

# Background Guide

United Nations Children's Fund



Property of Lagos Model United Nations

Background Guide: United Nations Children's Fund

**Edited and reviewed by**

Zainab Olamide Dunmoye (Deputy- Secretary General)

Oludayo Olufowobi (Under-Secretary- General Research)

Oluwakemi Agbato (Under -Secretary -General, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Department)

**Written by**

Oguntuase Ifeoluwa (Chair)

Adesanya Sinmisoluwa (Vice Chair)

Aminat Yusuf (Researcher)

Victoria Kasali (Researcher)

**Design by**

Mosorire Aiyeylemi

**Cover photo by**

Favour Obakin

LMUN 2021: The Sixth Session

## Table of Content

<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Committee Overview</b>	<b>2</b>
Introduction	2
Governance and Structure	4
Mandate, Functions, and Powers	7
Recent Sessions and Current Priorities	8
Conclusion	10
Annotated Bibliography	10
Bibliography	12
<b>Addressing Sexual Violence against Children</b>	<b>0</b>
Introduction	0
International and Regional Framework	3
Role of the International System	5
The Psychological and Physical impact of Sexual Violence on Children	10
Global Partnership to End Sexual Violence	14
Addressing Online Sexual Violence against Children	16
The Role of the Government in Protecting Children from Sexual Violence	19
The Role of Culture and Religion in Perpetuating Sexual Violence against Children	21
Improving the Legal Protection of Child Victims of Sexual Abuse	25
Conclusion	28
Further Research	29
<b>Children in Armed Conflict: Rehabilitation and Reintegration</b>	<b>39</b>
Introduction	39
International and Regional Framework	41
Role of the International System	45
Addressing the Violation of Rights of Children in Warfare	49
Addressing the Prevalence of Sexual Violence against Children in Armed Conflict	54
Therefore, while UNICEF, NGOs and government of member states continue in their efforts to prevent the recruitment of children in armed conflict, action must always be taken to respond to the mental and physical health of the rescued or released child soldiers, in order to ensure that they are not compelled to return back to the warfront, and that they become useful to the society.	60
The Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Child Soldiers into Armed Conflict	60

Conclusion	65
Further Research	65
Annotated Bibliography	66
Bibliography	69

## **Letter from USC**

Dear delegates,

Welcome to the Lagos Model United Nations 2021, the 6<sup>th</sup> session. It is a pleasure to welcome you all to this conference which brings age long and recent international problems to the fore. LMUN is a platform for youth to deliberate on innovative solutions and take actions to create a better world for us all. This process is one that will improve your problem-solving skills, public speaking skills, team work and leadership skills while making you great connections along the way. This is why LMUN continues to be such a transformative process.

The staff for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are: **Oluwakemi Agbato** (Under-Secretary-General); **Oguntuase Ifeoluwa** (Chair); **Sinmsoluwa Adesanya** (Vice Chair); **Aminat Yusuf** (Researcher) and **Victoria Kasali** (Researcher).

**Oluwakemi** is a 400-level student of the Faculty of Law University of Lagos. She was a participant at the LMUN 2018 where she was awarded the Position Paper Award and the Honorable mention Award. She has served in official capacities; as a researcher in LMUN 2019; as the chair of UN-Women in LMUN 2020 and as a communication and logistics officer in YISMUN. Her love for MUNs is in tandem with her interest in international human rights and development. **Ifeoluwa** is a 400-level student of the University of Lagos. She began her LMUN journey as a delegate for Kenya in 2018, where she won the Distinguished Delegate Award and co-won the Best Delegation award. In 2020, she acted as a delegate for the UNHRC committee in the Wind of Change Model United Nations, where she also won the Most Improved Delegate award, and later on acted as the Researcher for the UNESCO committee for LMUN'20. **Sinmisoluwa** was a delegate at LMUN 2018, where she represented the Republic of China in the Security Council, and developed the only working paper that was passed by the council. In 2020, she served as a delegate at the Youth International Model United Nations, where she won the Verbal Mention Award. In 2021, she also served as the campus ambassador for the International Model United Nations. **Victoria** is a 300-level student at the University of Lagos, and was a delegate in the 2020 LMUN conference where she represented New Zealand in the UNICEF committee. She had the privilege of winning three awards, one committee award as a Distinguished Delegate, and two peer awards as the Best Delegate and Most Likely to be a Dictator. Her interest includes writing, human rights, reading and overall activities that promote self-development. **Amina** was a delegate in 2019 at LMUN where she represented the Kingdom of Morocco in UNICEF. In 2020 she was also a delegate at LMUN where she represented USA and won the Distinguished Delegate award. Also in 2020, she was a delegate in UNICEF in the International Model United Nations, where she won the Verbal Communication award.

UNICEF, since its inception has been concerned with the rights and welfare of children. UNICEF demonstrates its priorities by promoting childhood education, aiding children's survival with aid and defending the rights of children.

The topics to be discussed by the committee are:

I. Addressing Sexual Violence Against Children

II. Children in Armed Conflict; Rehabilitation and Reintegration

The Background Guide will form the stepping stone to begin your research on your topics one of the first steps to research at LMUN. Nonetheless is not be a stand in for undertaking the extensive research required of you as individuals. The Further Research, Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography will serve you well and aid you your research. In addition to this this Delegate Prep Guide and the Rules of Procedure will provide you with guidance for the conduct expected and procedure of the conference. These documents are available on the LMUN website – [www.lmun.ng](http://www.lmun.ng).

Each delegate is expected to submit a position paper by a later communicated date after registration and assignment of country and committee, in accordance with the position paper guide which is on the LMUN website.

Any enquiries or concerns during your preparation for the committee or the Conference itself, should be directed to the USG at - [usgpeacesecurityhr@lmun.ng](mailto:usgpeacesecurityhr@lmun.ng) or the committee at - [unicef@lmun.ng](mailto:unicef@lmun.ng).

We anticipate your presence at the conference!

**Oluwakemi Agbato**

USG Peace, Security and Human Rights, LMUN 2021.

## **Abbreviations**

<b>ACRWC</b>	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
<b>AP</b>	Additional Protocols to the Geneva Convention
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>CAAC</b>	Children and Armed Conflict
<b>CCC</b>	Core Commitments for Children
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CSAM</b>	Child Sexual Abuse Material
<b>DDR</b>	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>ECOSOC</b>	Economic and Social Council
<b>ECPAT</b>	End Child Prostitution and Trafficking International
<b>GV</b>	Geneva Convention
<b>ICC</b>	International Criminal Court
<b>ICCPR</b>	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<b>ICMEC</b>	International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children
<b>ICESCR</b>	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee for the Red Cross
<b>IGOs</b>	Intergovernmental Organizations
<b>IRC</b>	Innocenti Research Centre
<b>IWF</b>	Internet Watch Foundation
<b>MRM</b>	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organizations
<b>OCSEA</b>	Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
<b>OPAC</b>	Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict

<b>PAHO</b>	Pan American Health Organization
<b>Paris Principles</b>	Paris Principles: Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups
<b>PEPFAR</b>	The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
<b>PTSD</b>	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SRSG</b>	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
<b>UDHR</b>	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<b>UN</b>	United Nation
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Food Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNGA</b>	United Nations General Assembly
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services
<b>UNWOMEN</b> Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation

## Committee Overview

### Introduction

The United Nations (UN) International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) was established after World War II in 1946, by the United Nations General Assembly<sup>1</sup> to provide immediate relief to the children and mothers affected by the war.<sup>2</sup> Shortly after, in 1950, it shifted its focus solely to the protection, survival, and development of children.<sup>3</sup>

The Convention on the Rights of the Child which is the most ratified treaty in history was adopted by the General Assembly,<sup>4</sup> and is a legally binding international agreement that extensively provides for the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of every child regardless of their race, religion or culture<sup>5</sup>. Due to its provisions on the protection of children, UNICEF supports states in ratifying and implementing the Convention and its protocols. UNICEF prioritizes the rights of children and works to teach young people all over the world about their rights while demonstrating its commitments to ensure these rights are protected.<sup>6</sup> There have also been collaborations with states to identify implementation strategies in over 190 countries and territories<sup>7</sup>.

UNICEF and partners have worked to aid children's survival, as well as provide learning opportunities for children to thrive.<sup>8</sup> It dedicates efforts to effectively improve children's health, nutrition, sanitation and hygiene, education, early childhood, and adolescent

---

<sup>1</sup> General Assembly, Resolution, "Establishment of an International Emergency Children's Fund" December 10, 1946, CF/NYH/IRM/RAM/1997-227.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, A World Safe for Every Child.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Convention on the Rights of a Child, adopted 20 November 20 1989, entry into force 2 September 1990.

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF, What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF, Human Rights for Women and Children.

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF Annual Report "For Every Child, Reimagine", 2019.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

development.<sup>9</sup> During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF has acted as a driving force to keep children healthy, reach vulnerable children with clean water and hygiene, provide learning alternatives for children, while supporting families and communities to care for the children.<sup>10</sup> UNICEF is committed to promoting the equal rights of every child and providing them with opportunities for their physical, political, social, and economic development.<sup>11</sup> A recent UNICEF publication<sup>12</sup> also addressed key questions regarding generating evidence on the rights of children that may arise during the pandemic.<sup>13</sup> The organization also collaborates with UN partners, humanitarian agencies, and other organizations to ensure the availability of support to less privileged children and their parents and guardians.<sup>14</sup>

For over 70 years, UNICEF has remained committed to its core values of care, respect, integrity, and accountability, while embracing the new decade and rededicating itself to the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>15</sup> To remain true to its mandate to help children and defend their rights, UNICEF's internal culture nurtures the unique contributions made by a diverse global workforce.<sup>16</sup> The committee has also attracted generations of talented, committed women and men around the globe to serve the needs of children and young people<sup>17</sup> while respecting, acknowledging, and listening to the necessary stakeholders to help in achieving lasting results for every child.<sup>18</sup> It also continues to improve on ways to cater to the needs of children all over the world, and relies on states to work hand in hand with them in order to achieve all the goals set out in the SDGs.

---

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF, "Opportunities".

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF, "Research on Violence against Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Guidance to Inform Ethical Data Collection and Evidence Generation", October 2020.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> UNICEF," Mission Statement".

<sup>15</sup> UNICEF," UNICEF's Culture".

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> UNICEF, "UNICEF's Journey of Organizational Transformation".

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Governance and Structure**

UNICEF is constituted of an internal and an external governance structure. By virtue of the external structure, UNICEF reports to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council. As an instrumental agency of the UN, the Economic and Social Council annually reviews the work and progress of UNICEF.<sup>19</sup> All financial reports and accounts, and the report of the Board of Auditors, are submitted to the General Assembly and then subsequently reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and by the Fifth Committee.<sup>20</sup>

The internal governance comprises the Executive Board, which is the official governing body of UNICEF.<sup>21</sup> The Executive Board is considered as the body in charge of administrative management which has the duty of determining policies and financial reports from the national committees.<sup>22</sup> It consists of 36 Member States elected to three-year terms by the UN Economic and Social Council, in which eight seats are allocated to Africa, seven seats to Asia, four seats to Eastern Europe, five seats to Latin America and the Caribbean, and 12 seats to Western Europe and Others. The Executive Board also observes all UN missions related to children and youth and oversees all documents adopted or produced by the organization, including several annual reports.

In 2018, the Executive Board adopted the Every Child Alive report, which highlights the challenges that many mothers and their babies face when enduring childbirth and care for their new-born.<sup>23</sup> Harsh realities such as premature death, disability, and severe illness all stem from the lack of proper tools and essential items to deliver babies in safe and sterile environments. The report emphasizes the importance of looking past medical complications

---

<sup>19</sup> Economic and Social Council, “The Organization of the United Nations Children’s Fund”.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board, “UNICEF Executive Board Informal Guide”.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

being the only source of childhood mortality and also examines the marginalization of families, who face harsh living conditions due to injustices.<sup>24</sup> The report promotes "the way forward," assessing how people, places, products, and power all play a role in achieving universal health coverage for new-born babies, while also holding health care providers accountable for the services they are to perform on these new born babies. Strong emphasis is placed on a facility's cleanliness, functionality, people and their proper training, life-saving equipment, and an emphasis on empowering women and girls to protect themselves and make informed decisions about their healthcare. The Executive Board reports on committee progress and makes recommendations regarding the status of children worldwide to both ECOSOC and the General Assembly.<sup>25</sup>

Today, UNICEF has a strong presence in one hundred and ninety-two countries. UNICEF runs 36 National Committees focused on fundraising, establishing best practices and sharing methods for public-private partnerships, and improving children's rights. UNICEF is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from IGOs, NGOs, corporations, foundations, and private individuals. UNICEF maintains a country office in most Member States, promoting cooperation through a five-year program of evaluation. UNICEF evaluates the needs of children within each Member State, and if these needs can be met by grassroots programs utilizing local workers and volunteers within those same states.

UNICEF's humanitarian action is heavily influenced by its Strategic Plans and Core Commitments for Children (CCC) which outlines the intention of UNICEF in all sectors namely- water, hygiene, sanitation, health and nutrition (WASH), child protection and education as part of any form of humanitarian response.<sup>26</sup> CCC was initially developed in 1998 and has undergone two revisions in consideration of evolving changes and demands; the

---

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>26</sup> UNICEF, "UNICEF in emergencies".

most recent revision was in the year 2020. The crux of their formation centres on global humanitarian standards and sets benchmarks to which UNICEF holds itself accountable for incorporation of successful humanitarian action covering all relevant areas to ensure equity, coverage and quality in its advocacy.<sup>27</sup>

Outside of the administrative structure, UNICEF also coordinates a Supply Division headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark. This facility stores supplies for medical emergencies, natural disasters, or post-conflict. The Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, Italy, branch of UNICEF liaises with intergovernmental policy creators and leaders.<sup>28</sup> The Innocenti Research Centre also examines the efficacy of UNICEF policies and programs, and promotes the CRC by monitoring changing situations, highlighting chronic problems, finding ways to support areas lacking capacity, influencing intergovernmental policies that affect children, and presenting reports to the Executive Board.

### **Mandate, Functions, and Powers**

UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's right to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.<sup>29</sup> UNICEF is committed to ensuring the protection of children's rights, gender equality, promotion of children's physical and emotional wellbeing especially for children in affected areas, promotion of quality education, protection for victims of war, violence, and exploitation.

UNICEF also works with women in mitigating the disparity between genders and promoting women participation in politics, development of their communities.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> UNICEF, "Core Commitments for Children".

<sup>28</sup> Maggie Black, "UNICEF - Global Governance That Works".

<sup>29</sup> UNICEF, Mission Statement 2020.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

To achieve all their goals rapidly, UNICEF partners with various bodies and organizations, which includes governments, United Nations (UN) agencies, international financial institutions, and other multilateral organizations, especially through Global Programme Partnerships.<sup>31</sup> UNICEF has worked with over a hundred and ninety countries and territories to address policy and provisions so that children can grow up protected, healthy and educated.<sup>32</sup> It also engages international financial institutions such as the World Bank Group to protect most children victims of violence, disaster, and conflict. Furthermore, UNICEF closely collaborated with United National Development Programs, the United Nations Population Fund, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women.<sup>33</sup>

### **Recent Sessions and Current Priorities**

During the midterm review held on the 24th December 2020, UNICEF identified they had failed to meet some of the SDG targets they had set in 2018. They recognized the importance of prioritizing these targets in their new Strategic Plan, 2022 – 2025.<sup>34</sup> Hence, UNICEF seeks to hasten these targets by focusing on reducing violence against children, immunization, improving basic sanitation, amongst others.<sup>35</sup> They are also focused on advancing its programming in climate change and mental health. They have also announced that in order to achieve the goals set in the Strategic Plan 2022 -2025, they would require the participation of different members, including children and youths, private sectors, members of the Executive Board, UNICEF staff members, amongst others.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> UNICEF Public Partnerships, 2019.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> UNICEF, "Updated Roadmap to the Development of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022 - 2025," UNICEF/2021/EB/4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

To foster its long-term vision, UNICEF has decided to retain critical aspects of its Strategic Plan 2018 - 2021, and to elaborate on its previous accomplishments.<sup>37</sup> The critical aspects include provision of primary health care, nutrition, learning and skills, improvement in sanitation and hygiene, and child protection. Additionally, UNICEF is also working towards a coalition with countries that are fundamental to the achievement of the targets set in its strategic plan, while placing more focus on countries with the highest possibility of leaving behind its children in their action plans.

