

**Ref: PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN
DURING THE LEBANESE WAR¹**

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- I. Statement of the First Regional Consultation on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children in the Horn, Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (Addis Ababa, 17-19 April 1995)
- II. Statement of the Second Regional Consultation on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children in the Arab Region (Cairo, Page 4 of 78 9/9/2002 gopher://gopher.un.org/00/ga/docs/51/plenary/A51-306.EN 27-29 August 1995)
- III. Statement of the Third Regional Consultation on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children in West and Central Africa (Abidjan, 7-10 November 1995)
- IV. Statement of the Fourth Regional Consultation on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children in Asia and the Pacific (Manila, 13-15 March 1996)
- V. Statement of the Fifth Regional Consultation on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children in Latin America and the Caribbean (Santafe' de Bogota', 17-19 April 1996)
- VI. Statement of the Sixth Regional Consultation on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children in Europe (Florence, 10-12 June 1996)
- VII. Statement adopted by the World Conference on Religion and Peace: Children and Violent Conflict
- VIII. Selected bibliography on children and armed conflict

The actual and predictive IMPACT OF THE WAR ON CHILDREN IN LEBANON:

1. ***children in conflict areas, refugees and internally displaced:*** unaccompanied children, massive evacuation, children and families in Palestinian camps for shelter, returning back home and finding durable solutions
2. ***possible situations of sexual abuse and predicted gender-based violence:*** this chapter is in the core of the present committee's task. There are no reported cases yet; on the other hand, there is no system of monitoring for eventual cases
3. ***landmines and unexploded ordnance, as obstacles to population return back home:*** threat to children : ban, clearance, awareness and rehabilitation. This may be a problem to come as soon as displaced persons will go back home. Dr

Nadim KARAM and the National Office for the Retrieval of Landmines are proposed as resources for data gathering in this regard

4. ***embargo situation from Israel on Lebanon:*** scarce humanitarian exemptions are sent to Lebanon by air, but few reach the areas under fire; furthermore, there is a need for child impact assessments and monitoring
5. ***health and nutrition :*** A specific team is already on the run for nutritional guidelines and preparation of food packages, in association with UNICEF and WHO. The issues of this chapter concern: communicable diseases and immunizations, reproductive health, disability, effect of the destruction of health facilities, protecting health services and health workers, disruption of food supplies and fuel, nutrition and vitamin supply, protecting food security
6. ***promoting psychological recovery and social reintegration:*** A dedicated team is already on the run in the hccleb: to evaluate psychosocial impact of violence on children and to study best practices for recovery programs, including child participation and animation
7. ***education and animation:*** the needs are urgent, as they tackle the risks to education during this war, with its settings, problems, challenges and opportunities

Aims of LibanCAN:

1. Seek widespread support from the Government and local authorities, as well as very active - but still scattered – non -governmental organizations,
2. Work with United Nations bodies and protocols, especially the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Committee and the Lebanese chapter of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and other relevant institutions, such as Save the Children Fund-Sweden, Médecins sans frontières, Médecins du Monde, etc.
3. Facilitate the development of new networks and coalitions, both nationally, regionally, and internationally, to help place the concerns on political and development agendas throughout the Arab region and the world.
4. Request UN agencies to assist the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Higher Council for Childhood in training relevant personnel in the concrete implementation of the rights of children, through advocacy, awareness and relief.
5. Enrolling the media, capable of effectively galvanizing international public support for humanitarian action and holding the potential for keeping some gross violations of human rights in check, like the slaughter of children in Qana.

II. IMPACT OF WAR ON CHILDREN

A. Refugees and internally displaced children

Lebanon has been deeply affected by massive population upheavals while not a single mohafazat has escaped either the phenomenon itself or its ramifications.

Displacement has a profound physical, emotional and developmental impact on children and increases their vulnerability

Most of all refugees and displaced people are children.

Some of them have even perished from disease.

1. Unaccompanied children

Unaccompanied children are especially vulnerable but were paradoxically subject to immediate attention from an emerging informal sector and have been shown in the Media, who have contributed to family reunion.

2. Evacuation

3. Children in camps

Displaced populations generate complex societies.

Women and adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable

Outside conflict areas and among displaced children, measles, diarrhoeal diseases, acute respiratory infections (ARI) and acute complications of chronic diseases account for the majority of reported morbidity and mortality

In these circumstances, only a multi-sectoral approach to health, nutrition and mental support can protect young children. For those reasons our taskforce should have an articulation with the Mental health committee and the Nutrition committee, under the umbrella of the hcclcb.

4. The situation of internally displaced children

Access to health and education services.

UNHCR, ICRC and the HCR have specific mandates

5. Returning home and durable solutions

Voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement : Procedures should be expeditious and carried out in the best interests of the child. Conditions of safety and dignity as well as national protection are available.

Equal opportunities to re-establish family life and productive livelihoods.

B. Sexual abuse and gender-based violence

Preventive measures include the construction of shelter, water and sanitation facilities, carefully designed to avoid creating opportunities for gender-based aggression [Increased numbers of female personnel, confidential counseling on a wide range of issues]

Include community-based psychosocial and reproductive health programs.

