian Physicians for Research and Education in Peace

PROTECTION AND RISKS

Children who have lived in the midst of armed conflicts or been displaced by war or fighting, including gang violence, have often experienced traumatic events which can have devastating impacts on their well-being. In 2014, the killing and maiming of children, recruitment and use of children as soldiers, sexual violence against children, attacks on schools or hospitals, denial of humanitarian access to children, or the abduction of children occurred against children in 23 countries.

IMPACT ON CHILDREN

Children who have lived in or been displaced by armed conflicts often have experienced traumatic events that can have devastating health impacts, including:

- ◇ Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- ◇ Major depression and anxiety disorders
- ◇ Aggression, somatic symptoms, and substance abuse (with adolescents)
- ◇ Difficulties with academic ability and participation and interference in developmental tasks (e.g. bedwetting, clinging behavior)

The impacts of armed conflict are far reaching, affecting:

Education: often war closes schools

Social investment: conflict disrupts community investment for the future

Mental health: distress, anxiety, fear, PTSD

Family structure: the death, absence, or suffering of parents due to conflict disrupts family structure and children's development

Displacement: incurs many physical dangers, including risk of malnourishment and sexual abuse



PARTICULAR RISKS TO CHILDREN

- ◇ Aerial attacks and less discriminate weapons pose a risk to children as children may unintentionally be hit
- ◇ Landmines and other such bomb devices may look like toys to curious children; in 2010, approximately 2100 children were killed by these devices
- ◇ Girls are at risk of sexual violence in war. They may experience the rejection of their communities if they are raped or impregnated by rebel groups.



- ◇ Children are easily indoctrinated and lack a fear of death, and so may be recruited as child soldiers by various armed groups. While there is still a gap in understanding the motivations of children for joining, it must be understood that the 'voluntary' element of enlisting is meaningless for children as it is motivated by desperation. The primary countries where child soldiers are used are Afghanistan, DRC, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Yemen.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

The following are factors which can help children overcome traumatic events:

- ◇ **agency:** having some measure of control in their life
- ◇ **empathy** and **social intelligence**
- ◇ **community connection** and sense of shared experiences with others
- ◇ **hope** for a future and ability to grow
- ◇ a **spiritual connection**, which can help children understand tragedy
- ◇ a **sense of morality** and right and wrong
- ◇ **family connectedness** and close relations
- ◇ **educational activities** and **social systems** (including schools, government systems, police, shelter, healthcare, faith structures)