In response to the Coronavirus disease, UNICEF and its partners have made various provisions needed to mitigate the harsh effects of the pandemic. One hundred and fifty-three countries and territories have been supplied with critical supplies and financial/technical support. They have ensured that over 261 million children have access to necessities such as vital health, nutrition, education, child protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), gender-based violence, and social protection services.<sup>38</sup>

At the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Food Programme(UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNPF), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UNICEF, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN-WOWEN), and the World Food Programme (WFP) on the 12th of May 2020 the Executive Director of each agency highlighted the harsh effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in hampering the attempts of agencies in meeting their goals of making a better world for children and ensuring all their needs are met. Each agency, however, was able to highlight some accomplishments in their respective areas even with the obstacle of COVID-19. An example being the WFP's joint work with UNICEF in simplifying and

---

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> UNICEF, "Global Covid-19 Response, Humanitarian Action for Children".

coordinating the acquisition, delivery, and distribution of food needed to prevent and treat malnourished children.<sup>39</sup>

UNICEF's current goals for the year 2021 include; ensuring that 6.3 million children get treated for severe malnutrition, 27.4 children getting immunized against measles, 45 million people have access to clean water, 19.2 million children and caregivers have access to mental care and psychological support, to intervene or prevent cases of gender-based violence against 17 million children and women, to grant 90.3 million children access to education, provide financial assistance to 9.6 million households and for 495.8 million to be engaged communication for development/community engagement. This plan spans 144 countries and 5 territories.<sup>40</sup>

## **Conclusion**

UNICEF remains at the forefront of ensuring that every child around the world survives and thrives. They continue to partner with the governments of different countries and also work with NGOs to protect the rights of every child. Furthermore, UNICEF's response to the COVID-19 situation also reveals the importance of everything it stands for - not only to support and protect children, but also to influence everything that pertains to children; which can only be done by encouraging countries into working on adequate and efficient health, education, nutrition, sanitation and education structures for the future.<sup>41</sup>

## **Annotated Bibliography**

UNICEF Annual Report "For Every Child Reimagine," 2019. Accessed 20 January 2021 from:

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF-annual-report-2019.pdf>

---

<sup>39</sup> UNICEF "Report of the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, AND WFP", 29 May, 2020.

<sup>40</sup> UNICEF, "UNICEF Humanitarian Action for 2021".

<sup>41</sup> UNICEF Annual Report, "For Every Child Reimagine," 2019.

*This document outlines the goals of UNICEF, its partnership, innovation, and progress. It discusses the rights of children and the role of government, NGOs, and other institutions to advocate for their rights.*

UNICEF, "Protecting the most Vulnerable Children from the Impact of Coronavirus: An Agenda for Action," April 2020. Accessed 11 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/agenda-for-action>

*This article highlights UNICEF's actions in reducing the spread of the virus and minimizing its economic and social impacts on children and their families, by working with different communities, governments and partners. It also talks about UNICEF's insistence on global actions such as keeping children healthy and properly nourished, keeping the learning process going, supporting families to nurture and care for their children, etc.*

UNICEF Regular Resources 2019 Report, "Achieving the Greatest Impact for Children." Accessed 5 June 2021 from:  
<https://www.unicef.org/media/71446/file/Regular-resources-2019-report.pdf>

*This document begins by outlining the actions UNICEF takes to positively change the lives of children. It proceeds to discuss how UNICEF continuously prioritizes children and how they respond to health situations such as HIV, Ebola and the COVID 19 pandemic.*

UNICEF, "Updated Road Map to the Development of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, Including Consultations and Briefings," February 2021. Accessed 2 May 2021 from:  
[https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/2996/file/2021-EB4-Updated\\_road\\_map\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_2022-2025-EN-2020.12.28.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/2996/file/2021-EB4-Updated_road_map_Strategic_Plan_2022-2025-EN-2020.12.28.pdf)

*This document gives a detailed insight into the future plans of UNICEF, and their plans to navigate global challenges for the continued protection of children. It provides a summary of UNICEF's shortcomings in achieving the goals set in the past, and ways to ensure that they achieve the past and present ones.*

## Bibliography

Maggie Black, "UNICEF - Global Governance That Works" [Website]. Accessed 20 February 2021 from:

<https://www.e-ir.info/2014/06/22/review-unicef-united-nations-childrens-fund-global-governance-that-works/>

UNICEF, Mission Statement [Website]. Accessed 20 January 2021 from:

<https://www.unicef.org/about-us/mission-statement>

UNICEF, History and Purpose [Website]. Accessed 20 January 2021 from:

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/united-nations-childrens-fund-unicef-history-purpose.html>

UNICEF, About UNICEF [Website]. Accessed 4 May 2021 from:

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.unicef.org/about-unicef&ved=2ahUKEwi3nZWC87DwAhUkURUIHZAjAv8OFjAMegQIDRAC&usg=AOvVaw3sE16JHLXauk\\_li3LeHB8&cshid=1620161303040](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.unicef.org/about-unicef&ved=2ahUKEwi3nZWC87DwAhUkURUIHZAjAv8OFjAMegQIDRAC&usg=AOvVaw3sE16JHLXauk_li3LeHB8&cshid=1620161303040)

UNICEF, UNICEF Organization Chart: How does the United Nations Children's Fund Work?"[Website]. Accessed 4 May 2021 from: <https://www.orgcharting.com/unicef-org-chart/>

UNICEF, UNICEF in Emergencies [Website]. Accessed 5 May 2021 from:

<https://www.unicef.org/emergencies>

UNICEF, Core Commitments for Children [Website]. Accessed 5 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/core-commitments-children>

UNICEF, Our Mandate [Website]. Accessed 4 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.unicef.org/eca/our-mandate-no-child-left-behind#:~:text=UNICEF%20has%20a%20mandate%20to,wider%20economic%20and%20social%20progress.>

UNICEF, Governance [Website]. Accessed 4 May 2021 from:  
[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/governance&ved=2ahUKEwi-1qOParHwAhUEoVwKHefdBdwQFjAAegQIBhAC&usg=AOvVaw08onH\\_z-xcqbuOI8m0aEsJ](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/governance&ved=2ahUKEwi-1qOParHwAhUEoVwKHefdBdwQFjAAegQIBhAC&usg=AOvVaw08onH_z-xcqbuOI8m0aEsJ)

UNICEF, Using Data to Achieve the SDGs for Children [Website]. Accessed 4 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://data.unicef.org/sdgs/&ved=2ahUKEwiCuv3Gq7HwAhX6QUEAHfXZBjkOFjAOegQIGHAC&usg=AOvVaw1EfggJnfhXAyCJMfe6hvVEu>

UNICEF, UNICEF's Role in Promoting and Supporting the Convention on the Rights of the Child [Website]. Accessed 4 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/unicef-role&ved=2ahUKEwitl8jgg7HwAhXTnVwKHbOsB9gOFjAAegQIBhAC&usg=AOvVaw10NlpqZYnN33yYsBsigg7D>

UNICEF, A Six Point Plan to Protect Our Children [Website]. Accessed 10 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/six-point-plan-protect-children>



## Addressing Sexual Violence against Children

*"The Global Partnership to end violence against children is mobilizing the world. There could be no more meaningful way to help realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." – **Ban Ki-moon, eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations.**<sup>42</sup>*

### **Introduction**

Violence affects children in every country of the world. Girls and boys of all ages and from all social backgrounds. It occurs in schools, institutions, on the streets, and in the workplace. Children also experience violence at home, within their families, from community leaders, and by other children. Although some violence against children leads to death, it often leaves no visible marks. It is one of the most serious problems affecting children today. Violence affects children's physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological well-being, causing lifelong damage to their health and development. Depending on its nature and severity, exposure to violence can damage the nervous system, impair the development of the brain and lead to problems such as depression, substance abuse, and low self-esteem.

As defined by WHO,

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society.<sup>43</sup>

Sexual violence is a global phenomenon that plagues children around the world regardless of race, class, religion, and culture.<sup>44</sup> The dynamics in child sexual abuse are different from that

---

<sup>42</sup> Ban Ki Moon, Remarks at launch of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 12 July 2016.

<sup>43</sup> WHO Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention (62), 1999.

<sup>44</sup> Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General, October 2006.

of sexual abuse in adults.<sup>45</sup> Children in particular rarely disclose sexual abuse experiences immediately after the event.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, disclosure tends to be a series of processes rather than one single episode and is usually initiated following a physical complaint or a behaviour change.<sup>47</sup> Children as a demographic, are also characteristically solely reliant on not only their parents but on the society and the machinery of the government as a whole, and this has resulted in a majority of sexual abuse cases being perpetrated by people in this position of authority, care and trust over said, child.<sup>48</sup> Sexual violence occurs in homes, schools, places of work, and even in care and detention centres. Parents, family members, teachers, caretakers, law enforcement authorities, and other children are some of the offenders to blame for such acts of violence.<sup>49</sup> It is also pertinent to note that, some children are especially vulnerable because of gender, race, ethnic origin, disability, or social status.<sup>50</sup> The result of sexual violence on children is and can be devastating. Most importantly, it can result in death and even children who survive must cope with unimaginable physical and emotional traumas.<sup>51</sup> On that foreground, States and parents are primary bearers of the responsibility for preventing, responding, and reducing the violence against children. There must be not only assurance but also a guarantee that girls and boys everywhere have the right to live their lives free from violence.<sup>52</sup> And such guarantees must come from local, national, and international stakeholders. However, civil society groups and individual citizens also have an important role

---

<sup>45</sup> *Supra.*

<sup>46</sup> *Supra.*

<sup>47</sup> *Supra.*

<sup>48</sup> Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Independent Expert for the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> UNVAC, "World Report on Violence Against Children".

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

to play.<sup>53</sup> According to the WHO, it is estimated that up to 1 billion children aged 2–17 years have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect in the past year.<sup>54</sup>

In situations of conflict or emergencies, the problem of sexual violence against children is exacerbated and the response to sexual abuse and violence against children has not been proportionate due to the pandemic and the requirement of social distancing to combat it.<sup>55</sup> The risks children seem to be facing are new especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been changes in patterns of sexual offenses against children coincident with curfews, school closures, and lockdowns.<sup>56</sup> In particular, emerging evidence suggests that child victims are younger and more likely to be victimized by a neighbour in a private residence, and in the daytime, compared to pre-pandemic.<sup>57</sup> It is a fundamental responsibility of not only the government of member states but also UNICEF and the United Nations as a whole to prioritize the well-being of children. The UN and UNICEF, for their part, remain strongly committed to this work<sup>58</sup>.

### **International and Regional Framework**

Violence against children is widespread and pervasive but is not inevitable. By placing children at the center of all we do, we can realize the noble vision of a world free from fear.<sup>59</sup>

This statement underlines the ethos of various conventions and treaties that seek to curb sexual violence against children by enshrining their right to reach their full potential, free

---

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>54</sup> WHO, "Violence Against Children."

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Global Women's Health, "Children's Vulnerability to Sexual Violence During COVID-19 in Kenya: Recommendations for the Future", 24 February 2021.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> UN, WHO: Newsroom.

<sup>59</sup> António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, "Keeping the Promise: Ending Violence Against Children by 2030", July 2019.

from violence and abuse.<sup>60</sup> There have been advances in the legislative and policy landscape over the past decade at the international, regional, and national levels.<sup>61</sup>

At the international level, *The Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC)*<sup>62</sup> in particular, has provided an overarching impetus for action, its *Optional Protocol on Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Pornography*<sup>63</sup> adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000, the implementation of the United Nations Study,<sup>64</sup> and a range of other international standards all aim to prohibit sexual violence in children. Particularly, there has been rapid progress at the regional level, with new intergovernmental policy frameworks on violence against children now spanning Africa and the Middle East, America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe.<sup>65</sup> At the national level, almost 100 countries now have comprehensive policies in place to prevent and respond to violence against children, and around 60 countries have comprehensive legislation to ban violence against children in all its forms, including at home and in schools.<sup>66</sup> The work of the *African Union (AU)* is notable here, with its campaign<sup>67</sup> to end child marriage having a clear impact on legislation and across the continent.<sup>68</sup>

Another framework that has added greatly to the subject of sexual violence against children is the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)*.<sup>69</sup> The ACRWC is a

---

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> UNVAC, "Keeping the Promise: Ending Violence Against Children by 2030", July 2019.

<sup>62</sup> General Assembly, *Convention on Rights of the Child* (A/RES/44/25), 1989.

<sup>63</sup> General Assembly, *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child* (A/RES/54/263), 2000.

<sup>64</sup> Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325.

<sup>65</sup> *Supra.*

<sup>66</sup> UNICEF, "Countries Failing to Prevent Violence Against Children, Agencies Warn", June 2020.

<sup>67</sup> African Union, "Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa."

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> African Union, adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1990 (in 2001, the OAU legally became the African Union).

regional human rights treaty that came into force in 1999.<sup>70</sup> It sets out rights and defines principles for the status of children and is a powerful tool used to hold governments accountable for ending child marriage which promotes sexual violence in children.<sup>71</sup> It provides a clear layout of the rights and responsibilities of a child and mandates protection of the girl child from harmful cultural practices such as child marriage.<sup>72</sup> It explicitly states that

“...child marriage and the betrothal of girls and boys shall be prohibited”<sup>73</sup> and that “effective action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify the minimum age of marriage to be 18 years.”<sup>74</sup>

Likewise, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*, a multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations<sup>75</sup> and came into force on 23 March 1976, in accordance with Article 49 provides for the protection of children against sexual violence. The *ICCPR* is part of the *International Bill of Human Rights*, along with the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)* and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*. The *ICCPR* is monitored by the United Nations Human Rights Committee (a separate body to the United Nations Human Rights Council), which reviews regular reports of State parties on how the rights are being implemented. States must report initially one year after acceding to the Covenant and then whenever the Committee requests (usually every four years). The Committee normally meets in Geneva and normally holds three sessions per year. Other treaties that fight against sexual abuse in children are the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*<sup>76</sup> which was adopted by the General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948<sup>77</sup> and protects children against sexual violence; The Convention against

---

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> African Common Position on the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa.

<sup>72</sup> *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*, Article 21 (2).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> General Assembly, *Resolution 2200A (XXI)*, 16 December 1966.

<sup>76</sup> UN, *Article 21.3*, 1948.

<sup>77</sup> General Assembly, *Resolution 217 A*.

*Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*,<sup>78</sup> an international human rights treaty, under the review of the United Nations, that aims to prevent torture and other acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment to persons, including children around the world.<sup>79</sup>

### **Role of the International System**

A myriad of actions has been taken by the international system to raise awareness and combat child sexual abuse and exploitation, physically, via the Internet, and through other new technologies since the mid-90s.<sup>80</sup> Focus and efforts by various countries have been in this direction. Italy is an example of such a country.<sup>81</sup> A project carried out three years ago in Italy, by Save the Children organization with the National Centre for Combating Child Pornography on the Internet - C.N.C.P.O established within the Postal and Communication Police, the Department of Equal Opportunities and the Italian Coordination of Public and Private Services Against Child Abuse and Maltreatment (CISMAI) sought to combat sexual abuse in children.<sup>82</sup> The project adopted the definition of child sexual abuse as provided in the Lanzarote Convention while also encompassing other aspects of online child sexual abuse including the production, distribution, downloading, and viewing of child abuse materials; the solicitation of children online to generate self-produced child abuse material; the engagement of children in sexual chats or other online sexual activity; or the

---

<sup>78</sup> Adopted by the General Assembly on 150 December 1984.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Cristiana De Paoli, "The Role of International Cooperation in Tackling Sexual Violence Against Children" p 5.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

arrangement of offline meetings for grooming or luring; and the facilitation of any of the above.<sup>83</sup>

International organizations are also taking action to combat sexual violence in children. INHOPE, the International Association of Internet Hotlines is a good example of international cooperation in the fight against child sexual abuse.<sup>84</sup> It prevents the distribution of child sexual abuse material online. The organization has been established in 36 countries throughout the world and is made up of 41 members.<sup>85</sup> In its 2011 Annual Report, it showed that INHOPE Hotlines in 2011 processed over 29,908 reports of web-based Child Sexual Abuse Material, which represented a 24% increase than the previous year.<sup>86</sup> It also reported that the victims' age groups saw a developing trend of increased incidence of very young children including babies. Finally, 82% of the websites reported, were non-commercial and 18% were commercially based, which required some form of payment.<sup>87</sup>

Matters revolving around child sexual abuse pose complex problems which have always been presented in dual form, in the sense that it can be referred to as a local problem when the fact that the abuse and children and young people who are victims, are real and living within our communities is emphasized.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, it can be seen as a global problem, since the images/videos and the children present there, once uploaded on the Internet can potentially be viewed, downloaded, modified among others, by anyone in the world.<sup>89</sup> It is also clear to see that technology has amplified the effects of abuse, which, in turn, has amplified the risks

---

<sup>83</sup> The Robert, "Risk taking Online Behaviour Empowerment through Research and Training, Project".