Local community must be involved in their design and implementation.

C. Landmines and unexploded ordnance

Only in the present war, it is estimated that up to 4000 ordnance, bombs, shells and grenades that failed to detonate on impact are left unexploded.

1. The threat to children

Children are also more vulnerable to the danger of landmines than adults [Recognize, read warning signs, less able to spot them, become familiar, greater damage to the body of a child, medical problems often severe, girls are less likely than boys to receive attention and prostheses, families often financially devastated, weaken the care and protection available to children]

2. Mine ban, clearance, awareness and rehabilitation

D. The Embargo

1. Humanitarian exemptions

2. The need for child impact assessments and monitoring

E. Health and nutrition

Hundreds of children have been killed in 4 weeks as a direct result of fighting; more will die from disease caused or increased by war. The interruption of food supplies, the destruction of food crops and agricultural infrastructures, the disintegration of families and communities, the displacement of populations, the destruction of health services and programs and of water and sanitation systems all take a heavy toll on children.

1. Communicable diseases

Diarrhoeal diseases and acute skin and respiratory infections; measles prevalence need monitoring, as well as other infectious diseases. The MOPH can provide some of the information in this regard, with other stakeholders². Tuberculosis has not yet been tackled by authorities and needs monitoring. Reduced access to reproductive health services, including education, increases the vulnerability of adolescents in particular.

2. Reproductive health

Provision of primary health care in conjunction with interventions to secure clean water, adequate nutrition, shelter and sanitation, must be the priority health agenda. However, reproductive health is also important for the physical and psychosocial well-being, and particularly of young girls. The reproductive health of pregnant women and mothers is integrally tied to the health of newborns and children. WHO advocates that reproductive health services based on women's needs and demands, should be available in all situations. At the present time, there has been no reported case in the media of medical or health failure with regard to perinatal care.

3. Disability

Children are killed by armed conflict, but three times as many are expected to be seriously injured or permanently disabled by war. The lack of basic services and the destruction of some health facilities and communications during the present war mean that children with disabilities get scarce support from their original facility.

² United Nations Children's Fund, State of the World's Children 1995, New York, Oxford University Press, p. 20.

4. Destruction of health facilities

Health facilities have been under attack, in direct violation of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The number of such health facilities and their categories are not yet determined. Access to others is impeded. In spite of the concentration on military needs, children injured in the present war did get effective treatment and immediate physical rehabilitation. On the other hand, health services suffer from a shortage of personnel as health workers move to other areas or leave the country. In reaction, the Lebanese Order of Physicians installed a dedicated team to offer counseling to needing persons, with a Hotline. Such measures are also encouraged by the Lebanese Pediatric Society and Medical groups. Supervision and logistic support remains however intact at the present time in most of the Lebanese areas. For children, one of the most dangerous implications of any health service breakdown is the disruption of rural vaccination programs. As a reaction, children are being immunized with anti-polio vaccine at day 26, while mass measles vaccination is under study.

5. Protecting health services and health workers

Health sector continues to promote children's rights to survival and development while doing all it can to prevent and alleviate their suffering.

Delivery of medical assistance is however obstructed by the interruption of communications and roads.

Role of the Lebanese Red Cross, using health care wherever possible as an opportunity to gain access to children for other positive purposes.

The post-conflict phase.

Health professionals must be advocates of the rights of the child.

6. Disruption of food supplies

Food production has been affected in many ways. Damage to food systems is deliberate. Both the quantity and quality of available food is affected by damage done to food systems and livestock.

7. Malnutrition

In addition to these nutritional hazards, the circumstances of armed conflict greatly increase exposure to environmental hazards. Poor waste disposal and inadequate or contaminated water supplies aggravate the vicious circle.

8. Protecting food security

In the case of Lebanon, recourse to outside food assistance is unavoidable. Dry rations [jars, cans, etc.] that can be used by families in their own homes are preferable to feeding centers. It is critical that children are not considered separately from the family.

F. Promoting psychological recovery and social reintegration

1. Psychosocial impact of violence on children

2. Best practices for recovery programs

G. Education

1. Risks to education during conflict

Schools are targeted during war. Fear and disruption make it difficult to create an atmosphere conducive to learning.

2. Challenges and opportunities

Formal, non-formal and informal education interventions are delivered through a variety of community channels. At the Second Regional Consultation in the Arab Region, it was suggested that local relevance could be facilitated by allowing parents, communities and children to play more active roles in the design, content and implementation of curricula and in flexible education methodologies.

Education has a vital role to play in rehabilitation, yet is rarely considered a priority in relief programs. Educational initiatives developed for conflict situations should therefore be designed to allow for easy integration in the post-conflict period.

Easy priority to the physical reconstruction of schools, but rather less attention to teacher training and the development of new curricula and teaching methods.

III. RELEVANCE AND ADEQUACY OF EXISTING STANDARDS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN THE LEBANESE WAR

Humanitarian law

Human rights law

1. Convention relating to the Status of Refugees

2. Convention on the Rights of the Child

Implementation of standards and monitoring of violations

Standards will only be effective, if and when they are widely known, understood, and implemented. Standards should also be known and understood by children.