<sup>84</sup> Cristiana De Paoli, "The Role of International Cooperation in Tackling Sexual Violence Against Children" p 6.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Cristiana De Paoli, Head of Young People and New Media Unit, Save the Children Italy, "Good Practice in Europe: A Save the Children Italy experience" p 7&9.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

to be abused. For example, in the case of grooming.<sup>90</sup> To effectively tackle the problem, strategies have to be put in place to deal with the two dimensions. Globally, one of the major difficulties faced in combating child sexual abuse and the sexual exploitation of children via the Internet is the international, multijurisdictional nature of the crime.<sup>91</sup> These criminal activities often cut across borders, for example, images and videos that are produced in one country can be hosted in another while being accessed and downloaded worldwide. Therefore, there must exist a common legal framework through which crimes relating to online child abuse can be addressed.<sup>92</sup> The differences between national laws tackling the legitimacy and punishments can create loopholes, which can be exploited by perpetrators and distributors of child abuse images.<sup>93</sup> To date, many countries do not have laws that effectively prosecute such crimes. A 2010 study by the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) on existing legislation, considered 196 countries and revealed, among other things, that only 45 of them have laws sufficient to tackle online child sexual abuse, and the other 89 have no legislation at all that particularly addresses this crime.<sup>94</sup> Law enforcement institutions should have a common legal framework, resources, and technical tools to better combat cross-border collaboration. In the last few years measures have been employed for this purpose and networking between police forces has been promoted and reinforced to facilitate the exchange of information and expertise, and to conduct investigations jointly.<sup>95</sup> Likewise, the Department of Equal Opportunities, through its experts has equally contributed to the process of harmonization of the legal framework, by being involved, in several different contexts at an international level.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Interpol Crime-areas, "Crimes-against-children/Victim-identification".

<sup>92</sup> Cristiana De Paoli, "The Role of International Cooperation in Tackling Sexual Violence Against Children" p 9.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Virtual Global Task Force and the Victim Identification Group within Interpol.

<sup>96</sup> *Supra.*

The other dimension that needs to be focused on, is the sexual violence against children within communities. Children need not only be rescued but also provided with efficient support. As online sexual abuse is a relatively recent phenomenon, it has now become vital that the international system takes active steps to understand how it differs from sexual abuse that occurs in the absence of technology, in the way it affects children, and in the kinds of long-term effects it might have on them.<sup>97</sup> This is an area where collaboration among specialized professionals is expedient. Through the exchange of experiences, methods of approach, and lessons learned, experts from different countries can improve their efficiency and effectiveness in tackling the problem.<sup>98</sup> The rate at which this process is advancing varies by country and largely depends on how widespread Internet use is and therefore how extensive related sexual abuse might be. CISMAI<sup>99</sup> which is a network of agencies and professionals working with children and victims of maltreatment and abuse have also been involved in international discussions revolving around the same subject and they aim to bring national approaches to resolve such issues.<sup>100</sup>

A fair, effective, and just system respects the rights of the child and such a system focuses on the need to prevent victimization and re-victimization of all children in contact with the justice system.<sup>101</sup> The plethora of challenges faced by the justice system in seeking to prevent and respond to violence against children have made it harder to achieve this goal.<sup>102</sup> Such problems include the absence of knowledge of international legal standards and norms on child rights; absence of specialized legislation prohibiting violence against children in all its

---

<sup>97</sup> *Supra.*

<sup>98</sup> General Assembly, *United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice* (A/RES/69/194), 2015.

<sup>99</sup> *Supra.*

<sup>100</sup> *Supra.*

<sup>101</sup> UNODC, *Global Programme on Violence Against Children*.

<sup>102</sup> UNODC, "Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System", 2017.

forms and more specifically; absence of specialized child-friendly and sensitive systems and procedures; absence of specially trained staff, such as judges, prosecutors, lawyers and other actors; and absence of engagement with other key sectors such as health, education, child protection, and social welfare.<sup>103</sup>

Countries must be able to transmit the expertise and experience they have acquired in their work in national contexts in a timely manner. Most importantly, they will need to understand the best way to carry out this strategy and agree that the best interests of the child must be the primary aim of all actions. The European Directive on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, which came into force in December last year is another international legislation whose provisions should be adhered to. Through the European project,<sup>104</sup> partners have tried to promote child rights by focusing on the issue of online child sexual abuse, which encourages inter-agency collaboration and the use of standardized procedures at a national level, targeting operators working in Law Enforcement Agencies, the legal sector, and social services.<sup>105</sup> All of this is to ensure that all stakeholders involved share the same knowledge when dealing with child sexual abuse, something that must form the foundation of any successful collaboration between different agencies.

### **The Psychological and Physical impact of Sexual Violence on Children**

Sexual abuse always involves some form of psychological and/or physical harm or violence and the impact of sexual abuse in children vary from person to person but generally the result is always traumatic.<sup>106</sup> Sexual abuse infringes on the basic rights of children and prevents them from having sexual experiences at the appropriate developmental age and within their control and choice. Children often sustain physical injuries during sexual abuse

---

<sup>103</sup> UNODC, *Global Programme on Violence Against Children*.

<sup>104</sup> United Nations, *Security Council Resolution (S/RES/2178)*, 24 December 2014.

<sup>105</sup> United Nations, *Security Council Resolution (S/RES/2396)*, 21 December 2017.

<sup>106</sup> UNVAC, "World Report on Violence Against Children".

which may result in cases of internal damage, sexually transmitted diseases, illnesses and disabilities, hypertension, and problems with reproductive systems and childbirth.<sup>107</sup> Psychological violence can also manifest in the form of depression, self-isolation, anxiety, low self-esteem, and sadness.<sup>108</sup> Standard definitions are lacking but it is known that there is a strong coexistence between psychological and physical violence against children.<sup>109</sup> According to UNICEF and the WHO, it is estimated that up to 1 billion children aged 2–17 years have experienced physical and psychological sexual violence as of 2010 and the numbers are increasing.<sup>110</sup> In 2010, at least 120 million girls under the age of 20 were being forced to engage in sex or perform other sexual acts,<sup>111</sup> however, the figure is probably higher because of the absence of documentation in certain cases. Furthermore, 90% of adolescent girls who report sexual violence have said that their first abuser was someone they knew, usually a boyfriend or a husband,<sup>112</sup> but many victims of sexual violence, never tell anyone about their experiences.<sup>113</sup> These staggering figures are even more worrying when we consider the number of unreported cases of sexual violence there is.<sup>114</sup>

It has been established that the majority of sexual abuse happens in childhood, with incest being the most common form<sup>115</sup> which has resulted in severe physical and psychological effects on children, which exist through their childhood and even into adulthood. The dynamics of child sexual abuse differ from instances of sexual abuse of adults because being children, they are more susceptible to emotional manipulation and threats of physical harm.

---

<sup>107</sup> Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, “The Impacts of Child Sexual Abuse: A Rapid Evidence Assessment”, 2017.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> UNICEF, “Sexual Violence Against Children.”

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> Hall, M., & Hall, “The Long-Term Effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse: Counselling Implications”, 2011.

Acts of sexual violence against a child include the inducement or coercion of a child to perform sexual acts and the exploitative use of a child in sexual activities or mediums such as pornography.<sup>116</sup>

A major psychological indicator of child sexual abuse is depressive episodes. Depression is the most common long-term symptom among survivors. Most times, survivors will have difficulty externalizing the abuse, thus thinking negatively about themselves.<sup>117</sup> In a research conducted by Medical News Today,<sup>118</sup> after years of negative self-thoughts, abused children end up with feelings of worthlessness and avoid others because they believe they have nothing to offer.<sup>119</sup> This eventually leads to depression, having suicidal thoughts, erratic sleeping patterns, and inconsistent eating patterns.<sup>120</sup> Anxiety is another psychological consequence that sexually violated children may battle with.<sup>121</sup> When intense feelings of fear and distress become overwhelming, it prevents them from performing their daily activities adequately.<sup>122</sup> Some other psychological consequences include academic regression, poor self-esteem, inappropriate sexualized behaviours, and symptoms associated with PTSD. On the other hand, the physical consequences survivors of sexual abuse experience are primarily difficulties in their sexual functioning. The most frequent signs being, lack of interest in sex, approaching sex as an obligation, disgust with touch, and having difficulty becoming aroused. While the prevalent physical effects in women are vaginal pain or orgasmic difficulties, men often experience erectile, ejaculatory, or orgasmic dysfunction. The result of most examinations conducted on sexually abused children show unremarkable digestive

---

<sup>116</sup> WHO, *Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention*, 1999.

<sup>117</sup> *Supra*.

<sup>118</sup> Yvette Brazier, "What are Suicidal Thoughts", 3 September, 2020.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Hall, M., & Hall, "The Long-Term Effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse: Counselling Implications", 2011.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

abnormality and this speaks to the fact that victims of sexual abuse will most likely experience sexual problems more than the general population.<sup>123</sup>

Ultimately, the violence children experience can lead to long-term detrimental consequences in their health and development<sup>124</sup> and they may lose trust in other human beings essential to normal human development. For children, learning to trust from infancy onwards through bonds in the family is an essential task of childhood, and is closely related to their capacity for love, empathy, and development of future relationships.<sup>125</sup> At a broader level, violence can stunt the potential for personal development and achievement in life, and present heavy costs to society as a whole.<sup>126</sup> It is also imperative to note that although sexual violence occurs everywhere, in cases of emergencies or conflict, the problem is exacerbated. The lockdown has specifically been linked to sexual abuse-related risks for children, which result in immediate and long-term mental health problems.<sup>127</sup> As a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting lockdowns, there is an increase in the reports of sexual violence. Countries have declared a state of health emergency and strict containment measures have been implemented including school closure and suspension of extra-curricular activities.<sup>128</sup> In a recent survey done in Morocco according to PAMJ, the report of children who were sexually abused in 2020 was 2.3 times over the number of children who reported in 2019 and although the rate was increased by 2.3, there is the certainty that the numbers are underestimated due

---

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. Regional Desk Review: North America, 2005.

<sup>125</sup> UNICEF, Somali children and youth: Challenging the past and building the future, 2003.

<sup>126</sup> Global Submission to the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. Oslo, Save the Children, 2005.

<sup>127</sup> Sheila Ramaswamy and Shekhar Seshadri, "Children on the Brink: Risks for Child Protection, Sexual Abuse, and Related Mental Health Problems in the COVID-19 Pandemic", November 2020.

<sup>128</sup> PAMJ, "Child Sexual Abuse and COVID-19 Pandemic: Another Side Effect of Lockdown in Morocco", 18 January 2021.

to the challenges faced by families in accessing hospitals.<sup>129</sup> Parental couples and their extended families were reported as the most often perpetrators responsible for these cases of child abuse<sup>130</sup> as most children had to stay at home for prolonged periods with adults in positions of authority and care over them. In Uganda, more than 21,000 cases of child abuse were registered by August 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown.<sup>131</sup> In Australia, federal police received more than 20,000 reports of child sex abuse, an increase of over 7,000 cases in the previous year.<sup>132</sup> Likewise, the Philippine government reported a 260 percent increase in reports of online child abuse materials from March to May during the COVID-19 lockdown.<sup>133</sup> All stakeholders in society need to ensure that there are actionable and effective frameworks being put in place to ensure the protection of children against sexual violence and efficient reporting systems to enable the rehabilitation of victims.

### **Global Partnership to End Sexual Violence**

Sexual Violence against children is not exclusive to a particular part of the world or country, it transcends borders. Violence against children is a problem peculiar to every society, hence the solution should also be shared among these societies.<sup>134</sup> Partners at global and regional levels have collaborated in order to strengthen the protection of children from violence. For example, the *Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Promoting Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies* works with countries worldwide to quicken progress towards Target 16.2<sup>135</sup> and the *Global Task Force on Justice*, brings policymakers, experts, and justice leaders to

---

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> The Times of India, “Covid-19 Lockdowns Drive Spike in Online Child Abuse”, December, 2020.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF.

<sup>135</sup> Sustainable Development Goals, “Target to End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children.”

guarantee access to justice for all, including children.<sup>136</sup> In 2015, a consensus<sup>137</sup> on the need to end all forms of violence against children inspired collaboration between various world leaders as part of the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>138</sup> The second and most recent of the Global Partnerships is the *Partnership to End Violence Against Children*; Alliance 8.7; and was launched in July 2016<sup>139</sup> by the UN Secretary-General.<sup>140</sup> The End Violence Partnership's central goal is to connect and convene partners to raise awareness; catalyse leadership commitments; mobilize new resources; promote evidence-based solutions and innovation, and support stakeholders taking action to end all forms of violence against children.<sup>141</sup> The Partnership platform seeks to facilitate collective and evidence-based advocacy with the aim to ensure action is taken in order to keep children safe at home, in their communities, online, and at school.<sup>142</sup>

The Global Partnership launched a combination of seven strategies to prevent violence against children. They are implementation and enforcement of laws; norms and values; safe environments; parent and caregiver support; income and economic strengthening; response and support services; and education and life skills.<sup>143</sup> This was in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), the CDC, Together for Girls, UNICEF, End Violence Against Children, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the World Bank.<sup>144</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup> UNVAC, "Keeping the Promise: Ending Violence Against Children by 2030", 2019.

<sup>137</sup> The Council of Europe's contribution to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, "Ending all forms of violence against children by 2030", July 2017.

<sup>138</sup> Global Youth Partnership for the Sustainable Development Goals.

<sup>139</sup> End Violence Partnership, "Who Are We."

<sup>140</sup> António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

<sup>141</sup> *Supra*.

<sup>142</sup> UNICEF, "New Global Partnership and Fund to End Violence Against Children Everywhere", 13 July 2021.

<sup>143</sup> UNICEF, "INSPIRE: Seven strategies for Ending Violence Against Children."

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

The partnership's goal seeks to ensure accelerated action and help in implementing work at scale; provision of a share and implement the strategy by building political will; collaboration among multiple countries to tackle the violence that children face; and the strengthening of partnerships between countries.<sup>145</sup> Through the SDGs, the United Nations member states have committed to play their part as individual countries as well as a collective, to tackle and end sexual violence against children. The then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has said

“The Global Partnership to end violence against children is mobilizing the world. There could be no more meaningful way to help realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

Likewise, the End Violence partnership is currently the only global entity particularly focused on Sustainable Development Goal 16.2; which deals with ending all forms of violence against children. It consists of over 500 partners including governments, UN agencies, private sector groups, research institutions, civil societies, and other stakeholders in the fight against violence against children.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, the WePROTECT Global Alliance to *End Child Sexual Exploitation Online* is another global partnership that has ensured progress regarding its agenda to bring together national governments, technology giants, international organizations on a global scale to combat CSA online.<sup>147</sup> It also plays an instrumental role in illustrating the crucial role the private sector plays in addressing the risks of online violence for children.<sup>148</sup> These partnerships play an important role in shaping global policies and opinions. Hence countries must take part in global partnerships to guarantee a strong and coherent voice on the issue of CSA at a global level.

---

<sup>145</sup> SDG Partnership Platform, “Global Partnership to End Violence against Children”, 2016.

<sup>146</sup> SDG Partnership Platform, “Global Partnership to End Violence against Children”, 2016.

<sup>147</sup> *Supra*.

<sup>148</sup> *Supra*.

## **Addressing Online Sexual Violence against Children**

The 2019 national study on online sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the Philippines, found that essentially all children are at risk of exploitation over the Internet, although certain characteristics and behaviours can make some children more vulnerable.<sup>149</sup> With the increasing global penetration of the Internet, new forms of sexual abuse affecting children have emerged and expanded.<sup>150</sup> Technology has made it much easier for child sex offenders to communicate anonymously with other child sex offenders, to access, produce and disseminate child sexual abuse material, communicate with these children, groom them, and encourage them to participate in virtual sexual experiences without ever leaving their homes.<sup>151</sup> Although sexual exploitation of children online and child sexual abuse are prohibited by international and municipal laws and pose a serious form of violence against children, due to various factors, the crimes considered to be child sexual exploitation and child sexual abuse vary within these legal instruments. However, some examples of the crimes proscribed by law (to varying extents) are online grooming, live streaming of child sexual abuse, possessing child sexual abuse material/child sexual exploitation material, online solicitation of children for sexual encounters, child grooming, and sexual extortion.<sup>152</sup> Child grooming is also known as the enticement of children or solicitation of children for sexual purposes is best described as a situation where an adult 'befriends' a child online, even though offline grooming also exists and should not be neglected, to sexually abuse her/him.<sup>153</sup> Research and available data have shown that grooming is predominately perpetrated by males; to a lesser extent, women solicit children for sexual purposes and/or to groom them.<sup>154</sup>

---

<sup>149</sup> De La Salle University, 2019.

<sup>150</sup> UNICEF, "What Works to Prevent Online and Offline Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse?"

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> UNICEF, 2017.

<sup>153</sup> Interagency Working Group, 2016.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

Article 23 of the *Lanzarote Convention*<sup>155</sup> prohibits the solicitation of children for sexual purposes, by criminalizing

the intentional proposal, through information and communication technologies, of an adult to meet a child... to commit, where this proposal has been followed by material acts leading to such a meeting.

Live streaming of child sexual abuse involves the real-time broadcasting of child sexual abuse to viewers in remote locations. While the live streaming of child sexual abuse often involves transmission across multiple national borders over the internet, it is also pertinent to note that some countries have reported instances of live streaming of child sexual abuse in domestic settings. A report commissioned by the Council of Europe noted that Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA)<sup>156</sup> does not respect national jurisdictions and that there is a need for a national and international cross-disciplinary strategy and collaboration to identify, connect and safeguard victims and avert, scrutinize and prosecute such crimes.<sup>157</sup> Although there have been actions regarding this, a lot more can be done within and beyond the law.<sup>158</sup>

Other forms of online sexual violence including the production and dissemination of child sexual abuse material appear to be rapidly increasing. The annual report of a British charity<sup>159</sup> indicated an increase of 34 percent in the number of child sexual abuse material reports compared to 2017.<sup>160</sup> This particular form of violence is often facilitated through the dark web or peer-to-peer platforms using cryptocurrencies or other non-traceable payment methods

---

<sup>155</sup> Council of Europe, "Convention on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse", 2007.

<sup>156</sup> Ethel Quayle, "Prevention, Disruption and Deterrence of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse", 23 September 2020.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Internet Watch Foundation (IWF).

<sup>160</sup> Internet Watch Foundation, 2018.

to make it hard for law enforcement to trace the perpetrators.<sup>161</sup> Research by IWF (2018) to better understand the profiles of children depicted in CSAM<sup>162</sup> and online sexual abuse found that of the 2,082 images and videos included in the study, were that of children assessed as 13 years or younger at 98 percent, 96 % percent of whom were girls.<sup>163</sup> While the majority of online offenders are male, studies have shown that female offenders range from 5 percent for consumption of child sexual abuse material to 30 percent for online solicitation of adolescents<sup>164</sup>. Also, a study by ECPAT<sup>165</sup> International suggests that the perception that online female sex offending is less damaging is extremely problematic as female offenders may not be adequately identified and children not believed when they disclose their experiences.<sup>166</sup> A lot more action needs to be taken to curb the online sexual abuse of children. A good partnership to tackle this problem would be one between the government, intelligence agencies, and ICT companies that would make it difficult to share CSAM while ridding the internet of already existing materials. The punishment accorded to perpetrators should also be greater in severity.

### **The Role of the Government in Protecting Children from Sexual Violence**

National governments carry the ultimate responsibility to ensure that the rights of children are met and that resources are provided for this purpose.<sup>167</sup> According to the Easy Target study by the Human Rights Watch, violence against children is a bigger problem than most governments choose to acknowledge, and it is most often carried out by officials of the

---

<sup>161</sup> UNICEF, “Review of National Education Strategies in East Asia and the Pacific”, 2020.

<sup>162</sup> Child Sexual Abuse Material.

<sup>163</sup> UNICEF, 2017.

<sup>164</sup> Capaldi, 2017.

<sup>165</sup> End Child Prostitution and Trafficking International.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> UNICEF, “Action to End Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation”, 2020.

state.<sup>168</sup> The study was founded on investigations conducted in twenty countries, through hundreds of interviews with children who have been subjected to sexual violence or abuse. It was found that in many of these cases, individuals employed by the government in institutions such as schools or orphanages which are under the direct control of the government were the major perpetrators of such acts.<sup>169</sup> The victimization children face usually manifests two-fold due to inadequacies in government policy and protection. First is the violence they endure during abuse, and then again, the failure of governments to bring their abusers to justice. It is now more imperative than ever for governments to start treating this phenomenon as seriously as it is.<sup>170</sup> Some countries that have recorded higher rates of child abuse are Bulgaria, Guatemala, India, Kenya, Pakistan, and Russia, where children frequently experience violence at the hands of the police and other law enforcement officials.<sup>171</sup> This can happen through unlawful detainment by the police without sufficient cause, subjection to harsh interrogations and torture to elicit information with street children being the easiest targets. It has become so extreme in some jurisdictions like Kenya, Guatemala, and India, that street children have been killed in extrajudicial executions.<sup>172</sup> In some other countries, like the United States, there are probabilities of children being detained with adults, thereby increasing their risk of physical and sexual abuse.<sup>173</sup>

In the same vein, children face violence as a regular part of their experiences in government schools that are established to nurture their development. Some countries go as far as

---

<sup>168</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Easy Targets: Violence Against Children Worldwide", September 2001.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> Jo Becker, Children's Rights Advocacy Director for Human Rights Watch.

<sup>171</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Easy Targets: Violence Against Children Worldwide", September 2001.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

permitting corporal punishment as part of school discipline.<sup>174</sup> In Kenya, children are subjected to slapping, whipping, and caning. In South Africa, both teachers and male students are perpetrators of sexual violence against girls.<sup>175</sup> With the development and amendment of laws, legislation addressing the protection of children against violence is lagging.<sup>176</sup> To properly tackle the issue, government action needs to be multi-sectoral and coordinated while specifying responsibilities for the justice, health sector, security, child protection service, education, non-governmental and community organizations, including the private sector, information and communications technology (ICT), media, faith groups, and civil society. Planning and coordination must also include links that would facilitate communication between the national and local levels of government response.<sup>177</sup> The government plays a major role in the protection of children and as such must make carefully thought out and intentional policies, partnerships, and laws to curb and combat sexual violence against children.<sup>178</sup> All governments need to guarantee that all forms of violence against children are expressly prohibited by law and that perpetrators are brought to justice.<sup>179</sup>

### **The Role of Culture and Religion in Perpetuating Sexual Violence against Children**

Over time, religion and culture, are two major pillars that have been deeply rooted in the foundation of every society. They form the basis of beliefs and practices of people in various societies thereby, shaping the way people see and think about certain conducts including sexual violence against children. Most cultures and religions have played a big role in

---

<sup>174</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Governments Responsible for Violence Against Children", September 2001.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Supra.*

<sup>178</sup> *Supra.*

<sup>179</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Governments Responsible for Violence Against Children", September 2001.

encouraging the sexual violation of children, which among other things, has created an unwillingness in these children to talk about their experiences for fear of victimization.<sup>180</sup> In many societies, since some forms of violence against children have religious roots or remain unchallenged by society, people still engage in practices that are harmful in nature even though they are perpetrated without the intention of violence.<sup>181</sup> These practices are deeply embedded in communities' social norms and are often justified on the grounds of religion, culture, or tradition. To change this narrative, radical change of attitudes and behaviours towards children is paramount.<sup>182</sup>

The role religion plays in facilitating institutional and interpersonal grooming often differs from the forms of manipulation in secular settings since inducement is based on religious doctrines. With moral standing and large platforms, religious leaders have the power to influence people across all areas of society to understand that violence against children is a human rights violation that can be propagated through some religious practices. Building on religion and its various divisions, some religious institutions and the leading figures in them have historically and gradually cultivated children and their caregivers into harmful and illegal sexual activity.<sup>183</sup> Examples of such religious acts that encourage sexual abuse of children include: theodicies of legitimization, protection, power, obedience, patriarchy, reverence towards authority figures, fears instilled in victims about spiritual punishments, and scriptural references to justify adult-child sex.<sup>184</sup> After the promulgation of the CRC, a lot of conversations revolving around the topic have constantly been initiated and religious

---

<sup>180</sup> UNICEF, "From Commitment to Action: What Religious Communities Can Do". to Eliminate Violence Against Children", 2010.

<sup>181</sup> UNICEF, *Religions for Peace Guide*, 2010.

<sup>182</sup> UNICEF, "From Commitment To Action: What Religious Communities Can do To Eliminate Violence Against Children", 2019.

<sup>183</sup> Susan Rainea Stephen A. Kent, "The Grooming of Children for Sexual Abuse in Religious Settings: Unique Characteristics and Select Case Studies", September–October 2019.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

institutions have begun to refine their outlook to ensure changes in many of their practices reflect that a child's protection, is of utmost importance.<sup>185</sup> In 2006 the *Religions for Peace* World Assembly in Kyoto, Japan, was held and it gave impetus to the commitment of almost 1,000 religious leaders from all world religions. They adopted the '*Multi-Religious Commitment to Confront Violence against Children*' (*the Kyoto Declaration*). This Declaration outlines the ways religious communities and their leaders should work together towards eliminating violence against children that is propagated through religion and other factors.<sup>186</sup> Religious communities are uniquely positioned to prevent and respond to violence against children since the inherent rights of the child are present in the teachings and traditions of every major religion.<sup>187</sup> Hence, there should be in existence, a strong consensus between religious stakeholders about the dignity of every child and the need to protect children from sexual violence. With their extraordinary moral authority, religious leaders can influence thinking and foster dialogue in their various communities.<sup>188</sup>

Furthermore, often unspoken, are some cultural norms and practices that have traditionally created ill standards of socially acceptable behavior which has governed what is and isn't approved in regulating the interactions between members of the society.<sup>189</sup> Cultural and social norms are rules or guidelines of acceptable behavior within a specific social or cultural group.<sup>190</sup> Cultural norms developed by various societies are mostly influenced by religion and trends that exist globally<sup>191</sup> and by evolving standards of decency, practices by various

---

<sup>185</sup> General Assembly, *Countering Child Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse Online (E/CN.15/2019/L.3/Rev.1)*, 24 May, 2019.

<sup>186</sup> UNICEF, "From Commitment to Action: What Religious Communities Can do To Eliminate Violence Against Children", 2019.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, "Addressing the Social and Cultural Norms That Underlie the Acceptance of Violence: Proceedings of a Workshop - in Brief", 2018.

<sup>190</sup> WHO, "Violence Injury Prevention", 2009.

<sup>191</sup> Plummer C., 'Cultural Issue in Disclosures of Child Sexual Abuse", 2010.

cultures have been regarded as inhumane, barbaric, and pretentious, especially in cases where it relates to and deals with children. Some cultures even have a strong belief that their practices and beliefs are superior to that of other cultures, leading them to persist in such unreasonable practices even though they strongly violate human rights.<sup>192</sup> A major practice that fuels CSA is the search for wealth. In Tanzania, women have stated that traditional witch doctors have often advised men looking for wealth to have sexual intercourse with virgin girls.<sup>193</sup> The same practice has extended to the 'cure' of diseases like acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), by having sex with virgins.<sup>194</sup> This has resulted in the rape of about 60 children each day in South Africa.<sup>195</sup> Likewise, the way children are perceived has made other practices like arranged marriages the norm in South Asia,<sup>196</sup> Southeast Asia, Middle East, and Africa,<sup>197</sup> where girls are given away by their relatives in marriage without their consent.<sup>198</sup> Parents have also been seen to stay silent about the sexual abuse experiences their children face due to how society would respond.<sup>199</sup> Reporting practices being curtailed by fear, taboo, and general beliefs and attitudes toward sexual offenses against children.<sup>200</sup> Factors like lack of adequate education, difficulty in obtaining information, and reluctance in victims to speak up contribute greatly to this dilemma. In Jordan, child abuse is only reported when there is death or severe damage.<sup>201</sup> Reporting is a

---

<sup>192</sup> *Supra.*

<sup>193</sup> Lalor Kevin, "Child sexual abuse in Tanzania and Kenya", 2004.

<sup>194</sup> Shafe and Hutchinson, "Child Sexual Abuse and Continuous Influence of Cultural Practices: A Review", 2014.

<sup>195</sup> Earl Taylor, "The Stats, The Virgin Cure and Infant Rape, 2002.

<sup>196</sup> The Telegraph, "Divorce Soars in India's Middle Class", 2005.

<sup>197</sup> Bobnoff Hajal, "Why Cousin Marriage Matters in Iraq", 2006.

<sup>198</sup> *Supra.*

<sup>199</sup> Kisanga F, Nystrom L, Hogam N, Emmelin M., "Child Sexual Abuse: Common Concern in Urban Tanzania, 2011.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> Brewer, "Culture and Social Identity", 2007.

crucial aspect of tackling child sexual abuse that needs more attention, especially through better implementation of already existing laws.

It is evident, that the role of religious leaders and faith-based organizations cannot be overemphasized. The same applies to cultural and traditional groups.<sup>202</sup> As such, there is a need to acknowledge the distinct and important roles that religion, culture, the family, and communities play in ensuring the security and protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse which occurs online or physically, and in preventing all forms of violence, including by promoting children's online safety.<sup>203</sup>

### **Improving the Legal Protection of Child Victims of Sexual Abuse**

There is an expedient need for a legal harmonization of laws among countries to formulate and enforce laws that further the purpose of combating sexual violence against children. Although there is no fixed plan to guide violence prevention,<sup>204</sup> a good starting point would be a reference to the recommended steps by the UN:

*The United Nations Study on Violence against Children*<sup>205</sup> urges states to: "prohibit all forms of violence against children in all settings, including all corporal punishment, harmful traditional practices, such as early and forced marriages, female genital mutilation and so-called honor crimes, sexual violence, and torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as required by international treaties, including the *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*".<sup>206</sup>

According to this treaty, states are required to enact and enforce laws that prioritize the prevention of sexual violence, protection of children, and response in the case of such an occurrence. Though in many countries there are laws in place to combat this problem,

---

<sup>202</sup> Patricia Hynes, "Promising Programmes to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation", 2015.

<sup>203</sup> *Supra*.

<sup>204</sup> UNICEF, "Action to End Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation", December 2020.

<sup>205</sup> General Assembly, *Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children (A/61/299)*, 29 August, 2006.

<sup>206</sup> UNICEF, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children.

resources need to be invested into closing the gap between the theoretical existence of the law and its practical application.<sup>207</sup> International legal norms that protect children against sexual abuse are, the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*.<sup>208</sup> This Convention requires comprehensive measures to be taken to recognise the rights of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development and to take all appropriate national measures to prevent the coercion children to engage in any unlawful sexual activity and the exploitative use of children in prostitution, pornographic performances, and any other unlawful sexual practices.<sup>209</sup> *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography* is also instructive in this regard. The protocol urges State parties to be deeply concerned about the protection of children who are at a greater risk of sexual exploitation and to take all necessary measures to ensure effective and efficient assistance is provided for victims of such sexual abuse, including their full psychological and full physical recovery.<sup>210</sup>

The *ILO Convention*<sup>211</sup> is another framework that addresses CSA. It discusses issues relating to the Worst Forms of Child Labour and urges member states to ratify the convention and take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the use of CSAM, procure offenders offering children for prostitution, and protect children from pornography or engaging in pornographic performances.<sup>212</sup> Likewise, the *Protocol to Prevent,*

---

<sup>207</sup> WHO, "Changing cultural and Social Norms that Support Violence", 2009.

<sup>208</sup> International Labour Organization, "Improving the Legal Protection of Child Victims of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation", 2010.

<sup>209</sup> Sharon Detrick, Nigel Cantwell, "The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: A Guide to the "Travaux Préparatoires""", April 1992.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> ILO, No.182.

<sup>212</sup> International Labour Organisation, Article 3 (b).