The CRC can receive information from any source and take an active role in gathering data. Where protection of children is concerned, much broader participation in the monitoring and reporting of abuses is required.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights, national institutions and national ombudspersons, international human rights organizations and professional associations should be actively utilized in this regard. The media should also do more to raise awareness of infringements of children's rights.

Civil society should actively disseminate humanitarian and human rights law and engage in advocacy, reporting and monitoring of infringements of children's rights. Building on existing guidelines, UNICEF should develop more comprehensive guidelines on the protection and care of children in conflict situations;

IV. RECONSTRUCTION

Children are rarely mentioned in reconstruction plans or peace agreements, yet children must be at the centre of rebuilding. Part of putting children at the centre means using youth as a resource.

V. CONFLICT PREVENTION

The international community must shatter the political inertia that allows circumstances to escalate into armed conflict and destroy children's lives.

A. Education for peace

Both the content and the process of education should promote peace, social justice, respect for human rights and the acceptance of responsibility. Children need to learn skills of negotiation, problem solving, critical thinking and communication that will enable them to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence. In Lebanon, the education for peace program, jointly undertaken in 1989 by the Lebanese Government, NGOs, youth volunteers and UNICEF benefited thousands of children.

The statement of the Second Regional Consultation on the Impact of Armed Conflict in the Arab Region emphasized the importance of integrating peace education principles, values and skills into the education of every child.

B. Early warning

Improvements in early warning systems and stand-by capacity are necessary to reduce the dangers of armed conflict for children. The media can alert the international community to child rights violations, but early warning must be linked to early action to be of any use.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

To keep these issues very high on the human rights, a special representative of the hccleb on children and armed conflict should be appointed:

As a standing observer, assessing progress achieved and difficulties encountered in the implementation of the CRC

To raise awareness about the plight of children affected by armed conflict and promote information collection, research, analysis and dissemination at the global, regional and national levels.

To encourage the development of networking to exchange experiences and facilitate the adoption of measures intended to improve the situation of children

To ensure respect for children's rights in these situations

The Government must create enabling environments within which civil society can work on issues related to armed conflict and child rights. O encourage the work of – and support coalitions that represent the views - parliamentarians, judiciary, religious communities, educators, the media, professional associations, the private sector, NGOs and children themselves. Such coalitions will facilitate service delivery, social mobilization and advocacy for children affected by the war. The establishment of national ombudspersons, national human rights commissions, international courts and other institutions should be quickly explored. So should long-term measures designed to ensure respect for children's rights.

The Government must ensure that health, education and psychosocial support are central to reconstruction efforts. De-mining, mine awareness and the control of the flow of arms within and outside of national borders must become immediate priorities.

Responsibilities of the United Nations

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP, WHO, FAO, WFP, UNFPA, UNIFEM, the High Commissioner for Human Rights /Centre for Human Rights and other United Nations bodies must treat children affected by armed conflicts as a distinct and priority concern. Such treatment should result in the establishment of the mechanisms necessary for reporting on violations of children's rights.

International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Lebanese Red Cross

The HCR, as an administrative Committee on Coordination and for Program and Operational Questions

Civil society organizations

Many organizations have been central in spreading the message of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in implementing its principles. They have shown themselves willing and able to break new ground in developing programs, to be daring in advocacy and in protecting and promoting the rights of children in situations of conflict. Civil society organizations continue to demonstrate their critical role in promoting the rights

and ensuring the well-being of children and families. Many of these groups have helped develop the issues contained in the present taskforce. The role of civil society will be crucial in **implementing recommendations and in assisting agencies to fulfill their obligations to children.**

Civil society organizations play a fundamental role in preventing further conflicts, **protecting children and in reconstructing the conflict-affected society.** They do so through **advocacy, research and information, human rights monitoring, program interventions, training and humanitarian assistance.** Because of their particular importance in Lebanon, it is essential to have lively dialogue and cooperation between and among all groups. NGOs, religious communities, cultural organizations, educators, professional and academic networks and associations and the media are encouraged to build and **use hccleb standards relating to the protection of children's rights as the framework for their work, and to continue to bring these issues of concern to the attention of the national and international community.** Organizations dealing specifically with women, family and communities are especially important. Women's organizations and networks should be strengthened at all levels.

Civil society organizations are encouraged to develop capacities, at national, regional and global levels, to undertake relevant research; form alliances, networks and campaigns on key issues; and to assist in creating an enabling environment for child rights activities and education.

VII. CONCLUSION

There is a clear and overwhelming moral case for protecting all children while seeking the peaceful resolution of war. The immediate wounds to children, the physical injury, the psychosocial distress, are affronts to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. While doing so, many other issues demand further investigation. These include: operational issues affecting the protection of children in emergencies; child-centered approaches to the prevention of conflict and to reconstruction and development; the treatment of child rights violations within existing human rights mechanisms; the role of the military in protecting child rights; child rights issues in relation to peace and security agendas; special programming for adolescents; the role of women in conflict management and resolution; community approaches to humanitarian relief; and the development of effective training programs in the area of child rights for all actors in conflict situations.