*SUPPRESS AND PUNISH TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS, ESPECIALLY IN WOMEN AND CHILDREN*, supplementing the *United Nations Convention Against Trans-national Organised Crime*, tackles issues revolving around the trafficking of children for sexual abuse purposes. It defines the 'trafficking in persons' to be

"...the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation."<sup>213</sup>

Lastly, the "theory of change" framework proposed by the UN,<sup>214</sup> adopts a structured and result-focused approach to addressing CSA issues in context with a "hand in hand" approach to what needs to be changed.<sup>215</sup> It sets out actions across three broad and inter-related areas in order to create suitable environments for prevention and report of CSA, build sufficient capacity for services that respond to CSA, and mobilize social and behavioural change in communities.<sup>216</sup> The theory of change can provide more impetus for states, to be honest, and evidence-based in combating CSA.<sup>217</sup> It would also promote collaborative dialogue between member states in identifying barriers that affect change, the processes for overcoming such barriers, and what needs to be done to achieve the needed change. The framework can be further used for linking sources of evidence which would be very useful in improving evidence-informed approaches.<sup>218</sup> Member countries need to build more heavily on processes that are useful starting points for consultation when developing responses to CSA in different contexts, and all reforms and collaborations must be done with the best interest of the child,

---

<sup>213</sup> *Supra.*

<sup>214</sup> UNICEF, "End Violence Against Children: A Theory of Change", 2020.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> UNICEF, "Action to End Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation", December 2020.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

as this is essential for understanding the problem of CSA and addressing the challenges it poses for young boys and girls globally.<sup>219</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Although violence against children is widespread, it is preventable, and the world has the resources to effect its elimination, to become a high priority, the elimination of violence against children requires strong political leadership and determined advocacy by civil society. Strong mechanisms must be put in place at national, regional, and international levels to ensure implementation. Efficient response mechanisms and rehabilitative coordination are equally important. Various governments and a wide range of partners have come forward with useful and concrete actions to prevent violence against children, reduce its multiple impacts, and advocate for change. A growing number of action research projects, prevention strategies, and therapeutic responses are being implemented and evaluated and this is providing an increasingly solid evidence base for partners to adapt and improve existing interventions and create new ones. Although, it is expedient to note that progress made by Governments in acknowledging the scale of the problem and respond to the human rights obligations is encouraging but there is still a lot more to be done. Furthermore, stopping violence against children requires not only sanctioning perpetrators but also the transformation of the “mindset” of detrimental underlying cultural and religious practices. Strong regional support for the implementation of the recommendations is also important and concerted and collaborative efforts must be made to follow through on the promise of protection made by the Convention on the Rights of the Child 20 years ago. As the sources, forms, and impacts of violence are diverse, so must be the approaches to its elimination. Collective action is crucial to effectively prevent and eliminate all violence against children and as all stakeholders in the society continue to engage in dialogue and partnerships, there

---

<sup>219</sup> *Supra.*

would be a significant and positive change in the prevention and elimination of all violence against children.

### **Further Research**

What are the ways that society and culture further sexual violence against children? Can any more be done to strengthen global partnerships to combat the problem? Is the United Nations doing enough in the efforts to protect children from sexual violence and punish perpetrators of sexual violence? What forms of violence are embedded in our religious and/or cultural traditions? How are these actions understood with regards to childrearing? What is the value-added and practical support offered by our religious perspectives in the efforts to eliminate violence against children? What is known about the nature and scale of violence against children in the community? Children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to violence. What are the attitudes and values of the community towards children with disabilities? How is the language of children's human rights understood in the community? What is the government mechanism for reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child? Are there other pertinent conventions or legislation that, in addition to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, influence national child rights policy (e.g., regional human rights treaties such as 'The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child')? What are some of the ways in which children can be meaningfully involved in strategies to address violence against children? What preparation and support do children need to participate? Delegates should be able to discuss all these and think of ways either through specific policies or other means that will further protect the children from this online violence.

### **Annotated Bibliography**

Council of Europe, "Ending all forms of violence against children by 2030: The Council of Europe's contribution to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals" [Report], available at [https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/2030\\_agenda/sdg\\_leaflet.pdf.pdf](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/2030_agenda/sdg_leaflet.pdf.pdf) (Accessed 4 May 2021)

*"This document addresses the Millennium Development Goals and how it requires input from Governments, civil society, private sector, and citizens, including children to realize its aims. It also urges all countries, which need to build the SDGs into their national policies and plans in order to combat sexual abuse to do so."*

International Labour Organisation, "Improving the Legal Protection of Child Victims of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation" [Report], available at [file:///C:/Users/HP/Downloads/Improving\\_legal\\_protection\\_sexual\\_abuse\\_and\\_expl\\_140116.pdf](file:///C:/Users/HP/Downloads/Improving_legal_protection_sexual_abuse_and_expl_140116.pdf) (accessed 24 May 2021)

*"This analytical report focuses on strategies that support the establishment of an adequate legal environment for protecting children from sexual abuse and exploitation. It also focuses on the importance of government collaboration with other NGOs to eliminate child labor. The analytical report was been prepared to contribute to the total prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse of children in Mongolia, protect the child victims, advance the legal environment for the rehabilitation measures and services, as well as to contribute to the improvements of accurate implementation processes"*

United Nations, "World Report on Violence against Children" [Report], available at [https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/document\\_files/world\\_report\\_on\\_violence\\_against\\_children.pdf](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/document_files/world_report_on_violence_against_children.pdf) (accessed 3 May 2021)

*"This document provides an overview of CSA and its forms, the role violence against children; international human rights law and standard; violence against children in the home and family in schools; and proposes solutions for the way forward."*

UNICEF, "Action to End Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation" [Report], available at <https://www.unicef.org/media/89206/file/CSAE-Brief-v3.pdf> (accessed 3 May 2021)

*"This report pivots on the fact that CSA is a global problem and proposes a framework(the theory of change) that all countries should adopt in tackling issues of CSA. It also addresses the major gaps and challenges faced in dealing with CSA. Finally, it suggests a mechanism of collaboration between countries to build on shared evidence in tackling problems associated with CSA."*

UNICEF, "What Works to Prevent Online and Offline Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse?" [Report], available at <https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/4706/file/What%20works.pdf> (accessed 6 May 2021)

*"This report summarises the risk and protective factors of online and offline child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) globally. It also identifies the types and effectiveness of national education programs that address offline and online CSEA, including examples of promising practices."*

UNVAC, "Keeping the Promise: Ending Violence Against Children by 2030" [Report] available at [https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/keeping\\_the\\_promise.pdf](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/keeping_the_promise.pdf) (accessed 3 May 2021)

*"This report presents findings based on extensive research that relate to strengthening legal and policy frameworks, protecting children; widening partnerships, and building the global movement to end violence against children"*

WHO, "Changing Cultural and Social Norms Supportive of Violent Behaviour" [Report], available at [https://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/norms.pdf](https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/norms.pdf) (accessed 3 May 2021)

*"This document majorly addresses cultural and social norms that encourage violence against children. It also emphasizes the need for laws and policies that can assist in*

*altering norms linked to violence and a more rigorous evaluation of interventions that address social norms which promote violence against children”*

## **Bibliography**

African Union, “African Common Position on the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa” [Report]. Accessed 17 May 2021 from: [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/31010-doc-cap\\_on-ending\\_child\\_marriage\\_-english\\_0.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/31010-doc-cap_on-ending_child_marriage_-english_0.pdf)

African Union, “African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage” [Website]. Accessed 17 May 2021 from: <https://au.int/en/sa/cecm>

Case Western Reserve University Law Library, “International Human Rights Law” [Website]. Accessed 13 May 2021 from: <https://lawresearchguides.cwru.edu/c.php?g=818397>

Council of Europe, “Ending all forms of violence against children by 2030: The Council of Europe’s contribution to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals” [Report]. Accessed 4 May 2021 from: [https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/2030\\_agenda\\_sdg\\_leaflet.pdf.pdf](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/2030_agenda_sdg_leaflet.pdf.pdf)

Ethel Quayle, “Prevention, disruption and deterrence of online child sexual exploitation and abuse” 2020. [Website]. Accessed 16 May 2021 from: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12027-020-00625-7>

Felix Kisanga, Lennarth Nystrom, Nora Hogan, and Maria Emmelin, “Child sexual abuse: community concerns in urban Tanzania” [Article]. Accessed 21 May 2021 from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21442533/>

Girls Not Brides, “Using the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child to address child marriage” [Website]. Accessed 13 May 2021 from:

<https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/articles/using-african-charter-rights-welfare-child-address-child-marriage/>

Global Women's Health, "Children's Vulnerability to Sexual Violence During COVID-19 in Kenya: Recommendations for the Future" 2021. [Article]. Accessed 9 May 2021 from: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fqwh.2021.630901/full>

Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse, "The effects of child sexual abuse" [Report]. Accessed 21 May 2021 from: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/publications/inquiry/interim/nature-effects-child-sexual-abuse/effects-child-sexual-abuse>

International Labour Organization, "Improving The Legal Protection of Child Victims of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation" 2010. [Report]. Accessed 4 May 2021 from: [file:///C:/Users/HP/Downloads/Improving\\_legal\\_protection\\_sexual\\_abuse\\_and\\_expl\\_140116.pdf](file:///C:/Users/HP/Downloads/Improving_legal_protection_sexual_abuse_and_expl_140116.pdf)

Kevin Lalor. "Child sexual abuse in Tanzania and Kenya" [Article]. Accessed 22 May 2021 from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15350768/>

Lepakshi Thakur, "Torture and violence on children by parents" [Article]. Accessed 30 May 2021 from: <https://indianlegalsolution.com/torture-and-violence-on-children-by-parents/>

Lisa Aronson Fontes and Carol Plummer, "Cultural issues in disclosures of child sexual abuse" [Article]. Accessed 25 May 2021 from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20924908/>

Maldives Embassy, "President Signs the Declaration in Relation to Article 22 Of The Convention Against Torture" [Website]. Accessed 13 May 2021 from: <https://www.maldivesembassy.de/president-signs-the-declaration-in-relation-to-article-22-of-the-convention-against-torture/>

Patricia Hynes, "Promising Programmes to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation" [Article]. Accessed 25 May 2021 from:

[https://www.academia.edu/38076802/Promising\\_Programmes\\_to\\_Prevent\\_and\\_Respond\\_to\\_Child\\_Sexual\\_Abuse\\_and\\_Exploitation](https://www.academia.edu/38076802/Promising_Programmes_to_Prevent_and_Respond_to_Child_Sexual_Abuse_and_Exploitation)

United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Accessed 17 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

United Nations Secretary-General, "Remarks at the launch of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children" 2016. [Website]. Accessed 10 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2016-07-12/remarks-launch-global-partnership-end-violence-against-children>

UNHR, "Monitoring civil and political rights" [Website]. Accessed 17 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CCPR/Pages/CCPRIndex.aspx>

Save The Children, "The Role of International Cooperation in Tackling Sexual Violence Against Children" [Report]. Accessed 11 May 2021 from: <https://rm.coe.int/1680471128>

Susan Raine and Stephen Kent, "The grooming of children for sexual abuse in religious settings: Unique characteristics and select case studies" [Article]. Accessed 29 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S135917891830315X?via%3Dihubhttps://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S135917891830315X?via%3Dihub>

S. Shafe and G. Hutchinson, "Child Sexual Abuse and Continuous Influence of Cultural Practices: A Review" [Article]. Accessed 25 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4663956/>

The Pan African Medical Journal, "Child sexual abuse and COVID-19 pandemic: another side effect of lockdown in Morocco" [Article]. Accessed 16 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8017354/>

The ROBERT, "Risk taking Online Behaviour-Young people, harm and resilience" [Website]. Accessed 7 May 2021 from: <http://www.childcentre.info/ROBERT/>

The Times of India, "Covid-19 lockdowns drive spike in online child abuse" [Website]. Accessed 21 May 2021 from:  
[http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/79522484.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/79522484.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

UNICEF, "Countries Failing to Prevent Violence Against Children, Agencies Warn" 2020. [Website]. Accessed 17 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/countries-failing-prevent-violence-against-children-agencies-warn>

UNICEF, "New global partnership and fund to end violence against children everywhere", 2016 [Website]. Accessed 3 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.unicef.org/kyrgyzstan/press-releases/new-global-partnership-end-violence>

UNICEF, Promising Programmes to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation" [Website]. Accessed 4 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.unicef.org/documents/promising-programmes-prevent-and-respond-child-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation>

UNICEF, "Seven strategies for Ending Violence Against Children" [Website]. Accessed 22 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.unicef.org/documents/inspire-seven-strategies-ending-violence-against-children>

UNICEF, "Sexual Violence Against Children" [Website]. Accessed 3 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.unicef.org/protection/sexual-violence-against-children>

UNICEF, "What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child?" [Website]. Accessed 3 May 2021 from: <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/what-is-the-convention>

UNICEF, "What Works to Prevent Online and Offline Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse?" 2020. [Website]. Accessed 3 May 2021 from: <https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/4706/file/What%20works.pdf>

UNODC, "Global Programme to End Violence Against Children" [Website]. Accessed 7 May 2021 from: [https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/justice-and-prison-reform/global-programme-to-end-violence-against-children\\_overview.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/justice-and-prison-reform/global-programme-to-end-violence-against-children_overview.html)

UNODC, "Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System" [Report]. Accessed 11 May 2021 from: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Child-Victims/Handbook\\_on\\_Children\\_Recruited\\_and\\_Exploited\\_by\\_Terrorist\\_and\\_Violent\\_Extremist\\_Groups\\_the\\_Role\\_of\\_the\\_Justice\\_System.E.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Child-Victims/Handbook_on_Children_Recruited_and_Exploited_by_Terrorist_and_Violent_Extremist_Groups_the_Role_of_the_Justice_System.E.pdf)

UNODC, "Online child sexual exploitation and abuse" [Website]. Accessed 30 May 2021 from: <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/cybercrime/module-12/key-issues/online-child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse.html>

UNODC, "Roadmap On the Treatment of Children Associated with Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups" [Report]. Accessed 16 May 2021 from: [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/criminal\\_justice/endVAC/Roadmap/UNODC-ENDVAC\\_Roadmap\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/criminal_justice/endVAC/Roadmap/UNODC-ENDVAC_Roadmap_EN.pdf)

UNW, "Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace" [Report]. Accessed 13 May 2021 from:

[http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf)

Velina Valcheva, "Child Marriage in India. Implementing Universal Human Rights in a Culturally Diverse World" [Article]. Accessed 27 May 2021 from:

<https://www.grin.com/document/376765>

WHO, "7 Child Sexual Abuse" [Report] Accessed 3 May 2021 from:

[https://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/resources/publications/en/guidelines\\_chap7.pdf](https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/resources/publications/en/guidelines_chap7.pdf)

Yvette Brazier, "What are Suicidal Thoughts?" 2020. [Article]. Accessed 16 May 2021 from:

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/193026>

## Children in Armed Conflict: Rehabilitation and Reintegration

*"We must not close our eyes to the fact that child soldiers are both victims and perpetrators. They sometimes carry out the most barbaric acts of violence. But no matter what the child is guilty of the main responsibility lies with us the adults. There is simply no excuse, no acceptable argument for arming children."* – **Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Human rights activist**<sup>220</sup>

### Introduction

Child soldiers are boys and girls that have been recruited by armed forces and armed groups during war.<sup>221</sup> Most times, these children are not only recruited to fight at the warfront; they are also used in support functions such as cooking, spying, sex slavery amongst others.<sup>222</sup> Whilst acknowledging the fact that these armed groups abduct, force or intimidate children to join them, there are still a number of push and pull factors that lead children to join armed conflict. They include poverty, displacement, a search for a sense of identity, lack of opportunities and choices, attempts at defending the community, etc.<sup>223</sup> In other situations, the children voluntarily join armed groups either because they have lost their families, or as a way of defending their communities from being destroyed<sup>224</sup> And gradually, it evolves into a continuous cycle of violence, where states begin to perceive such children as not only victims, but also perpetrators. This issue has however been addressed in the international community where international laws such as the CRC, Paris Principles etc., have stated that regardless of

---

<sup>220</sup> Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Interview at UNICEF's Headquarters, 9 March, 2010.

<sup>221</sup> UNICEF, "Children Recruited by Armed Forces", 2020.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>223</sup> Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed conflict, "Children and Justice During and in the Aftermath of Armed Conflict," September 2011.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

a child's involvement in armed conflict, they should still be seen as victims rather than perpetrators.<sup>225</sup>

War violates every right of a child; the right to life, health, family, and community, and the right to be respected and protected.<sup>226</sup> During armed conflicts, not only are the children killed or injured, a great number of them end up without a family or a stable societal structure to give meaning to their lives.<sup>227</sup> For decades, children have continued to experience hardships during armed conflict, and tend to be vulnerable to being recruited, abducted, or coerced to become child soldiers.<sup>228</sup> They are exposed to the danger of being maimed, killed, sexually violated, and traumatized during the war, while fulfilling other duties.<sup>229</sup> They are also left to deal with major mental, physical and emotional injuries either through direct or indirect participation in armed conflict.<sup>230</sup>

Besides the coercion of children to join the conflict and the other reasons for children voluntarily participating in armed conflict, recruitment may also involve families or communities handing over their children to join armed groups that share religious, ethnic, or societal ties with them, and it is usually done out of a sense of obligation towards the group.<sup>231</sup> Despite these voluntary actions of the children and their families, states should always remember that every child all over the world has the right to be protected from recruitment

---

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> Report of the Secretary-General, "Provisional Agenda of the 51st Session of General Assembly" A/51/150.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, " Internal Displacement Overview of Trends and Development in 2009" Geneva, May 2018, pg. 18.

<sup>229</sup> Child Soldiers International, "Questions and Answers, Who are Child Soldiers?", 2007.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> Prosecutor v. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, case no. ICC- 01/04-01/06, para. 71.

and use by armed forces,<sup>232</sup> as this is key to their development and ability to tap into their future potential.<sup>233</sup>

Therefore, prioritizing the reintegration and rehabilitation of children affected by armed conflict is fundamental not just for the protection of their rights, but also to establish peace and development in all parts of the world.<sup>234</sup> Providing reintegration and rehabilitation opportunities for child soldiers and children affected by armed conflict is not only a legal obligation but is also essential to maintaining sustainable peace.<sup>235</sup> Thus, failure to implement adequate reintegration and rehabilitation assistance to help children forget about their war experiences, and become productive members of society might eventually affect the peace and security progress of such countries.<sup>236</sup>

### **International and Regional Framework**

Every child around the world under the age of 18 is legally protected under international and national laws. The recruitment and use of children by armed groups is unacceptable under an extensive body of international human rights law, international humanitarian law, criminal law, and labour law, and it is a violation of a child's fundamental human rights.<sup>237</sup>

The first prohibition against the use of children in war surfaced in 1977 in the two *Additional Protocols (AP) to the Geneva Conventions*. The *Additional Protocol I* and *Additional Protocol II* to the *Geneva Convention* were the first international legal instruments to provide for the

---

<sup>232</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990), art. 3 & 6.

<sup>233</sup> UN Doc, "Reframing Child Reintegration: from humanitarian action to development, prevention, peace building and beyond ", 2020.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> UN, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of Children and Armed Conflict, "Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers".

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

prohibition of the recruitment and use of child soldiers in armed conflict.<sup>238</sup> The main purpose of the provisions of *AP I* is to regulate international armed conflicts, while *AP II* focuses on non-international armed conflicts.<sup>239</sup> They also expressly prohibit the recruitment and participation of children in armed conflict,<sup>240</sup> and generally any form of hostility.<sup>241</sup>

In 1989, the *CRC* was promulgated, and some of its provisions addressed the problem of child soldiers. The *CRC*'s comprehensive recognition of the rights of children provides a normative and legal framework within which every member state can situate their work for children. The provision of the *CRC* aims for the total exclusion of children below 15 from armed conflict and their forced recruitment in the armed forces.<sup>242</sup> While the *CRC* set the minimum age of recruitment at 15 years, the provisions of the *Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict* adopted by the United Nations General Assembly<sup>243</sup> raised the minimum age to 18 years for compulsory recruitment,<sup>244</sup> but allows for 15-year-olds to voluntarily enrol into armed groups, as long as safeguarding policies are put in place.<sup>245</sup> The *CRC* goes on further to state that no child should be subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment<sup>246</sup>.

Years later, during an international conference in 1997, the *Cape Town Principles* were adopted.<sup>247</sup> Although not a legal document, the *Cape Town Principles* was introduced as a result of the discussion organized by UNICEF and the Working Group on the *CRC*, to develop strategies for preventing the use of child soldiers, demobilizing them, and aiding their

---

<sup>238</sup> Utrecht Journal of International and European Law, p. 71.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>240</sup> Additional Protocol I (1977) to the Geneva Convention (1949), Article 77(1).

<sup>241</sup> Additional Protocol II, Article. 4(3).

<sup>242</sup> *CRC* (1989), Article 38(3).

<sup>243</sup> General Assembly "Adoption of Resolution and Decisions", 54<sup>th</sup> session, vol III, A/54/49.

<sup>244</sup> OPAC, Article 3(1).

<sup>245</sup> OPAC, Article 3(2).

<sup>246</sup> *CRC*, Article 37(a).

<sup>247</sup> UNICEF, Cape Town Principles, at 1.2.

reintegration into society.<sup>248</sup> It was the first to clarify the term "child soldier", stating that it not only refers to children with weapons but also anyone below 18 years of age who belongs to any armed force or armed group in any capacity.<sup>249</sup> This instrument greatly influenced the development of international norms and created a positive shift in national, regional, and international policies.<sup>250</sup> A decade later, the *Paris Principles* were adopted during the "Free Children from War" conference to act as a global review of the *Cape Town Principles*.<sup>251</sup> Currently, the *Paris Principles* are endorsed by 105 states with the sole objective of preventing recruitment, supporting the disengagement of children from armed forces, and securing their reintegration into society.

Equally important is the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which provides that state parties should take necessary measures to ensure that children do not take direct part in hostilities.<sup>252</sup> Thus, International Human Rights Law, through the CRC and the ACRWC, urges states to take every possible measure to prevent the recruitment or direct participation of children below eighteen years in any form of hostilities.<sup>253</sup>

In addition to the provisions of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, international criminal law also plays a vital role in ensuring that any violation of the rights of children does not go unpunished.<sup>254</sup> Therefore, in an attempt to put an end to the impunity of those who coerce children to participate in armed conflict, the *Rome Statute of*

---

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, at the annex.

<sup>250</sup> UNICEF, Paris Principle: Principles and guidelines associated with armed forces or armed groups, February 2007, at 1.2.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (adopted July 1990, entered into force 29 November 1999), Article 22(2).

<sup>253</sup> CRC, Article 38; ACRWC, Article 22.

<sup>254</sup> Office of the SRSG FOR CAAC, "The Role of the International Criminal Court".

1998 was created.<sup>255</sup> The *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* is a legal instrument that was created by the international community to address the concerns of a child soldier's legal status.<sup>256</sup> The *Rome Statute* specifically states that it is a "war crime" to conscript or enlist children below the age of 15 in hostilities<sup>257</sup> Therefore, the Court has the jurisdiction in situations when a state is unwilling to investigate and prosecute, to punish the perpetrators.<sup>258</sup>

Additionally, the International Labour Organization also adopted a *Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action to the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Labour* (ILO 182), which commits states to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate all forms of child labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children into armed conflict.<sup>259</sup> This Convention also took a step further by stating that the coercion of children for use in armed conflict is similar to slavery.<sup>260</sup> This constitutes a powerful assertion in international law due to the *jus cogens* and *erga omnes* character of slavery, which indicates the seriousness of the crime in international law. Put differently, this means that just like slavery, the provisions of international law on the use of children in armed conflict is a compelling law which allows for no derogation. It also imposes an obligation on all states to ensure that impunity for such crimes is not allowed, and also evokes an international duty to prosecute alleged offenders.

---

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> Rome Statute of the ICC (adopted 17 July 1998, entered into force 1 July 2002), Article 8(d)(vii)

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.* Article 17-19.

<sup>259</sup> International Labour Organization, Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 1820, 1999, Article 3 & 4).

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.* Article 3(a).

## **Role of the International System**

With the staggering number of violations against children, the international community needs to come together, build on advancements and develop tools to protect children during and after armed conflict.<sup>261</sup>

The 2030 SDGs,<sup>262</sup> as well as other development agendas such as the African Union's Agenda<sup>263</sup> 2063 addresses the need to attain peace and development through coordinated and deliberate investment and action. Since most of the SDGs relate directly to the lives of children, they are therefore relevant to child soldiers, and children affected by armed conflict. In adopting the SDGs, governments impliedly agreed to stop the recruitment of children by armed forces by 2030.<sup>264</sup> Additionally, due to UNICEF's emphasis on the fundamental role of the SDGs in supporting and protecting children, it has set targets surrounding these goals.<sup>265</sup> The SDGs that relate directly to children in armed conflict include SDG 4 - Quality Education, SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being, SDG 5 - Gender Equality, SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth, and SDG 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. And as long as every state is committed to these Goals, there should be a significant and positive advancement in the protection of children from armed groups and armed forces by the end of 2030.

UNICEF makes use of disaggregated data collection to identify governments and non-state armed groups that exploit and recruit children by engagement with the Monitoring and Recruitment Mechanism (MRM).<sup>266</sup> This Mechanism was created based on the proposal of the Secretary-General, with the purpose of collecting timely, objective and accurate information

---

<sup>261</sup> Economic and Social Council Affairs Segment, Geneva, 2019.

<sup>262</sup> United Nations, "17 Sustainable Development Goals".

<sup>263</sup> African Union, Overview Agenda: The Africa We Want.

<sup>264</sup> O'Neil S. and Van Broeckhoven, "Cradled by Conflict: Child Involvement with Armed Groups in Contemporary Conflict".

<sup>265</sup> Office of the SRSG for CAAC, "Children and Armed Conflict and the SDGs".

<sup>266</sup> SDG 8.7: Elimination of The Worst Forms of Child Labour, Including Recruitment and Use Of Child Soldiers

on state recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, as well as other violations and abuses committed against children affected by armed conflict.<sup>267</sup> In addition, a Working Group on children in armed conflict was also established by the UNSC, in order to consistently prioritize the violations committed against children.<sup>268</sup> This Working Group acts to review the reports of the MRMs, review the progress of states in implementing action plans, make recommendations to the UNSC on ways to promote the protection of children in armed conflict, amongst others.<sup>269</sup> Another major improvement of the UNSC was the establishment of a UN in-country task force. This task force is co-chaired by UNICEF and whoever holds the position of the highest ranking UN representative in the country, and it is bestowed with the responsibility of reporting to the Special Representative for CAAC twice every month.<sup>270</sup> It is composed of several UN agencies and representatives such as the ILO, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, child protection activists, and also international and national NGOS.<sup>271</sup> These task forces are usually established in countries noted to be involved in recruiting and coercing children in armed conflict, as identified by the UNSG. Therefore, once they have been established in such countries, they are mandated to report all violations committed against children (specifically the six grave violations).<sup>272</sup>

In 2003, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process was introduced by the UN to help in disarming child ex-combatants and reintegrating them back into the society.<sup>273</sup> This laid the foundation for protecting and sustaining the communities where these children

---

<sup>267</sup> UNSC Press Release, "Security council Establishes Monitoring, Reporting Mechanism on Use of Child Soldiers, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1612 (2005)" SC/8458.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid*, p.156.

<sup>273</sup> Council Foreign Relation, " Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration in Africa.

were taken from, while working towards maintaining long term peace and security.<sup>274</sup> There was also a partnership around that period between the World Bank, international donors, and peacekeeping forces, to establish a Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program to demobilize combatants in Africa. This program operated from 2002-2009, and during that time made significant progress in demobilizing and reintegrating ex-combatants in the Greater Lakes Region of Central Africa.

Few years later, in 2014, an international campaign named *Children, Not Soldiers* was launched by UNICEF and the SRSG for CAAC, which introduced a new commitment and movement towards ending the use of children by the government and armed groups.<sup>275</sup> The aim of this campaign was to put an end to the recruitment and use of child soldiers by government forces by the end of 2016, and this plan was supported by the UNSC Resolution 2143(2014).<sup>276</sup> The main focus of the campaign is on the seven countries currently listed for recruiting children for conflict. They include Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen.<sup>277</sup> All these states have henceforth committed to preventing and ending child recruitment, and six of them have signed action plans to work towards it.<sup>278</sup> Thus, this campaign has helped to consolidate the global consensus that children do not belong in conflict.

Moving further, international actors are progressively working with national governments and local communities to formulate non-military community engagement strategies that work on preventing armed conflict.<sup>279</sup> In response to the various attacks launched against schools during conflict and the use of educational infrastructures by the military, UN

---

<sup>274</sup> United Nations Peacekeeping, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration".

<sup>275</sup> UNICEF, "Ending the Recruitment and Use of Children in Armed Conflict".

<sup>276</sup> UNSC Resolution 2143 (7 March 2014) UN Doc S/RES/2143.

<sup>277</sup> ECOSOC, "Humanitarian Affairs Segment, Geneva", 2019.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>279</sup> UN, "Community Violence Reduction: Creating Space for Peace".

member states developed a *Safe School Declaration*.<sup>280</sup> This Declaration is an inter-governmental political agreement which set out a series of commitments with the sole aim of protecting the educational system from attacks of military groups during armed conflict.<sup>281</sup> It was opened for endorsement during the *First International Conference on Safe Schools* in Oslo, Norway in May 2015, and is currently endorsed by 106 states. The Safe Schools Declaration is supported by people in the highest levels within the UN,<sup>282</sup> particularly from UN Secretary-General António Guterres; former High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein; and Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba; each of whom has urged all UN Member States to endorse the Declaration<sup>283</sup>.

The UN continues to work with different organizations worldwide, and also introduces new and better recommendations to member states in order to push and encourage their government to do better for the children.

### ***Addressing the Violation of Rights of Children in Warfare***

Armed conflict creates an almost impossible environment for the protection of rights, and so in a time where the entire structure of the society is crumbling, the support and protection of children's rights must always remain a priority.<sup>284</sup> The recruitment and use of children in armed conflict is a grave violation of their human rights, and it continues to persist despite repeated international efforts.<sup>285</sup> Every child regardless of their race, ethnicity, colour, or

---

<sup>280</sup> Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, "The Safe School Declaration".

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>284</sup> Ben Majekodunmi, "The Protection of Children's Right on Situation of Armed Conflict: UNICEF Experience in Burundi", 1999.

<sup>285</sup> SRSG CAAC, "The Six Grave Violations Against Children During Armed Conflict: The Legal Foundation", 2013.

religion has the right to enjoy their childhood, and the government is expected to take necessary measures to ensure that their rights are not violated.<sup>286</sup>

The provisions of the CRC and other international laws contribute to the improvement of legal protection available to children. However, it somewhat appears redundant in the case of enforcement of these laws.<sup>287</sup> This is because the risks children face in armed conflict are too complex to be addressed through general human rights or humanitarian protection. It is not sufficient to offer tons of food and water to children that might be killed or forced to leave their temporary food and shelter.<sup>288</sup>

International human rights law draws attention to the importance of the right to life, liberty, and security of a person, and the fact that every state is bestowed with the responsibility of ensuring that these rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled.<sup>289</sup> The CRC is an important tool that works as a foundation to communicate information on the rights of children to different state actors. It provides for the right to life of every child and places a duty on parties to the Convention to ensure that the maximum survival and development of the child is met.<sup>290</sup> To further reiterate their commitment to the protection of child soldiers, the provisions of the CRC established a UN Committee on the Rights of the Child which currently consists of 18 independent experts.<sup>291</sup> These experts are bestowed with the duty of monitoring the implementation of the CRC. Member states are also expected to submit a report every five years to monitor their concerns and progress regarding the children in their states.<sup>292</sup> In addition to these actions, the UNSC also encourages member states to prosecute anyone

---

<sup>286</sup> Report of Graca Machel “Impact of Armed Conflict on Children”, UN doc A/51/306, 26 August, 1996.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>289</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (adopted 10 December 1948), Article 3.

<sup>290</sup> CRC, Article 37.

<sup>291</sup> CRC, Article 43.

<sup>292</sup> CRC, Article 44.

responsible for the violations and abuses against children in armed forces through national justice systems, and applicable international justice systems.<sup>293</sup>

Furthermore, in respect to the problem of whether child soldiers should be treated as perpetrators and punished for the crimes they commit during armed conflict, international law provides guidance on how to address such situations. The CRC requires all ratifying states to establish a minimum age of criminal responsibility, where if a child falls below that age, such child cannot be presumed capable of committing a criminal offense.<sup>294</sup> *The Paris Principles* also provides that children accused of allegedly committing international law crimes whilst associated with an armed group should be regarded as victims not perpetrators.<sup>295</sup> However, if the prosecution still proceeds to convict child soldiers, both the CRC and *Paris Principles* require that the sanction imposed on them should only be to serve the purpose of rehabilitating and reintegrating the child back into the society, and not as a form of punishment. Therefore, regardless of whichever method of restorative justice a state decides to use, it must be tailored to address the needs of the child and the community.

In 1999, the first resolution on CAAC adopted by the UNSC identified and condemned six grave violations affecting children in times of war.<sup>296</sup> The six grave violations identified include the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, killing and maiming of children, sexual violence against children, attacks against schools and hospitals, abduction of children, and denial of humanitarian access.<sup>297</sup> The UNSC stated that the protection of children is a

---

<sup>293</sup> UNSC Resolution, "Adopted by the Security Council at its 638th meeting on 19 September 2012" S/RES/2068.

<sup>294</sup> CRC, Article 40(3).

<sup>295</sup> Paris Principles, February 2007

<sup>296</sup> UNSC Resolution, "Adopted by the Security Council at its 4037th Meeting, on 25th August 1999" S/RES/1261 (1999).

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*

fundamental imperative in resolving conflict, and should be considered a priority in the international community.<sup>298</sup>

To further protect children from these grave violations, the UNSC came up with an accountability system where the Secretary General is required to attach the list of perpetrators of these violations to his annual report.<sup>299</sup> Over the years, the UN has worked effortlessly to promote its CAAC agenda by investing special attention, resources, and partnerships in protecting children all over the world.<sup>300</sup> These concerted actions towards the children have resulted in major policy shifts and urged states to have more positive impacts on the children.<sup>301</sup>

Subsequently, the UNSC also developed a UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism around the world to feed into this structure, gather evidence of grave violations committed against children, and report it to the Security Council.<sup>302</sup> The UNSC proposed that the MRMs should pay special attention to the six grave violations. It also established a Security Council Working Group in order to review the reports of the MRM submitted by the Secretary General, and also to analyse the progress of state and non-state parties in implementing action plans.<sup>303</sup>

In 2009, *Resolution 1882* further reinforced the purpose of the MRM, which was established to protect children in armed conflict.<sup>304</sup> In this Resolution, the UNSC condemned the continued violation of international law, especially the provisions on the death and injury of

---

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>300</sup> Security Council Report, "September 2020 Monthly Forecast, Thematic Issues: Children and Conflict", August 31, 2020.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>302</sup> UNSC Resolution, "Adopted by the Security Council at its 4984th meeting on 22 April 2004" S/RES/1539.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.* 88.

<sup>304</sup> UNSC Resolution on Children and Armed Conflict, "Adopted by the Security Council at its 6176th meeting, on 4th August 2009" S/RES/1882 (2009).

children caused by the use of force, landmines and cluster munitions; they also condemned the use of rape and sexual violence as tactics of war.<sup>305</sup> In addition to this, the UNSC requested the Secretary General to add parties that kill and maim or commit rape and other sexual violent acts against children to its “list of shame”.<sup>306</sup> And also admonished states to come up with long lasting solutions to curb the abuses committed against children, and the use and recruitment of children into armed conflict.<sup>307</sup>

Over the past fifteen years, the MRM has documented over 250,000 grave violations against children in armed conflict.<sup>308</sup> The report showed that 77,000 children were recruited, over 10,000 killed and maimed, over 15,000 suffered rape and sexual violence, 25,000 were abducted, 17,000 were attacked in schools and hospitals and 11,000 were denied humanitarian access.<sup>309</sup> However, despite these alarming numbers, the increasing role of the UNSC on this issue has helped in applying pressure through sanctions to generate international compliance in ensuring the protection of children.<sup>310</sup>

In 2019, over 80 UN member states gathered to express their concerns over the effects of conflict on children, and discussed efforts to address their needs and facilitate their reintegration into society. The UNSC also held a debate to assess the six grave violations against children. Sadly, despite these efforts, and the agreement by warring parties to implement action plans, roadmaps, and other measures given by the UN to better protect children, the case of human rights violations against children remains extremely high.<sup>311</sup> Thus,

---

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>308</sup> UNSC, “Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace and Security” SC/14223.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>310</sup> UNICEF, “Guidelines, Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms on Grave Violations against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict”, June 2014.

<sup>311</sup> UNSC Resolution, “Adopted by the Security Council at its 8700th meeting, on 10 January 2020” S/RES/2504.

while it is important to celebrate the small victories, the UNSC urges states to remain focused on prosecuting the perpetrators of these crimes against children.<sup>312</sup>

### **Addressing the Prevalence of Sexual Violence against Children in Armed Conflict**

According to the universally ratified CRC, it is provided that states must protect children from sexual abuse,<sup>313</sup> without distinction based on status.<sup>314</sup> Noting that sexual violence is a form of inhuman and degrading treatment, protection of this right must not be set aside when it pertains to armed conflict.<sup>315</sup> Sexual violence which includes rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage is seen as a tactic of war, terror, and political oppression that disproportionately affects both boys and girls.<sup>316</sup> With regard to girls, sexual violence is considered more damaging because they are left to deal with permanent issues like pregnancy, childbirth, psychological trauma, urinary incontinence, exposure to HIV, and STI's amongst others.<sup>317</sup>

Furthermore, sexual violence in conflict has been shown to have a major influence on child marriage. In this situation, girls have little or no opportunity to avoid unwanted pregnancies.<sup>318</sup> They also lack access to essential services like antenatal care and assisted childbirth, and this has intensified child and maternal mortality rate over the years.<sup>319</sup> Reports have revealed that pregnancy and childbirth complications are one of the leading causes of death for adolescent girls within the ages of 15-19, and girls under 15 years have posed to be more likely to die from complications than girls above the age of 18.<sup>320</sup> As a result of the child marriages and sexual relationships these girls have been forced into, they are unable to

---

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.* 96.

<sup>313</sup> CRC, Article 34.

<sup>314</sup> CRC, Article 2.

<sup>315</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 4 & 7.

<sup>316</sup> General Assembly, "Children and Armed Conflict" A/74/845 - S/2020/525.

<sup>317</sup> Save the Children, "Unspeakable crimes against children: sexual violence in conflict", 2013.

<sup>318</sup> WHO, "Adolescent pregnancy", 2018.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*

return to their families and communities, either because of threats from their “husbands,” or the fear of being stigmatized.<sup>321</sup>

Concurrently, the effect of armed conflict is that it weakens the structures meant to protect children.<sup>322</sup> The absence of effective governance institutions, social and physical infrastructure, and the prevalence of economic and physical insecurity, all contribute to the vulnerability of children in armed conflict.<sup>323</sup> When this occurs, families and communities have the duty of supporting these children. Sadly, sexual violence works to break down these structures. An unmarried girl who is supposed to be provided with food and shelter may be rejected by her family and community because she has been sexually violated.<sup>324</sup> The lack of protection, accountability mechanisms, and integrated services for survivors and their families discourages them from reporting the violations, which as a result further stigmatizes the survivors and also discourages the male survivors from accessing assistance and justice.<sup>325</sup>

However, despite the recorded cases of sexual violence, it was stated by the UNGA that cases of sexual violence against children still remains significantly underreported.<sup>326</sup> This stems from the refusal of victims and their families to report incidences of sexual violence; mainly because of the stigma they fear they will face, and the lack of services and resources to cater for the victims.<sup>327</sup> In 2019, over 730 cases of sexual violence and rape were reported, and the Secretary-General stated this was not even an adequate report, especially concerning boys.<sup>328</sup>

---

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>322</sup> International Bureau for Armed Conflict, “A Guide to International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law”, 2010.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>325</sup> UNSC, “Conflict-Related Sexual Violence” S/2020/487.

<sup>326</sup> Report of the Secretary-General of Children in Armed Conflict S/2019/509.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>328</sup> General Assembly, “Children and Armed Conflict” A/747845 – S/2020/525.

Countries are yet to adequately invest in tackling the root causes that drive and perpetuate violence.<sup>329</sup> The major responsibility falls on the government of every country to ensure that the process is implemented.<sup>330</sup>

In response to this, the adoption of strong and airtight legislation is essential to curbing this practice.<sup>331</sup> In the Security Council's recent resolution in 2019, it was noted there was the need for a survivor-centered approach in order to prevent as well as address sexual violence in post-conflict situations.<sup>332</sup> A survivor-centered response aims to create a safe environment and also provide a contextualized solution that addresses the diverse experiences of all sexual violence survivors. This approach is essential to ensuring that every child is included in the dividends of peace and development.<sup>333</sup> State and non-state armed groups are thereby required to implement action plans to prevent address sexual violence.<sup>334</sup>

### **Addressing the Mental and Physical Health of Child Soldiers after Rescue**

Returned child soldiers present the likelihood of showing severe mental health problems such as PTSD, severe personality changes, anxiety disorders, and other forms of mental impairments.<sup>335</sup> As children continue to be forced and exploited by armed groups all over the world, special mental health interventions have proven to be of utmost importance.<sup>336</sup> Sadly, it has been observed that during violent times, social structures such as hospitals and schools

---

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>330</sup> Human Rights Watch: Children as Weapons of War (2004).

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>332</sup> UNSC Resolution,"Adopted by the Security Council at its 8514th meeting, on 23 April 2019" S/RES/2467.

<sup>333</sup> UNSC, Report of the Secretary-General, "Conflict-related Sexual Violence" S/2020/487.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>335</sup> Elisabeth Schauer and Thomas Elbert "The Psychological Impact of Child Soldiering", p 3.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*

which are expected to act as a shield for children are usually raided and destroyed by armed groups.<sup>337</sup>

Child soldiers are forced to experience a life filled with extreme violence and they subsequently commit all forms of cruelties.<sup>338</sup> This consequent exposure to such cruelty leaves them with a mental and physical illness that is too exhausting to bear alone. It greatly impairs their integration into society and prevents them from acting as fully functioning members of the society.<sup>339</sup> The forms of abuse committed against them in war zones include premature sexual experiences, direct exposure to violence, verbal and physical assault, and starvation,<sup>340</sup> and after the war, they are left to deal with the effects of this terrible experience.<sup>341</sup>

Concerning female children forced to join the war or those that join to escape hardship at home, they are sometimes coerced to give sexual favours to be protected.<sup>342</sup> Majority of the time, these actions lead to unwanted pregnancies, which not only affects them physically but also psychologically.<sup>343</sup> Children are also forced by their armed groups to use drugs to enhance their performance and make them numb to sexual violence.<sup>344</sup> They are forced to use drugs like cocaine, amphetamines, and other common stimulants which can have a lasting effect on the body and mind of the child soldiers.<sup>345</sup>

---

<sup>337</sup> Ben Majekodunmi, UNICEF Experience in Burundi, 1999.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>340</sup> Briggs J. "Innocent Lives Lost: When Child Soldiers Go To War", 2005, p.43.

<sup>341</sup> UNICEF, State of the World's Children, 2005.

<sup>342</sup> Human Rights Watch, "You'll Learn Not to Cry", p.9.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*

When children experience severe and prolonged violence without any support, it can lead to a negative influence on their cognitive and emotional development.<sup>346</sup> Therefore, regardless of whether the children were active combatants, cooks, or spies, it is certain that their war experiences have traumatized and robbed them of their childhood, and so each child that escapes or is released needs to be provided with physical and mental health support from the government to help overcome the long-term effects of war.<sup>347</sup>

In 2002, a programme titled the Longitudinal Study of War Affected Youth was created with the purpose of collecting data on female and male child soldiers who participated in the Sierra Leone civil war.<sup>348</sup> It was a 15 year study which started as a collaboration agreement between local NGOs and community advisory boards.<sup>349</sup> During their yearly survey, they noted that the long term mental health problems faced by former child soldiers were shaped by war experiences and certain post conflict elements (such as having to kill or injure others, being raped consistently, etc.).<sup>350</sup> The children reported to have been raped displayed increased post-war anxiety and depression; 47% surpassed the limit for anxiety and depression, and 28% surpassed the possible PTSD limit.<sup>351</sup> Additionally, a child protection specialist working with UNICEF who was posted to the Democratic Republic of Congo stated in her report that although most of the rescued child soldiers returned home with large scars from bullet and knife wounds, the principal damage seemed to be psychological.<sup>352</sup>

---

<sup>346</sup> Slone M. Mann "Effects of War, Terrorism and Armed Conflict on Young Children: a systematic review", 2016, p 950-965.

<sup>347</sup> UN SRSG for CAAC, "Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers", 2019.

<sup>348</sup> Theresa Bentacourt, Katrina Keegan, et al, "The intergenerational impact of war on mental health and psychosocial wellbeing: lessons from the longitudinal study of war-affected youth in Sierra Leone" 2020.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>352</sup> Bulletin of the WHO, "Healing Child Soldiers," Volume 87, 2009, pg.325.

In response to the mental and physical needs of these child soldiers, several agencies, NGOs and CSOs are constantly working to ensure that these children are adequately attended to. A notable example is the International Committee of the Red Cross which was established based on the provisions of the Geneva Convention.<sup>353</sup> The ICRC is a private international humanitarian organization that was created with the sole mission of protecting the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict, and providing them with assistance<sup>354</sup>. Whenever a conflict arises, the ICRC actively responds to those affected by providing them with material relief such as food, medicine, cash; as well as repairing their water supply and building medical facilities<sup>355</sup>. There is also another organization known as World Vision International, which is one of the largest charities in the world, present in about 100 countries. For decades, this organization has helped children affected by war in different countries. They were particularly effective in the genocide that occurred in Rwanda, the Western Balkan war, the Korean war and the Syrian conflict. They act by responding to children's most important needs, and teaching them to adapt and restore their hopes in the future. Another important organization is the Save the Children NGO with the vision of protecting every child's right to survival, development and participation. Over the years, the organization has consistently provided emergency healthcare, psychosocial support, temporary places of learning and cash grants to families in need.<sup>356</sup>

---

<sup>353</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, "Protection of Victims of Armed Conflict through Respect of International Law" (16, September 1999).

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> Save the Children "More than 24 million children affected by conflict need mental health support", 10 September, 2019.

Therefore, while UNICEF, NGOs and government of member states continue in their efforts to prevent the recruitment of children in armed conflict, action must always be taken to respond to the mental and physical health of the rescued or released child soldiers, in order to ensure that they are not compelled to return back to the warfront, and that they become useful to the society.

### **The Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Child Soldiers into Armed Conflict**

The definition of child reintegration was provided in the *Paris Principles* as the process of a child transitioning into civil society and entering meaningful roles and identities as civilians who are accepted by their families and communities.<sup>357</sup> Simply put, the process of reintegration and rehabilitation of children in armed conflict basically means providing a fast and adequate response to children upon their exit from armed groups, while ensuring that there are no further violations of their rights.<sup>358</sup> Thus, irrespective of the role they play during the armed conflict, either as active combatants, cooks, spies, scouts or porters, it doesn't diminish the fact that they are all left traumatized and robbed of their childhood, and so they must be adequately and equally attended to.<sup>359</sup>

Every year, thousands of children all over the world are released from the clutches of armed groups and armed forces, and member states must realize that the real challenge is not finding ways to release them, but providing them with adequate services for their smooth reintegration after their release. Member states are encouraged to realize that the provision of reintegration opportunities for children dealing with the aftermaths of armed conflict

---

<sup>357</sup> UNICEF, Paris Principles. Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, February 2007, p. 7.

<sup>358</sup> UN Doc, "Reframing Child Reintegration: from humanitarian action to development, prevention, peace building and beyond ", 2020.

<sup>359</sup> Office of the SRSG for CAAC, "Reintegration of Child Soldiers".

should not be seen merely as a moral and legal obligation, but also a fundamental factor in maintaining sustainable peace and development.

The most difficult aspect of the aftermath of a war is the process of reintegration. This majorly stems from the fact that these children have faced major atrocities committed against them which has led to an impaired effect on their mental and physical wellbeing. Therefore, the successful reintegration of these children into their communities can be healing for the children, their families and the community as a whole, thereby enabling them to forgive, reconcile and move past the conflict experience.

The rehabilitation of child soldiers is an important aspect of peacebuilding and sustenance, and it helps in ensuring that these children realize their rights and tap into their potential as agents of change.<sup>360</sup> For reintegration and rehabilitation of child soldiers to be effective, the traumatic experiences they faced has to be addressed. This can be done through providing mental health care, building interpersonal relationships, providing housing, and reuniting their families.<sup>361</sup> Reintegration and rehabilitation programmes should include mental and psychosocial support, educational and vocational training, community-based interventions (with special attention to the needs of both genders), and support for children with disabilities. This is in order to enable children affected by armed conflict to return to their communities and salvage the remaining parts of their childhood.<sup>362</sup> Furthermore, member states are advised to pay special attention to the importance of education during this rehabilitation and reintegration process. After a period of conflict, the majority of schools in affected communities end up destroyed, thus rendering the former child soldiers unable to attend school. School offers a sense of normalcy, and creates a notion of safety to children,

---

<sup>360</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Security Council, "Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General," (20 June, 2019) A/73/907 - S/2019/509.

<sup>361</sup> The Borgen Project, 'Organizations Helping Child Soldiers Recover,' April 14 2017.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*

which helps to reduce the psychological stress they face after being rescued; therefore the lack of a familiar schedule contributes to the instability of former child soldiers. Hence, ensuring that children return to school, or a regular and stable life positively contributes to their well-being and development.

As the years passed and armed conflict intensified, the UN integrated DDR programme was introduced as a means to disarm armed groups, disband them, and encourage them back into the society.<sup>363</sup> This programme has played and continues to play an integral role in the reintegration and rehabilitation process, as it makes the transition into a peaceful post-conflict situation easier.<sup>364</sup> Rehabilitation gives the child a new meaning of life and provides them with a new social identity.<sup>365</sup> The first part of the DDR process which is Disarmament involves the surrender and destruction of the weapons belonging to the child soldiers upon entering the rehabilitation camps.<sup>366</sup> The next stage is Demobilization which entails the removal of children from the hostile military environment and providing a more conducive place that would help in the facilitation of their integration into the society.<sup>367</sup> And the last process is Reintegration. This is when the former child soldiers are sent back to their communities for them to rejoin their families and attempt to retrieve their childhood.<sup>368</sup>

Although a lot of countries implement the DDR programs, some are more committed than others. DDR programmes in Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, and Congo have helped disarm hundreds of thousands of combatants and have also helped in preparing ex-combatants for

---

<sup>363</sup> Cornelius Steenken, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Rehabilitation: A Practical Overview". 2017.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>365</sup> UN Integrated DDR Standard "Children and DDR".

<sup>366</sup> M.A Drumbl, "Reimagining Child Soldiers in International Law and Policy", vol. 85, 2012, p. 188.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*

employment.<sup>369</sup> However, it has been noted that a major problem of this programme is lack of funding, thus making the rehabilitation process short term. And this has made it impossible to make any significant change to help the child soldiers. The reintegration and rehabilitation processes are lengthy one that require long term commitment from states, as well as child actors and donors.<sup>370</sup> Thus, to ensure that it is effective, funds must be readily available throughout the time required to ensure full reintegration for children who have been associated with armed groups and armed forces.<sup>371</sup>

In recognition of the need for the long-term social reintegration of child soldiers, there are certain organizations committed to this cause, and they have made significant changes towards its realization. The first and major one is UNICEF. For the past seventy years, UNICEF has been committed to finding ways to release children associated with armed forces, and providing them with assistance to return home.<sup>372</sup> They have supported over 100,000 former child soldiers to reintegrate back into their communities, while providing a variety of recovery services, such as mental and mental health support, education and vocational training.<sup>373</sup> Another important organization is the Child Soldiers International, which has consistently worked to promote the ban of child recruitment.<sup>374</sup> This organization offers literacy classes for girls in the DRC, and advocates for an increase in the quality and quantity of reintegration programs.<sup>375</sup> There is also the Global Coalition for the Reintegration of Child Soldiers, which

---

<sup>369</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration in Africa", 2007.

<sup>370</sup> War Child UK, "Rethink Child Soldiers: A New Approach to the Reintegration of all Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups", 2019.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>372</sup> The Borgen Project, 'Organizations Helping Child Soldiers Recover,' April 14 2017.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*

was established and co-led by the SRSG and UNICEF with the major aim supporting member states, and addressing the pressing need for the reintegration of all children's rights.<sup>376</sup>

However, despite these positive actions, there are certain barriers that hinder children's successful reintegration and rehabilitation.<sup>377</sup> Two major constraints emerge. The first is the practical constraint which is as a result of the complexity of reintegration, its long-term nature, and the political and structural challenges that affect the effective application of reintegration programs.<sup>378</sup> Second is the problem of funding. With funding for reintegration programs decreasing from 2006- 2018, despite the increased recruitment of children all around the world; this means that children and families in need are unable to adequately benefit from these recruitment programs.<sup>379</sup> Therefore, there is the need for an approach that strongly encourages the release of children recruited by armed forces, and provides for access to reintegration support for both boys and girls.<sup>380</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Despite the numerous developments in protecting children over the last few years, new challenges to the children in armed conflict agenda continues to emerge; thereby stressing the importance of the duty of states to constantly provide and improve on ways to prevent the recruitment of children in armed conflict. In addition, a successful reintegration and rehabilitation of children associated with armed groups and armed forces is essential to the protection of their rights and will make progress in the action plans regarding this situation.<sup>381</sup>

---

<sup>376</sup> Global Coalition for the Reintegration of Child Soldiers, "Reframing Child Reintegration: from humanitarian action to development, prevention, peace building and beyond ",2020.

<sup>377</sup> War Child, "Closing the Funding Gap for the Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups," September 2018.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>381</sup> Global Coalition for the Reintegration of Child Soldiers, "Gaps and Needs of Children associated with armed forces or armed groups", 2019.

Successful protection of children is dependent on UNICEF's work with member states and NGOs, which indicates that there is a need to develop a UN child rights protection capacity by embracing UN agencies and UN structures.<sup>382</sup> There is also a call for a better and long-lasting approach for the reintegration process of every child while working to completely end their recruitment and use in armed conflict. Thus, although Member States still have a long road ahead of them, they must continue to give priority to the promotion of sustainable measures in preventing violence, promoting peace, and implementing peace agreements, as a means of avoiding conflict.

### **Further Research**

It is undisputed that there has been a significant change in the number of children recruited in 2019 in comparison to the number recruited years ago. However, the world at large still has a lot of work to do. Are children's rights adequately represented when drafting peace agreements? Should there be strict laws prohibiting member states from prosecuting child soldiers after the war? Are the justice systems doing enough to prosecute governmental and non-governmental armed forces that recruit and use children in armed conflict? Are there further actions the UN has taken to encourage member states to take proper actions in the rehabilitation and reintegration of children affected by armed conflict? Taking note of the fact that UNICEF and its NGO partners are faced with the problem of limited resources, what recommendations can be proffered to deal with this problem? Are there long term rehabilitation and reintegration processes that can be set up for children rescued from armed conflict? While working towards the realization of the SDGs, do you believe that member states are making deliberate efforts to include child soldiers in their plans? If not, what can be done to encourage this? Has the introduction of the MRM played a major part in

---

<sup>382</sup>*Supra.*

ending government recruitment of children in armed conflict? And are there ways to improve on it to ensure that these governments follow through with their action plans?

### **Annotated Bibliography**

Ben Majekodunmi, "The Protection of Children's Rights in Situations of Armed Conflict: UNICEF Experience in Burundi" [Report] available at <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/protection.pdf> (Accessed 5 February 2021)

*This document emphasizes the need to protect children. It also discusses the progress of NGOs and other organizations in this regard, using Burundi as a case study*

Child Soldiers International, "Why 18 Matters: A Right-Based Analysis on Child Recruitment" [Report] available at <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/13864/pdf/why18matters-download.pdf> (Accessed 6 June 2021)

*This document provides a detailed analysis of child recruitment and use in armed conflict. It further discusses the negative impact this has on them, such as mental health and alcohol use, aggression and violence amongst others. It then emphasizes on the need for change, and provides recommendations in this respect.*

Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers, "Improving Support to Child Reintegration: Summary Findings From Three Reports" [Report] available at <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/17735/pdf/gcr-reintegration-summary-paper-february-2020.pdf> (Accessed 6 June 2021)

*This document provides information on actions of government and child organizations in reintegrating children. It points to the problems impeding such reintegration, and provides recommendations to address them.*

Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers, "Reframing Child Reintegration; From humanitarian action to development, peace building and beyond" [Report] available at :  
<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/GCR-Reframing-Child-Reintegration-92020.pdf> (Accessed 20 January 2021)

*This document outlines the link between the SDGs and protecting children in armed conflict. It highlights the importance of reintegration for children and addresses the legal frameworks for preventing and responding to child recruitment.*

Save the Children, "The War on Children" [Report] available at  
[https://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/usa/reports/advocacy/war-on-children-report-u s.pdf](https://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/usa/reports/advocacy/war-on-children-report-us.pdf) (Accessed 20 January 2021)

*This document emphasizes the importance of the wellbeing and safety of children affected by armed conflict. It analyses the annual reports of the secretary-general on children in armed conflicts, the laws currently protecting them, and the areas the government needs to work on. It also provides recommendations to help protect children from the horrors of war.*

United Nations Children's Fund, "The Six Grave Violations Against Children During Armed Conflict: The Legal Foundation" [Report] available at  
[https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/WorkingPaper-1\\_SixGraveViolationsLegalFoundation.pdf](https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/WorkingPaper-1_SixGraveViolationsLegalFoundation.pdf) (Accessed 20 January 2021)

*This paper explains in detail the six grave violations committed against children involved directly or indirectly by armed conflict. It also provides the legal basis of these violations.*

United Nations Children's Fund, "Machel Study 10-year Strategic Review Children and Conflict in a Changing World," April 2009 [Report] available at [https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/MachelStudy-10YearStrategicReview\\_en.pdf](https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/publications/MachelStudy-10YearStrategicReview_en.pdf) (Accessed 5 June 2021).

*This report is a strategic review of the impact of conflict on children. It was written with the aim of acting as a policy tool on children and armed conflict, and as the foundation of a platform of action. It contains a detailed analysis of the six grave violations committed against children, the SDGs and MDGs related to children, the countries and territories mostly affected by armed conflict, the progress that has been made, and recommendations for the future.*

War Child, "Closing the Funding Gap for the Reintegration of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups" September 2018 [Report] available at [https://www.warchild.org.uk/sites/default/files/link-files/war\\_child\\_uk\\_reintegration\\_child\\_soldiers\\_briefing\\_paper\\_web.pdf](https://www.warchild.org.uk/sites/default/files/link-files/war_child_uk_reintegration_child_soldiers_briefing_paper_web.pdf) (Accessed 6 June 2021).

*This document provides detailed funding data of reintegration programs in different countries, and outlines recommendations on actions to be taken to ensure that organizations, the government, and its people contribute to this funding.*

World Vision International, "No Choice: It Takes a World to End the Use of Child Soldiers" [Report] available at [https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/12038/pdf/wv\\_itaw\\_no\\_choice\\_policy\\_report\\_2019\\_sp\\_online\\_2.pdf](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/12038/pdf/wv_itaw_no_choice_policy_report_2019_sp_online_2.pdf)

*This document was written with the purpose of better understanding children associated with armed groups. Using information obtained from research done in South Sudan, DRC, Central African Republic, Iraq and Colombia, this document aims to help us understand how and why children join, as well as to uplift their voices and experience.*

## Bibliography

Bulletin of the World Health Organization, "Healing Child Soldiers," 2009. [Website]. Accessed 2 June 2021 from: <https://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/87/5/09-020509/en/>

Child Rights Connect, "Children and Armed Conflict," [Website]. Accessed 1 May 2021 from: [https://www.childrightsconnect.org/working\\_groups/children-and-armed-conflict/](https://www.childrightsconnect.org/working_groups/children-and-armed-conflict/)

Conflict Dynamics International "Children in Armed Conflict Accountability Framework", 2015 [Report]. Accessed on 15 January 2021 from: <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/Children%20in%20Armed%20Conflict%20Accountability%20Framework.pdf>

International Committee of the Red Cross, "Legal Protection of Children in Armed Conflict," [Report]. Accessed 2 May 2021 from: <https://www.icrc.org/en/download/file/1033/children-legal-protection-factsheet.pdf>

Jennifer Klot, The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, 2012 [Website]. Accessed on 15 January 2021 from: <https://odi.hpn.org/magazine/the-impact-of-armed-conflict-on-children/>

Melani Gow, Kathy Vandergrift, Randini Wandurangala, "The Right to Peace," [Report].

Accessed 14 May 2021 from:

<https://www.worldvision.com.au/docs/default-source/publications/children/the-right-to-peace---children-and-armed-conflict.pdf?sfvrsn=6>

Patricia Sukore, "Protecting the Rights of the Child in Humanitarian Situations," [Report].

Accessed 13 May 2021 from:

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Children/HumanitarianSituations/PatriciaSukoreFoundation.pdf>

Save the Children Organization, "One in Six Children Living in Conflict Zones at Risk of Sexual

Violence by Armed Groups," [Website]. Accessed 12 May 2021 from:

<https://www.savethechildren.org/us/about-us/media-and-news/2021-press-releases/one-in-six-children-in-conflict-zones-at-risk-of-sexual-violence>

Save the Children Child Resource Centre, "Cradled by Conflict: Child Involvement with Armed Groups in Contemporary Conflict" (2019). [Website]. Accessed 6 June 2021 from:

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/cradled-conflict-child-involvement-armed-groups-contemporary-conflict>

Shaheed Fatima, "Protecting Children in Armed Conflict: Executive Summary" [Report].

Accessed on 1 May 2021 from:

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ProtectingChildren-Summary.pdf&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwiehf\\_L56nwAhXCDeWKHYiGAKEQFjAAegQICBAB&usq=AOvVaw1IDrEvV3SYgaCF9phfqgkD](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ProtectingChildren-Summary.pdf&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwiehf_L56nwAhXCDeWKHYiGAKEQFjAAegQICBAB&usq=AOvVaw1IDrEvV3SYgaCF9phfqgkD)

Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, "Watchlist on Children and Armed

Conflict," [Website]. Accessed 2 May 2021 from:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=20036&menu=1561&nr=55229#>

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, "Humanitarian Assistance in Armed Conflict with a Children's Rights Perspective," [Report]. Accessed on 2 May 2021 from: [https://publikationer.sida.se/contentassets/b5700447a2d14073b8142a145a4cf3f8/humanitarian-assistance-in-armed-conflicts-with-a-childrens-rights-perspective\\_1761.pdf](https://publikationer.sida.se/contentassets/b5700447a2d14073b8142a145a4cf3f8/humanitarian-assistance-in-armed-conflicts-with-a-childrens-rights-perspective_1761.pdf)

Theresa S. Betancourt, Katrina Keegan, et al, "The Intergenerational Impact of War on Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing: Lessons from the Longitudinal Study of War-affected Youth in Sierra Leone," 62 (2020). [Report]. Accessed 2 June 2021 from: <https://conflictandhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13031-020-00308-7#citeas>

United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF in Emergencies [Website]. Accessed on 13 January 2021 from: <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies>

UNICEF, "Promoting Children During Armed Conflict" [Report]. Accessed on 17 January 2021 from: [https://www.unicef.org/chinese/protection/files/Armed\\_Conflict.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/chinese/protection/files/Armed_Conflict.pdf)

UNICEF, "Key Asks For 2020 SDG Voluntary National Reviews SDG 8.7: Elimination Of The Worst Forms Of Child Labour, Including Recruitment And Use Of Child Soldiers" on 23 April 2021 from: [https://www.unicef.org/media/64361/file/sdg8.7\\_childlabour2\\_pager\\_final.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/64361/file/sdg8.7_childlabour2_pager_final.pdf)

UNICEF, "Children and Armed Conflict and the SDGs" [Website]. Accessed 1 May 2021 from: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/tools-for-action/children-and-armed-conflict-and-the-sdgs/>

UNICEF, "Fighting for the Rights of Children in Armed Conflict," [Website]. Accessed 1 May 2021 from: <https://www.unicef.org/stories/fighting-rights-children-armed-conflict>

United Nations, "Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict - Note by the Secretary General," [Website]. Accessed 2 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-183990/>

UNICEF, "Children Under Attack: Six Grave Violations Against Children in Time of War," [Website]. Accessed 3 May 2021 from:  
<https://www.unicef.org/stories/children-under-attack-six-grave-violations-against-children-times-war>

UN Security Council Working Group on Children Affected by Children, "Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on Grave Child Rights Violations: Philippines 2010," [Report]. Accessed 3 May 2021 from:  
<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/monitoring-reporting-mechanism-mrm-on-grave-child-rights-violations-philippines-2010>

UNICEF, "Sexual Violence against Children," [Website]. Accessed 12 May 2021 from:  
<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/six-grave-violations/sexual-violence/>

War Childhood Museum, "Children and Armed Conflict: Legal Framework," [Website]. Accessed 13 May 2021 from:  
<https://warchildhood.org/children-and-armed-conflict-legal-framework/>

UNICEF Innocenti, "Children Affected by Armed Conflict," [Website]. Accessed 13 May 2021 from: <https://www.unicef-irc.org/research/children-affected-by-armed-conflict/>

UNSC Press Release, "Security council Establishes Monitoring, Reporting Mechanism on Use of Child Soldiers, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1612 (2005)" SC/8458. [Website]. Accessed 6 June 2021 from: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2005/sc8458.doc.htm>

